SAINT PETER DAMIAN

Sermons

Sermones

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Sermones · Sermons

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SERMONS OF BLESSED PETER DAMIAN, CARDINAL OF THE HOLY ROMAN CHURCH, BISHOP OF OSTIA, OF THE ORDER OF ST. BENEDICT, PRESERVED IN THE ORDER OF THE MONTHS (C,G)*

1-2 JANUARY.

VI. Sermon on the Epiphany of the Lord.

XIV. Sermon on the translation of St. Hilary, bishop of Poitiers and confessor.

XXII. Sermon on St. Anastasius, monk and martyr.

FIRST SERMON. ON THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD (JAN. 6).

"When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judah in the days of King Herod, behold, magi came from the east to Jerusalem, saying: Where is he who is born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and have come with gifts to adore him (Matt. II)." "Praise the Lord, all you nations, and praise him together, all you peoples (Psal. CXVI)." For when the almighty Word had not yet descended from his royal seats "and night was in the midst of her course (Wisd. XVIII)," the people of the nations walked in darkness (Isai. IX), because "they loved darkness more than light (John III)," and following various errors, "the wicked walked in a circuit (Psal. I)," each one going, "one to his farm, another to his business (Matt. XXII); and their foolish heart was darkened (Rom. I)," because each one was bowed down to the work of his own hands. All those ancient fathers were also

under the cloud (I Cor. X), because they looked in a vision of the night, nor could they behold the brightness of the face of Moses (Exod. XXXIV; II Cor. III), because a veil was placed over their heart, and there was dark water in the clouds of the air (Psal. XVII), when indeed the noble sons of Zion were turned into earthen vessels, the work of the potter's hands; the stones of the sanctuary were scattered at the head of every street; their silver was turned into dross, because their wine-sellers mixed water with the wine; when the gold was darkened, the best color was changed (Lam. IV); nor was there anyone among them who did good, not even so much as one (Psal. XIII). Then, therefore, darkness was made over the whole earth (Matt. XXVII), because the Jew and the Gentile spread their bed in darkness, dwelling in darkness and the shadow of death (Luke I). Because, therefore, then the night passed, behold, the day has drawn near (Rom. XIII), and light has shone in the dwelling of our prison, because light has risen in the darkness for the upright of heart (Psal. CXI), when the Orient from on high has visited us (Luke I); and the morning star has risen for us, which knows no setting, when that true light, which enlightens every man coming into this world, shone in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it (John I).

The Jews, therefore, and the Gentiles were in darkness until the time of fullness. But when the fullness of time came (Galat. IV), the Lord sent the Lamb, the ruler of the earth, from the rock of the desert to the mountain of the daughter of

Zion (Isa. XVI), and the stone which the builders rejected, this has become the head of the corner (Psal. CXVII). And because he had come for this, that he might gather together in one the scattered sheep, although he was not first sent except to the sheep that had perished of the house of Israel (Matth. XV); yet because he had other sheep, which were not of this fold, and it was necessary for him to bring them, so that there might be one fold and one shepherd (John X), therefore for those dwelling in the region of the shadow of death, both Jews and Gentiles, light has risen for them both (Isa. IX), on account of which also in the nativity the brightness of God shone round about the shepherds, because the angel announced to them great joy (Luke II); and on this day the brightness of a star announces the newborn Savior (Matth. II). Therefore to the Jews, as to those using reason, the voice of the angels speaks; but to the Gentiles, as to beasts and cattle in the fields of the forest, the tongue or the star of the heavens speaks. Our light, therefore, demonstrates the light, the creature indicates its Creator, the thing made speaks of its maker, and a new star announces the true sun. "Praise the Lord, therefore, all you nations, and praise him together, all you peoples (Psal. CXVI). Rejoice, you nations, together with his people (Rom. XV)." Let the Gentiles be glad, let the Jews exult, because behold, the sun has shone forth from the star, and the Maker of the Virgin was made in the Virgin his own handiwork. For the man who was made in her, the Most High himself founded her

(Psal. LXXXVI). Therefore the sun has risen from the star, health from sickness, life from death, light from darkness, sweetness from bitterness, and a rose from a thorn, a father from a daughter, a lord from a handmaid, and from a tiny stream "a fountain of water springing up into eternal life (John IV)." Therefore the sun rises from the star, and the sun is demonstrated by the star.

There was a star in the air, a star on earth, the sun in the manger. The star in the air, that lucid body; the star on earth, the Virgin Mary; the sun in the manger, our Christ. The star in the air, of which we had in the Gospel: "For we have seen his star in the east, and have come to adore him (Matth. II)." The star on earth, of which Balaam predicted in his prophecy: "A star shall rise out of Jacob, and shall crush all the foreigners (Num. XXIV)." The sun in the manger, of which the reprobate, according to what is read in the book of Wisdom, are to say in the future: "We have erred from the way of truth, and the sun of justice has not shone upon us (Wisd. V)." Of which the Apostle says: "Let not the sun go down upon your anger (Ephes. IV)." Is it not he who "set the tabernacle of his flesh in the sun," when he was "as a bridegroom coming out of his bridal chamber? (Psal. XVIII)."

In a star, brothers, four things are principally observed. For a star is of a fiery nature; a star is lucid and clear in itself; a star emits a ray from itself; a star shines in the night. These same things we can find in our star, that is, in the Virgin Mary. A star, as we have said, is of a fiery nature

[appears fiery], and the Virgin Mary herself was of a fiery nature. For she herself is that fiery bush in which the Lord appeared to Moses, which indeed seemed to burn, but was not consumed (Exod. III), because the Virgin indeed appeared pregnant, but was not consumed by the fire of lust. She is splendid and clear in herself, so much so that it is written of her in the Song of Songs: "Who is she that comes forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun? (Cant. VI.)" She emitted that ray from herself, which penetrates even to the secrets of the heart. For he searches hearts and reins (Jer. XVII; Rom. VIII; Apoc. II); because the word of God is living and effectual and more piercing than any two-edged sword, reaching even to the division of the soul and the spirit (Hebr. IV); wherefore also the interpretation of her name fittingly agrees with her. For Mary is interpreted as star of the sea (stella maris). The sea is this world, as it is written: "This great and spacious sea, there are creeping things without number (Psal. CIII)." Fittingly, therefore, is she called star of the sea, because she herself shone as a singular star in the world, and whose splendor enlightens the world, and from herself emitted that ray, which "enlightens every man coming into this world (John I)." And just as the ray proceeded from the star, the star remaining whole; so the son from the Virgin, her inviolable virginity enduring, according to what also the prophet Ezekiel says: "The gate which you see shall always be shut, and no one shall pass through it, but the Lord alone shall enter

through it (Ezech. XLIV)." The star shines in the night, and the Virgin herself shone singularly in the night of this world, according to what is written of her: "Who alone have destroyed all heresies in the whole world." Such is our star, brothers, such is the Virgin Mary, such is the star of the sea; and because she left us an example, that we may follow her footsteps (I Pet. II), such also ought our soul to be.

Let us be, therefore, brothers, of a fiery nature, so that there may be in us that fire which the Lord came to cast upon the earth (Luke XII): and that fire which was flaming in the bones of Jeremiah, let it be kindled in the furnace of our heart, beside which the Lord sits purging and cleansing the sons of Levi (Mal. III). Let us also be clear and bright, so that the day may breathe for us, and the shadows may incline (Cant. II, IV): and "putting off the old man with his acts, let us put on the new, who is created according to God (Col. III);" so that if we were sometimes darkness, now we may be light in the Lord (Ephes. V): and clothed with the armor of light, let us walk honestly, as it becomes us to walk in the day (Rom. XIII). Let us also emit from ourselves, brothers, a ray of good operation, because it is written: "Let your loins be girt, and burning lamps in your hands (Luke XII)." We carry indeed burning lamps in our hands when we shine for our neighbors through examples of good operation, so that curtain may draw curtain; "and he who hears, let him say: Come (Apoc. XXII);" and "so let your light shine before men, that seeing your good works they

may glorify your Father who is in heaven (Matth. V)," and many may run in the odor of our ointments (Cant. I).

The star also shines in the night, and let us, brothers, shine in the night of this world, according to what is written: "Among whom you shine as lights fixed in the firmament (Phil. II)." Against the darkness of heretics let us shine with the light of wisdom, because it is written: "Catch for us the little foxes that demolish the vineyard of the Lord (Cant. II)." For which reason the Lord says: "Be wise as serpents and simple as doves (Matth. X)." Thus, therefore, brothers, shall we be able to reach the true sun, if we shall have imitated the footsteps of the Virgin and our star.

In the sun, however, five things are principally observed. The sun is immutable in itself, while the moon is changed every month. In the sun there is no spot, while there is always a spot in the moon. The sun has fullness of light, from which other lights also receive light. The sun, although it is immutable, nevertheless sometimes suffers an eclipse. The sun always shines in the day. But let us carefully investigate these same things in our true sun. The sun in itself is immutable, and Christ himself according to the power of his divinity always remains immutable. Wherefore he himself says: "I am God, and I am not changed (Mal. III); with whom there is no change, nor shadow of vicissitude (Jas. I)." In the sun there is no spot; and it is he who singularly entered the world without spot, "who did no sin, nor was guile found in his mouth (Isai. LIII)." The

sun has fullness of light; and in him dwelt the fullness of the divinity bodily (Col. II), to whom the Spirit was not given by measure (John III), rather from his fullness we have all received grace for grace (John I), when the ointment descended from the head even to the beard, and from the beard dripped to the hem of the garment (Psal. CXXXII). The sun sometimes suffers an eclipse; and Christ himself suffered the eclipse of death in his passion, when the Shepherd of the sheep departed, laying down his life for his sheep (John X), "and bowing his head, he gave up the ghost (John XIX)." The sun always shines in the day; and the Lord himself, after by rising he consumed the darkness of our mortality, "rising from the dead now dies no more, death shall no more have dominion over him (Rom. VI)." But he inhabits light inaccessible (I Tim. VI), and in him there are no darkness at all (I John I). Him alone the eagle John with unblinking eyes gazed upon in his wheel, when he flew so high that if he had thundered a little higher, the whole world could not have contained him, saying: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John I)."

The Magi, therefore, enlightened by the sun, come to the Sun; who, illustrated through the star which has its light from the sun, came to adore the Sun; whose deeds let us diligently observe one by one. They came therefore from the east to Jerusalem, and when they had come, they inquired: "Where is he who is born king of the Jews (Matth. II)?" When they had reached the

place, they fell down; when they had fallen down, they adored; when they had adored, they offered gifts. They came therefore with indefatigable labor, they inquired with provident solicitude, they fell down with due humiliation, they adored with devotion of mind, they offered gifts with the integral religion of faith; "and they offered to him gold, frankincense, and myrrh (Ibid.)." Behold, the first-fruits of the nations first offer a pure and integral faith. For they offered frankincense to God, myrrh to a mortal, gold to a king. Frankincense through faith in his divinity, myrrh through faith in his humanity or mortality, gold through faith in his royal dignity. For he was God and man, Emmanuel, God with us, when he was made at once in one rich and poor, and was of a royal tribe, according to what is described in his genealogy: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham (Matth. I)," etc.

Or they offered these three to the humanity of Christ: gold to the King, frankincense to the Priest, myrrh to the mortal. For he was of a royal and priestly tribe. He was King, because he had written on his garment and on his thigh: "King of kings, and Lord of lords (Apoc. XIX)." He was also a Priest according to the order of Melchizedek (Psal. CIX), king of Salem, who was a priest of the most high God (Gen. XIV; Hebr. VII), because not through the blood of goats or calves, but through his own blood he entered once into the holy place, eternal redemption having been found (Hebr. IX). "For we are turned to the shepherd

and bishop of our souls (I Pet. II)." He was also mortal, because "truly he has borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows (Isa. LIII)" in his body upon the wood.

These same things the Virgin herself, the star of the sea, offered to the Sun born of her in her person. For she offered the gold of royal dignity, because she herself was of the royal tribe, according to what is read in the said genealogy: "Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ (Matth. I)." She also offered frankincense and myrrh; wherefore in the Song of Love these two are joined in her, where it is said: "Who is she that ascends through the desert like a rod of smoke from the aromatics of myrrh and frankincense, of all the powder of the perfumer?" (Cant. III.) Myrrh keeps worms from the bodies of the dead, and preserves the bodies themselves from corruption, for which reason Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes (John XIX), to anoint the body of Jesus. Through myrrh, therefore, integrity of the flesh is designated, while frankincense expresses devotion of the mind. Well, therefore, are these two species joined in our star and rod, because in the Virgin Mary integrity of the flesh and devotion of the mind always remained undivided. And fittingly it is added: "of all the powder of the perfumer;" because she herself was so filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, that she deserved to hear: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you, blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb (Luke I)." Thus, therefore,

brothers, the magi offered, and the Virgin Mary our star offered. And because they gave us examples, therefore let us also do likewise.

The magi came, let us also come, because it is written: "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you (Matth. XI)." And elsewhere: "Come to me, you who desire me (Eccli. XXIV)." The magi searched, let us also search, because it is written: "Seek the Lord while he may be found." The magi fell down, let us also fall down, because it is written: "Come, let us adore, and fall down before God (Psal. XCIV)." The magi adored, let us also adore, because it is written: "Adore the Lord in his holy court (Psal. XXVIII)." The magi offered, let us also offer, because it is written: "I beseech you, brothers, that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God, your reasonable service (Rom. XII)." Let us also offer those three things which the magi offered, yet in a different way than they did.

Let us offer the myrrh of mortification, so that mortifying our bodies which are upon the earth (Col. III), we may not care for the flesh in its desires, crucifying our bodies with their vices and lusts (Gal. V); and yet in all these things let our service be reasonable, as has been said (Rom. XII). Let us offer the frankincense of devout prayer, according to what the Apostle says: "I will pray with the spirit, I will pray also with the mind; I will sing with the spirit, I will sing also with the mind (I Cor. XIV)," so that, "my prayer may be directed like incense in the sight of

the Lord (Psal. CXL)." Let us also offer gold, the splendor of wisdom; for gold designates wisdom, according to that: "A desirable treasure rests in the mouth of the wise (Prov. XXI)," so that we may be ready to give a reason to everyone who asks concerning the faith and hope that is in us, and that we may shine with the splendor of wisdom, and fight undaunted against the darkness of heretics, and be able to say: "Better to me is the law of your mouth than thousands of gold and silver (Psal. CXVIII)."

And would that you could not say instead: Better to me is the law of the mouth of Justinian than thousands of gold and silver, "The wicked have told me fables, but not as your law, O Lord (Ibid.);" "they have forsaken the Lord, the vein of living waters (Jer. XVII)," so that deservedly Wisdom herself complains, saying: "They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water (Jer. II)." For those who ought to meditate day and night on the law of the Lord turn away their hearing from the truth to fables.

Therefore, let the watchmen appointed over the walls of the church be vigilant, lest Samson's foxes set fire to our crops (Judic. XV); and let the tower of David be set with bulwarks against Damascus, from which a thousand shields may hang (Cant. IV); for the name of the Lord is a very strong tower; the just shall flee to it and be exalted (Prov. XVIII). This is the Scripture, where the name of the Lord is invoked, in which the bulwarks are the prelates and doctors, who ought to guard its boundaries, of whom it is written: "You

shall not transgress the boundaries which your fathers have set for you (Prov. XXIV)." For Moses set boundaries against Mount Sinai, which it was not lawful to transgress (Exod. XIX). And would that no one transgress these boundaries, otherwise they will be worthy of stones. From this hang a thousand shields, namely, the perfection of authorities, which is for its defense. This tower is placed against Damascus, that is, against the strength of heretics. No one can lay another foundation besides that which has been laid, which is Christ Jesus (I Cor. III), that is, the mystery of Christ.

Truly immovable and immutable is the mystery of Christ, because it had a manifold testimony. For it had the testimony of men, the testimony of women, the testimony of men, the testimony of the elderly, the testimony of earthly things, the testimony of the heavens, the testimony of the Gentiles, the testimony of the Jews, the testimony of the ancients, the testimony of the moderns, the testimony of light, the testimony of darkness, the testimony of the law, the testimony of the prophets, the testimony of kings, the testimony of the crowds, the testimony of the living, the testimony of the dead, the testimony of brute animals, the testimony of the sun, the testimony of the elements.

It had the testimony of men, because there were shepherds in that region, who, coming, found out about the word, as it had been told to them concerning the child (Luke II). The testimony of angels, for the angel of the Lord stood by

them and said to them: "Behold, I evangelize to you a great joy, because today is born the Savior of the world, who is Christ the Lord in the city of David (Ibid.)." And there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will (Ibid.)."

It had the testimony of women, because Anna the prophetess, daughter of Phanuel, confessed to the Lord, and spoke of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Israel (Ibid.). It had the testimony of men, because in one day three thousand were converted, and in another five thousand (Acts II; IV), who bore testimony concerning Jesus.

It had the testimony of the elderly, because that ancient of days Simeon, whose hairs were like white wool, who had received a response from the Holy Spirit that he would not see death unless he saw the Christ of the Lord, receiving him into his arms, said: "Now you dismiss your servant, Lord, according to your word, in peace, because my eyes have seen your salvation (Luke II)." It had the testimony of little ones, because those Innocents, although not by speaking, yet by dying confessed him (Matth. II).

It had the testimony of earthly things, because peace was made on earth to men of good will; so great that by one man, Caesar Augustus, the whole world was described (Luke II); of whose tranquility Isaiah says: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into sickles (Isa. II)."

It had the testimony of the heavens, because the heavens sent a new star, according to what we had in the Gospel: "And behold the star, which the magi had seen in the east, went before them until, coming, it stood over where the Child was (Matth. II)." It had the testimony of the Gentiles, because the magi coming to Jerusalem said: "Where is he who is born king of the Jews (Matth. II)." It had the testimony of the Jews, because Herod, gathering the chief priests and the scribes of the people, inquired of them where Christ was to be born; and they said: "In Bethlehem of Judah (Ibid.)."

It had the testimony of the ancients, because he was prefigured in the hands of the prophets (Hos. XII); for he himself is the Lamb slain from the origin of the world (Apoc. XIII). It had the testimony of the moderns, wherefore he himself said to the disciples: "You shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the end of the earth (Acts I)."

It had the testimony of light, because the brightness of God shone around the shepherds (Luke II), and the brightness of the star enlightened the magi (Matth. II). The testimony of darkness because at his death darkness occurred over the whole earth (Matth. XXVII; Mark XV; Luke XXIII).

It had the testimony of the law, because Moses said in the law: "God will raise up for you a prophet from among your brothers; him you shall hear as myself (Deut. XVIII)." And elsewhere: "And your life shall be hanging upon a tree; you

shall see, and shall not know (Deut. XXVIII)." The testimony of the prophets, because Isaiah says: "A rod shall go forth from the root of Jesse, and a flower shall ascend from his root, and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him (Isa. I)." And elsewhere: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel (Isa. VII)." And Baruch: After these things, he says, he was seen on earth and conversed with men (Baruch III). Ezekiel in his testimony was called son (Ezek. II). Daniel says: "When the Holy of holies comes, your anointing shall cease (Dan. IX)." Hosea in his testimony took a whorish wife (Hos. I). Habakkuk says: "Horns are in his hands (Habac. III)." Jonah in the belly of the whale witnessed to his testimony (Jon. II). And why should I go through each one? There was no prophet who did not bear testimony to him.

The testimony of kings; wherefore King David: "Our land shall yield her fruit (Psal. LXXXIV)." And elsewhere: "Let the earth be opened, and bud forth a Savior (Psal. XLV)." And Solomon: "Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth, for your breasts are better than wine, fragrant with the best ointments," and: "While the king was at his repose, my spikenard gave forth its odor (Cant. I)."

The testimony of the crowds, wherefore they said in the Gospel: "We have seen wonders today (Luke V)." And: "Unless this man were of God, he could not do what he does (John IX):" on account of which they even wanted to seize him and make him king (John VI).

The testimony of the living, because those two who were going to Emmaus came and told all the things that had happened to them (Luke XXIV). The testimony of the dead, because "many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep arose and appeared to many (Matth. XXVII)."

The testimony of brute animals, because "the ox knew its owner, and the ass its master's crib (Isa. I)." The testimony of the sun, when it was darkened (Luke XXIII). The testimony of the elements, because the earth bore testimony, when a great earthquake occurred (Matth. XXVII). The water bore testimony, when he walked with dry feet upon the waters (John VI). The air bore testimony, when a cloud received him from their eyes, namely, the disciples' (Acts I). The fire bore testimony, when the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and his face shone like lightning (Matth. XXVIII); for lightning is of a fiery nature.

Since, therefore, brothers, the mystery of the cross had the testimony of all the aforesaid, let the unhappy Jew be ashamed, who denies that Christ was born of the Virgin; because the Jewish shepherds found him just as it had been told to them (Luke I). Let the Gentile be confounded, who says to a piece of wood: "You are my God;" and to a stone: "You begot me (Jer. II);" because the Gentile magi adored him. Let the heretic be silent, who contradicts the mystery. And let every tongue confess that our Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father (Philip. II). To which glory may our Lord Jesus himself lead us, who, since he is the splendor of lights, the flower of flowers, the

life of morals, the school of virtues, and the crown of saints, reigns over the choirs of angels for ages of ages. Amen.

SERMON II.

ON THE TRANSLATION OF ST. HILARY, BISHOP OF POITIERS AND CONFESSOR (JAN. 14).

Let us rejoice and exult, most beloved, while we solemnly assemble to recall the sublime merits of blessed Hilary. Indeed, the very dignity of his illustrious name provokes us, so that our mind, affected by spiritual joy, may plausibly cheer up. Nevertheless, this also is worthy: that while we celebrate the translation of the blessed man, we ourselves also translate our minds from earthly desires to heavenly ones, so that, while we see the remains of his body and his slight dust preferred with such honor among men, our mind may ponder what a weight of glory he possesses in the heavens, where there is true and incomparable honor. But it is pleasing now to run through the history of this translation succinctly, so that henceforth it may be expedient for no one to doubt at all concerning the origin of this preeminent solemnity.

Furthermore, while Fredelin, the confessor of Christ, was laudably ruling the monastery of blessed Hilary, which is situated in the suburb of Poitiers, and was flourishing there with the noble disciplines of holy conversation and distinguished honesty of character, blessed Hilary appeared clearly to him in a vision, and among

several other things commanded him with a certain authority of lively command, namely, that he himself together with the bishop of Poitiers should go without delay to the king of the Franks, who then managed the reins of affairs, and confidently request that expenses be paid by which the monastery could be enlarged and made more august. To these words he added furthermore that, the monastery having been newly restored, the holy abbot should provide a suitable place for him, in which they might store his body after the translation had been made. Whom, having performed the embassy of the happy oracle, the king received clemently and benignly and bestowed upon them magnificent gifts of royal liberality.

From the foundations, therefore, constructing the monastery anew through stonecutters and masons, and restoring it unpollutedly, the ministers of the Lord persisted untiring in the labors begun for so long, until they not only led the machine of the rising structure even to consummation, but also clothed the walls on both sides, that is, inside and outside, with the decorum of radiant mosaic. In which work, namely, where the sum of the royal gift failed, the bishop did not cease to supply what was missing from the ecclesiastical faculties.

Finally, the monastery being perfect not only in the structure of the finished fabric but also dedicated by the blessings of the priestly office, they soon demolished the mound in which the holy body had been buried. Therefore, the day having been appointed in which they would

translate the holy limbs, on the preceding night, while the bishop and the abbot together spent the night continually in vigils and prayers, they suddenly saw that blessed angels led the holy body out of the tomb, which had already been bored through, and carried it with their own hands into the place which had been prepared for it.

These things being thus performed, blessed Hilary admonished holy Fredelin through a vision that he should substitute a certain Scot, related to him by kinship, in the rule of the monastery; and that he himself should hasten to the island of Gallinaria to build a church in honor of the same blessed Hilary. Who soon humbly obeyed the command of the blessed priest, and built not only that which had been ordered, but also four other monasteries in his honor. Although the life of blessed Fredelin, in which this history is said to be related, has in no way come into our hands, yet what is written here has become known to us by the evidence of a brotherly report.

This, therefore, is the cause of this sacred solemnity, this the venerable matter of today's celebration, that in the translation of the sacred body the devout people of the faithful may deservedly rejoice, to whom an army of angels pays funeral rites. Furthermore, on the occasion of this venerable translation, the other deeds of the blessed man also return to our memory, so that those things which were performed long

ago, being now brought back to our sight, seem in some way recent and new.

For as soon as we begin to discuss the deeds of the venerable man, it immediately occurs to memory how impenetrable a wall of the Church stood against the darts of the heretics, how an insuperable warrior crushed the perverse dogma of the Arians with the grace of Catholic truth. Nor is it without weight that when he was about to fight against the perfidy of heretics and was going to the town of Seleucia in Isauria, a Gentile girl, divinely taught, announced the arrival of so great a priest, and therefore with her father Florentius and the whole family deserved to receive the sacrament of divine baptism.

Nor does that notable miracle fall from memory, that on the island of Gallinaria the poisonous madness of huge serpents could not bear the virtue of so distinguished a pontiff, but as if terrified by a thunderous crash, did not presume to cross the boundary of even a vile staff, which he himself had fixed.

But also it subsequently occurs to memory that the same excellent pontiff not only returned to his mother, resurrected and unharmed, a boy who had died without the grace of regeneration, but also, having instructed him in the rudiments of the true faith, added him to the sons of the holy Church.

These, therefore, and many other signs of his virtues occur to us on the occasion of this venerable translation, which kindle us to the love of God and devotion to this illustrious priest. Clearly,

since the holy Church venerates the translations of many just men, which have been procured by the diligence of men, with how much study of devotion is this one to be solemnly recalled, which was made by the hands of angels?

But why is it that the Lord himself by himself buried the body of Moses (Deut. XXXIV), and yet did not want his sepulcher to become known to men. But the body of blessed Hilary he not only translated before men through angels, but also exalted it to the glory of such great honor and the reverence of the whole Church. For concerning Moses it is written: "Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, by the command of the Lord; and he buried him in the valley of the land of Moab opposite Phogor; and no man knew his sepulcher even to the present day (ibid.)." Why is it, therefore, that he is unknown, but this one is visited daily with such glory of Christian devotion? Why is it, I say, that Moses is removed from the knowledge of men, unless it be to take away the occasion, lest divine honor be given to him by the perfidy of the Israelite people, since he is known to have been so dear and familiar to God? But the bodies of the other saints are not hidden, so that while they are frequented by the approach of Christian devotion, both glowing signs of virtues may occur through them, and the heap of happy merits may increase for these [the faithful].

Furthermore, some faithful are for this reason enclosed in more prominent tombs after death, so that they may urge their memory upon the

living, lest they omit to bestow works of piety upon them. Hence it is that a burial is customarily called a memorial, namely so that by it the living may remember and the dead may receive refreshment.

But why is it that some of the saints strove so much to provide sepulchers for their bodies? For Abraham bought a double cave from the sons of Heth for four hundred shekels of silver (Gen. XXIII); Jacob and Joseph already directed the whole desire of their mind toward the same cave, and requested that their bodies be carried there after death (Gen. XLIX and L). What is it then that the holy patriarchs, who clearly maintain that they are dust and ashes, and who certainly despise bodies and all bodily things through the contemplation of heavenly things, long for with such desire that their bodies rest in the land of the Canaanites? Why do they foresee that place for their rest before other parts of the world, unless it be because they knew that the Author of human salvation was to be born there from their seed? Hence it is that Jacob beseeches his son Joseph, saying: "If I have found grace in your sight, put your hand under my thigh, and you shall do me mercy and truth, that you do not bury me in Egypt; but I will sleep with my fathers, and you shall take me away from this land, and bury me in the sepulcher of my ancestors (Gen. XLVII)." But why, for a sign of confirming the pledge, did Jacob ask that his son's hand be placed under his thighs, unless because he knew that he who is supreme truth was to be propagated from his

own seed? Therefore, the blessed men were already longing in their innermost hearts for those boundaries of the land, which through the spirit they already perceived would be worn by the Savior's footsteps, which with their inner eyes they already saw being purpled by the precious blood of the Lord's body, so that their bodies might await their resurrection there, where they knew that the author of the blessed resurrection himself was to rise again.

Toward him let us also, most beloved, direct the sharp sight of our mind. Toward him, when we cannot by the progression of feet, let us hasten by the speed of burning desire, and while we exhibit reverence of worthy devotion to the relics of any saints, let us direct the gaze of our mind to that one and singular body, which we believe to be ineffably exalted in the glory of paternal majesty.

That is surely the land for which the blessed patriarchs and prophets then sighed, flowing indeed with milk and honey. For milk flows from the breasts of the flesh, but honey comes from higher places. And because the substance of the Lord's body came forth from the Virgin's vitals, but the divinity descended from the paternal majesty, rightly the Savior's body is called the land of promise. Which land is surely said to flow with milk as well as honey, because in our Redeemer's body there is both true substance and the sweetness of ineffable deity. "For in him, as the Apostle says, dwells all the fullness of the divinity bodily (Col. II):" and elsewhere, "God

was in Christ reconciling the world to himself (II Cor. V)." To this land of the living may he deign to lead us, he who did not disdain to tolerate the mortal things of our earth, so that we may thus feed there on milk and honey, that we may be satisfied with our Savior's presence and the mellifluous sweetness of his divinity. Who with God the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns through all ages of ages. Amen.

SERMON III.

ON SAINT ANASTASIUS, MONK AND MARTYR (MARCH 21).

To a beautiful spectacle, most dearly beloved brothers, we assemble in today's festivity, when we see our true David snatching the prey from the jaws of the bloody lion (I Sam. XVII), indeed triumphing most invincibly with the weary boy over the ranks of the Amalekites (I Sam. XV). For blessed Anastasius, as his history testifies, was the son of a magus, and furthermore had been instructed in his father's sacrileges. He was held, therefore, in the jaws of the lion, while he was using the deceits of the sacrilegious art; but a stronger one coming upon him conquered the enemy, and took away all the arms in which he trusted (Luke XI): and thus he brought back the straying sheep to his own fold (John X).

God chose the foolish things of the world that he might confound the wise (I Cor. I): but also if he found any who were wise, he first cast them down from the vain swelling of their proud

wisdom, and afterwards raised them up into the authority of free preaching (Matth. X), so that they might thereafter constantly maintain that very thing which they previously were anxious to cruelly attack. Which Moses then mystically figured, when taking the golden calf, he burned it with fire, ground it even to powder, and scattering it on the waves, gave it to the Israelite people to drink (Exod. XXXII).

For what is that molten calf by figure, but the body of the devil, namely men in all nations deceived by the error of perfidy and idolatry at once, and joined under their own pestiferous head like diverse members in a sacrilegious conspiracy? Above whom surely that spirit of wickedness, like a presiding author, is insolently raised up, and rules over his body as a head through tyranny. And the calf is described as having been golden, because the rite of idolatry seems to have been instituted as if by wise men. For by gold wisdom is designated, as it is said through Solomon: "A desirable treasure in the mouth of the wise (Prov. XXI)."

Therefore the calf was golden, because the wise of the world, before the grace of the new faith, are proved to have been authors of demonic worship, concerning whom the Apostle indeed says: "Because when they had known God, they did not glorify him as God, nor gave thanks; but became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened; for saying that they were wise, they became fools; and they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness

of the image of corruptible man, and of birds, and of quadrupeds and of serpents (Rom. I)." Through this vanity of insane wisdom, poets, philosophers, magi, scrutinizers of the stars, and those instructed in the expertise of all the liberal disciplines, used to adore prodigious figments of demons. In the calf, therefore, the whole body was signified, that is, the whole society of Gentiles devoted to idolatry.

Moses, therefore, burned the calf with fire: because our Redeemer, whom he had signified, set on fire the evilly conspired hearts of the Gentiles with the flame of his charity. Wherefore he himself says: "I came to cast fire on the earth, and what do I wish, but that it be kindled? (Luke XII)." And the Prophet: "There is no one," he says, "who hides himself from its heat (Psal. XVIII)." In the mind of the Gentiles, therefore, the divine fire is suddenly kindled, so that in them the bestial form of irrational idolatry may be dissolved.

Then the whole body of this calf is ground into powder, because that Gentile society of diabolical conspiracy, fused into one by art, was hammered out at the coming of Christ as if by a hammer of salutary correction and was crushed from the hardness of its rigor by the power of the divine word. Indeed, that which seemed to stand insensibly whole in a form of pride is healthfully crushed at the word of truth. Then it is scattered in the water, so that the Israelite people may drink from it. Finally, the crushed calf is put into the water, because the humbled Gentile people must be washed in the laver of the salutary foun-

tain. Whom the Israelites drink immediately, because the holy preachers of the Gospel, who are the true Israelites, convert those whom they transfer to the body of the Lord, which is the Church, by receiving them into their members as if by drinking. To which Israelites it was first said: "Slay and eat (Acts X)." Which is as much as if it were said: Grind and drink. Thus, thus that calf, through the fire of zeal, the edge of the word, and the water of baptism, was rather absorbed by those whom it tried to absorb; it was itself transfused into those whom it had tried to transfer into its own, that is, diabolical members.

However, because Moses did not fix the goal of vengeance in this, as if to only break the idol, but added furthermore that he should slaughter twenty-three thousand men (Exod. XXXII), he mystically taught that it is in no way sufficient if anyone is converted from the worship of idolatry or depravity of life, unless he also strives to mortify his own vices with the sword of the spirit. Wherefore also the excellent preacher says: "Mortify your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, lust, evil concupiscence, and avarice, which is the service of idols (Col. III)."

And it should be noted that just as here the vices are said to be our members, so also there, they were slain when they were joined to their slayers by a bond of kinship. As was said through Moses: "Thus says the Lord God of Israel: Let every man put his sword upon his thigh; go and return from gate to gate through the middle of

the camp, and let every man kill his brother, and friend, and neighbor (Exod. XXXII)." If anyone, therefore, delights to rise up in arms, whoever pants to fight against the ranks of the enemies, let him turn his hands upon himself, and there he will find more adversaries to be cut down, from which truly after victory he may not incur the foul name of a murderer, but rather appear as a glorious triumpher, from which certainly he may not deserve to be excluded from the thresholds of the sanctuary, but consecrating himself to the Lord, he may be increased by the blessings of divine grace; as it was also said to them: "You have consecrated," he says, "your hands today to the Lord, every man in his son and in his brother; that a blessing may be given to you (Ibid.)."

Regarding the fact that those who were slain are reported to have been twenty-three thousand, the number of three thousand slain indicates the triple form of sins. For we commit every sin either by deed, or by word, or by thought. But since the number ten is also doubled there, it is given to be understood that, just as we have despised keeping the Decalogue of precepts by the fault of both flesh and soul, so also we ought to crush and mortify the vices of both with the weapons of virtues.

Blessed Anastasius, then a magus, was therefore crushed like the golden calf by the hammer of preaching and was transfused into the members of the body of Christ, and as soon as he obtained the sacrament of divine baptism, he immediately, according to the Apostle, did not

yield to flesh and blood (Galat. I), but fervent in the Holy Spirit, truly showed in himself the signs of resurrection by changed habits. And no wonder. For just as Seth, who was the son of the first man (Gen. V), is called "resurrection" in Hebrew; so also Anastasius is translated from the Greek into our language as "son of resurrection." Fittingly, therefore, he is called son of resurrection, because the magus and the sacrilegious man died in him, and in his place rose the Christian of true faith, and he was kindled with such fire of the Holy Spirit that in the very beginning of his conversion he immediately sought martyrdom anxiously, and burned with all his vitals for the struggle of martyrdom. What more? Finally dragged before the judge, he is now tried with flatteries, now deterred by the harshness of threats; but the soldier of Christ, who had placed the foundations of his faith upon a firm rock, persisted immovable among the threatening waves and the whirlwinds of surrounding storms, and with the same mind both despised prosperity and trampled upon adversity; and in that way the strenuous warrior drove away fear from the minds of the fearful, and kindled the crude minds of the recruits for the struggle of the divine contest. Which was also commanded through Moses in the law: "When the battle is now approaching," he says, "the priest shall stand before the battle line, and thus shall he speak to the people: Hear, O Israel. You today join battle against your enemies, let not your heart fear, do not be afraid, do not yield, nor dread them, because the Lord

your God is in the midst of you and will fight for you against your adversaries, that he may rescue you from danger (Deut. XX)."

And it should be noted that the priest, who harangues when war is already imminent, is commanded to stand not elsewhere, but before the battle line, so that, namely, he himself also may go before as a leader those whom he provokes to battle by his exhortations, lest while he strives to impel others to war, he himself be dissolved by negligence into the leisure of degenerate torpor. As is said through the Prophet concerning some who indeed preach great things, but live lazily: "The sons of Ephraim, bending the bow and shooting their arrows, turned back in the day of battle (Psalm LXXVII)." For those who provoke others to conflict against the temptations of vices, but themselves refuse to conflict under the ignoble languor of sloth, those indeed direct arrows, but having turned their backs, they do not deserve the titles of consummated victory; nor does it profit them that they had begun well, because they do not magnanimously persevere to the end. Wherefore also concerning them it immediately follows: "They did not keep the covenant of God and in his law they would not walk (Ibid.)." As if he were saying, they indeed received the covenant, but they did not keep it; they set their foot in the law at the beginning, but they did not keep the step of perseverance.

Whoever, therefore, provokes others to the spiritual struggle, whoever instigates the minds of his neighbors to act bravely, ought by all

means to harmonize his life with his tongue, lest, while he proposes high things to others, he himself, content with the lowest things, be weighed down by inertia. Hence it is that in the law it is commanded: "You shall not have," it says, "in your bag diverse weights, a greater and a less; nor shall there be in your house a greater and a less bushel; you shall have a just and true weight, and an equal and true bushel shall be to you (Deut. XXV)." In truth, we do not then have diverse weights in the bag, if within the secret of our conscience, judging not otherwise of ourselves than of others, we apply the same measures of legal precepts. Namely, so that we do not strive to indicate to others the rule of strict severity, but to treat ourselves with the law of more remiss indulgence. Concerning which fraud Solomon also says: "A double weight and a deceitful balance is an abomination to the Lord (Prov. XX)." It is necessary, therefore, to measure the fruits of the word by no means with diverse, but with the same weights, so that what we command others to do, we ourselves also effectively fulfill with living works. Which certainly the blessed martyr Anastasius laudably did, because while he exhorted others to battle, he himself first seized arms, and immersed himself in the very battle line of the crowded legion, protected by the breastplate of faith; and while he offers an example of engaging to others, he obtains the triumph from the conquered enemy; and, as I might speak thus, while he levels the way to battle for those

following, he himself, the victory having soon been completed, is led to the crown.

Him therefore, most beloved, let us follow, namely the most brave warrior of the heavenly host, so that we may strive always to tame the tyrannies of vices, so that we may endeavor to restrain the rebellious pleasures of carnal allurements, so that the noble soul, always intent on the highest things, may fervently seek heavenly things, and despise earthly ones, so that it may not fear to suffer adversity for the truth, so that it may long from its innermost heart to deserve the grace of its Creator alone. For hence the man of the Lord, blessed Anastasius, to touch upon a few things out of many, endured horrific prisons, tolerated the lack of hunger, thirst, cold, and all necessities, despised beatings, and finally, after immense torments of punishments and tortures, lay dead, killed in a river, and lost the life of the flesh in the same element in which, namely, he had previously received the sacraments of eternal life. Well, therefore, a magus, because in the magi the Redeemer of the world, coming, dedicated the firstfruits of his faith.

Let us offer glory and honor to our God, according to the Psalmist, with joyful minds (Psalm XXVIII), most beloved brothers, because while we await the most celebrated solemnity of the Lord's offering, in the present we also cultivate the venerable assumption of the excellent priest, Blessed Severus. Let it delight our hearts to celebrate the present festival; let it also be pleasing to await eagerly the imminent one. Let that festival

teach us to give thanks to our Redeemer; but let this one kindle in us the love of the heavenly homeland. In that one let us learn how much God suffered for man; in this one let us weigh to how great a peak of loftiness man ascended through God. For in that festival the only-begotten Son of God was humbly presented in the temple; in this one his most blessed servant was sublimated with glory to the palace of heaven. In that one his parents brought our Redeemer to Jerusalem, that they might present him to the Lord (Luke II); in this one holy angels carried the soul of the most blessed confessor to the heavenly Jerusalem, that they might present it to the face of the divine majesty. In that solemnity the Mediator of God and men, the foreskin of the flesh having already been cast off, was offered as a little child in the temple; in this one the excellent confessor, having laid down the weight of the earthly body, ascended free into heaven. In that one he who owed nothing to the law paid the tributes of the law; in this one he who was subject to death escaped the laws of death. He, by being born from a mother, deigned to be mortal; this one, by dying in the flesh, deserved to become immortal. By coming into the world, God put on the form of a servant; by receding from the world, Severus was advanced to angelic dignity. But unless he had descended, this one would by no means have ascended. Unless God took on human form, never would man reach heavenly glory. Unless God were humbled below himself, by no means would man be exalted above himself. And what

more shall I say? Unless God-man had been made a little lower than the angels (Psalm VIII), never would pure man be made equal to the angels. Which equality Truth itself promises in the Gospel, saying: "But in the resurrection they shall neither marry nor be married, but shall be as the angels of God in heaven (Matth. XII)." To the peak of this most happy dignity, O man, if you desire to be advanced, strive with all your efforts to be prostrated in the dejection of true humility; if you desire to be exalted in Christ, first cast yourself down in yourself, depress the pride of the flesh, and lift yourself up to the height of the Creator, restrain whatever rises tumidly in you, and soon you will be raised up very far beyond yourself. And certainly God is high, indeed most high. But if you stretch yourself so much that you even break, yet by this means you do not aspire to his loftiness; indeed, the closer you think you approach, the further you are distanced, being repelled to lower things. Hear what the Psalmist says: "The Lord is high and regards the humble, and knows high things from afar (Psalm CXXXVII)." Attend also how Truth itself agrees with this sentence: "Everyone," it says, "who exalts himself shall be humbled; and he who humbles himself shall be exalted (Luke XVIII)."

Hence it is that this blessed and excellent pontiff, whose glorious solemnities we rejoice to frequent today, deserved both to receive the episcopal seat in this life and to penetrate the courts of the heavenly kingdom after his happy death. But, so that the virtue of his humility may become

more clearly known, let it not irk us to taste something from the history of his deeds itself. For it is read that on a certain day, while he was occupied with the office of wool-working, he said to his wife: I will go, and I will see a wonderful vision, namely how a dove comes from heaven, and settles upon the head of the chosen one in the usual manner. But his wife began to mock and rebuke him, saying: But work here, do not stand idle. For whether you go, or do not go, the people will not ordain you pontiff. And he said: Let me go. Then she, thinking she was lying, but ignorantly announcing true things, said: Go, because at whatever hour you go, you will immediately be ordained pontiff. And a little after it is added: that because of the deformity of the squalid garment with which he was clothed, he hid himself behind the door of that same place where all were praying; and the prayer having been completed, immediately a dove came and rested upon the head of him lurking behind the door.

You have heard, most beloved brothers, of a man's life poor in things, but wealthy in the riches of virtues. You have heard of a man placed in a humble position among men, but truly supported in the citadel of arduous loftiness before God. You have heard of a man foul indeed with tattered clothes, but conspicuous with the illustrious honesty of his character. Where are those who say: "We cannot keep the precepts of God because we do not have earthly substance for necessary uses"? Where are they, I say, who while they strive to excuse themselves to men,

render themselves much more inexcusably worse to God? Let them approach and learn from the teaching of Blessed Severus how to abound in true riches, lest, while they are empty of things, they be full of vices, and the furnace of poverty, if it does not purge the rust of vices, turns the vicious metal into the soot of empty dross. For behold, this most blessed man, placed under the burden of his poverty, both sufficiently fulfilled the precepts of the divine law; and, because he had nothing else, he offered himself upon the altar of holy simplicity as a most wealthy sacrifice to God, like some great dove; and, because he was a dove in character, he deserved to receive the gift of a dove. Indeed, narrowed by the lack of poverty, he did not enter the house of any powerful person to serve; he did not strive to flatter the rich, as is the custom of the poor; he did not pant to increase his money through ambitious negotiation; he did not desire the stipend of dangerous military service which cannot be carried out without sin; but content with a woman's office, he sought a simple living with his hand and art, and, according to the voice of the Psalmist, being innocent he ate the labors of his hands (Psalm CXXVII). Who for that reason is believed not undeservedly to have chosen this kind of art above the rest, so that a greater occasion of mutual charity might be offered between wife and husband, lest, if there were inequality of offices between them, some diversity of minds might also creep in at some time, and from the distance of the art to be exercised there might perhaps

arise a rupture in domestic peace; but while the industry of both was applied to one work, there would truly be in both, as is read concerning the primitive Church: "One heart, and one soul (Acts IV)." Hence it is also, that while she rebuked the most blessed man, mocked him, and scolded him with biting words, he, mild and placid, did not break out into anger, did not answer with contumelious words, did not exercise the right of due power to avenge himself upon his wife. Keeping that of the Apostle: "Husbands, love your wives, and do not be bitter toward them (Col. III);" and because the same Apostle says: "The husband has not power of his own body, but the wife (I Cor. VII);" until he extorted from her the license of his petition, he did not presume to go to the miracle of his own will.

Think, my brothers, when could this man be contumacious toward any man, who also obeyed a subject woman so humbly? When did he return evil for evil to opposing enemies, who also tolerated the injuries of his own wife so equanimitously? Or when did this man presume to bring insults upon his neighbor, who also would not vindicate one brought upon himself, although he certainly could have? "Blessed indeed is the man who could have transgressed, and did not transgress, to do evil things, and did not do them; therefore his goods are established in the Lord (Eccli. XXXI)."

But what is this, my brothers, that almighty God afflicts his elect, whom he beholds as so dear to himself for eternity, so vehemently as if despis-

ing them? And on all sides in this world he girds with the lashes of adversities those whom before the ages he chose for the ineffable joy of supernal happiness? Unless it be this which is open to the piety of the faithful, that for this reason he thus presses them in the lowest things, because he sees how he may remunerate them in the highest? And he casts them down outwardly even to despised things, because he leads them inwardly even to incomprehensible things. Hence therefore, hence let each one gather what those whom he reproves are going to suffer, if here he tortures with such severity those whom he loves. For behold, blessed Severus is destitute of necessary things, is fouled by the squalor of a deformed garment, is worn out by the labor of vile woolworking, and what is more intolerable to all, is urged on by the derisions of a mocking wife. For the ancient enemy, whom he could not provoke to impatience from the lack of poverty, nor from the affliction of assiduous labor, nor from the deformity of dishonest clothes, kindled the mind of the wife to inflict the insult of words, and sharpened her tongue to the injury of biting rebuke; he incites the woman's heart with the usual stings of his suggestion, and unbridles her tongue to the audacity of a poorly free presumption, so that the manly soul, which is not bent to impatience from the world's adversity, might at least be provoked to anger from the wife's injury, and a domestic civil sedition arising within might open the most fortified rampart of Christ, which the surrounding multitude of enemies does not penetrate;

that what the impacted rams of the besieging army cannot destroy, might be captured by the domestic rupture offering an entrance. Indeed, the holy man had fixed the building of his mind on high, and therefore hostile impulses were not able to break in there. It is sought therefore by the adversary, because this lofty fortification is seen to be impregnable, by what steps it may be ascended. But a woman is truly near and joined. He held therefore the heart of the woman, and found as it were a ladder by which he could have ascended to the heart of the man. The ladder of the husband occupied the mind of the spouse; but he prevailed nothing by this art, because the brave man opposed the shield of patience to the darts of words, and reputing them as nothing, as one hearing he did not hear. It was certainly worthy that the manly soul should not admit the woman's words, since indeed from that first lapse of the human race itself he knew that a woman knew not how to teach right things. Whence it is also well said through Paul: "But I do not permit a woman to teach (I Tim. I)." Because namely at some time when she taught, she deviated from the path of wisdom. And so the ancient enemy lost from Adam in the workshop of wool-working him who overcame Adam in paradise (Gen. I); and he unknowingly destined his helper woman, while she ascended to the insult of bitter correction, rather for an example of patience to be learned; and while he taught her perverse things which she should teach, he sent her to the school of rectitude; and she who had been excited so

that she might destroy, was erudite lest she perish. Thus, thus is the enemy struck by our brave men, so that his own darts are snatched from him. Whence he thinks to exaggerate the pain of wounds, thence he suggests to them against himself the arms of virtues.

From the words of a poorly rebuking wife, most beloved brothers, we ought skillfully to inspect that the ancient adversary strives to incline the state of our mind not only through himself, but also through those who adhere to us. For when the slippery serpent does not subvert our heart by his persuasion, he truly creeps to this through the tongues of those adhering. For hence it is written: "Beware of your sons, and attend to your domestics (Eccli. XXXII)." Hence it is said through the prophet: "Let each one guard himself from his neighbor, and let him not have confidence in any brother of his (Jer. IX)." Hence again it is written: "A man's enemies are those of his own household (Mich. VII; Matth. X)." For the wicked adversary beholds himself repelled from the hearts of the good, he seeks those who are more familiarly loved by them, and he often incites them to inflict injury, so that while the holy are lacerated by the perversity of those by whom they ought most greatly to have been venerated, their mind may be more prone to be provoked to anger. But behold, the iniquitous enemy is broken everywhere, is overcome everywhere: for he succumbed to the warriors of Christ through all the arguments of temptations already, who also lost that familiar solace of his, being frustrated

even concerning the woman. For so also blessed Job, after he had taken away all that he possessed, after he had wounded his very body with a grave ulcer, because he was not able to reach the wound of the mind by the wounds of the flesh, he sought also the tongue of the joined woman, and because he grieved that he was overcome in open contest, he twisted a dart from the mouth of the spouse as if from ambushes. For she said: "Do you still persevere in your simplicity? Bless God, and die (Job II)." Thus also blessed Tobit, after he came to the hardship of excessive poverty, God disposing, after he lost the light of his eyes, because the malignant spirit saw him not seeing with corporeal light, but innerly flashing with divine splendor, empty of things outwardly, full of God inwardly, he ran to the usual arms and incited the tongue of the wife to inflict the reproach of most vehement rebuke. Who said: "Truly your hope is made vain, your alms have appeared now (Tob. II)." And as this one answered nothing to the perverse spouse, but the dart of diabolical suggestion having been cast at him, he soon ran to the arms of prayer, Scripture witnessing (Tob. IV), so also the most blessed man Severus contemned to answer the words of his wife; but he unknowingly hastened to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, the same spirit suggesting.

But if we weigh the order of divine justice with subtle meditation, we find not without cause holy men afflicted by the molestation of their wives. For because the man by poorly consenting to the wife had contemned the precepts of his

Creator, it is already worthy that the woman by dissenting from the man should vehemently afflict him with the hard insults of lashes. For in that he obeyed the woman poorly, he was inobedient to his Founder. For it is written: "The woman took of the fruit and ate, and gave to her husband who ate: and the eyes of both were opened (Genes. III)." From her therefore he was to be struck by the Author, whom erring he had preferred to the Author, so that whence man did not fear to admit fault proudly, thence he might find punishment to be corrected. And so much more quickly would he look back to him whom by being proud he contemned, by as much as he would behold her whom he delightfully obeyed to be full of bitterness.

Nevertheless, we do not say these things in order to assert that the wife of the blessed man perished with reprobate women. For if he had known her to be excluded from the lot of the elect, by no means would the man filled with the Holy Spirit have wished to have one tomb with her. Therefore, the common burial of their bodies indicates that the variety of merits does not separate the souls of the blessed spouses; and while the man willingly associates himself with his wife in death, it is certainly established that in that life the merits of both do not distance them from each other. For it can be believed not without merit that after the woman saw the most blessed man, divinely elected to the pontifical height (*pontificale fastigium*) contrary to her opinion, she soon recognized the stain of

her guilt, blushed in confusion, did penance, and thus for the rest exercised herself more studiously in the virtues of holy conversation. Hence it is also written of her that after the most blessed man was made bishop, wondering, she congratulated him.

But you, my most beloved brothers, who diligently attend to hearing the praises of such a great man, God inspiring you, you praise patience, you extol humility; take up the marks of such great virtues for your own use, and what you willingly hear that he was, studiously care to become yourselves through the grace of God. For you will be what he is, if you yourselves strive to be what he was. Therefore, in the journey of this pilgrimage, let no persuasion of prosperity deceive you, let no rushing adversity break you, let not the want of poverty depress your mind, let not the hope of temporal abundance extol you, let not an insult brought from the mouth of a neighbor provoke you to anger, let not the freedom of permitted power over anyone instigate you to avenge yourselves, so that you who now hold the footsteps of Blessed Severus to be imitated in life, may afterwards be able to rejoice with him concerning the prize of eternal happiness in the homeland, by the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and is glorified [reigns] with the Father and the Holy Spirit through infinite ages of ages. Amen.

SERMON V.

II. CONCERNING SAINT SEVERUS, BISHOP OF RAVENNA AND CONFESSOR. (FEB 1).

You have heard, most beloved brothers, from the history of Blessed Severus while it was being read, how God raised him from the wool workshop (*lanificii ergodochio*), how wonderfully He elected him, not only beyond the opinion of all the citizens but even his own, to the citadel of the pontificate. You have heard that a poor little man was taken by God from the rich of the world. You have heard that the dejected and humble was sublimated with glory above the powers of the noble. You have heard that the Holy Spirit, contemning the wise of the age, electing a simple man, flying over those adorned with garments, descended upon one ragged and squalid, as if upon a familiar friend and one formerly most known to Him.

It is pleasant, most beloved, to diligently expand all the rays of the inner lights toward that beautiful spectacle, and to studiously weigh, as much as is possible for me, how differently from men Almighty God judges. All the citizens gather at the oratory; the Holy Spirit descends in the likeness of a dove upon the assembled people. Many hearts below, one Inspector above. These men expect someone great from among the rich to be elected; He considers who from among all most greatly prevails in being found rich in virtues. These men prefer in their own minds an erudite tongue, a brilliant sermon; He, however, elects a simple mind and purity of heart. Hence the people pass over the commoners in their

sight, and attend to the primates, as to who of them might most greatly be elected; but from the other side "the Lord on high regards the humble, and knows the lofty from afar (Psal. CXXXVII)." Hence many long for themselves for that summit of sacred dignity, and cry out with a garrulous silence within their conscience: O if the dove should come upon me, o if God should elect me! Do you think I will be the elected one? Do you think the bishopric will be given to me? But from there He searches the reins and the hearts (I Par. XXVIII; Psal. VII), "who fashioned the hearts of them individually, who understands all their works (Psal. XXXII)."

And indeed many were present there, as in an eminent city, some indeed accustomed to proceed with the crowded steps of neighing horses, others distinguished by clear titles of birth, others conspicuous by the brilliance of precious garments, others thronged by frequent wedges of following soldiers, others multifariously endowed with all these gifts of the world, others endowed with certain ones according to their possibility. But Almighty God, who subtly intended the hearts of all, again repeated without any noise of voice what He had formerly said through the prophet: "Upon whom," He said, "shall my Spirit rest, except upon the humble, and quiet, and the one trembling at my words?" (Isa. LXVI.) The people saw the dove from heaven waiting in an open place. She looked toward poor little Severus lurking behind the door. For he who

hid himself from men could not decline the gaze of the divine majesty.

What is this, Saint Severus? So poor, so rich? So humble, so sublime? So ragged, so glorious? Dejected according to human judgments, invisibly sublimated by divine providence? Why do you strive to hide yourself, you who are promoted to this that you might be proposed to the eyes of all as an example of virtue? Why do you blush at the faces of men, you who have pleased the sight of the divine majesty before all others? Namely, for this reason you are hidden, that you may see, and not be seen; see, that is, the dove for admiration; not be seen, however, for the foulness of your garments. Come now, manifest yourself in public, proceed into the midst, and take up the stewardship of the Christian family. Let the pearl come out of the dunghill, that it may shine in the ornament of the highest King. Let the lamp no longer lie hidden under a bushel, but placed upon a lampstand, let it pour the light of its brilliance upon all who are in the house (Matth. V). Feed therefore the Lord's flock, and exhibit pastoral care over the sheepfold of Christ. Christ has already decreed to commit His Church to you, which He purchased with the inestimable price of His blood. Take up the office of eminent administration, so that you may bring back an increased profit from the interest of the committed talent. Neither should you fear ignorance of letters, nor doubt concerning the enormity of uncomposed sermons, because He who promotes you will instruct you without the labor of reading; He who

commits to you the office of doctrine, will also suggest the increase of teaching. For it is the Highest Word which exhibits to you the ministry of sowing the word. This Word says to you, and to those like you, through Himself: "When you stand before kings, do not think how or what you should speak; for it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak (Matth. X)." And again: "It is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you (Ibid.)."

What more? At last the dove came, and while all were wondering, she visited the head beloved to her. And certainly He was already invisibly in his breast, upon whose crown He now corporally descended. But what should the fugitive of God now do? Where should he turn? What safer hiding place should he find for himself? He fled from the sight of all, he set the doors against them, he left for himself only the little cracks of the doorposts for seeing. But he who was able to turn away human gazes did not escape the sharpness of the dovelike intuition. He sees himself caught; he complains within himself that his refuge profited him nothing. Nevertheless, he still suspects that the dove errs, being deceived, and is not able in such a great multitude of men to note a certain person to be elected. Therefore, for the third time, he repelled her flying toward him with agitated hands, and thus in the name of the most holy Trinity he received the blessing of his consecration.

O new and unheard-of order of promotion! O admirable dignity of an eminent pontiff! For

what else was it, for the dove to descend upon the head of the most blessed man for the third time, except to patently consecrate him in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit? And what else was it, to touch the same dove by driving her away from himself, except, in the order of ecclesiastical institution, to receive the oil of holy unction in those very hands? For in that the dove descended, having glided onto the head of the most holy man, she fulfilled the office of the imposition of hands. But in that she permitted herself to be touched by his sacred hands, she signed those very hands with the unction of the Holy Spirit.

Now indeed of how great grace and how great excellence is it, to receive the Holy Spirit in that figure in which it is established that He descended upon our Lord Himself, the Mediator namely of God and men (Matth. III)? And certainly in whatever way one receives the Holy Spirit, it is of very great merit; but to receive the Holy Spirit in that figure in which also the only-begotten Son of the Father received Him, is an indication of the highest holiness. For upon the apostles themselves the Holy Spirit appeared in fiery tongues (Act. II); but upon the blessed Severus He was seen not in the image of fire, not in the diversity of tongues, but, just as upon the baptized Lord, in the likeness of a dove (Matth. III); that He might surely show that just as the dove is a simple animal and alien to the bitterness of gall (*fellis*), so also the most blessed man was lacking in all bitterness of malice, and lived in the

holy purity of a simple mind. Behold, it is clearly manifested what is said by the prince of the apostles: "That God is not a respecter of persons, but in every nation, he who fears Him and works justice is accepted by Him (Act. X)."

Divine providence itself also now guarded in the election of this most blessed man what He formerly warned us to observe through Blessed James. For he says among other things: "My brothers, do not have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ of glory with respect of persons (Jac. II)." Then he subjoins: "For if there shall enter into your assembly a man having a gold ring in a white garment, and there shall also enter a poor man in a filthy habit, and you attend to him who is clothed in the brilliant garment, and shall say to him: You sit here well; but you say to the poor man: You stand there, or sit under the footstool of my feet; do you not judge among yourselves, and are made judges of iniquitous thoughts? (Ibid.)" For if the blessed apostle speaks this concerning daily sittings, who does not very often fall into fault concerning the respect of persons, unless when among himself he perhaps so judges, that he to whom he exhibits honor seems so much better to him, as he is also richer? But this apostolic sentence is then more rightly understood, if that distance of sitting and standing is referred to ecclesiastical honors. For it is not to be thought a light crime for any rich man to be elevated to the summit of ecclesiastical government, while a poorer man, holier and more learned, is repelled from the dignity of receiving honor. Thus

Almighty God, wonderful in His saints (Psal. LXVII), did what He taught through His apostle ought to be done, when the rich being spurned, He wonderfully sublimated this great poor man clothed in filthy garments to the episcopal chair. Who, having taken up the office of the pontificate, did not more ascend from the order of ecclesiastical dignity than he also grew into the citadel of the highest holiness.

For some, when they take up the care of government, immediately burn to lacerate their subjects; they exhibit the terror of power, and they harm more those whom they ought to have profited; and because they do not have the bowels of charity toward their children, they desire to be seen as lords, they by no means recognize themselves to be fathers; they change the place of humility into the elation of domination, and exalt themselves as certain tyrants in the horns of pride; and if ever they are flattering outwardly, they rage inwardly. Concerning whom Truth says through Itself: "They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves (Matth. VII)." For they come in sheep's clothing because they pretend a fleece of innocence on the surface, but they are ravening wolves because they sharpen the bites of malice in the hidden part of the heart, not attending to that which the Lord says to His disciples: "Behold," He says, "I send you as lambs among wolves (Luc. X)." For he who takes up the place of preaching ought not to inflict evils, but to tolerate them, so that by his very mildness he may mitigate the anger

of those who rage, and he himself, wounded by afflictions, may heal the wounds of sins in others. And even when the zeal of rectitude requires him to rage toward his subjects, let that very fury be from love, not from cruelty, so that he may both exhibit the laws of discipline and inwardly love with paternal piety those whom he chastises outwardly as if by pursuing [raging]. But bad pastors are not as lambs among wolves, but rather as wolves among lambs, because, while they receive for the most part no bite of injury from their subjects, they themselves cruelly fix the teeth of their rapine in them.

But some, before they attain the summit of the priestly office, exhibit themselves as mild and humble in all things; they study to increase in virtues, they are strong in good morals, and they exercise themselves in all the honesty of holy conversation; never do they inflict evils on anyone, but they bear those inflicted patiently; they assiduously subdue their flesh with fasts and prayers, and they bridle all the motions of vices in themselves with the censure of rigid severity. But when they take up the laws of pastoral custody, whatever of holiness they had held, they lose—as I may so say, oh grief!—by an exchange of miserable permutation; they forget everything in which they had lived piously, and after the manner of running rivers, they are rolled down to the lowest depths without any obstacle of retention; and like bad rowers, when they come to the deep parts of the sea, the wind impelling them, when namely there is need for greater

effort, they resolve themselves into sleep with a deadly security; or rather when they take up the tiller of the ship to be governed, they who before had navigated strenuously with the others, now placed in the mastery, cast themselves down into the torpor of negligence, and not only do they not guard others, but they even unhappily lose themselves.

But why do we speak these things concerning reprobate pastors, since even men of the highest holiness, having taken up the office of pastoral care, even if they by no means rush forth into evils—which God forbid—nevertheless are often somewhat diminished from the very perfection of good, necessity compelling? Hence it is that Blessed Pope Gregory glories that in the conversation of his former life he had transcended all visible things, but afterwards he complains with pious lamentation that he is entangled in exterior cares (GREG. in praef. lib. I Dialog.). Hence it is also that it is read concerning Blessed Martin, bishop of Tours, that there had been greater power in him before his episcopate than after his episcopate (SEVER. SULPIT., Vita S. Martini, lib. II. cap. 5). Although it is to be believed without doubt that for holy preachers, whatever is subtracted from their own perfection for the custody of others is increased much more largely and much more abundantly in acquiring the gains of their subjects.

Consider therefore, most beloved brothers, how wonderful a man was blessed Severus, to whom the merit of holiness was added by the

care of the government he took up, which for other most excellent men was accustomed to diminish. For that which for others is often a cause of descent, for him is proved to have existed as the material of promotion; and from there the summit of perfection was increased for him, from where for most perfect men it is generally not doubted to have been diminished. For behold, before the office of the committed prelacy he is known indeed to have led a life of virtues, but he is by no means reported to have performed signs of virtues; but after his ordination, the signs of miracles performed through him cry out with open voices how much his later merits transcend his former life.

For how illustrious, my most beloved brothers, how stupendous was that distinguished miracle, by which namely during the very solemnities of the Masses, suddenly rapt in ecstasy, he sought the town of Modena in spirit, commended the soul of his deceased brother and co-bishop to God, placed the body in the tomb, and celebrated every office of the funeral obsequies in order! O what a new spectacle and how most worthy of admiration, if a mortal gaze could have grasped all that at once! For indeed he was absent to the gathered faithful, yet present; he was away, yet near. Certainly placed far even from himself, here he rendered the debt of the committed pastoral care to his living children, there he impended the office of pious humanity to his deceased brother. But also how light, how swift a vehicle our bishop had, who—I will not say in a point, not in a

moment, but in the stroke of a most brief time—passed through such long spaces of lands? Surely that chariot knows not how to be repressed by the roughness of the ways, it knows not how to be retarded by the brake of opposition. Nevertheless, this so great miracle, which is more rarely heard to have been shown by any of the saints, is perhaps more difficultly believed by those who do not believe all things to be possible to one who believes.

For what is rarer, what more worthy of admiration than for a pure spirit corporally to bury a body? And, as I may so say, for a soul visibly to commend a soul? But we quickly bend our mind to believing this, if we also studiously weigh other works of divine power. For it is clear that spirit is of a more mobile nature than body, and certainly, with Scripture as witness, we know that the prophet Habakkuk, raised from Judea, was suddenly transported into Chaldea with a meal. With which meal namely he refreshed the prophet Daniel, and found himself again in Judea (Dan. XIV). If therefore Habakkuk was able to go corporally and carry a meal so far in a moment, what wonder if blessed Severus obtained that he might go through the spirit, and exhibit the office of the funeral to his deceased brother? So that just as the former proceeded corporally to carry food to the body of the prophet, so the latter might proceed spiritually to commend to God the spirit of the most blessed man.

Now indeed of how great virtue and how great power was it, that the dry ash of a formerly de-

ceased cadaver obeyed him, and at the command of his voice the lifeless flesh of his wife, that she might yield her place to her daughter, contracted herself into a narrow corner of the burial? For certainly by a just judgment of God, the woman, who formerly had despised him by mocking him in this life, now, her opinion changed, humbly observed his precepts. Namely, she who had known him as a poor little man spinning threads in a humble workshop (*ergasterio*), now with eyes that could not be deceived, she attended to how great a senator he was in the court of the supernal King. But perhaps someone judges this incredible, that a man, although venerable and most holy, still dwelling in this corruptible flesh, was able to subject insensible dust to his laws, whose soul it is established had already migrated to that invisible judgment? Yet this is also easily believed, if the divine grace conferred upon men is subtly investigated. For was Peter not still in this flesh, who heard from the mouth of Truth: "Whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven: and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven (Matth. XVI)?" Whose turn in binding and loosing all those now possess who hold the place of holy government in faith and morals. But so that man might prevail so greatly from the earth, the Founder of heaven and earth came to the earth from heaven; and so that flesh might be able to judge not only concerning flesh, but also concerning spirits, He who was made God-flesh for men deigned to bestow this upon it.

Because from there our infirmity rose beyond itself, whence the firmness of God was made infirm below itself.

But why do we speak these things concerning the ancient miracles of Blessed Severus, when today we hear not a few signs of wonders frequently performed in the venerable basilica of his burial? For, to be silent concerning others, that one thing—with how great praises is it worthy and with how great joy to be referred to the glory of divine omnipotence—that from under the very altar of his most sacred body there sensibly emanates the clearest water, to be of profit for the various health-needs of the languishing! For if the faith of the drinkers requires it, as soon as the sick breasts perceive it, they immediately convalesce from infirmity to former health. And, that you may hear a wonderful thing wonderfully performed, not in the inclement time of spring, not in the rains of autumnal inundation, not in the chills of the rain-bearing winter, when water is accustomed to exude thinly from various masses of stones, but in the very heat of the fervid summer you should know it to bubble up from dry lime and hard stones. Namely, so that when a greater necessity of sicknesses lies upon them, then most especially divine mercy may confer a remedy, and to human infirmity, which is then born from the vice of fiery heat, He may —after the manner of physicians—oppose the power of healing from the contrary element. To which that miracle can reasonably enough be compared, that similarly the Nile river of Egypt

elevates itself into a heap in no other time but the summer, irrigates all the plains on this side and that through the circuit, and fecundates the veins of the lands with the large moisture of its inundation. Therefore, let not human folly attribute the works of divine power to the forces of nature; let it at least learn from the very time in which they are performed to whom they should rightly be deputed; and let it rise so much more eagerly to return thanks to its Creator, as it is not ignorant that the very changes of the natures are for the sake of its utility.

For behold, Almighty God repeats the ancient miracles of His operation; behold, again He produces water from the rock through another Moses (Exod. XVII); He renews for us the Israelite age, by which through exterior benefits He may kindle us, as the true Israel, to the love of His vision. Behold, from the Church of His most blessed confessor He has in a certain way restored to us another paradise, from whose most salutary fountain He clemently pours into the earth of our fragility.

Let us therefore, most beloved, give thanks to our Creator, who for this reason still produces water from the rock of the cliff, that through this we also may draw water in joy from the fountains of the Savior (Isa. XII). That one namely, concerning which He Himself says in the Gospel: "He who shall drink the water which I give, there shall become in him a fountain of water springing up into eternal life (Joan. IV)." And again He cries out, saying: "If any man thirst, let him come

to me and drink, and from his belly shall flow waters of living water (Joan. VII)." How many are there today, who if they had been able to see that rock from which water was produced in the time of Moses, would have deputed it as no small gain. Therefore, let these now enter the church of Blessed Severus, and see performed in many stones at once what they exult with the joy of pious devotion to have been done in one. With this also added, that that water only took away thirst from the drinkers; this one also cures the various sicknesses of the languishing. That one, while it was drunk, gave an indication of simple water from itself; this one, while it heals, fulfills the office of various aromatics and medicinal species.

Convert these so many and so illustrious miracles, most beloved brothers, into the gains of true utility, and through the exterior benefits of the divine gift, pant also for the interior ones from the marrow. For what does it profit to perceive these deciduous and transitory goods temporally from divine benignity, if it does not happen that one reaches the prizes of the eternal good which are to be taken up? Remember what Truth said to the Jews concerning their ancient fathers: "Your fathers," He said, "ate manna in the desert, and they died (Joan. VI)." Consider also how great is the glory of the saints in heaven, whom even the elements themselves serve and obey on earth against the order of their nature. For what can the souls of the saints not do, whether in heaven, or on earth, or even in the abyss, who are one with Him who presides over all? Therefore, most

beloved, strive with all your efforts for that dignity of such great glory; hasten toward it daily with the steps of holy virtues and pious conversation. Certainly all things which you see are to be contemned by you, if you wish to reach those things which you hope for. For as Blessed Paul witnesses, we cannot rejoice in the world here, and reign with God there (Rom. XII). Who again says: "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal (II Cor. IV)." Therefore, despise the fluid and seductive flatteries of this unclean world, overcome its threats with fortitude of mind, repress the rising incentives [fires] of the flesh, dilate your minds, with God helping, in virtues, expel the cold of torpor and negligence from your hearts, sigh continually with a flaming desire of the mind for that ineffable joy of supernal beatitude. For that watcher [spectator], who delectably inspects your hearts directed toward Himself, also willingly opens to you the door of His society, Jesus Christ our Lord, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns for ages of ages. Amen.

SERMON VI.

CONCERNING SAINT ELEUCHADIUS, BISHOP OF RAVENNA AND CONFESSOR. (FEB 14.)

Today's festival, most beloved brothers, crowns your holy devotion, or rather ours, with

a double joy, because while we celebrate the solemnities of the venerable confessor Eleuchadius, we necessarily also soon recall to memory the illustrious deeds of the blessed victor of Christ, Apollinaris. For as Solomon says, "A wise son is the glory of his father (Prov. X and XV)," so the cause of one depends upon the other, such that whoever worthily relates the praises of one cannot keep silent about the illustrious commendation of the other. And because Truth says: "The son can do nothing, except what he has seen the father doing (Joan. V):" so this blessed pupil followed in his father's footsteps, thus in preaching the true faith he held the straight line, thus in living religiously he exhibited a service consonant with his holy preceptor, that he worthily succeeded him in government, whose imitator he had stood in holiness. For just as Blessed Peter, the prince of the apostolic senate, is known to have had three more eminent disciples among the others, who subsequently succeeded him in order in the height of the pontificate, first namely Linus, then Cletus, and thirdly Clement, so in no less a manner did Blessed Apollinaris have four illustrious disciples, succeeding him in ecclesiastical government after the happy glory of his martyrdom, namely Aderitus, and this blessed one to whom the present sermon is to do service, Eleuchadius, then Martianus, and finally Calocerum.

Now this Eleuchadius was a philosopher, as is related in the history of his blessed master. Therefore the wisdom of Plato was overcome by

a disciple of a fisherman. He sent the net of the word into the deep saltiness of the Ravennese ocean, and drew a golden mesh to the shore of faith. Furthermore, he whose master once knew how to guide a little boat through all the pools, taught the disciple to dispute with the subtle craftiness of the dialecticians; he taught, I say, a disciple of sharp genius and acute eloquence to enclose men with simple speech, who had been accustomed to knot together cheap nets for enclosing fish through the depths of the sea. Clearly, after the boatman of the sea was appointed the key-bearer of heaven, the disciples of fishermen were made the masters of orators; and the wisdom of the world was conquered by the simplicity of Christ, for because, as the Apostle says, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe (I Cor. I). By this simplicity Paul, who judged himself to know nothing among the Corinthians except Jesus Christ and Him crucified (I Cor. II), overcame Dionysius the Areopagite at Athens. By this simplicity Blessed Apollinaris enclosed Eleuchadius the philosopher in the city of Ravenna; who himself, when consulted concerning skill in cures, replied that he knew nothing without the name of Jesus. Nevertheless, to both of these prudently simple men Blessed Peter offers testimony of wisdom: for concerning Paul he says: "Just as our most beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given to him (II Petr. III)."

To Apollinaris he says: "Behold, you have been instructed concerning all things which Jesus did."

But those who were wise for God showed themselves as fools for the world. For God chose the foolish things of the world, that He might confound the wise (I Cor. I). And so that you may wonder more, He cast down those unskilfully wise from the vain swelling of their proud wisdom, and thereafter raised them up into the authority of free preaching, that they might subsequently constantly assert that which they had previously anxiously and cruelly attacked. Which Moses then mystically figured, when seizing the golden calf he burned it with fire, ground it even to dust, and sprinkling it upon the waves, gave it to the Israelite people to drink (Exod. XXXII). For what is that cast calf by figure, except the body of the devil? Men, namely, deceived in all things by the error of perfidy and simultaneously of idolatry, and joined in a sacrilegious conspiracy under their very pestiferous head as diverse members, over whom certainly that spirit of wickedness, as the author, is insolently raised presiding, and as the head dominates his body through tyranny? Now it is described as having been a golden calf, because the ritual of idolatry seems as if instituted by the wise. For by gold wisdom is designated, as is said through Solomon: "A desirable treasure in the mouth of the wise (Prov. II)." Therefore the calf was golden, because the wise of the world before the grace of the new faith are proved to have been the authors of demoniacal worship. Concerning whom certainly the Apostle

says: "Because when they had known God, they did not glorify Him as God, or give thanks, but became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened, for saying they were wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of the image of a corruptible man, and of birds, and of four-footed beasts and of serpents (Rom. I)." Through this vanity of insane wisdom, the poets, philosophers, magi, scrutinizers of the stars and those instructed in the skill of all liberal disciplines, were accustomed to adore the prodigious figments of the demons.

In the calf, therefore, the whole body was signified, that is, the whole society of the gentiles devoted to idolatry. Moses therefore burned the calf with fire because our Redeemer, whom he had signified, kindled the evilly conspiring hearts of the gentiles with the flame of His charity. Whence He Himself also says: "I have come to send fire upon the earth, and what do I wish except that it be kindled? (Luc. XII)" And the Prophet: "There is no one," he says, "who can hide himself from his heat (Psal. XVIII)." In the mind of the gentiles, therefore, the divine fire is suddenly kindled, so that in them the irrational bestial form of idolatry may be dissolved. Then the whole body of this calf is crushed into dust, because that gentile society, fused into one by the art of diabolical conspiracy, at the coming of Christ was beaten out by a certain hammer of salutary correction, so to speak, and from the hardness of its rigor was crushed by the power

of the divine word. For at the word of truth it is healthfully crushed, which seemed to stand insensibly whole in the form of its pride. Then it is scattered into the water, so that the Israelite people may drink of it.

Finally, the crushed calf is put into the water, because it is necessary that the humbled gentile people be washed in the washing of the salutary fountain. Which the Israelites immediately drink, because the holy preachers of the Gospel, who are truly Israelites, convert those whom they transfer to the Lord's body, which is the Church, into their own members by receiving them as if by drinking. To which Israelites it was first said: "Kill and eat (Act. X);" which is just as if it were said: "Grind, and drink." Thus, thus that calf through the fire of zeal, and the edge of the word, and the water of baptism, was rather absorbed by those whom it tried to absorb: it was transfused into them whom it had attempted to transfer into its own, that is, diabolical, members.

Nevertheless, because Moses did not fix the limit of vengeance in this, merely to break the idol, but moreover added that he should slaughter twenty-three thousand men, he taught mystically that it is by no means sufficient if anyone is converted from the worship of idolatry or depravity of life, unless he also strives to mortify his own vices with the sword of the spirit. Whence also the illustrious preacher says: "Mortify your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, lust, evil concupiscence and avarice, which is the service of idols

(Col. III)." And it is to be noted that just as here our vices are said to be members, so also there those who were destroyed were joined to their slayers by the necessity of kinship, just as was said through Moses: "Thus says the Lord God of Israel: Let every man put his sword upon his thigh; go and return from gate to gate through the middle of the camp, and let every man kill his brother, and friend and neighbor (Exod. XXXII)." If anyone therefore delights to rise up in arms, whoever pants to fight against the battalions of the enemies, let him turn his hands upon himself, and there he will find more adversaries to be cut down, whence clearly after victory he may not incur the foul name of a homicide, but rather appear a glorious father-triumphator, whence certainly he may not deserve to be excluded from the thresholds of the sanctuary, but consecrating himself to the Lord, he may be increased by the blessings of divine grace, just as was also said to them: "You have consecrated your hands today to the Lord, every man in his son and brother, that a blessing may be given to you (Ibid.)." But as for the fact that those who were slain are reported to have been twenty-three thousand, the number of three thousand destroyed indicates the triple form of sins. For we commit every sin either by deed, or word, or thought. But since there the number of ten is also doubled, it is given to be understood that just as we contemned keeping the Decalogue of precepts by the fault of the flesh and simultaneously of the soul, so also we ought

to wear down and mortify the vices of both with the arms of virtues.

Blessed Eleuchadius, therefore, then a great philosopher, was crushed like the golden calf by the hammer of preaching, and was transfused into the members of the body of Christ. Then a teacher of earthly wisdom, he has now been made a master of ecclesiastical discipline. Then he searched into the investigation of natural causes; now he clearly contemplates the Author of all natures Himself. And he who then had perhaps noted the stars with a rod, now joyfully beholds the machine of heaven revolve with the stars. Doubtless he who had previously been a philosopher of truth, having turned to the Lord, was made a preacher of truth; third namely from Blessed Peter the Apostle in the order of discipleship, and no less third from Blessed Apollinaris in the height of the pontificate. And though the order of persons was extended, yet the same purity of faith, which had proceeded from that very highest and original source, flowed down through the sloping series of the channel. For from Christ into Peter, from Peter into Apollinaris, and from Apollinaris into Eleuchadius, the river of heavenly eloquence emanated; so that that proclamation of the Psalmist might be fulfilled: "He who sends his eloquence to the earth, his word runs swiftly (Psal. CXLVII)." Finally, the blessed cultivators and helpers of Christ, Apollinaris and Eleuchadius; father namely and son, master and disciple, took up the ministry of one work, the estate of one field, so to speak, the

cultivation of one vineyard. The former, clearly, that he might cut down the dense obscurities of the woods; the latter, however, that he might radically extirpate the remaining trunks of trees and the thickets of bristling briars. The former, that he might cut through the hard fields of the squalid desert with the sharp plowshare of the word; the latter that no less he might break up the clods of swelling vices after him with the hoe of holy preaching, and clothe the diligently cultivated fallow lands with the fruits of good works. The former, that he might plant with Paul; the latter that he might water with Apollos (I Cor. III). And to repeat from higher up, the former with Moses transferred the people of the Lord into the deserts by dividing the Red Sea (Exod. XIV); the latter with Joshua, succeeding the master, first introduced the same people into the land of promise (Jos. IV). The former taught how Israel as a sojourner should despise Egypt; the latter how they should possess the land flowing with milk and honey, with their portions distributed in turn. One certainly admonished them to shake off their necks from the iron yoke of Pharaoh; the other to tread upon the conquered necks of the enemies with triumphant feet. One taught how swiftly they should flee the reproach of servitude; the other, however, how most cautiously they should guard the very titles of liberty.

Nor indeed is it to be believed, my brothers, that Blessed Eleuchadius, while he yet lived, was without the labors of martyrdom, even if he was not consummated by martyrdom. For he saw

that some remains of the recently extinguished paganism still survived; he grieved that in the people committed to him even the last vestiges of superstitious ritual remained, and therefore, although the hands of persecutors did not draw swords, his holy soul was tortured, burned by the fire of pious zeal and paternal compassion. For what does it profit if anyone believes catholically and lives like a pagan? Or how does right belief concord with a heretical life? For what does it help if the apostolic faith is present, where an Arian conversation is led? For concerning those who believe catholically and live heretically, the blessed Apostle complains, saying: "They confess that they know God, but by their deeds they deny Him (Tit. I)." Since whether by believing or by living, to deny God is without doubt nothing else than to perish. Wherefore the blessed pontiff Eleuchadius bore no contemptible martyrdom in the peace of the Church itself, seeing that even if not with those who believe faithlessly, he is proved to have had an irreconcilable conflict with those who live perversely; although we also gather not without reason that he labored in the doctrine of the faith, since we recognize that the cities and towns adjacent to all the Ravennese metropolis hide almost no martyrs.

Whence we cannot worthily admire how great is the glory, how great the excellence of Blessed Apollinaris, whose martyrdom, since it was prolonged through the space of twenty-nine years through innumerable torments, he alone labored so greatly that someone else, where in almost

all those parts he might have been able to die for the testimony of the faith, did not find. But if anything perhaps remained, the venerable succession of his disciples supplied it, among whom certainly Blessed Eleuchadius shone forth like a golden star, and, according to the etymology of his name, he brought back the insignia of paternal brightness and splendor as a true son. For Eleuchadius in Greek is understood in Latin as candidus. And not undeservedly. For he had been of the number of those of whom it is said: "His Nazirites have been made white, they gave splendor to God, and they have been curdled like milk (Thren. IV)." And Jacob concerning Christ to his son: "His eyes," he said, "are more beautiful than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk (Gen. XLIX)." For the eyes of Christ are the apostles and evangelists, who provided the light of wisdom to the whole body of the holy Church, whose doctrine, while it softens the rigor and hardness of the ancient law, in a certain way their beauty excels the austerity of the old wine, for the evangelical precepts are far clearer than the mandates of the Old Testament. But the teeth are the holy preachers, who cut off converted men from the society of the wicked and transfer them into the body of Christ, as was said above, as if by chewing. Furthermore, by the name of milk the doctrine of the law is hinted at, which seemed to nourish the carnal people with a cup of milk, as if little children, whose teachers of the Church are certainly whiter than milk, because they both eat the strong and solid food of the word themselves

and hand it on to others, concerning whom the Apostle says to the Hebrews: "But solid food is for the perfect (Hebr. V)." And well are the doctors of the Church said to be white, because they are both free from the stain of depravity and seen to be bright in the works of conspicuous conversation.

Wherefore it is to be guarded against, my brothers, lest any blackness of vices disgrace us, who have white leaders in the militia of Christ. Certainly the appearance of things fluctuates perilously, where the insignia do not concord with the leaders of the following army. For our blessed fathers showed themselves prompt to bear punishments; but we, when we are harmed by our neighbor, let us at least restrain our minds from vengeance. For Moses, as an indication of vengeance descending from the mountain, appeared horned (Exod. XXXIV); but over the Lord in the Spirit of mildness a dove descended (Matth. III). They decreed to contemn all their own things for Christ; let us at least learn not to covet those things which are another's. Let today's care suffice for present necessity, nor let the rancor of anxiety anticipate the morrow.

The Israelite people indeed, as sacred history witnesses, when they collected manna, it swarmed with worms and putrefied, if anyone acting unfaithfully reserved any of it for the morrow (Exod. XVI). So clearly whoever, kindled by the heat of cupidity, treasures up for himself earthly substance as if providing nourishment for his body, for him that worm bubbles up which

may dig into the conscience and gnaw the secrets of the breast. Truly those worms of anxieties, which avarice generates, prepare in turn those worms concerning which it is written: "Their fire shall not be extinguished and their worm shall not die (Isa. LXVI)," so that the fire of the fire of cupidity may kindle and the worm proceed from the worm. Although it may also be understood not inconveniently thus, that just as Christ Himself, who says: "I am a worm, and no man (Psal. XXI)," came to others for resurrection, so nevertheless His word becomes manna and the sweetness of honey to the faithful, but to the unfaithful and those living perversely it becomes a worm, not clearly one which may nourish by refreshing the soul, but which may bite by terrifying and threatening the conscience. But on the sixth day a double measure was ordered to be collected, so that from it a half might be kept for the Sabbath. Furthermore, the sixth day is understood as the sixth age of the world, in which we now are. On this day, therefore, he collects double for the coming Sabbath who, for the sake of the intuition of heavenly glory, where there is a perpetual Sabbath and true rest, both hears and does the word of God. In this he stores up double who both lives well and shows an example of salvation to others; or, what is more expeditious, he collects a double measure who labors so greatly in good operation, whence both here his soul may please its Creator, and with Him afterwards may live perpetually. That which therefore was laid up for the Sabbath could not be corrupted,

because good works, which are done for the desire of supernal rest, will remain perpetually. Therefore those riches are not to be accumulated, which rust may demolish, which moths may eat, and which may putrefy with a gushing of worms (Luc. XII), of which not free possessors Blessed James rebuking says: "Your riches are putrefied, your garments are eaten by moths, your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust shall be for a testimony to you and shall burn your flesh like fire (Jac. V)." Those riches therefore, brothers, let us seek, which may be able to adorn us with the gems and pearls of virtues, which may promote us to the titles of heavenly dignities. Which riches indeed the prophet hints at, when he says: "The riches of salvation are wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the Lord itself is his treasure (Isa. XXXIII)."

Doubtless Blessed Eleuchadius desired these riches when he deposed himself from the chair of philosophical doctrine, when he cast away the rod of the preceptor, when he humbly subjected himself to the discipleship of Christ from the principality of mastery. Whatever superfluous thing he had previously learned there, he pruned away in the far more noble studies of this school; whatever of falsehood, whatever of superstition he taught there, he corrected in the discipline of ecclesiastical purity. Whence by the law through Moses it is decreed that for a woman captured in war and chosen for the marriage of the victor, the superfluity of the body should be cut away: "She shall shave," he said, "her hair, and pare her

nails, and put off the garment in which she was captured, sitting in your house she shall weep for her father and her mother for one month, and afterwards you shall enter to her and sleep with her, and she shall be your wife (Deut. XXI)." We indeed shave the hair of the woman when we prune away the superfluous senses of rational discipline. We also pare the nails when we cut off from her any dead works of superstitions. She is also ordered to put off the garment in which she was captured: so that she may strip off the superinduced surface of fables and of any figments whatever, and exhibit the solid truth of true reason. But she weeps for her father and mother because she accounts the authors of the liberal arts among the dead and deplores with compassion that they perished in error. Now it is the custom of women to purge themselves each month by the effusion of their own blood. After a month, therefore, we are ordered to enter to this woman, so that we may obtain as if in marriage the art of any discipline whatever, purified from all contagion of superstitions, so that having now been made an Israelite she may consequently pass into the marriage of an Israelite and return a well-fecund offspring of spiritual works.

To which it is also not dissimilar that the same Moses ordered the Israelite people to borrow gold and silver with garments from the Egyptians, in which clearly—lest I dwell longer—we mystically ask for gold and silver with garments from the Egyptians, whence we may fabricate a tabernacle for the Lord, when we read the worldly

poets and philosophers, so that we may be able to profit more clearly in the divine oracles. Or also, which is more perspicuous, the gold and silver are precious souls, which together with their garments, that is, their bodies, join themselves to the people of God, so that they may desert this dark world as if Egypt and acquire the promised land of perpetual happiness. That which therefore Blessed Eleuchadius borrowed from the Egyptians profited the Israelites, and the treasure which he snatched from paganism he faithfully distributed as a dispenser of the holy Church. Whose deeds indeed are not found handed down in writings, but not without cause has antiquity either constructed a basilica in his honor, or dedicated his death with the honors of an annual solemnity. For he is also reported to have written some volumes concerning the Old and New Testament, or even concerning the incarnation or passion of the Lord, which nevertheless we judge to have been deleted by the oblivion of writers. Although this also seems to pertain not undeservedly to the accumulation of his merits, that he then consented to be made a bishop when poverty oppressed the Church, and the more difficult labor of a faith still rude and newly planted was imminent, when finally he applied himself to radically uprooting the sprouting seeds of the pristine ritual and the heavy burden and benefit of temporal subsidy was lacking. For although the Church had then already been founded in faith, the Christian religion was not yet polished by the morals of living.

And so let us also, most beloved brothers, imitate the example of this holy fervor. Let us never fear to approach that business constantly and confidently, in which we hope to be fatigued, either for divine services or for fraternal salvation, by pressures and adversities. Let honor, glory, riches and all temporal dignity be fled. Let the labor of obedience, the narrowness of poverty, and the restlessness of charity which may exercise us be sought. Indeed the Jewish people, when they had been satiated with loaves, wished to appoint our Redeemer as king, but, as John witnesses, lest He could be found, He fled into the mountain (Joan. VI). But when He was sought for the cross, He offered Himself voluntarily to those not knowing Him, saying: "Whom do you seek?" To whom indeed as they asserted that they sought "Jesus of Nazareth," He immediately replied: "I am he (Joan. XVIII)." For why is it that the Mediator of God and men escaped when he was to be promoted to a kingdom, but sought, He thrust Himself voluntarily into death, unless so that He might admonish us to avoid the glory of this world, but gratefully to seek tribulations for God, and the pressures of labors and pains?

Paul also, when he was at Miletus, and saw everyone following him and loving him most affectionately, such that Luke reports in the book of the Apostolic Acts that after Paul departed there was a great weeping of all, and falling upon his neck, they kissed him. He nevertheless was hastening most greedily to Jerusalem to suffer as if to feast, saying: "Behold," he said, "bound in

spirit I go to Jerusalem, not knowing the things which are to come to me in it, except that the spirit protests to me through all the cities, saying: That chains and tribulations remain for me." "But I fear none of these, nor do I make my soul more precious than myself, provided that I may consummate my course and the ministry which I have received from the Lord, to testify to the Gospel of the grace of God (Act. XX)." Behold, surrounded by a crowd of those weeping he is by no means bent, softened by kisses, soothed by services he is not moved to mercy for himself, but joyful he hastens to chains and torments as if he were approaching to dine at a nuptial banquet.

We also, most beloved, following the examples of the imitators of Christ, let us flee the flatteries of the world, let us manfully gird the loins of our mind to bear any adversities for God. And we who tend toward the inheritance of sons, which is in the fatherland, placed in exile, let us equanimously tolerate the injuries of our fellow-servants, so that our supernal inspector and arbiter, considering us by no means reluctant before the empire of His command, as much as He now beholds us more oppressed in punishment, so much may He afterwards remunerate us more happily in glory, Jesus Christ our Lord, who with God the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns for ages of ages. Amen.

MARCH. XX. Homily on Palm Sunday. XX. Sermon on the vigil of S. Benedict the abbot and confessor. XXI. Homily concerning the same S. Benedict the abbot and confessor. XXIV. Sermon

on the Lord's Supper. XXV. Sermon on the Annunciation of the B. Virgin Mary. XXVII. Sermon on the resurrection of the Lord.

VII. HOMILY ON PALM SUNDAY. (MARCH XX.) "When Jesus had approached Jerusalem, and had come to Bethphage at the mount of Olives, then he sent two of his disciples, saying to them: Go into the castle which is over against you, etc. (Matth. XXI)."

The Lord, about to suffer voluntarily for human salvation, approaches the place of His passion spontaneously. To this He came into the world, for this He was born, that by His passion He might liberate us. Knowingly He came to Jerusalem, knowingly He entered accompanied by a large crowd of people with pompous service, so that He might show that He did not fear death, but was prepared for it. For if He had wished to avoid death, He would not have come to the place where he knew those seeking His death were. Whence he says in the Gospel: "Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man shall be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death (Matth. XX)." But why is it that He who before had fled when he was to be made king, now approaches spontaneously when He is to be crucified? Unless clearly so that He might teach His members to flee the high things of the world, but to approach with joy those things which are thought by the world to be humble and abject for the sake of the love of God. For if He had been made king, He would have confirmed the error of the Jews,

who were expecting Him only as an earthly king. But by dying He destroyed death, and by rising He repaired life. He also approaches the place of His passion riding upon an asina and a pullus, so that He might show that He is the Lord of both peoples, namely the Jews and the Gentiles. For by the asina, which was under the yoke, the Jewish people is signified, who were under the yoke of the law. By the pullus of the asina, however, which was not yet broken, the Gentile people is signified, who had not yet received the yoke of the divine law. He sits upon both, because He called both to the faith, and reduced both to the obedience of His command.

But let us see why He sent two of His disciples to bring the asina and the pullus. These two disciples are the two orders of preachers, namely of the Old and New Testament. For the former preached to the Jews, the latter to the Gentiles. Or these two disciples are the two precepts of charity, namely the love of God and of the neighbor. For no one can bring anyone to the Lord, unless he is himself perfect in the love of God and of the neighbor. They are ordered to go into the castle which was over against them. This castle is this world, which is opposed to the disciples of Christ. For the friendship of this world is an enemy to God (Jac. IV). Whence the world is called a castle, because it is fortified by the walls of vices and the towers of pride against the humility of Christ. In this castle the asina and the pullus were bound, because both the Jewish and the Gentile people were bound by the chains of sins. The disciples

are ordered to loose them and bring them to the Lord. For the holy preachers, by the word of preaching and the grace of the Holy Spirit, loose men from the chains of sins and lead them to the obedience of Christ. But if anyone should say anything to them, they should say: "The Lord has need of them (Matth. XXI)." These who say anything are the spirits of wickedness, who try to hinder the conversion of men, by suggesting various obstacles and bringing in the love of the world. To whom nevertheless the preachers reply that "the Lord has need of them," because God wishes all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (I Tim. II). Whence the Lord says: "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you (Joan. XV)."

By the asina and the pullus, which were bound in the castle, the people of the Jews and the Gentiles are signified, both of whom were subject to the chains of sins. The asina under the yoke signifies the Jewish people subject to the yoke of the law. The pullus wanton and unbridled signifies the Gentile people, who were led by the wantonness of their own will and had not yet received the yoke of any law. Both nevertheless were bound in the castle, because both were held by the error of infidelity and the love of the world. But the disciples loose them and bring them to the Lord, because the holy preachers by the word of the Gospel loose men from the errors of the world

and lead them to the faith of Christ. They also place their garments upon them, and the Lord sits upon them. The garments of the disciples are the examples of good works and the teachings of the virtues, by which the souls of the faithful are adorned, so that the Lord may be able to sit in them as in His own throne. He sits upon both, as was said, because He established His Church from both peoples.

But let us see what the crowd does, which follows or precedes the Lord. "A very large crowd," he says, "spread their garments in the way; others however cut branches from the trees and spread them in the way (Matth. XXI)." Those who spread their garments in the way are the holy martyrs, who for the name of Christ did not fear to offer their own bodies even to death, and as if through their own blood they prepared a way for the Lord to the hearts of others. Those who cut branches from the trees are the doctors of the Church, who from the books of the holy Scriptures as if from fruitful trees cut the testimonies of the virtues and the examples of the fathers, and spread them in the way of the hearts of the faithful, so that the Lord may be able to approach them more easily. All however with one voice cry out: "Hosanna to the son of David; blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; hosanna in the highest (Ibid.)." By this cry they confess that He is truly the Son of David according to the flesh, and the Son of God according to the divinity.

We also, most beloved brothers, following the examples of the crowds and the disciples, let us

prepare a way for the Lord in our hearts. Let us spread our garments, that is, let us subject our bodies to the spirit, so that we may be able to bear the Lord. Let us cut branches from the trees, that is, let us collect the testimonies of the holy Scriptures, by which we may be able to resist the temptations of the devil. And let us cry out with a loud voice, not only by word but also by work: "Hosanna in the highest," that is, let us ask for salvation from Him who alone can save us, Jesus Christ our Lord, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns for ages of ages. Amen.

VIII. SERMON ON THE VIGIL OF SAINT BENEDICT THE ABBOT. (MARCH XX.) "The Lord has granted to us, most beloved brothers, to celebrate the festive day of the most holy father Benedict; namely, that we may suffer with him when he is enduring sickness, but rejoice with him when he is happily ascending the heavens." For first through a temporal death he paid the debt of nature; then, accompanied by hymn-singing companies of angels, he migrated to the heavenly kingdoms.

In the vigils, the celebrant ought to be afflicted, so that on the solemnity he may be able to rejoice. And now, therefore, we celebrate the vigils of that final resurrection—the true Passover, to be sure—if we break our own wills, if we restrain the impulse of the flesh, if we repel wicked thoughts from the heart, if we bear the cross after Jesus by afflicting ourselves in the heart, and finally if we strive to spare those who offend us, to help the needy, to bring forth the truth with

the mouth, and to keep unfeigned charity in the heart: if we do not devote ourselves to fables, if we do not attend to idle words, if we do not desire any earthly things, and if we do not entangle ourselves in secular business; if we strive to offer pure and daily clean prayers to God, and if it continually delights us to hear the word of God with all the affection of the heart, so that Christ may be heard in the tongue, Christ seen in the life, Christ in the heart, and Christ in the voice. For truly, whoever diligently observes these things, he truly celebrates the vigils of the eternal festivity. And he who now mortifies himself by humbling himself with Christ, it is necessary that he rise together with Him, after all corruption has been utterly consumed.

Therefore, most beloved brothers, let us always celebrate these vigils; let the whole intention of the spirit be directed toward attaining the glory of that eternal happiness, so that, by performing vigils of this kind, we always behold Jesus hanging on the cross, and afterward we may deserve to contemplate Him amidst those very solemnities reigning in the majesty of His Father's glory. Who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns for all ages of ages. Amen.

IX. HOMILY IN HONOR AND PRAISE OF ST. BENEDICT THE ABBOT AND CONFESSOR. (MARCH XXI.)

Simon Peter said to Jesus: Behold, we have left all things and followed you, etc. (Matth. XIX).

On this principal solemnity of our father, we should have applied ourselves with all our strength, had not the noble tongue of Gregory collected his entire itinerary in a magnificent discourse (l. I Dial. throughout). For he so depicted his deeds and life with the clarity of a flowing eloquence, that both the style sparkles with the majesty of the sentences, and the sentences shine back with a clearer style. It is therefore superfluous to add anything after the voice of such a great man, in comparison with whom we know ourselves to be not only uneloquent, but even mute. Let it suffice, however, to have said only this, that he alone will present a military band to the exalted Prince more abundantly than others, and with troops of monks living in the manner of angels, he will fill the palaces of the heavens. How shining and splendid a soldier, therefore, will he stand at the imperial tribunal, full of infinite virtues, accompanied by innumerable hosts, a counselor of the king, a friend of the judge, and the singular enemy of the ancient foe!

Concerning him plainly, and those following him, Simon Peter said to Jesus: "Behold, we have left all things (Matth. XIX)." Truly a friendly conversation of Simon to Jesus, and a discourse more graceful than any oratorical flower; and Simon is worthy to speak more fully with the Savior; for Simon means obedient, and Jesus means savior. Obedience, therefore, speaks with salvation, because eternal salvation is owed by hereditary right to the obedient alone, provided that Peter is there, that is, if obedience does

not waver or stumble, but is founded upon a firm rock. And what does he say? "Behold, we have left all things and followed you." A solemn word, a great promise, a holy work, worthy of blessing, to leave all things and follow Christ. These are the words of a voluntary, persuasive poverty, which brought forth monasteries, which more abundantly filled cloisters with monks and forests with anchorites. For these are the things of which the Church sings: "Because of the words of your lips I have kept hard ways (Psal. XVI)." She is about to receive rest for labor, riches for poverty, a reward for tribulation. It is truly a great thing to leave all things, but greater to follow Christ, since we read that many left all things, yet did not follow Christ. This is the task, this is the labor, here consists the summit of human salvation; nor can we follow Christ unless we leave all things, because He exults as a giant to run the way (Psal. XVIII), and one who is burdened cannot follow Him. No one swims out with bundles, says that orator of secular discipline whom nobility of tongue and depth of sense established as a friend of poverty. He rightly leaves all things who follows Him who is above all things, since our sufficiency is from Him (II Cor. III), and God will be all in all (Col. III).

Behold, he says, we have left all things, not only the resources of the world, but also the desires of the soul: for he does not leave all things who has retained even himself; rather, it profits nothing to have left other things without oneself, since no other burden is heavier to a man than the

man himself. For what tyrant is more cruel, what power more savage to a man than the man's own will? It is never permitted to rest under it, never to sit, and the more it knows you to be fatigued in obeying it, the more it urges, instigates, and burdens, unmindful of piety, knowing no mercy. For own-will has this characteristic, that the more obedient the one obeying it has been, the more it binds him in more cruel chains. It alone is loved, when it alone is worthy of hatred, the beginning of iniquity, the infusion of death, the great destruction of the virtues. "Come therefore, you who labor and are burdened," to the lifter of burdens, and respond to Him in voice and work: "Behold, we have left all things, and followed you (Matth. XI)." Observe that formerly, before the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (Joan. I), the Fathers of ancient time followed God, adhering to the spirit alone by the spirit alone. But now He is to be followed also in the body, so much so that, while the aforesaid Fathers are read to have abounded in earthly riches, henceforth unless one renounces all that he possesses, he cannot be His disciple (Luc. XIV), who, though He was rich, for our sake became poor (II Cor. VIII). Therefore possessions must be left, and own-wills, if we wish to follow Him who had not where to lay His head (Luc. IX), and who came not to do His own will, but the will of Him who sent Him (Joan VI).

There follows: "What then will there be for us?" Already Peter has left all things, already he not only follows, but has followed for a long time; and now for the first time he asks what he is to

receive. What is it, Peter? Did you not promise obedience in the hearing of the ear, not in the making of a pact? But hear now what the Lord God says, and attend to the hope in which we ought to hope while the world fluctuates: "Amen I say to you, that you who have left all things and followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the seat of His majesty, you also shall sit judging (Matth. XIX)." Truly infinite is the sweetness of the Lord's mercies toward His poor ones; nor does He leave them in death, for whom He exposed Himself to death and torments. "You," He says, "who have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the seat of His majesty, you also shall sit judging." What is this other than to say, you shall attain Him whom you follow, if however you pursue Him, as it is written: "Seek peace, and pursue it (Psal. XXXIII)?" So run, therefore, that you may apprehend (I Cor. IX), nor should you wish to rest before you apprehend Him who is sitting and deserve to sit together with Him. He exulted as a giant to run the way (Psal. XVIII); surely in the whole time in which He was seen on the earth and conversed with men (Baruch. III); nor did He rest, until He reached that which He Himself established as the end of labor and sorrow, saying, "My soul is sorrowful even unto death (Matth. XXVI)." Therefore when the Son of Man shall sit on the seat of majesty, who formerly stood in the most ignominious punishment of the cross questioned by insults and likewise by torment, you also shall sit judging, from whom

now judgment begins, who give very little rest to yourselves; why did even He come not to judge, but to be judged, nor to be served, but to serve (Matth. XX)? There truly shall seats sit in judgment (Psal. CXXI). For the Son of God the Savior, by an indivisible unity of natures, according to that which He is as God, sits at the right hand of God (Psal. CIX); according to that which He is as man, He now assists before the face of God for us (Hebr. IX); nor will there be a triumphal session for Him, until God is all in all, that is, the body is joined to the head with such peace that we are similar to Him, even if not equal. For He is still denied by the Jews, mocked by the Gentiles, torn by the heretics, and gravely impugned by false Christians; and do you think He is resting quietly, and does not attend to the eyes of the proud, the impulses of the malignant, the wills of those who resist? But in the regeneration He will sit with those who sit, when we shall be cleansed into the purest brightness in both substances, and He Himself, with His enemies conquered, will enter into glory with His friends. Joining angels to men in everlasting unity, and repairing the losses of the blessed city. Moreover, this whole thing will be in the regeneration. Blessed is that regeneration, which will renew the earth and the heaven, will ally the earth-born with the heaven-dwellers, and will pour back the fountain of perpetual peace with untiring profluency.

It is to be noted, however, that there is one generation and two regenerations. And in the generation indeed, which we contract from a cor-

rupted root, the body is filled with mortality, but the soul with iniquity. In the regeneration of baptism, however, where it behooves us to be born again (Joan. III), the iniquity of the soul is indeed purged, but the mortality of the body is not taken away. Therefore another regeneration is necessary, or resurrection, in which even bodies shall be found configured to the body of the brightness of Christ (Phil. III), provided that the hearts have first been reformed to the meekness and humility of the heart of Christ Himself. Whence he also is blessed who has part in the first resurrection (Apoc. XX), for the reason surely that he is to be a partaker also of the second. In this regeneration, therefore, when the Son of Man shall sit, etc.

This is what the Scripture says in another place: "for their double confusion," it says, "and shame they shall praise their part (Isa. LXI)." For the poverty of those following the Lord has two things: namely, affliction and vileness. Whence the Prophet says: "See," he says, "my humility and my labor (Psal. XXIV)." For that reason, therefore, they shall possess double things in their land (Isa. LXI), so that for vileness there may be the honor of judicial power, and for affliction the refreshment of a most placid session. When, therefore, shall we sit, whose body now sits not, nor the soul, in whom nothing is settled, nothing quiet, nothing remains in the same state? When shall we be freed from the restlessness of this mobility? For our body is not permitted to sit, since both the present sense of pain and the future anxiety of death hinder it, because it is

passible and mortal. But the spirit itself also has no rest because of the expectation of hope and the solicitude of fear. But it will be when the soul shall rest uniquely established in hope (Psal. IV); free indeed from solicitude, but not from expectation. This will happen after the death of the flesh, but before the day of judgment. On that day, however, when the Son of Man shall sit, we shall sit perfectly and in every part, because the body will neither be disturbed by the sense of pain, nor will it be anxious with the fear of death, glorified by the double robe of impassibility and immortality; and we shall be free, as pertains to the soul, from all expectation and solicitude, having nothing less, fearing nothing of danger henceforth, in the most perfect security and most secure perfection. "You shall sit," says the Lord, says the Truth. A solemn session, a grateful rest, a full sufficiency. "O sons of men, how long with a heavy heart, why do you love vanity and seek a lie (Psal. IV)?" For you seek the glory which is from one another, vain surely and lying, since the sons of men are vain, the sons of men are liars (Psal. LXI), and you do not wish for the glory which is from God alone, a glory without doubt remaining and true. Wretched and miserable are they who for a brief pleasure lose the torrent of pleasure, and interrupt the divine mercy for themselves, so that they may never be satisfied by the breasts of His consolation (Psal. XXXV).

But lest the long-awaited expectation should twist the sweetness of the great promise, He tempers the mobility of our mind with a sweeter

discourse. For He Himself knows our frame (Psal. CII), since our faint-heartedness does not sustain the delays of postponement; and therefore by His kindness He meets this thought as well, and comes to meet us also from this side, saying: "And everyone who has left house, or father, or mother, or brother, or wife, or fields, or children for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall possess eternal life (Matth. XIX)." "The mouth of those speaking iniquitous things is surely stopped (Psal. LXII)." And let all those who act iniquitously in vain now be confounded (Psal. XXIV). For we have the promise of this life, which now is, as well as of the future (I Tim. IV), and it is manifest that the promise of the hundredfold belongs to the present time from that which surely follows: "And he shall possess eternal life." But lest any place for obstinate pretending remain, I go to the Gospel according to Mark, where it is openly declared that the promise of the hundredfold belongs to this time. For the Lord says: "There is no one who has left father, or mother, or children, or fields for me and for the Gospel, who does not receive a hundred times as much; now in this time houses, and brothers," etc. (Marc. X). And, that you may wonder more, nor should you estimate this promise, although it is of this time, to be exhibited concerning temporal things, it is added: with persecutions. For what did the holy martyrs, placed in persecution, receive of earthly substance, when even the very earth of their blessed bodies was given into the hands of impious men? That he says, therefore,

a hundred times as much houses, or brothers, etc., can by no means be understood according to the flesh, as is manifest even from this, that no one receives a hundred mothers. Now indeed, if for the communication of possessions and the affection of minds which is among the elect, we wish to understand this promise, it will be able to apply to some, but not to all. For we know that some of the saints have lacked this earthly and human consolation. In the heart, therefore, and in the inner man you must seek that hundredfold, so that you may have now indeed your fruit unto sanctification, but the end eternal life.

Therefore let those who have not yet received the hundredfold search their hearts, and diligently examine all the pursuits of their hands, nor is it doubtful but that they will find a corner and an inn which the Savior does not know. But foxes have holes, and the birds of heaven have nests (Luc. IX). Rather, let them more perfectly leave all things, let them not seek the things that are their own, let them retain nothing for themselves, nothing for others. For there are very many who, although they sufficiently despise their own exaltation and pleasure, nevertheless in a certain way retain for their kinsmen what they ought to have left, laboring for them surely with an incongruous solicitude and one contrary to religion. For how many monks, while they consult more than is just for their parents, have lost their own souls? Therefore let them leave all things, let them follow Christ alone, let them contend to please Christ alone, and let them

adhere to the good pleasure of His will with watchful solicitude; there is no doubt but that they will experience immediately what the Truth promises to those leaving all things and following Him: "He shall receive a hundredfold," He says, "and shall possess eternal life (Matth. XIX)." For that is received on the way for solace; but the other shall be possessed forever for beatitude in the fatherland. But what is this hundredfold, if not the consolations, and visitations, and first-fruits of the spirit, which is sweeter than honey, if not the testimony of our conscience, if not the joyful and most pleasant expectation of the just, if not the memory of the abundance of the sweetness of God, and the truly great multitude of His sweetness, which, as is necessary to say, no one who has experienced it can express in those words, nor anyone who has not experienced it? Not father, not mother, not house, not field, not food, or clothing, not finally anything earthly or corporeal, but clearly it is more delightful than all these, sweeter and more pleasant above all these.

To whom indeed can the whole course of the evangelical lesson be so specially assigned as to our father and teacher blessed Benedict? He left the world with its flower from boyhood, and followed the running Christ with a most rapid course, nor did he cease until he should attain Him. Who among those judging will judge more sublimely? Who so perceived the hundredfold in this life? Who will possess eternal life more gloriously? By his intercession, therefore, may He deign to administer to us the largess of His grace

for the consolation of the present life and the possession of the eternal, He who came that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly (Joan. X), Jesus Christ our Lord, who is blessed forever. Amen.

SERMON X.

ON THE LORD'S SUPPER. (MARCH XXIV.)

Today, most beloved brothers, while we celebrate the solemnities of the Lord's Supper, we recall many sacraments of the heavenly virtues. For today our Savior, who is the head of the angels, while He wiped the feet of His disciples, manifestly proposed to us an example of true humility, so that what the Lord bestowed upon His servants, the servants may not disdain to exhibit to their fellow-servants, and dust may not deny to dust what seemed to so great a majesty to be fitting for Himself. Where when Peter refused to receive the service of so great a Teacher, and He threatened the threats of rejection unless he permitted himself to be washed, at length terrified and immediately acquiescing to the command of the one insisting, he said: "Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head (Joan. XIII)." In which words surely the blessed Apostle signified that our works, together with our thoughts, need to be purified and cleansed by the Lord. Since indeed one works with the hands, but thoughts are brought forth from the mind, which is the head of the inner man. Therefore it is true and perfect purgation when almighty God not only keeps

our works clean and immaculate, but also repels wicked thoughts from our hearts by the infusion of the Holy Spirit.

Today the Savior converted the species of earthly bread and wine into the sacraments of His body and blood, and administered the food of vital nourishment to His disciples. For that forbidden food, which the first man received with swelling pride and an itching throat, diffused through all his viscera the poisons of all vices and of mortal corruption. Against this lethal virus, therefore, an antidote is taken by the Christian people, through which the pestilence of spiritual disease may be healthfully vomited out. By the power of this new sacrament, we immediately expel that leaven of condemned antiquity, so that we may pass from servitude to the liberty of the spirit and to the new unleavened bread of regeneration.

Today the holy chrism is prepared, through which the sanctification of all heavenly charisms is confirmed in us. For this surely is recognized to be that sacrosanct chrism which not only anointed priests, kings, and prophets in the Old Testament, but also sanctified the holy apostles, martyrs, and confessors in the New. Today also we are anointed with this oil of divine virtue, so that struggling in the contest of the spiritual gymnasium we may triumph over the subdued and convicted enemies. Concerning which oil surely the prophet says: "The yoke shall rot before the face of the oil (Isai. X)." For, when by this sacrament of the divine chrism the spirit of

liberty is restored to us, the yoke of the ancient servitude must necessarily be reduced to rottenness. This mystery of the chrism the prophet David undoubtedly recognized, when he sang that our faces were to be exhilarated in oil (Psal. CIII). Truly when the crimes of the world were formerly expiated by the poured-out flood (Gen. VII); he presented the likeness of the future gift of the dove, when he announced peace restored to the earth with an olive branch. For the Scripture says: "But having waited yet seven other days, Noe again sent forth the dove from the ark. And she came to him in the evening, carrying a branch of olive with green leaves in her mouth (Gen. VIII)." In the sending forth and the return of the dove the number seven is placed, because surely the gifts of the Holy Spirit are known to be seven. But at the evening hour the dove returns to the ark, because the Holy Spirit, who in the beginning of the world was moved over the waters (Gen. I), has now, as the age grows toward evening, filled the holy Church.

To this also pertains the sacrament of the divine chrism, which almighty God gave as a command to His servant Moses, that he should first wash Aaron his brother with water, and then establish him as priest through the infusion of this ointment: "Aaron," He said, "and his sons you shall anoint, and you shall sanctify them, that they may execute the office of priesthood to me. To the sons of Israel also you shall say: This oil of unction shall be holy to me unto your generations (Exod. XXX)." Furthermore, just

as when the world was already washed by the flood, the dove returned to the ark with an olive branch, so also Aaron was first washed with water, then anointed with chrism, so that he might be promoted to the priesthood. So even now anyone coming to the grace of regeneration is first immersed in the waters of holy baptism, so that afterward he may be sealed with the mystery of the divine chrism.

Moreover, that oil, which consecrated both the tabernacle of the covenant and all its utensils, clearly figured this sacrament of the divine chrism. For the Lord said to Moses: "You shall take oil from the olive groves by the measure of a hin, and you shall make the holy oil of unction, an ointment composed by the work of a perfumer, and you shall anoint with it the tabernacle of testimony, and the ark of the testament and the table with its bases, the lampstand and its utensils, the altars of incense and of holocaust, and all the furniture which pertains to their worship, and you shall sanctify all things, and they shall be the Holy of holies; whoever shall touch them shall be sanctified (Exod. XXX)." Therefore the mystical chrism, which then consecrated the tabernacle in the desert, now sanctifies the Church in the new testament. Which sacrament also then seems to have been more richly and more copiously fulfilled, when our Redeemer, having been baptized, came out from the waters of the Jordan, and with the heavens opened, the Holy Spirit immediately descended upon Him in the form of a dove in a manifest vision, and soon

the voice of the Father thundered: "This," He said, "is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (Matth. III)." Clearly proving Him to be the one to whom David, formerly taught by the same Spirit, said: "The Lord your God has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows (Psal. XLIV)." From that same Spirit, then, who also now consetrates our chrism, the nature of all waters conceived such power, that in whatever flowing waters one to be washed is immersed under the profession of the deifying Trinity, the full and perfect mystery of the new regeneration is divinely fulfilled.

This chrism of ours also typically designated that oil with which the Lord commanded the seven lamps in the tabernacle to be filled and to burn continually. "Command," He said, "the sons of Israel, that they bring to you the purest and clear oil from olives to prepare the lamps continually outside the veil of the testimony in the tabernacle of the covenant, and Aaron shall set them from evening until morning before the Lord, by a perpetual worship and rite in your generations; it shall be set always on the cleanest lampstand in the sight of the Lord (Lev. XXIV)." But what is signified by the seven lamps in the tabernacle, if not the seven Churches in the one Christian people? In which surely the oil is commanded to burn without ceasing, because in these sincere charity, which is given through the Holy Spirit, ought to glow with the fire of double love, and always to sparkle with bright and conspicuous works. But since there is undoubtedly

one catholic, universal Church, as is said through Solomon: "My dove is one, the one of her mother (Cant. VI);" why is it that in the sacred discourses seven Churches are reported to be, if not because she who is one through the unity of faith, is sevenfold through as many gifts of the Holy Spirit? For these are those seven women who, according to the prophecy of the prophet, received one husband (Isai. IV). Moreover, the husband of the Church is Christ. Clearly all the foods of the holy Scriptures are seasoned with this oil of the Holy Spirit, so that the viscera of our souls may be fattened. This oil, infused into the vital feasts of the heavenly discourse, tastes sweet in the throat of the soul, whose stomach it both refreshes and whose taste it sweetens for the one perceiving. For it is written: "The letter kills, but the spirit gives life (II Cor. III)." Whence it is to be known that all the pages of the sacred volumes are seasoned with the oil of the Holy Spirit. Wherefore also in the book of Numbers it is read: "Because the people went about, and collecting manna ground it with a mill, or beat it in a mortar, cooking it in a pot, and making from it cakes of a taste like oiled bread (Num. XI)."

Furthermore, we have had a transition as if through many jars in the storehouse of the Lord, so that we might be able to arrive at the oiled part alone, as if at a vessel of oil. Finally manna, by which the Israelite people lived, designated the sacred discourse, by which the Christian religion is nourished and quickened. Which surely is truly oiled, because it is sprinkled with the mystical

unction of the Holy Spirit. It is to be noted, indeed, that the same manna, which in the book of Numbers is called oiled, in Exodus is read to have had the taste not of oil, but rather of honey: "Its taste," he says, "was like flour with honey (Exod. XVI)." Why is it that that angelic food is first said to have exhibited the sweetness of honey, and afterward provided the pleasantness not of honey, but of oil, if not because our Redeemer, the author and founder of all the sacred Scriptures, whom that manna principally figured, both before the passion exhibited the sweetness of miracles like honey, and after His ascension poured out the Holy Spirit upon His disciples like oil (Act. I and II)? For He seems to have offered the sweetness of honey while He sparkled with signs and wonders; but to have given the pleasantness of oil then, when He diffused the gifts of the Holy Spirit the Paraclete upon His apostles. Which order Moses fittingly held, when in Deuteronomy he typically sang concerning the rock, which was nevertheless also manna: "They sucked," he says, "honey from the rock and oil from the firm rock (Deut. XXXII)." Concerning this oil of mystical unction the bride says to the bridegroom in the Canticles: "Your name is oil poured out (Cant. I)." The name of the bridegroom is asserted to be oil poured out, because just as Christ is named from chrism, so consequently from Christ one is called a Christian.

Because therefore, most beloved, through the grace of our Savior we have already perceived the sacrament of this chrism, because we already

bear on our forehead the expressed seal of royal dignity, let us strive to live so nobly that our conversation may be able to harmonize with such divine and such magnificent mysteries. For we are those to whom it is said through the first of the apostles: "You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people, that you may announce the virtues of Him who called you out of darkness into His admirable light (I Petr. II)." And certainly it is ignoble enough to live under the servitude of carnal vices, we who, with God adopting us, obtain the dignity of a royal race. It is too shameful that we should be given to earthly concupiscence, we who are called both sons of God and deserve to be enrolled through the grace of Christ to obtain the heavenly inheritance. Plainly, because it is established that we are disciples of a crucified teacher, it is worthy that we also show ourselves dead to this wicked world. Therefore, from carrying the cross after our Master and Lord, let no care of temporal business hinder us, let no love of earthly substance or carnal allure avert us. Let us direct the eyes of our faith and devotion through the way of the cross already paved and proposed to us, so that walking through it with unoffended steps, we may deserve to reach Him who is the author and provoker to the glory of the resurrection. Who with God the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns for ages of ages. Amen.

* SERMON XI. ON THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN MARY. (MARCH 25)

Exult, brothers, in the Lord, because there follows a discourse concerning that Lady who claims for herself a singular principality in our hearts. This is she to whose name you humbly incline your body, at whose hours you reverently assist, whose memory you continually frequent. This is she who sweetly becomes honey-sweet to your affections, because the multitude of her sweetness is great. For her spirit is sweet above honey; in whom the sweet Lord, with all His sweetness, came upon her. For when God had made all His works very good (Gen. I), He made this better, consecrating for Himself in her a golden resting-place, in which alone He might recline after the tumults of angels and men, and find rest. This is what nature wonders at, the angel reveres, man fears, heaven is amazed at, earth trembles at, hell dreads. In her womb the majesty of the Most High was wonderfully liquefied, and as if with fatness and richness it filled the lands, infused the heavens, and sprinkled the lower regions. Here the High and Immense emptied Himself (Philip. II), sending into our bosom a good measure, and pressed down and shaken together (Luc. VI). Here He was anointed with the oil of gladness by divine hands, and as if from the altar He was consecrated into the high priest. Ascending from this altar to the altar of the cross, drenched in His own blood as if by oil of another kind, now not only consecrated, but also

consecrating, He coupled the whole body of the worldly machine with a more bountiful bond. Let sorrow therefore depart, let sadness flee, let grief be eliminated, let rancor withdraw, so that it may be permitted to be at leisure and see with Moses this great vision (Exod. III): how God is conceived in this womb, the devil is deceived, the lost is received, the undue is accepted. Affection draws me entirely, but prayer fails, and rich thought is confounded by the poverty of the voice. My inward parts glow, and boil over into a wavy depth, but the coldness of my tongue cools the overflowing heaps.

What is it, most blessed one? Shall I fall asleep so gradually silent, that I may be mute there, where every creature speaks? Nevertheless I will not be silent, and I will not rest, until your face goes forth as brightness, and the word conceived of you, if not as a lamp, at least as a spark, be kindled (Isai. LXII). It moves me, I confess, that with God permitting it rational creatures sin, and for many thousands of years both heavenly and earthly things seem to stand in vain, those being about to serve, these being destroyed. That great city stands defrauded of the numerosity of its citizens, and from the starry palaces a manifold multitude of inhabitants is propelled; the starry fires are obscured, I speak of the sun, the moon and the stars, and they are punished with much brightness of light taken away from them, the earth is cursed, the succession of men is condemned, "and every creature, according to the Apostle, groans and travails (Rom.

VIII)." Almighty God is silent, and His ordaining omnipotence dissembles such great confusion. At last Mary is born, and going forth to cloudy years she puts on a beautiful appearance, which may allure God Himself, and turn the eyes of the divinity upon herself. See what that not least explorer of the secrets of God says concerning this: "Hear, daughter, and see, and incline your ear, and forget your people, and the house of your father. And the king has desired your beauty, since He is the Lord your God (Psal. XLIV)." Therefore the rod of Jesse buds from the tortuous root of the human race, and breaking out from the tree of the patriarchs into height and rectitude, it ignores all knottiness, it does not know the darkness of leaves, it does not have anything unfruitful. That vehement lover sees and burns, and sings the whole epithalamium in her praises, where the bridegroom is manifestly induced breathing most sincere love, and no longer able to dissemble what he suffers. Immediately that heavenly assembly is called forth, and according to the prophet God enters into counsel, gathers a council (Isai. XVI), makes a discourse with the angels about their restoration, about the redemption of men, about the renovation of the elements, and with them being amazed and wondering for joy, about the manner of redemption. And immediately from the treasury of divinity the name of Mary is unfolded, and through her, and in her, and from her, and with her, it is decreed that all this must be done, so that just as without Him nothing was made, so without her nothing

should be remade. The letter is handed to Gabriel, in which is contained the salutation of the Virgin, the incarnation of the Redeemer, the manner of redemption, the fullness of grace, the magnitude of glory, and the multitude of joy.

The angel Gabriel was therefore sent by God to the Virgin, who, after he spoke to her, felt God slipped into her inward parts, and His majesty concluded within the brevity of that virginal womb (Luc. I). O womb more diffused than the heavens, wider than the lands, more capacious than the elements, which shuts in the whole Concluder of all things, in whom the God of glory is reclined. Finally also the archangel says: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you (Ibid.):" because the Holy Spirit was about to snatch her entirely, chosen and pre-elected by God, for Himself and to distinguish her with heavenly ornaments. Already she was to be consecrated into a place of pleasure, from which that fountain ought to ascend, which should irrigate the whole surface of the earth (Gen. II).

We have scattered words enough thus far, and have pre-sown diverse things in volatile discourses; now let us insist here, if perchance we may be able to elicit something worthy. "A river," says the Scripture, "went out from the place of pleasure to irrigate the whole surface of the earth: which is divided from there into four heads (Ibid.)." That river is my God Jesus, who goes out from two places of pleasure: from the womb of the Father, and from the womb of the Virgin. Whence the Prophet says: "The Lord our

God is a glorious river, leaping forth into a thirsty land (Isai. LIX)." But by ineffable differences He goes out far differently from the Father than from the mother: because even if the temporal birth is glorious, much more glorious is the eternal. To you praying, therefore, I wish to open what I feel concerning both generations, not that I presume to expound anything, since this is beyond the strength of all (how much more my own?), and it is of extreme madness to wish to speak the ineffable, especially for an unskilled man. For I have not forgotten Solomon saying: "As he who eats too much honey vomits it; so he who is a searcher of majesty shall be oppressed by glory (Prov. XXV)." For concerning both I think it is said through the prophet: "Who shall declare His generation? (Isai. lIII.)" Because surely that of the Father is ineffable and inaccessible and pervious to no creature; in this sense I believe the Apostle said of God: "Who alone inhabits inaccessible light (I Tim. VI)," when even the purer natures are reverberated by such an intuition, nor are they able to break into the abyss of such great brightness. The Son Himself also protests: "No one knows the Son, except the Father, nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son, and he to whom the Son should wish to reveal Him (Matth. XI):" Not as He is, but as one can grasp, to whom such great condescension is revealed. Whence also that sublime soul, which had been snatched up even to the third heaven into the riches of glory (II Cor. XII), says: "I do not think myself to have apprehended (Phil. III)." Therefore

the truest definition is that no intellect at all penetrates that generation of the Begetter and the Begotten. This also concerning the mother I judge inextricable for every human creature: I do not know whether it can be apprehended by that more excellent nature. For who may comprehend the conjunction of the flesh and the Word; in what manner God and man meet in one person with the properties of the natures safe and undisturbed? Each one abounds in his own sense; I believe this surpasses all sense, adhering to the footsteps of the ancient men, who left sound and unshaken sentences upon this.

Returning therefore to the paternal generation, we judge the Father to be the place of pleasure, although God is illocal, but we cannot explain the efficiencies of things except through common discourses. Moreover, he who reads the Apostle saying: "Since from Him, and through Him, and in Him are all things (Rom. XI)," understands that all pleasure is in Him, and another from that twelve-fold summit [the Apostles] similarly eructating: "Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, descending from the Father of lights (Jac. I)." The Son Himself also says: "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God (Joan. XVII)." The knowledge of the Father, therefore, is eternal life; and where there is eternal life, there is sempiternal pleasure, because God from God, light from light, Lord from Lord is begotten from the womb of the Father. Moreover, He goes out by identity, because He is the same as the Father. I say the

same according to substance, not according to person. He goes out also by equality, because with equal omnipotence He regards the Begetter, since all things which the Father can do, the Son also can do, as He Himself testifies: "All things that the Father does, the Son also does; nor can the Son do anything, except what He has seen the Father doing (Joan. V)." He goes out also by eternity, because although He is generated, He is not posterior to the Begetter, but both are of one antiquity, if however you do not abhor the novelty of the word. Which although it may signify in some way what is said, it is nevertheless far from the majesty of the sentence. He goes out by similitude, because He is similar to the Father, the image of the Father, the brightness of glory and the figure of His substance (Hebr. I). He goes out by alternity, because He is another from Him —another, I say, not another thing: "I," He says, "and the Father are one (Joan. X)." He said "one" [unum, neuter], not "one" [unus, masculine], because "one" signifies the unity of substance, but "are" signifies the property of persons. Thus therefore and in a far more excellent manner the Son going out from the Father inundates the angelic stations, because, according to Solomon, "the Word of God in the highest is a fountain of wisdom (Eccli. I)." The boy harper had drunk with a full belly from this fountain, when he said: "With You is the fountain of life (Psal. XXXV)," because not only are You life, but also Your Son is the fountain of life. And, that he might openly

show what he felt, he subjoined: "In Your light we shall see light (Ibid.)."

"To irrigate the whole surface of the earth (Gen. II)." What earth is that replaced in that summit of the heavens, which the glorious river does not flow past and irrigate? The kingdom of heaven is the land of the living, concerning which the saint says: "My portion, O Lord, in the land of the living (Psal. CXLI)." And: "I believe to see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living (Psal. XXVI)." And: "I will please the Lord in the region of the living (CXIV)." This irrigation is unspeakable. For the angels are inebriated from the richness of the house of God, and are given to drink from the torrent of His pleasure. Here I know not what to say, because a great stupor oppresses both sense and mind. Where are the oratorical discourses, which all that chorus of philosophers forged in the rhetorical furnace? Where are the giants named from of old, who from the beginning were of great stature, knowing war, languishing about the battles of words? Was not that greatest giant—I speak of Plato—repulsed from the understanding of such a most pure truth? Touching with a most sharp genius of mind, but not reaching the divinity of God, did he not say: I have found one, which works all things; and another, through which all things are effected; but a third I could not find? Rightly ignorant of the Holy Spirit, who had not been infused into him, who is the master of holy revelations, who reveals to Paul what eye has not seen, as the same Apostle glories: "To us," he says,

"God has revealed (I Cor. II)." Through what, Apostle? "Through His Spirit (Ibid.)," not through our spirit, which the philosophers followed and were both seduced and seduced others. Our philosopher, who understood above the elders and above all teaching him (Psal. CXVIII), let us hear what he felt concerning this: "Watering," he says, "the mountains from His higher places (Psal. CIII)." Surely he teaches concerning the more sublime angels, who not through a mirror in an enigma, but face to face behold the very substance of God with untiring eyes (I Cor. XIII).

There follows: "Which from there is divided into four heads." Into which four heads let us speak briefly, because a great way remains for us. Into admiration, by which that whole more worthy creature is stupefied concerning the glory of the Creator and the reason of His glory. Into purity, because they do not drink from the torrent of pleasure in an earthen vessel or the fragility of the human complexion, but with the veil removed, they draw waters in joy from the fountains of the Savior (Isai. XII). Into satiety, because even if they desire to look into Him, nevertheless desire does not induce necessity, or necessity misery, but in a more wonderful way, they always desire so that they may always be satisfied, and they are always satisfied so that they may always desire. Into security, because certain of their stability, they are immersed in perennial joys, expecting the blessed hope and the coming of the glory of the great God (Tit. II), when there shall be one fold and one shepherd (Joan. X), and that heav-

enly Jerusalem shall be consummated into itself. Thus this river flows in through the angelic workshops. But faith captures all these things, reason knows them not, human intellect is ignorant of them. These are perhaps those four things which the vessel of election [Paul] divides by a happy quaternary in the Epistle to the Hebrews, saying: "You have not approached a smoking mountain, but to Mount Sion, to the city of the living God Jerusalem, to the company of many thousands of angels, to the Church of the firstborn written in the heavens (Hebr. XII)."

Now let us gird ourselves to see in what manner He goes out from the Virgin, because this going out is sweeter and more affectionate to human misery, which strikes the breasts of those beholding, moistens the eyes, and overflows the faces of lovers with blessed fountains. Here I understand the place of pleasure to be the womb of Mary, in which the Lord accumulated all the delights of delights, concerning whose delights the Holy Spirit in an admiring discourse in the Song of Love thus eructates: "Who is she that ascends from the desert, abounding in delights? (Cant. VI.)" Does the Most High have pleasure in the angels, in whom He Himself found depravity? Does He in the constellation or scintillation of the stars, some of which are turned into blood, others fall from heaven, others are obscured in darkness? Does He in the air, or fire, or winds? By no means, because "the Lord is not in the fire, the Lord is not in the commotion, the Lord is not in the spirit (III Reg. XIX)," if he is true who was

taken up into heaven in a chariot of fire and with horses of fire (IV Reg. II). Does He in the waters, where the raging and tortuous Leviathan dwells, or on the earth, which under the curse of Adam sends forth thorns and thistles? The womb of the Virgin is the only place of pleasure.

From this He goes forth with humanity, because clothed in the hairshirt of our mortality, He appeared visible to human eyes; and making a rod from the Virgin, and a line from the book of generation, He attached the hook of divinity, which He covered with virginal flesh, so that the great dragon, enticed to the flesh, might feel beneath it the iron of the divine power. He goes forth also with novelty, because never was a man born as He is fed. For the first man was first formed from the earth; second, the woman was fashioned from his side; third, Cain was begotten by both in the customary order of birth. He alone is born of a virgin alone, and the humanized divinity seals the womb of the Virgin with a new and singular birth. Where now is the eloquent indeed, but sterile loquacity of Aristotelian subtlety? If she brought forth, did she lie with a man? Whether it will or not, privation is turned into a habit, nor is the Terminator of all things bound by dialectical terms, at whose command nature brings forth and custom grows unusual. He goes forth also with clarity. For as He is born, all that luminous serenity of the starry lights is buried, and a brighter star, pre-sparkling with clearer rays, snatches for itself the whole position of the sky. Kings walk in the splendor of His rising (Isai.

LX), for behold the kings are gathered together, they have come together as one. They themselves, seeing God and man thus being born, and a mother and Virgin bringing forth, were amazed, they were troubled, they were moved, trembling took hold of them (Psal. XLVII) in the light of such great miracles. He goes forth also with poverty, because wrapped in the cheapest swaddling clothes and reclined in the hardest manger (Luke II), even then He prefigured the law of martyrdom for His most holy limbs. He goes forth secretly, because that most subtle investigator of frauds is excluded from the height of such great condescension. Hence it is that, fatigued by ambiguous altercations, he now tempts Him, now calls the tempted one the Son of the Most High, now prepares the cross, now destroys it, with commands through the woman, his accustomed instrument: "Have nothing to do with that just man (Matth. XXVII)."

There follows: "To water the entire surface of the earth." To expiate the earthly misery which that first sinner had left to us as an inheritance. I wish that the Apostle would here distribute Him for me into four heads, just as above, because I receive his exposition more securely. "Who was made for us," he says, "wisdom, justice, sanctification, and redemption (I Cor. I)." Coming indeed to us, who were in prison, He first of all dispelled the darkness of our ignorance by the light of His wisdom, then through the justice which is from faith (Rom. X), He loosed the ropes of our sins, sanctifying us in His body,

redeeming us in the passion of His body. "For the Lord looses those who are bound, the Lord illuminates the blind (Psal. CXLV); He sanctifies His tabernacle (Psal. XLV); He redeemed from the hand of the enemy (Psal. CV)." He is divided also into patience, by which He sustains sinners; into mercy, by which He cherishes the penitent; into largesse, by which He exalts those who profit; into fortitude, by which He preserves those who are exalted. Concerning this second quaternary I have conversed with your fraternity throughout this whole Advent, interweaving moral things with mystical ones through the course of the rivers and the interpretation of names; whether anything was done worthily, you shall see. But we cannot compress everything into the present sermon, avoiding weariness.

I have four heads sweeter than the previous ones, which perhaps will more pleasantly please your hearts. For our Lord, lifted up on the cross, most generously sent forth streams of blood from four parts of His body. For with thorns piercing His most holy head with its snowy neck bent back, and with nails through His feet and hands, and a lance transfixing His side, the precious blood gushed forth, by whose sprinkling the judge passed into a father, the angry into the mild, the rod into mercy, captivity into a crown. Christ, therefore, is a fountain hidden and occult in the heavens; a fountain patent and open on earth. There from the womb of the Father, here He goes forth from the womb of the Virgin. There living He waters the land of the living, here dying

the land of the dying. There He is divided into an admirable quaternary; here into a sweet one. Sweet Lord, sweet lady, because He is my God my mercy, she my lady the gate of mercy. May the mother lead us to the Son, the daughter to the Father, the bride to the bridegroom, who is blessed forever. Amen.

SERMON XII

ON THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD. (MARCH 27)

On that of Psalm II: I have asked my Father, and He gave me the nations. Alleluia.

If we consult the aid [f., auditorium] of legal experts, the first word of the proposed chapter is thus described: to petition is to set forth one's own desire or that of one's friend in law before him who presides over the jurisdiction, or to contradict the desire of another. This act is public, and it is the office of advocates, who, relying on the protection of a glorious voice, raise up the fallen, repair the fatigued, and provide no less for the human race than if they defended themselves and their country with shields and breastplates.

In executing this act we ought to attend to who petitions, whom, where, and what he petitions. An advocate petitions a judge in law for his own thing, or petitions for himself, an action having been proposed. In the present business the advocate is Christ; the judge is God the Father; and the place of law is the gibbet of the cross; the thing petitioned is the Church from the nations; the name of the action is the petition for

the inheritance. Rightly we call Jesus Christ an advocate. Whence John: "If anyone has sinned, we have an advocate with the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ; He is the propitiation for our sins (I John II)." This advocate set forth His desire before the Father when He was offered for the salvation of the human race, because He Himself willed it (Isa. LIII). His desire is our salvation, which thirsting for on the cross, He is read to have loved His own unto the end (John XIII). But also this was the desire of His friends, to whom He said: "Now I will not call you servants, but friends, because the servant knows not what his lord does. But I have called you friends, because all things that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you (John XV)." Likewise: "Greater love no man has, than that a man lay down his life for his friends (Ibid.)." Fittingly He petitions the Father who was always heard. For it is said both commonly and vulgarly: He goes securely to the plea who has a father as judge. For concerning Him the Father said: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (Matth. III and XVII)." For since the Son is of the same substance with the Father, in the human nature indeed, which He united to Himself personally, He petitions for us, or alleges the propitious judge, and brings back the fruit of His desire. Nor incongruously do we call Him Father, when in the person of the Son the Prophet says: "Judge, O Lord, those who harm me, fight against those who fight against me (Psal. XXXIV)." And the Son Himself: "I do not

seek my glory; there is one who seeks and judges (John VIII)."

In many places of holy Scripture a certain order of judgments seems to be instituted and preserved by God Himself. A certain simple and upright man, fearing God, when he went out from the church after the morning office had been completed, and was asked by his disciples: "What did you hear in the church, father?" He responded: "I heard four, I noted six." This was clearly a subtle and faithful response. For he had heard four verses of the eighteenth Psalm, namely: "The law of the Lord is immaculate, converting souls (Psal. XVIII)," and three others which follow, in which six things are noted, which are: law, testimony, justice, precept, fear, judgments. In these are expressed partly the persons who are necessary in law, partly their acts. For the Lord, who is the judge, and the law, according to which it is judged, and the office of witnesses under this name, testimony, and the merits of the actor and the thing are designated by this name, justice. For the merits of causes are opened by the assertion of the parties. The sentence of the judge under this name, precept; the offices of the accuser and the executor are indicated by the last two names, which are fear and judgments. The first five rest upon two accompanying things, the sixth upon four: "The law of the Lord is immaculate, converting souls. The testimony of the Lord is faithful, providing wisdom to little ones. The justices of the Lord are right, gladdening hearts. The precept of the Lord is lucid,

illuminating the eyes. The fear of the Lord is holy, remaining for ever and ever. The judgments of the Lord are true, justified in themselves. Desirable above gold and much precious stone, and sweeter than honey and the honeycomb (Ibid.)." These are truly said to be of the Lord. For there is a law which is not of the Lord, such as that of sin, of which the Apostle says: "I see another law in my members, repugnant to the law of my mind and captivating me in the law of sin, which is in my members (Rom. VII)." There are also human justices, of which it is said: "All our justices are like a menstruous rag (Isai. LXIV)." There are also human precepts, which Peter says ought not to be obeyed: "It behooves," he says, "to obey God rather than men (Acts V)." Human fear indeed is reproved by the Lord. Whence He says: "Do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul (Matth. X)."

In the proposed verses, however, all things are said to be of God. First, namely, the law has two accidents, which are immaculate; converting souls, whether you understand it of the natural law, or the written, or the law of grace. For to each of these three laws, namely the natural, the written, and the law of grace, these two agree. For it ought to be immaculate and converting souls. The natural law had these two precepts. "What you do not wish to be done to you, do not do to another; and what you wish to be done to you, do to another (Tob. IV)." Which are not to harm, and to profit. And this as much as to the first, namely immaculate; as much as to the second,

"converting souls." In the first not harmful, in the second beneficial; in the first without the stain of malice, in the second converting souls to the mildness of benevolence. For since three natural powers are in the soul, namely, anger, reason, concupiscence; concupiscence was given so that you might be moved to desiring those things which are licit to you; likewise to indignation against those things which are illicit; reason was given in the middle, restraining and directing both, lest it be moved so much beyond the limits of anger, and lest concupiscence desire illicit things. Therefore the natural law, as much as is in itself, is immaculate. The written law also is immaculate and converting souls. Immaculate, that is, without the filth of idolatry, converting souls to serving God; which only the children of Israel did. But the law of grace is truly immaculate and converting souls. For even the Church is led by the law: for she is said to be without stain and wrinkle (Ephes. V); without the stain of crime, without the wrinkle of simulation. Also the evangelical law is without the error of heresy, converting souls simply and directly without the figment of hypocrisy. Attend to these steps, because the first law is immaculate; the second, more so; the third, most of all, and so also converting souls.

The testimony of the Lord has two accidents, namely faithful and providing wisdom to little ones. Whatever the Lord testifies in the holy writings, either promising or commanding, is called the testimony of the Lord. Therefore testimonies are contained in promises and precepts, because

what He promises, He fulfills, whether rewards to the just or torments to the unjust. Providing wisdom to little ones, in as much as it is commanding; because those who are little in knowledge are rendered wise from the precepts of the Lord, as is shown there: "From your mandates I have understood." There is therefore a faithful testimony of the Lord in the explanation of His precepts. In the first understand promises and threats; in the second prohibitions. He is faithful, promising and threatening; providing wisdom to little ones, prohibiting and commanding.

The justices of the Lord are converted by two accidents, which are right, gladdening hearts. The justices of the Lord are the works of the just: whence they themselves are called just. But they are said to be of the Lord because, "every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, descending from the Father of lights (James I)." For what do you have, O man, that you have not received? (I Cor. IV). Likewise: "By the grace of God I am what I am (I Cor. XV)." Those works, moreover, can be called of justice which are born from faith and are consummated by love. For just as without faith it is impossible for anyone to please God (Hebr. II [XI]), so also faith without works is dead (James II). Faith, however, which works through love, both profits and suffices for salvation. These are the justices of the Lord, right, gladdening hearts through a clear conscience.

The precept rejoices in two accidents. For it is lucid, illuminating the eyes from its doctrine. There are indeed some things that are lucid and

not illuminating; as a coal without a flame is lucid, yet it does not illuminate. A flame without a coal both shines and illuminates. The precept of the Lord is lucid without the confusion of sentences; it illuminates the eyes from the infusion of graces. Whence that: "Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths (Psal. CXVIII)." And blessed Peter: "To whom you do well," he says, "attending as to a lamp shining in a dark place (II Peter I)." Singularly, moreover, the precept is placed, although there are many precepts: because, as Gregory says (Hom. 27 on the Gospel). The precept of the Lord is both one and many; many because of the diversity of the work; one in the root of charity.

"The fear of the Lord is holy, remaining for ever and ever (Psal. CX)." Human fear being excluded, here filial or chaste fear is noted.

In this, that it is called "the fear of the Lord is holy," chaste is understood; and the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

That which is called "remaining for ever and ever" designates filial fear.

The judgments of the Lord indeed are carried by their own quaternary. They are true, justified in themselves, desirable above gold and much precious stone, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. The judgments of the Lord are retributions, by which He either punishes the reprobate or rewards the just. These, although they are often hidden, are nevertheless always true; and just, following the truth of the just judge. They are justified in themselves, not like human

judgments, which are formed from elsewhere, such as from the allegations of advocates, and from the depositions of witnesses and the recitations of instruments. Whence also through this judges are often deceived, and although the judicial order is preserved, nevertheless sometimes the innocent is condemned and the guilty is absolved. But the judgments of God receive justification from themselves, as is said through the prophet: "Not according to the vision of the eyes shall He judge, nor according to the hearing of the ears shall He reprove, but He shall judge the poor in justice, and reprove in equity for the mild of the earth (Isai. XI)." They are, moreover, desirable, that is, most worthy to be desired above riches and delights. In gold and precious stone understand riches; in honey and the honeycomb delights. Riches, moreover, are understood especially in money and power. Through the precious stone, which the powerful and noble use, the glory of power. Furthermore, some riches are acquired with difficulty, others without difficulty. In honey, which is liquid, delights and pleasures without labor. In the honeycomb, which contains honey and wax together, pleasures with difficulty.

Behold, a certain judicial play occurs to us in the Scriptures representing God the Father. The place of law, in which our Advocate petitions, was the gibbet of the cross. For since by their office advocates have to stand, He, not standing, but with His whole body extended on the wood of the cross, alleged before the Father for us,

setting forth His desire and that of His friends, and contradicting the desire of the adversary even unto the effusion of His own blood. He petitions for His own thing, that is the human race, which He Himself created, of which He had the true lordship. He petitioned that the Church from the nations be converted, setting forth as the proper heir the petition for the inheritance, and desiring to be sent into possession by right. Moreover, the petition for the inheritance is set forth from order and regular law against him who possesses as heir or as possessor. He possesses as heir who says that he is the heir, when he is not; one possesses as possessor when he can protect his possession by no title, who, if he be asked why he possesses, alleges no other cause except "because I thus possess." Rightly, however, our Lord set forth against the devil, who as a malignant plunderer was possessing the inheritance of the Lord as possessor. Concerning whom the prophet: "Woe to you who plunder, shall not you yourself be plundered? (Isai. XXXIII)"

In this advocacy or petition of our Advocate, the Church especially rejoices on the day of the Lord's resurrection, because the Advocate petitioned, because He impetrated the things petitioned, because He obtained and possessed the things impetrated. Hence it is that she subjoins praise in a threefold way. For introducing the Son speaking to the Father and saying: "I have petitioned my Father," the Church responds: "Alleluia," that is, "Praise to God," because You have petitioned. Likewise: "He gave me the nations."

And the Church responds: "Alleluia," that is, "Praise to God," because You have impetrated. Likewise: "For an inheritance to me (Psal. II)." She responds: "Alleluia," because You have obtained and possessed.

Let us therefore also be associated in this praise of the universal Church, so that entering with the elect into the inheritance of the Lord, we may be able to arrive at the resurrection of the Lord, to rejoice perpetually. Which may He Himself deign to grant, who lives and reigns through all ages of ages. Amen.

APRIL. XXIII. Sermon on St. George the martyr. XXV. Sermon I on St. Mark the evangelist. Sermon II on the same. Sermon III on the same. XXVIII. Sermon I on St. Vitalis the martyr Sermon II on the same.

SERMON XIII.

ON ST. GEORGE THE MARTYR. (APRIL 23)

Today's festivity, most beloved, doubles the joy of the Paschal glory, and like a precious gem gold, to which it is pressed, illustrates with the beauty of its own splendor. Fitly, indeed, at this most special time has it been granted to the blessed George to triumph, when, the inclemency of the winter whirlwind having passed, the fuel of the south wind being loosened, the joyful earth eagerly brings forth, and with the various flowers of herbs and trees breaking out, it grows youthful, so to speak, as if with adolescent age. For George in Greek sounds as "cultivator of

the earth" in Latin speech, who indeed, according to the presage of his name, not only cultivated the field of his own mind with the disciplines of spiritual exercise, but also with the plowshare of holy exhortation and pious correction plowed the earthly hearts of many, and having uprooted the briars of vices, planted in them fruitful groves of virtues.

Deservedly, therefore, today the soul of this blessed martyr, after the bloody rage of the furious prince, after the inhumanity of the executioners savagely raging, after the exquisite tortures of the lacerated body, after the unjust torments of fire, and iron, pitch, and sulfur, after finally the blows of scourges, after the darkness of prisons, as if after the winter storms of raging winds and snows, deserved to hear this oracle of divine vocation: "Come," it says, "my dove, my spouse, my beautiful one; now the winter has passed, the rain has gone and receded; flowers have appeared in our land; the time of pruning has arrived (Cant. II)." Plainly he was translated from military service to military service, because he changed the office of the earthly tribunate, which he was performing, for the profession of Christian military service, and, as a truly strenuous soldier first bestowing all his things on the poor, he cast off the burden of earthly faculty; and thus free and unencumbered, and girded with the breastplate of faith, the fervent warrior of Christ immersed himself into the very line of the thick combat, the order having been observed, to be sure, that he would first lay down the weight of

things, and so afterwards leap forth undaunted to the field of combat.

Whence it is that in the law it is commanded, that a man who is fearful and of a trembling heart should not go out to war, but let him go, it says, and return to his land, lest he make the hearts of his brothers to tremble, just as he himself is terrified (Deut. XX). By which words indeed we are clearly taught that those who still fear to be stripped of earthly riches cannot fight strongly and suitably for the defense of the faith; and it is more tolerable that, returning home in a certain way, they live ignobly and as cowards, than that they turn away others along with themselves from the glory of triumphing through examples of degenerate fear. But the blessed George, kindled with the fire of the Holy Spirit, and unassailably fortified with the standard of the cross, so engaged with the wicked king, that he both conquered the prince of all the wicked in his satellite, and incited the minds of the soldiers of Christ to act strongly. And indeed Diocletian, the emperor then, as is found in the history of his passion described, whose mouth, according to the Psalmist, was full of cursing and bitterness, and under his tongue labor and sorrow, who sat with the rich in secret places, that he might kill the innocent, lying in wait like a lion in his den (Psal. V), first as if a crafty sheep's clothing he put on, and so by a certain art of cunning and with feigned colors of flatteries he tried to persuade him. But when the distinguished athlete of Christ contemned the foaming poisons from the mouth of the ancient

serpent, and demonstrated that not the origin of the first parent, but rather the titles of the second were living in him, immediately he, coming forth like an arrow from the quiver of Satan, opened the savage wolf that was hiding, and as a cruel beast he ferally boiled over to inflict diverse exquisite tortures of punishments. And so, the executioners being gathered, the blessed martyr is stretched out, beaten with scourges, torn by hard slaughters. Thence a wheel armed with swords is brought forth into the midst, so that the bound body of the martyr might be pierced so much more cruelly as it was more manifoldly. Indeed, the ferocity of the craftsman found new and exquisite arguments of punishments, and to satisfy the rage of his fury he philosophizes in exceeding the measure of human cruelty, being ignorant, of course, that the precious pearl of conspicuous brightness, to be inserted into the living stones of the heavenly Jerusalem, the more it is polished by the roughness of a harsher file or the pounding of a hammer, the more clearly it is rendered. Plainly the supernal and invisible Arbiter was present, who according to the judgment of His dispensation, would both here permit the hands of the impious to rage, and there keep His gem in the inviolate integrity of its own solidity. Who even if He delivered the members of His martyr to the hands of executioners, nevertheless guarded the soul, supported in the unassailable citadel of faith, with the untiring protection of His defense. Nor did He permit them to reach to that which was hidden, opposing to them only that which

appeared outwardly; and like the waters of the flood, the ark indeed was flowing around on all sides, yet they could not penetrate the innermost parts (Gen. VII).

Let the blessed George say, therefore, let him say: "Unless the Lord had been in us, when men rose up against us, perhaps they would have swallowed us alive: when their fury was angry against us, perhaps as water it would have absorbed us (Psal. CXXIII)." These are clearly the waters of which the Savior says through the Psalmist: "Save me, Lord, for the waters have entered even unto my soul (Psal. XI)." And through Jonah: "You cast me," he says, "into the deep in the heart of the sea, and the river surrounded me; all your whirlpools and your waves have passed over me (Jon. II)." But to these waters and the sea, according to the Scripture, the Lord has set a boundary (Psal. CIII), because according to the measure of His dispensation, not according to the concupiscence of human perversity, He permits the reprobate to rage against His elect.

For hence it is that in the beginning of the nascent world God divided the sea from the dry land (Gen. I). For what does the sea signify through mystery, unless reprobate and infidel men, who indeed are always found bitter with a certain saltiness of carnal nature, but with hatreds and feuds among themselves, and like the sea they swell with diverse blasts of temptations, and are shaken by storms and tempests of carnal desires? But what does the dry land designate, unless the soul thirsting for the fountain of faith,

or panting for its Creator with ardent desire as if with parched throat? Whence also a certain soul, happily dry with this thirst, cried out in its burning: "My soul has thirsted for the living God, when shall I come and appear before the face of God? (Psal. XXXI.)" Therefore the sea is divided from the dry land when almighty God represses from Himself the impetus of the thirsting reprobate, and as if a shore opposes the marine waves, while He fixes the limit of His moderation to the efforts of seething madness. Which indeed that voice of God proves, by which it says: "Who shut up the sea with doors, when it broke forth, as if proceeding from the womb? (Job XXXVIII.)" And a little after: "I surrounded it with my boundaries, and set a bar and doors, and I said: Hitherto you shall come, and shall proceed no further, and here you shall break your swelling waves (Ibid.)." Indeed, rightly by the sea is designated the heart of the wicked man, which to be sure is turbid with fury, bitter with strifes, swollen with the elation of pride, obscure with the darkness of malicious fraud. Therefore God then separated the sea and restrained the threatening waves from the inundation of the earth, so that the earth might bring forth green herbs and fruit-bearing trees, and then yield the fruits of the crops. He also now separates from His elect the whirlwinds of the reprobate persecutors and restrains the as if raging impetus of the tempests, whom, even if He permits to rage even to the inflicting of torments on bodies, nevertheless lest they harm the souls, He guards them with the unconquered and ever-

watchful protection of His arm, saying in a certain way to the sea: Hitherto you shall come, and shall proceed no further, and here you shall break your swelling waves, as if He clearly says, I relax you even to the inflicting of torments on bodies; but lest you flow forth with swelling heaps even unto the soul, I oppose to you the shore of my law, so that while the shore is opposed to the fury of your waves, the earth of the heart may be left free to bring forth the buds of fruits.

And because George, as we said above, is expressed as a cultivator of the earth, rightly is this mystery of allegorical figure fitted to the same most blessed martyr. To whom, to be sure, even if the wave of persecution seethed up to the shore of the flesh, nevertheless the storm of the tempestuous whirlwind did not envelop the most solid earth of his soul; nor did the abyss of the raging sea absorb him who fixed the anchor of his hope not in the fall of rotten sand, but in the solidity of the rock which is Christ (I Cor. X). Hence it is indeed, that the Truth says: "He who hears my words and does them, I will liken him to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. The floods came, the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it did not fall; for it was founded upon the rock (Matth. VII, Luc. VI)." Truly this distinguished soldier of Christ established the foundations of his faith upon the rock, who with the intuition of the heavenly reward spurned the threats of princes, mocked the promises of those evilly flattering, contemned the torments of executioners, trampled iron, fires, swords and di-

verse kinds of exquisite tortures with the majesty of unconquered patience.

This warrior of the heavenly military service, dearest brothers, let us not only admire, but also imitate; let the spirit now be raised into that reward of heavenly glory, so that while we fix the heart in its contemplation, we may not be moved, whether the world smile as a seducer, or certainly roar threatening with adversities, saying with the Psalmist: "As its darkness, so also its light (Psal. CXXXVIII)." Let us cleanse ourselves therefore, according to the precept of Paul, from all defilement of flesh and spirit (II Cor. VII), so that into that temple of beatitude, upon which we now intend the sharp edge of the mind, we may eventually also deserve to enter. Hence it is that Aaron is first washed with water, and so afterwards enters the tabernacle to sacrifice (Exod. XXX). Concerning which indeed it is well commanded to Moses by the divine voice: "With a tunic," it says, "he shall be clothed, he shall hide his shameful parts with linen breeches, he shall be girded with a linen belt, he shall put a linen miter upon his head. For these are holy garments, with which he shall be clothed after he had been washed (Lev. XVI)." For whoever in the tabernacle of Christ, which is the Church, strives to sacrifice himself to God, it is necessary that after he is washed by the washing of the sacred fountain, he be also clothed with diverse garments of virtues, as it is written: "Let your priests be clothed with justice (Psal. CXXXI)," so that he who in Christ is reborn through baptism as a new man, may no longer

clothe himself in leather tunics, the indicators namely of mortality, but having put off the old man, may put on the new, and live in him innovated through the study of pure conversation. And it is to be noted that all those garments are described as of linen; for linen is brought to whiteness with labor, and the life of virtues is not acquired under the torpor of sloth, but rather in the exercise of laborious discipline.

Purified, therefore, most beloved, through the sacrament of the new baptism, let us put on the linen tunic, so that the brightness of holy conversation may adorn us. Let the shameful parts be covered with breeches, so that while the covering of an honest life is assumed, the turpitude of past crimes may be hidden before the eyes of God. Whence David: "Blessed," he says, "are those whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered (Psal. XXXI)." Moreover, let us be bound with a linen belt, and let a miter be put upon the head, so that having girded the loins of the mind in truth, we may be protected by the helmet of the hope of salvation. Thus, thus indeed, both purged from the squalor of old sin and conspicuous with the brightness of new conversation, we worthily celebrate the Paschal mystery, and truly imitate the example of the blessed martyrs. Nor do you despair, my brothers, although still weak, although perhaps still implicated in exterior acts, do not despair that you belong to the consortium of the martyrs, you who recognize that you love the victories of the martyrs from the heart. Certainly the five daughters of Zelophehad are

known to have obtained an inheritance among their brothers, Moses establishing it (Num. XXVII and XXXVI); five indeed and women, so that through the fivefold number exterior occupation may be designated, and through the female sex weakness. Jonathan also, placed in a certain middle ground between both, neither remained with Saul in evils, nor could be altogether equated with David in goods (I Reg. XVIII, XIX and XX). But because he was a friend to the beloved Prophet of God, and rejoiced with brotherly kindness over his future success, it is piously believed that he is not now divided in spirit from his consortium, to whom while he lived in the flesh, he stood out as joined unanimously in love.

But we, most beloved, who having left the evil spirit agitating Saul behind our backs, with God's help (I Reg. XVI); nay, who have escaped Pharaoh's army drowned in the Red Sea (Exod. XVIII), through the virtue of the Paschal sacrament, yet on account of the infirmity of the flesh are still involved in the desert, let us pass to the perfection of life, namely to the land flowing with milk and honey. Having gone out from Sodom, let us no longer dwell in Zoar but having been liberated, with Lot, let us quickly ascend the top of the mountain (Gen. XIX) so that we who among the very rudiments of apprenticeship, have already begun to rejoice in the triumphs of the blessed martyrs, may eventually also be advanced to this, that we ourselves may learn to triumph with the saints. And may He Himself be our strength while He protects, who became the price when He

redeemed, Jesus Christ our Lord, who with God the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns for ages of ages. Amen.

SERMON XIV.

I. ON ST. MARK THE EVANGELIST. (APRIL 25)

Today, most beloved, like a precious and conspicuous beryl in radiant gold is set before our eyes, while the solemnity of the blessed evangelist Mark dawning, the Paschal joy is doubled for us. And fitly enough, while the holy Church still perseveres in the Paschal feasts, this blessed man happily passed away: because through the palm of martyrdom he deserted this sad world, and as a laurelled victor he brought in the titles of triumphal glory with the hymn-singing choirs of angels. Furthermore, just as four rivers proceed from one fountain of paradise, which flow into the parts of the whole world, so the four blessed evangelists flow forth from Christ, who is the fountain of life and the origin of wisdom, as so many whirlpools, and water the parched fields of human hearts with the stream of their doctrine. Whence the Wise man, when he had premised: "David set for his servant to raise up from him a most strong king, and one sitting on the throne of honor forever;" immediately subjoined: "Who fills up wisdom like Pishon, and like Tigris in the days of new fruits, who fulfills sense like Euphrates, who multiplies like Jordan in the time of harvest, who sends discipline like light, and assisting like Gihon in the day of vintage (Eccli.

XXIV)." Hence also a little after he says: "I wisdom have poured out rivers; I as a path of immense water from the river, I as the river Diorix, and as an aqueduct I came out of paradise. I said: I will water my garden of plantings, and I will inebriate the fruit of my meadow (Ibid.)." Christ therefore, the wisdom of the Father, who came out of paradise through the mystery of the assumed humanity, watered His garden, that is, the holy Church, through the four evangelists, as through so many rivers of heavenly doctrine. Among whom indeed the blessed Mark as Gihon belches forth conspicuous and pure, and fecundates human minds with the inundation of health-giving moisture. Who, according to the series of the Scripture, encompasses all the land of Ethiopia (Gen. II), that is, he embraces the university of the Church blackened by preceding sins. Concerning the people of which Ethiopia the Lord says through the prophet: "Beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, thence are my suppliants (Sophon. III)." Who also, pressed by persecutions, says in the Canticles: "I am black, but beautiful." And a little after: "Do not consider me that I am dark, because the sun has discolored me (Cant. I)." But the same holy evangelists, whom Moses relates as rivers through the series of typical history: Ezekiel the prophet pronounces that he saw under the species of diverse animals: "The likeness of their faces," he says, "was the face of a man; and the face of a lion on the right of those four, and the face of an ox on the left of those four, and the face of an eagle above those four (Ezech. I)."

Among which animals indeed the blessed Mark is found placed in the second place, because he is described as having the face of a lion. For because he begins his Gospel from the cry of the voice in the desert, he rightly obtained the species of a lion. But if that very origin of his Gospel is subtly weighed, a most orderly dispensation of the Holy Spirit is found in it. For he broke out beginning into this voice: "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Marc. I)." As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: "Behold I send my angel before your face, who shall prepare your way before you. The voice of one crying in the desert: Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight the paths of our God." But Matthew says: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ the son of David (Matth. I)." What is it therefore that the former says, "of the Son of God"; the latter, "son of David", unless because through His organs the Holy Spirit distinguished the sacraments of the mediator of God and men, so that through the one He might show Him to be the Son of God, through the other the son of man? For as if through two breath-holes of one pipe, or rather through two nostrils of the Church, one spirit flows out, while the former describes the divine, the latter the human generation of the incarnate Word.

But it can be moved, why the blessed evangelist Mark, after he promised that he would set forth the words of Isaiah, did not immediately bring in the words of Isaiah, but rather the sayings of Malachi, and so afterwards arrived at

the words of Isaiah? For that which is premised: "Behold I send my angel (Mal. III)," Malachi set forth, who is the last of the twelve prophets. But that which is subjoined: "The voice of one crying in the desert (Isai. XL)," is undoubtedly the oracle of Isaiah. Why therefore did he who promised Isaiah, not soon render Isaiah, but brought in Malachi first for testimony? Could a man full of the spirit of God, especially in the very beginning of his narration, either err or lie; so that he who described the deeds of Truth, would have dedicated his book to a lie? But this was done by the mastery of teaching, so that in the very beginning of his Gospel the Holy Spirit, of whom he himself was the author, might show that He Himself, one and the same, had spoken through the mouths of all the prophets, so that what is said by one specially is brought forth by all commonly.

Whatever therefore Malachi says, Isaiah nevertheless says as well, and the words of each one through the unity of the spirit were brought forth by all. In which also the blessed evangelist teaches this, that if he himself speaks anything which may seem to be different from the other evangelists, nevertheless all should be understood to bring forth one speech through the unity of the same Holy Spirit who speaks in all. Whence just as in the prophets, so also in the evangelists, by no means is that which was brought forth by the one authority of the dictating Spirit different by the ministry of the writing man. Indeed, whoever considers the Gospel of the blessed Mark with subtle meditation, and treats it, as is worthy,

with deep investigation, will find it described with rude indeed and not accurate words, but redounding with the most fertile mysteries of heavenly intelligence. It is plainly succinct with brevity of style, but diffused with profound abundance of spiritual mystery. For searching almost all the pages of the Scriptures, we can hardly find the spirit of truth to have spoken more cautiously or circumspectly through any other than through the mouth of the blessed Mark, so much so that the very series of description and the order of words contains a great sacrament. Which, so that it may shine forth more easily, it should not irk us briefly to intimate in the very beginning of his book.

For first he sets the miracle by which the Lord commanded the demon crying out through the mouth of the man to be silent, and immediately expelled him. "Be silent," He says, "and go out of the man (Marc. I)." The second miracle is by which He healed the mother-in-law of Peter who was feverish, the heat of the type having been driven away (Ibid.). The third is by which He touched and cleansed the leper (Ibid.). The fourth also is by which He commanded the paralytic to take up his bed and go (Marc. II). Which order, if it is weighed with diligent care, manifestly teaches with how much art of mastery the Holy Spirit held the pen of the writer, and to declare the mystery of human redemption, as if through a certain line, dispensed all things. For in the dejection of the first man, in the beginning the devil spoke, and persuaded that the forbid-

den fruit be eaten; then the woman, because she fell into the concupiscence of delight, incurred as it were the heat of a seething fever. But Adam, after he tasted of the fruit of the tree by evilly consenting (Gen. III), was soon covered with the leprosy of all vices; finally also, as a paralytic, he was constricted by the languor of the interior man from all good works. Because therefore the Son of God, as the apostle John says, came to destroy the works of the devil (I Joan. III), He followed death through the same way by which it had entered into the world. And where the poison of our perdition was poured out, the Physician of souls opposed the antidote of salvation, and from where the crafty enemy introduced death, through the same path our Redeemer reformed the beginnings of returning life, so that He would compel the devil, who had spoken to our ruin, already now to be silent, and would liberate Eve from the fevers of seething concupiscence, and from the man not only would wipe away the leprosy of vices and crimes, but also would release the same, hither-to a paralytic, strong and free for exercising works of piety. Just as therefore in those first men the whole human race perished, so in these healed by the Savior it was restored to its pristine salvation under the mystery of a figure.

In the head therefore of this evangelical book let the studious reader learn how profound, how mystical sacraments of charisms the series of the following style contains. Nor is it a wonder, since that book is perhibited no more of Mark than of

Peter the apostle. For whatever the former wrote, he heard from the mouth of the blessed master as a crafty, so to speak, explorer. For he was, as the authentic antiquity of histories relates, a Levite according to the origin of the flesh, a priest in Israel according to the dignity of the order. Converted to the faith, he was made the son of the blessed Peter in baptism, and a disciple in the divine speech. He described the Gospel in Italy, his master not knowing; but he reverently offered it when described to his judgment. Who, finding the pious and religious theft and rejoicing that his interpreter had held the purest faith and most sincere truth, attributed the strength of authority, and delegated it to be read to the holy universal Church. But afterwards the apostolic man passing to Egypt through Libya scattered the seed of faith of Marmarica and Ammoniaca; he also preached the Gospel of Christ to the gentile peoples of Pentapolis. Furthermore he is read to have amputated his thumb, so that he might be held as reprobate for the priesthood. But so much could the predestined election of the supernal dispensation in him, that not even thus did he lose in the faith of the new grace what he had primarily obtained in kind. For having been made bishop, he founded the Alexandrian Church and, after the distinguished architect raised it upon the rock which is Christ, he faithfully dedicated it to the glorious name of his master. Whence it came about that the same Church is called the apostolic see not so much from Mark's as from the blessed Peter's name,

as if Peter himself through himself had held the episcopal chair there; and therefore marked with the name of the heavenly key-bearer, that Church in the whole world holds the second throne after Rome. And although in Antioch, where namely the name of the Christian religion arose, Peter himself through himself had brought in the first fruits of the faith, nevertheless the Alexandrian see obtained the superior place, so that in the catalogue of the more eminent sees the Roman possesses the first, the Alexandrian the second, but the Antiochian Church the third primacy. And deservedly where Mark, there Peter, because by the stream of the Gospel which flowed forth from the mouth of Peter as from a belching fountain, Mark, as a most abundant and conspicuous river of paradise, more copiously inundated the fields of the whole Church.

But it can be asked, why the blessed Mark, who is known to have stood out with such faith and such love towards his master, that there seems to have been one heart, certainly one soul in two persons, was altogether silent concerning the praises and proclamations of his master? For while the other evangelists frequently enumerate the sublime merits of the blessed Peter and the principal glory of his highness, he alone, if the whole tenor of his Gospel is searched, is found hardly to have related anything concerning his master which pertains to praise. Nay, if it is diligently inspected, he increases and accumulates with words if there is anything reprehensible in him; but he suppresses, and as if by industry

smooths over, or even for the most part passes over in silence what is laudable. Which we show more evidently if we briefly set forth a few testimonies of the same Gospel. Certainly it is published daily with celebrated frequentation through all the Churches that the blessed Peter is described to have walked upon the waters. Which Matthew indeed so clearly declares that he relates Peter to have exclaimed to the Lord walking upon the sea: "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you upon the waters." And when He had said: "Come," he immediately subjoined: "And Peter descending from the boat, walked upon the water, to come to Jesus (Matth. XIV)." But Mark coming to this place, describes all things by order in full relation (Marc. VI), except that he makes absolutely no mention of Peter.

Now indeed who would not wonder at such glory of Peter, who at such excellence of exceptional highness, because, when the Savior inquired who men perhibited Him to be, and the opinions of diverse people having been set forth, the Apostles are consulted as to what they feel, then he stood out first in the confession of the true faith, who was first in the apostolic dignity. For Peter says: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matth. XVI)." And the Lord: "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona, because flesh and blood has not revealed it to you, but my Father, who is in heaven. And I say to you, that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it: and to you

I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven (Ibid.)." Could this thunder of a singular gift have passed by the ears of the blessed Mark, which filled the breadth of the whole world and the mouths of all the faithful everywhere? And that which Matthew said of Peter, did Peter ignore to tell this to his disciple, since Mark runs through this place of history as if by neglecting? Peter responding says: "You are the Christ. And He threatened them that they should tell no one of Him (Marc. II)." And not only does he not relate Peter to have been sublimated by the Lord with the glory of a singular privilege among the others, but rather relates him to have been corrected with austere animadversion. For a little after, when Peter dissuaded Him from permitting Himself to be crucified, Mark testifies that He said as if moved by zeal: "Get behind me, Satan, because you savor not the things that are of God, but those that are of men (Ibid.)." What is it therefore that the blessed Mark delivered to oblivion whatever pertains to the glory of his master, but whatever pertains to reprehension he commended to such tenacious memory; that from which his preceptor would be praised, he passed over as if by ignoring, but that from which he would be noted, he digested with an altogether sharp and plain relation, especially since whatever he wrote in secret, he disposed to be offered to his gaze, and reserved to be proved by his judgment? Now

indeed, so that by the study of brevity I may pass over many things, let us come to the passion of the Lord.

Certainly it is known that, when the ministers were seizing the Lord, Peter, as a truly faithful servant and fervent in spirit, rose up as an avenger with a stroke of the sword and cut off the ear of the servant accompanying Judas the impious traitor. Whence also John says: "Simon Peter," he said, "having a sword, drew it, and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear (John XVIII)." But where John wrote, "Simon Peter," there Mark put, "a certain one of those standing by (Mark XIV)," insofar as he might so weave the history of truth that he might nevertheless pass over the glory of his master in silence. And so he would fulfill the office of a truthful writer, that by ignoring the favor of any person, he might not incur the blemish of a flatterer. For serving pure truth, in all things which he wrote, he knew no hope of advantage, he despised the laws of friendship, and he utterly ignored human favor. Finally coming to the denial of Peter, while the other evangelists lighten what was said by Peter with milder words; he alone speaks more harshly and, as if he would exaggerate the crime, testifies that his master precipitately poured out more incautious words. "He began," he says, "to anathematize and to swear, saying: I know not the man of whom you speak (Ibid.)." Why, blessed Mark, do you not spare with your pen your so eminent, so distinguished preceptor, whom you uniquely love with

a devoted soul? That you both pass over those things which are to be extolled with praises, and describe those things which seem fit for reprehension?

Why do you not rather insert this in your book, that Peter at the command of the Lord, namely by the first cast of the hook, caught a fish, in whose mouth he found a stater, which he paid as a tribute owed to Caesar for himself, and at the same time for Him as compared to the Lord? (Matth. XVII.) Did it also escape you that, after the Savior conferred on him the privilege of closing or opening the heavenly kingdom, after he subjected all the kingdoms of the earth to him (Matth. XVI), after finally, lest his faith as the foundation of the whole Church should ever fail, He showed that He had prayed (Luke XXII), He soon delegated to him in His place the custody of His passion over the entire flock of His sheep? "Peter," He said, "do you love me? Feed my sheep (John XXI.)" Why therefore do you restrain your pen from so many heraldings of your master, and commit with your pen to the memory of posterity only those things which are of infirmity? But it is altogether to be believed, my brothers, that, since one spirit fills both, one possesses the hearts of both; the one from the other, he in teaching, this one in the study of writing, does not discord. For just as Peter withheld from his own praise, so his truthful interpreter refrained the point of his description from that which he did not learn in his master. For it was done for a great example of our edification, that both he should

bring forth things not to be extolled but to be reprehended about himself, and this one should so walk straight along the line of truth that he should not decline in any way even to the favor of his master. For since Paul the apostle says: "If I wished to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ (Galat. I)." And elsewhere the Scripture prohibits: "What you do not wish to be done to you, do not do to another (Tob. IV);" the blessed evangelist did not wish to exhibit to his master what he himself would not wish to be offered to himself by another. Whom certainly if he should prefer with praise, he would offend more than he would benefit. Those clearly willingly extol others with praises who seek praise from flatterers. But he who refuses to receive, disdains to offer. Indeed, from the book of Matthew, which had already certainly been published, Mark was able to learn the praises of Blessed Peter, which he did not hear in his relations; but he was compliant to his master, and, he who was not delighted by his own, abstained from the praises of others.

Furthermore, some things are found which were so digested by Blessed Mark that they seem to be contrary to the other evangelists. Which, however, if they are more sagaciously scrutinized, are found both consonant with the others and founded on the truth of most sincere faith, such as that the others assert that the Lord was crucified at the sixth hour (Matth. XXVII; Luke XXIII; John XIX), while this one asserts it was at the third hour (Mark XV). Which diversity is indeed resolved thus, that, since at the

third hour they shouted: Crucify Him, crucify Him, at that same hour they crucified the Lord with the tongues of the Jews, whom at the sixth hour the nails of the Gentiles fixed corporally. Those, therefore, speak according to the corporal history, so to speak, of the thing done; this one brought forth a spiritual sentence concerning the furious cruelty of the Jews. Those, moreover, relate that the Lord was denied three times by Peter before the cock crowed (Matth. XXVI; Luke XXII); this one, who heard this from the mouth, namely, of the denier himself, wrote that this denial was made not before the cock crowed, but before it crowed twice (Mark XIV). Which indeed, according to the faith of the matter, is acknowledged to have truly happened just as Mark asserts, without doubt. But what the other evangelists say, ought to be so understood that that threefold denial was indeed only begun before the cock crowed, but after it sang once, it was completed, so that, since in the Scriptures a part is usually put for the whole, that which is said by Matthew: "Before the cock crows, you will deny me thrice," is so understood as if he said: you will begin to deny me thrice before the cock crows; but you will consume that same denial after it has sung once, before it adds to sing twice. Thus, both what Mark says: "Before the cock crows twice;" and what the others say: "Before the cock crows, you will deny me thrice," although they seem to discord in exterior words, are found to agree in most congruent intention.

Nor indeed without cause, my brothers, does this blessed Mark, either with Moses under the figure of rivers (Gen. II), or with Ezekiel through the faces of animals (Ezek. I), as was said above, hold the second place among the holy evangelists. But the honor which he obtained in the predestined order, he preserves in evangelical truth. For in the Apocalypse of John when the order of the holy animals is described, not now second, but first is he found in their catalogue. "In the midst of the throne," he says, "and round about the throne were four animals full of eyes before and behind;" and soon he adds: "And the first animal like a lion, and the second animal like a calf, and the third animal having a face as if of a man, and the fourth animal like a flying eagle (Apoc. IV)." This is surely that chariot of the Lord, and the true Cherubim, upon which leaning He circles all things and runs everywhere. Innumerable watchful eyes on this side and that; sparks flash out frequently, and fearful lightnings glitter. Straight feet, and tending on high: winged backs, and flying everywhere. They hold each other mutually, and are perplexed among themselves. And like a wheel in the midst of a wheel they go thither continually, whither they are impelled by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is, I say, the chariot, of which it is said in the Canticles: "I knew not, my soul troubled me because of the chariots of Aminadab (Cant. VI)." It is the voice of the Synagogue, which seeing such great grace of the holy Church to have been conferred, grieves that she received the faith later, because

she did not acknowledge the truth of the Gospel. Aminadab, moreover, is known to have been the grandson of Judah, who is numbered in the genealogy of the Lord with the fathers. Aminadab is interpreted as "spontaneous of my people," and therefore not incongruously signifies Christ, who was spontaneous of His people, because since He was God, He was spontaneously made man. For He who created us not by necessity, but by goodness alone, redeemed us nonetheless by His own will. Whence also James says: "Of His own will He begat us by the word of truth (James I)." He was therefore made spontaneous of His people, because whom human depravity repelled from itself, only the will of divine grace restored. But the chariot of Aminadab is the Gospel of Christ, compacted from the most concordant diversity of the four evangelists. Which chariot indeed Christ the charioteer disposes, and He runs through the fourfold machine of the world with the most agile speed of preaching, as is said through the Psalmist: "Who sends forth His speech to the earth, His word runs swiftly (Psal. CXLVII)."

The Synagogue therefore seeing the grace of evangelical preaching suddenly break forth and fly nimbly through all the provinces of the world, suddenly troubled, complains that she alone is deserted in her perfidy while the nations are converted to the faith: "I knew not," saying, "my soul troubled me because of the chariots of Aminadab." This grace of fourfold preaching the Lord figured, when He commanded Moses concerning the ark to be carried by the priests: "You shall

make," He said, "four golden circles, which you shall place through the four corners of the ark; and you shall make poles of Shittim wood, and cover them with gold, and you shall lead them through the circles which are in the sides of the ark, that it may be carried in them, which shall always be in the circles, and shall never be drawn out from them (Exod. XXV)." What is designated by the ark, if not the holy Church? To which four golden circles are commanded to be joined through the four corners, because in that she is extended, being dilated through the four parts of the world, without doubt she is preached girded with the four books of the holy Gospel. And poles are made of Shittim wood, which are inserted into the same circles for carrying, because strong and persevering teachers are to be sought like imputrescible wood, who always adhering to the instruction of the sacred volumes, announce the unity of the holy Church and, as if let into the circles, carry the ark. To carry the ark with poles, indeed, is to lead the rude minds of the faithful to the holy Church by preaching as good teachers. Who are also commanded to be covered with gold, so that, while they sound to others in speech, they themselves also shine with the splendor of life. Concerning whom it is aptly added: "Who shall always be in the circles, nor shall they ever be drawn out from them." Because surely it is necessary that those who watch for the office of preaching do not withdraw from the study of sacred reading. For this reason the poles are commanded to be always in the circles, so

that when the opportunity demands the ark to be carried, no slowness of carrying be generated from inserting the poles, because namely when something spiritual is inquired of the pastor by subjects, it is very ignominious if he then seeks to learn when he ought to disentangle the question. But let the poles adhere to the circles, so that the teachers always meditating the sacred eloquences in their hearts, may lift up the ark of the testament without delay, if they should teach immediately whatever is necessary. Whence well the first pastor of the Church admonishes the other pastors, saying: "Be always ready for the satisfaction of every one asking you a reason of that hope which is in you (I Pet. III)." As if he should say openly: that no delay may impede the carrying of the ark, let the poles at some time not withdraw from the circles.

In these golden circles, most beloved, let us also be inserted like poles of Shittim wood, so that rejecting the rottenness of this world, we may continually dwell in the pages of the holy evangelists. Among others, moreover, the not only holy doctrine, but also the distinguished life of this blessed Mark provokes us to imitate him. To whom that which is said through the prophet is not inconveniently fitted: "The first," he says, "says to Zion: Behold I am here, and I will give an evangelist to Jerusalem (Isai. XLI)." Who surely was truly a golden circle, because, while through the office of preaching he taught those things which are holy, he also radiated with the manners of a shining life, and like a pole from Shittim

wood he despised all earthly things, which rot; he sought heavenly things, which know not how to wither. Through the cutting off of a member he defiled the beauty of his body, lest he should ascend to ecclesiastical dignity against the rule of the Church. But what he thought a protection of flight, profited for a title of glory. For whence he rendered himself unworthy, he was more worthy; and that which he fled, he incurred by compulsion. Blessed are you, O Alexandria, empurpled with the triumphal blood of the apostolic martyr. Happy also are you, Italy, both long ago the nurse of the one writing the Gospel, and now made rich with the precious treasure of his most sacred body. Thus the East is decorated through Egypt, the West through the Roman empire. Glory be to Him, who being wonderful in His saints (Psal. LXVII), makes them also wonderful for ages of ages. Amen.

SERMON XV.

II ON ST. MARK THE EVANGELIST. (APR. 25)

I will not allow you to be ignorant of this also, most beloved, that in the eighth year of the Neronian empire, the blessed Mark obtained the triumphal palm of martyrdom, whom Anianus soon succeeded in the dignity of the Alexandrian see, and the blessed apostle Peter survived him at Rome for seven years. Whence, by the disposition of heavenly clemency, it happened that, after he had first illustrated Alexandria both by the splendors of evangelical preaching and by the

shedding of his sacrosanct blood, he afterwards returned to Italy by a certain right of return, so that the very land in which it was given to him to write the Gospel might merit to possess his sacred relics, and where it was granted to him to pour forth the radiance of evangelical description, there he might gleam with many rays of virtues and signs through the presence of his glorious clod.

Furthermore, if we diligently traverse the places where all the evangelists died, we find that none of them has remained in the tomb which he first obtained. In the burial of John, for instance, after his death, not his body but manna was found. Ethiopia, where he is known to have been slain, is not decorated with the body of the blessed Matthew, but rather the city of Salerno. Saint Luke also, since he died in the parts of Bithynia, as history testifies, was translated from Achaia to Constantinople in the twentieth year of Constantius Caesar, with the sacrosanct relics of the blessed apostle Andrew. But he of whom we now treat, the holy evangelist Mark, was conveyed from Alexandria to Venice, by the merciful disposition of God, so that he who then had illustrated the whole East like a golden morning star, might now shine forth by the rays of his presence through the regions of the Western climate. For through Egypt he dedicates his rising, through Venice he holds his setting. There he obtained the soil of the Alexandrian church; here he established the new principality of reborn Aquileia. He is, therefore, like a golden star renowned

throughout the whole world and conspicuous by the celebrated veneration of the entire Church.

Let us, therefore, most beloved, keep this star continually before our eyes, let us imitate its example, if we desire to avoid shipwreck among the foaming waves of the worldly whirlpool. From one side let the swollen sea rage, from the other let the raging winds strike, if we do not turn the gaze of our mind from this star, we do not fear the onset of the inundating storms. Let the line of a certain course direct the dragnet of our mind toward this star, let all the rowing of our labor tend toward this, so that, may it be far from us, the whirlpool of Scylla's depth may not absorb us, the rocks of errors or the syrtes of the shifting sands may not overwhelm the improvident, but the heavenly Pilot, Jesus Christ our Lord, who with God the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns for ages of ages, may drive us into the port of safe rest and the bosom of desired tranquility. Amen.

SERMON XVI.

III ON ST. MARK THE EVANGELIST. (APRIL 25)

You know, most beloved, that we have already completed two sermons on the merits and famous virtues of the blessed Mark, yet we are not able to rest from his praise, as our conscience impels us. For while we weigh these and those deeds of his virtues and revolve in our mind the merit of such sublime grace, we cannot have the pen of our outer limb at leisure. Among all the

marks of such conspicuous splendor, it seems to me singular and pre-eminent that through Mark, Alexandria was called by the holy Fathers the second see of Peter, and by this an apostolic see. For no authentic scripture testifies that the blessed apostle Peter held a chair in Alexandria, or even exhibited his presence there. But, while he appointed Mark, his distinguished disciple namely, to preside there, he dedicated it to himself as if through the presence of his own approach. Similarly, the Gospel of Mark is called the Gospel of Peter, because this faithful interpreter wrote simply and immutably what he truly heard from the mouth of the master narrating it. Furthermore, since that key-bearer of heaven destined disciples through so many kingdoms of the lands and committed to them the government of the Churches through diverse provinces of the world, what is the reason that none of them, except only Alexandria at least, was called either the see of Peter or an apostolic Church? Antioch clearly is itself called the see of Peter, doubtlessly because he himself is reported to have held the chair there in person; but in Alexandria, Peter himself did not preside in person, but he decorated it with the title of his own name through the blessed Mark, whom he clearly had both as a disciple in doctrine and as a son in baptism. And, what is more wonderful, just as the Roman see exceeds the Alexandrian by the summit of singular excellence, so also the Alexandrian overspreads Antioch by a certain dignity of privilege, so that that see over which Mark presided in the stead of Peter

is superior to that in which Peter himself presided in his own chair. Why then did the Holy Spirit inspire the minds of the blessed pontiffs to establish this, unless because He knew Peter and Mark to be together in mind and spirit, in faith and will, not two in a certain way, but one rather? For the same Spirit had bound them together with such great charity, had fused them with such unanimity of mind, that there was both one heart and one mind of the two. Whence it came to pass that the see which was Mark's became indifferently Peter's also.

We know clearly that the blessed Andrew was the brother of the same Saint Peter; Scripture also testifies that a certain Martial, a prelate of glorious holiness, was his nephew; but neither Achaia, which he irradiates through the triumphal banner of the cross, nor even the province of Limoges, in which he indeed gleams with much brightness of wonders and signs, is called the see of Peter, but each of them is entitled only by the name of him who presides over it. Alexandria alone especially merited this, that through the chair of the blessed Mark it was established to be called the see of the apostle Peter. Nor, as we believe, was this name impressed upon that city without divine nodding. For Alexandria was named after Alexander. But Alexander is interpreted as 'lifting the narrowness of the darkness'; but Egypt also, in which Alexandria is situated namely, is called 'darkness.' What, moreover, was the whole world before the coming of the Redeemer, except a density and confusion of darkness? Whence it

is said through Isaiah: 'To those living in the region of the shadow of death, light has risen for them (Isai IX).' The world was dark, because it had not yet been illustrated by the splendor of heavenly grace. The men of this world were darkness, because they had not yet been converted from the blindness of their depravity to the true light. To whom, now led out from the darkness of infidelity and gleaming with the light of true faith, it is said through the Apostle: 'You were once darkness, but now light in the Lord (Ephes. V).' Who therefore of these lifted the narrowness of the darkness, except that Sun of Justice, our Redeemer, who dispelled the gloom of sins? Who, I say, is he who lifts the narrowness of the darkness, except he of whom the apostle Peter says: 'Who himself bore our sins in his own body upon the wood (I Pet. II);' and it is said through Isaiah: 'Truly he himself has borne our infirmities, and he himself has carried our sorrows (Isai. LIII).' For if sins are darkness, the narrowness of the darkness is undoubtedly the vengeance and punishments of sinful men. And who lifted these narrownesses of the darkness, nay rather, who bore the worthy punishments of the delinquents, except he of whom the same prophet says: 'But he himself was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our crimes (Ibid.)'? Just as Alexander built the city of Alexandria in Egypt, so our Redeemer built the holy Church among the darkness of this world. Who truly lifted the narrowness of the darkness, while he bore the punishments of our crimes and flooded the Egypt

of this world with the new splendor of true faith. This Christ did in Egypt through Mark, this he did in the whole world through the other senators of the heavenly court.

But why, brothers, do we ascribe Egypt to the blessed Mark, and contract the most ample glory of so excellent a man within the narrow corner of one land? He indeed, a vehement trumpet of heavenly thunder, thunders terribly, and like one of the rivers of paradise flowing forth rapidly, he inundates the universal breadth of the world with the exuberant streams of the holy Gospel. Alexandria indeed is happy, which this unconquered warrior of Christ empurpled with the blood of his triumphal martyrdom, but you especially are happy and too blessed, Venice, which he chose for this, that he might commend to you the precious treasure of his body. A very great abundance of riches indeed flows together into you from diverse parts of the world, but this heavenly gem, which is placed in the midst of you, raises you on high with the glory of conspicuous dignity. For this incomparable treasure exceeds all kinds of vibrating metals, it surpasses all the ornaments of glittering gems. For as the blessed Job says concerning wisdom: 'Gold or glass shall not be equaled to it; neither shall high and eminent vessels be exchanged for it; gold from Ethiopia shall not be equaled to it, nor shall it be compared to the purest dyes (Job. XXVIII);' and, so to speak, this is a certain distinguished aromatic species, which by its mellifluous virtue

excels cinnamon and balsam, and surpasses the fragrance of all pigments.

Furthermore, if Alexandria is of such great dignity through him, which he flooded with the glorious blood of his martyrdom, so that it is called an apostolic see, of how great excellence do we think that happy Province is, in which the precious clod of his body is now hidden? Must it not be believed to be of the same grace and dignity, even if not by a common name, yet in the very thing itself and the sacred secret truth of the mystery? Finally, he entered those parts while he still existed as a mortal in corruptible flesh; but he chose these when, now about to live forever, he was reigning in the hall of the heavenly kingdom. He visited those so that he might lead them out from the darkness of infidelity to that light of true faith which he had already conceived in his mind; but he wished to be transferred to these so that he might recall them to Him with whom he now is, the Leader of light. Rejoice therefore, and exulting in the Lord, applaud, O Venice, because through that talent of precious treasure which is known to be hidden in you, you have been made the treasury of the heavenly King, and while you have received into your bosom a man of apostolic grace, you yourself have in a certain way merited to become an apostolic see. Wherefore, just as Rome, the mother of cities, is sublimated in Peter above all the kingdoms of the earth, so also you, like his distinguished daughter, glory in Christ through Mark. Whom indeed we humbly implore, that, just as He called the blessed Peter

from the sea and the ship (Matth. IV; Marc. I), then sustained him by lifting him up lest he should be overwhelmed by slipping into the sea, so He may guard your rowing among the marine dangers, and lead you with your sons to the port of eternal rest, who lives and reigns with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for all ages of ages. Amen.

SERMON XVII.

I. ON ST. VITALIS THE MARTYRE. (APRIL 28)

Let us refer immense praises and thanks to God, most beloved brothers, because, while the paschal festivity shines through the whole world, the triumphal day of the blessed Vitalis also illustrates the borders of our homeland. For today the glorious soldier of Christ died for the faith of his Emperor, to live forever. Today, the enemy of the human race being conquered, he entered the starry kingdoms with a triumph of glory. Today, the course of his study being completed, he went out as a victor from the prison of the flesh. Today, with the hymn-singing choirs of angels alternating here and there, he entered the palace of the eternal King, clothed in purple, where he gleams ineffably with the fiery companies of the blessed spirits, exults with the robed senators of the heavenly court, is enthroned sublimely with the patriarchs on a golden throne, is wonderfully crowned with the laurelled martyrs, and with all these, clothed in the robe of glory, he dances with ineffable exultation, and in the sight of the

eternal King he sings the melodic Alleluia with most pleasant sweetness. Oh, how blessedly he dies who arises by dying! how happily he finishes temporal life who begins to live perpetually! Hence it is that the holy Church is accustomed to call the days of the migration of the saints 'birthdays' (natales), because they are immediately born in heaven when they visibly die on earth; and then they truly begin to live, when they seem to finish mortal life.

Consider, my brothers, what a strong, what a robust heart this most unconquered soldier of Christ had, who, entirely secure regarding his own danger, and solicitous for that of another, struck the enemy with one weapon of a word and excited his faltering companion, already wounded, to act bravely. While his skilled hand vibrated the spear for the battle, he touched his companion that he might rise, and inflicted a lethal wound upon the already conquering adversary. For as it is told in the most true history of his deeds, when after excessive torments Ursicinus wished to evade the capital sentence, the blessed Vitalis cried out, saying: 'Do not, do not, O physician Ursicinus, who have been accustomed to cure others, wound yourself with the dart of eternal death.' For it is indeed the custom of holy men, my brothers, that when they are caught in the war of tribulations, while they see the adversaries pursuing from one side, and their own people fleeing from the other, they oppose the shield of patience to those, and hurl the darts of doctrine at these; and they raise themselves

to both modes of fighting by a wonderful art of virtue, so that the weak may raise themselves bravely within, and those without may manfully despise adversities, correcting the former by teaching, and pressing the latter by enduring. For they despise the rising enemies by enduring, and they lead the faltering citizens back to safety by sympathizing. They resist those, lest they should withdraw others; they fear for these, lest, by fearing death, they should utterly lose life. From one side they strike opposing breasts with darts; from the other, having put the shield behind them, they protect the weak. And so in both directions they watch with the speed of circumspection, so that they may both transfix the audacious before them, and defend the fearful behind them from a wound. But whoever wishes to act bravely in the field of contest, must necessarily take care to guard himself in domestic peace; let him exercise himself frequently in leisure, lest being ignorant of fighting he should break forth incautiously into wars, lest, if the rude and unskilful person engages with the more learned, while he strives to join arms with arms beyond his custom, before he does anything distinguished, he should be prostrated by an unforeseen wound and perish conquered, whence he was gasping with all his efforts to be victor.

For it is not to be believed that the blessed Vitalis then began to live religiously and to serve God in the first place, when the cruelty of the persecutor provoked him to the contest of martyrdom. Finally, the holy man was then

also supported by the highest strengths, when he had rested in the tranquility of his peace without any molestation of persecution. He who was known only to himself and to God, unless he were compelled to go forward into the field of contest, could in no way have been recognized by us. For virtue indeed exercised itself even in time of quiet, but beaten by the blows of the wicked, it gave forth fragrance in the mortar of adversity. And he who, quiet within himself, contained what he was, when moved to the knowledge of all, sprinkled the odor of his fortitude. For just as ointments do not know how to smell more widely unless moved, and just as aromatics do not expand their fragrance unless when they are burned, so holy men make known in tribulations all that they smell of by virtues. Whence it is rightly said in the Gospel: 'If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain: Remove from hence, and it shall remove (Matth. XVII).' For unless the grain of mustard seed be ground, the force of its virtue is in no way recognized, for not ground it is mild; but if it be ground, it grows hot, and shows whatever most sharp thing was hiding in it. Thus indeed, thus every holy man, when he is not struck, is seen as despicable and mild; but if any threshing of persecution should oppress him, soon he shows all that tastes hot, and whatever before seemed despicable and weak in him is turned into the fervor of virtue, and that which he willingly covered within himself through times of tranquility, being agitated by tribulations, he

makes known under compulsion. Whence it is well said through the Prophet: 'In the day the Lord commanded his mercy, and in the night he declared it (Psal. XLI).' For the mercy of the Lord is commanded in the day, because in tranquil time the virtue granted from heaven is perceived; but in the night it is declared, because the gift which is taken in tranquility is manifested by tribulations.

For if it is asked what virtue the blessed Vitalis had before the contest, with what vigor of discipline he as a good father of the family ruled his house, by how religious and how holy an order of living he instructed his sons, let the blessed Valeria his wife with her two sons being requested say; 'so that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may stand (Matth. XVIII).' For she, having heard of the death of Vitalis her most blessed husband, did not fear the greedy encroachers upon her possessions, she did not seek the patronage of any more powerful person, she did not according to the custom of widows study to collect her things dispersed everywhere into a safe place, but keeping the faith of a most chaste marriage, she arrived from the city of Milan all the way to Ravenna with wonderful fervor to pay the service of the funeral. The difficulty of so long a journey did not deter her, the fear of losing her possession could not retain her, the love of relatives or fellow citizens in the city of Milan did not bind her, the most immense fury of the consul did not disturb her from the borders of Ravenna. For thither her spirit, raised up,

tended from the marrow, where she had known her most blessed husband to have preceded, death being already trodden under foot. For where her treasure was, there also was her heart (Matth. XVI). She rejoiced that he was already living in the habitation, she grieved that she still remained in exile. To this she gasped with the whole desire of her mind on the way, where he was already delectably enjoying himself in the fatherland. She rejoiced to be called the wife of a martyr by men, but much more ineffably she was burning to be crowned with the same glory of martyrdom. Whence it is not to be doubted that she daily requested her most blessed husband himself with special familiarity of devotion, that by his most sacred prayers she might merit to reach the palm of martyrdom, so that namely those whom the immaculate chamber of mutual charity had bound here, a not dissimilar triumph should join in the glory of heavenly beatitude, and, because they had been two in one flesh, they should become united also in the crown. Wherefore when she was prohibited by the Christians who were then at Ravenna from taking away the holy body, and having deposited this intention she was returning to her own places, she ran into idolatrous men sacrificing to Silvanus, who, taking her down from the pack-saddle, exhorted her to feast with them upon those things which had been immolated to Silvanus.

But what about you, blessed Valeria? Will you not be able to leave the footsteps of your husband, and to incline your mind, already raised

in heavenly things, to diabolical suggestions? Will you be able, educated in the Catholic faith, to postpone what you learned in tranquility because of the terror of the executioners, and to violate the foundation of faith placed upon a firm rock by any whirlwind of trepidation? Come, come, blessed Valeria! hey, noble matron! now manfully recall the documents of your husband, and declare what the mastery of such a great teacher provided for you. For she said: 'I am a Christian, and it is not allowed for me to eat from the sacrifices of your Silvanus.' But they hearing these things slaughtered her with such great slaughter, that her people with difficulty brought her half-dead to the city of Milan, so that within three days the blessed Valeria migrated to the Lord. Oh, how ineffably the order of divine dispensation is arranged! how mercifully the series of human condition is varied! A woman cast the man out of paradise (Gen. III); a man recalled the woman to the fatherland of paradise. She, that the man might be deceived, was made an instrument for the devil; he, that the woman might be crowned, provided an imitable example of virtue. The ancient woman by eating the forbidden apple mulcted herself with the hunger of a miserable fast; but the new woman by abstaining from things sacrificed to idols prepared for herself the banquet of eternal satiety. The former, delighted by the fruit of the tree, condemned for herself the door of blessed pleasantness by the bars of concupiscence in going out; the latter, having spurned the eating of meats, opened for

herself the pastures of everlasting greenness with the keys of continence. Behold it is clearly evident with how conspicuous an honesty of manners the holy man shone in tranquility, who also led his most blessed spouse to such a summit of perfection. For if she had learned from him to study avarice, she would in no way have despised all her things for only the burial of his cadaver to be venerated. If she had used luxurious banquets with him, doubtless being fatigued by the journey she would more easily have acquiesced to be refreshed than to be lacerated by scourges even to the limit of death. And, to conclude all things briefly, unless in the time of peace she had learned to live for Christ through all things, in the moment of persecution she could in no way have been able to die for Christ. But since Valeria, being questioned, briefly returned the testimony of her assertion, what virtue his most excellent husband had before the contest; now let other witnesses also approach. That it may be proved how honestly the parents lived, let the heirs be called to testimony. For it is likely that whatever virtue is discerned in the sons of the saints should be believed to have been entirely handed down by the parents themselves.

Therefore the most blessed Gervase and Protase, not to say bereaved of both parents, but rather happily illustrated by their most splendid death, as is told in their holy history, lusting for nothing earthly and nothing carnal, but concluding themselves in one upper room, vacated themselves for ten years to reading and prayer.

Consider, most dear brothers, the inestimable praise of paternal instruction, weigh the wonderful tradition of rigid censure, note the example of a new conversation left to the orphans, observe the most evident indication of paternal severity. Common substance is accustomed to become the cause of division and discord among brothers; among these, however, a heritage to be divided was present; yet one charity filled the hearts of the two. From a populous city they make a desert, they turn a dwelling of habitation into an oratory. Young men are also accustomed, their parents being lost, to flow down luxuriously through the liberty of their own judgment, and as if already of their own right freely to loosen the reins of their pleasures for themselves, all who think whatever is allowed exceeding namely the limit of rectitude in that which is allowed. But these boys of angelic nature, not solicitous for the life yet to come, provide for themselves the expense of earthly things or resources, they did not strike any marriage of carnal copulation to be dissolved by death, they are not delighted by neighing horses, they are not dissolved by the lasciviousness of delights, they do not vainly lust to be adorned with precious garments. They flee the businesses of worldly noise, they spurn the riches of earthly things, they reject the summits of transitory dignity, they despise the allurements of carnal enticement. And not only do they not go about after the things of others, but they even disperse all their own by a prodigal largess of mercy. From the whole breadth of the world they

choose for themselves one clod of a most narrow prison, where, their senses being collected on every side from the vanity of the world, they contemplate from the marrow the species of their Creator alone. To Him, now exceeding the enclosures of the flesh, they direct their spirit by the study of assiduous meditation, to Him kindled by the torches of excessive love they grow hot with all their bowels. For the mind of each was anxious in heavenly desire, alien from earthly concupiscences; for true love, which had filled this, tortured them in weepings. But, while they were tortured in such ardor, they were fed by those very tortures of theirs, and they persist so long in the wonderful fervor of this conversation, until following the glorious footsteps of their parents they are crowned by martyrdom for the faith of Christ. Doubtless they whose examples they imitated in living and by whom they were carnally brought forth on earth, are associated with their company in heavenly beatitude; and those whom carnal propagation joined, inequality of merits did not divide; and in what order nature produced them into the world, in that also divine grace sublimated them to heavenly things. These, namely those who begot them, precede; those who were begotten follow them in right order.

O blessed family, which deserting Egypt, so strenuously passed through the Red Sea, and the army being made arrived triumphing at the land of promise! O noble progeny, which by being born indeed drew its origin from the earth, but

by dying vivifically merited to pass to heavenly dignity, which nobility of manners transferred to the nobility of the angels! How arduous was that house, which merited to transmit so many most famous citizens to the heavenly Jerusalem! For what city, however high with turreted walls, will be able to excel the dignity of this little house, which, worthy of the name of heaven, contained a copious crowd of martyrs in a happy habitation in itself? Those whom the whole world was not worthy to hold, that house closed under one door. For also the Apostle, when he was speaking of the holy martyrs, immediately added, saying: 'Of whom the world was not worthy (Hebr. XI).'

Rejoice therefore Ravenna, most famous city, empurpled by the precious blood of so many martyrs, which, although from these four you hold the most sacred body of the blessed Vitalis alone bodily, yet you are in no way vacant of the other three through the mystery of hidden virtue. For if the blessed Valeria with her husband, Scripture being witness, was in one flesh (Gen. II), it necessarily follows that of one flesh there is one burial. And when we read: 'What God has joined, let not man separate (Matth. XIX),' let us also say rejoicing that what God, who is eternal life, joined, temporal death intervening did not divide. Concerning the sons, moreover, what else is to be said, except that they who are connected to their most blessed begetter by insoluble bonds of nature could in no way be separated from him by a local interval? Moreover it is read that Adam, when he first saw his wife, immediately said:

'This now is bone from my bones, and flesh from my flesh (Gen. II).' If therefore Eve, because she was formed from the side of the man, is called bone from his bones and flesh from his flesh, why should not also the sons, who went out from the loins of the father, be said to have the same bones and flesh with the father? Although therefore they seem set apart by intervals of places, yet they are joined by the hidden sacrament of mystical virtue.

Rejoice therefore, noble city of Ravenna, and delight with all your bowels in the Lord, you who, although you are arduous with the loftiness of mural machine, are yet much higher by the dignity of the blessed martyrs, girt indeed with stony ramparts inexpugnably, but much more inexpugnably walled by the protection of the strong soldiers of Christ. You who in a certain way amicably emulate the Roman citadels, thus through two principal martyrs, namely Vitalis and Apollinaris, you merited to be the mother and mistress of any surrounding cities. Just as that city [Rome] through two highest apostles, namely Peter and Paul, vindicates for itself the principality of the whole world, being made as it were the head to the remaining cities, so you sparkle with the splendor of two saints, like a human face with the twin lights of eyes. Rejoice therefore and exult, because you who had before been a shrine of demons, now through the respect of divine grace have been made a capitol of heavenly senators, and you who before being wickedly fertile produced innumerable stubbles

for hell in your sons, now through the merits of the blessed martyrs are bringing forth many citizens for heaven. For you who had been an ancient Babylon before the confusion of men, have been made a new Jerusalem through the novelty of virtues, adorned namely with living stones, so that already it is said to your people not undeservedly through Paul: 'Now you are not guests and strangers, but you are citizens of the saints and domestics of God (Ephes. II);' and through Peter: 'You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of acquisition (I Pet. II).' Nor was a light indication of divine love given to you in that the blessed Vitalis even after his happy passage wished to have his sepulcher in you. He did not allow his body to be taken away from you, because he did not wish you to be destitute of the protection of his patronage. In which matter he provided for you more than for his most blessed wife, who, while he consulted your utility, did not acquiesce to her holy will. For it is written that the holy Valeria, while she wished to take away the body of the blessed Vitalis, was prohibited by the Christians and often admonished in visions by himself lest she should violate the holy body well placed by a bad man.

Certainly I cannot say, my brothers, how pleasantly, how delectably I consider the contest of this fight, how most avidly I expand all the rays of my interior lights to the spectacle of this holy contention. I weigh the diverse line of the litigants; on this side namely I behold a city, on that side a single woman; but the body of

Saint Vitalis placed in the middle is the matter and cause of the contest. Each part uses its own allegations, and defends its cause by a diverse reason of law. The former repeats the right of ancient possession, the latter opposes the title of divine concession; the former complains that it was violently taken away from her; the latter on the contrary asserts that it was given to them by divine benignity. The former says: 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's thing (Exod. XX).' The latter responds: 'What is not yours, do not seek back (Luc. VI).' The former says: 'But he is joined to me by the law of dotal marriage.' The latter responds: 'Because he is also allied to me by the precious blood of martyrdom.' You had your husband while it was allowed; let it be allowed for me also to have my martyr without molestation. For he is associated with you by the glue of carnal copulation, in me he is crowned by the glory of triumphal martyrdom. Hear the Apostle saying: 'A woman is bound to the law as long as her husband lives; but when her husband dies, she is loosed from the law of the husband (I Cor. VII).' If therefore you are loosed from the law of the husband, you who still live in the flesh, how do you seek to weave a bond for him who has already passed to the heavenly kingdoms? But to settle the dispute of this kind of holy contention, the blessed martyr himself came forward into the midst, and imposed a limit upon the complaint of the venerable wife. And he who had hitherto been the matter of contention became the sequester and mediator of peace.

But while we say these things to you, most dear brothers, that also is brought back to mind which sacred Scripture testifies that the patriarch Jacob did. For it is read that when he saw the day of death approaching, he called his son Joseph and said to him: 'If I have found grace in your sight, place your hand under my thigh, and you shall do mercy and truth to me so that you do not bury me in Egypt, but I may sleep with my fathers, and you shall carry me out of this land, and hide me in the sepulcher of my ancestors.' To whom Joseph responded: 'I will do what you have commanded.' And he: 'Swear therefore to me (Gen. XLVII).' Upon his swearing, Israel adored God. What is this, my brothers? What does such an anxious solicitude for the body to be buried mean from so great a man? For if we measure this from human custom, certainly we find nothing worthy of such great excellence of a prophetic mind. For wherever a human body is buried, its future resurrection is believed without doubt not to be for that reason either less perfect or less glorious. But if the depth of the mystic sacrament be required in the gloom of this doubtfulness, a clear light of understanding will rise for him who finds it. For the cadavers of the dead signify the sins of those living unjustly. For just as after the contact of dead bodies the law commands men to be purified (Num. XIX), so also after the perpetration of crimes we are commanded to be washed through penance. Hence namely that sentence was said: 'He who is baptized from the dead, and touches him again, what does his washing profit

him?' (Eccli. XXXIV.) For he is baptized from the dead who is cleansed by weepings from sin; but after baptism he touches the dead who repeats the fault after tears. But the burial of the dead signifies the remission of sins. Whence it is said through the Prophet: 'Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered (Psal. XXXI).' Where therefore were the cadavers of the patriarchs to be buried, except in that land where He was to be crucified by whose blood the remission of sins was made? What therefore was the cause that the patriarch Jacob was buried in the land of the Canaanites, was the same why the blessed Vitalis specifically chose a sepulcher for himself in the city of Ravenna. For just as the former by the burial of his body signified that the remission of sins was about to be in those borders of the world, because there the Lord was to be crucified, so the latter knew that this most happy city was to be called by divine appointment to the grace of baptism and to the faith of Christ.

Therefore I beseech and admonish you, most beloved brothers, reflect with assiduous meditation upon so great a dignity, which you have received by the gratuitous gift of God, and take care to return thanks worthy of such benefits, not only with mouth or heart, but also with worthy works, saying always with the Prophet: "What shall I render to the Lord, for all the things that he hath rendered to me? I will take the chalice of salvation, and I will call upon the name of the Lord (Psal. CXV)." Let him not abhor to drink the bitterness of a momentary potion, who desires

to arrive at the sweetness of perpetual safety. He who wishes to be enrolled among the soldiers of Christ, let him now gird himself manfully for the conflict, so that after the victory has been achieved, now emeritus, he may receive the citizenship of blessed rest. Let him now prepare himself to join battle, that he may be worthily able to be crowned after the victory. "For he also that striveth for the mastery, is not crowned, except he strive lawfully (II Tim. II)." For he is a delicate soldier who wishes to conquer before he begins to fight, who wishes for victory without a battle, or without a victory pants for the palm. No, brothers, it cannot be that great rewards are reached, except through great labors. For as it is said by the Apostle: "Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God (Act. XIV)." Whence Truth itself says: "From the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away (Matth. XI)."

Despise therefore the fleeting allurements of this world, my brothers, pant from the marrow of your bones for the joys of the heavenly homeland, repress the incitements of the flesh, fulfill with works the commandments of God which you receive; let no prosperity of the world draw you back from the love of God, let no adversity break you, let not luxury pollute your body, let not the flame of envy consume you, let not elation puff you up, let not the covetousness of earthly things weigh you down, let not anger divide you from the love of your neighbor, let not inordinate affec-

tion join you to the vices of the wicked; wipe away past evils with the tears of worthy penance, avoid imminent ones with cautious provision, place the terrible Judge who is to come before the eyes of your mind, fear with trembling the sentence of the strict examination, so that, fearing Him who is now to come, while you busy yourselves carrying the cross of His humanity, you may afterward see Him coming in the glory of His majesty, secure and joyful, Jesus Christ our Lord, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XVII

bis. II. ON SAINT VITALIS THE MARTYR. (APRIL 28)

To a spectacle exceedingly beautiful and delightful to see, most dear brothers, we have gathered on today's feast, and we have contemplated with the eyes of faith the admirable victory of the triumphal struggle. For we saw the ancient dragon join battle with man; we saw the poisonous shrewdness overcome by the astuteness of a better serpent; we saw him who had been accustomed to conquer, yield feebly; we saw him who had lain prostrate, report victory over the triumphed enemy with the spoils snatched away. On that side we perceived the roaring lion raging immensely against the flock of Christ; on this side, indeed, a new David liberating the snatched sheep from the bloody teeth of the most greedy predator. For that one, gaping with dry jaws, thirsted for human blood, and with the throat of

his malice opened, had already begun to swallow the sheep of Christ; but this one, transfixing his mouth with the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God (Ephes. VI), violently snatched the captured prey and, through the hole which he had made in the jaw of Leviathan, called it back from the very abyss of death to the pastures of life. Whence it is well said to the blessed Job by the Divine voice: "Wilt thou bore through the jaw of Leviathan with a ring? (Job XL.)" For by Leviathan, who is called "their addition," that cautious devourer of the human race is designated, who, while he promised to add divinity to man, took away immortality; who also, while he multiplies in those who follow him by his most wicked persuasion the fault of prevarication which he offered to the first man, heaps up punishments for them without ceasing. Therefore the Lord, through His elect, bores through the jaw of Leviathan with a ring, because by the ineffable power of His mercy He meets the malice of the ancient enemy, so that at some time He may lose even those whom He has already captured, and they fall as it were from his mouth who, after perpetrating faults, return to innocence. For who, once captured by his mouth, would escape his jaw, if it were not bored through? Did he not then bite the blessed Ursicinus, when after excessive torments he feared the sword of the executioner? Did he not hold him fully in his mouth, when he consented to sacrifice to idols? But, while through the exhortation of Vitalis, the most glorious martyr, he returned to life, this Leviathan

lost him in some way as if through the hole of his jaw. For as it is narrated in the holy history of his deeds, when after excessive torments Ursicinus had come to the palm of being beheaded, he was terrified, and while he wished to escape, Vitalis cried out, saying: "Do not, do not, Ursicinus the physician, who have been accustomed to cure others, wound yourself with the arrow of eternal death; and you who through excessive passions have come to the palm, do not lose the crown prepared for you by the Lord." O wonderful soldier of Christ, who, while he is still girded with the arms of earthly warfare, by the inflaming Divine Spirit, is suddenly fervently animated for the spiritual contest! O new and incomparable recruit, who, in the very beginning of his recruitment, bursting into the midst of the ranks of the roaring enemies, rushed undaunted upon the tyrant himself, and liberated his fellow soldier from under the very swords of those who were slaughtering! The learned and most fervent soldier of Christ, making an attack upon the enemy, repelled the captive, drew his companion to himself, and repaired the loss of his warfare with the soldier restored.

It is pleasant to consider, most dear brothers, with how great an ardor of charity the mind of the blessed Vitalis had been inflamed, who, in order to consult for the salvation of his brother, did not fear danger for himself. Indeed, girded with a military belt, distinguished by the famous titles of warfare, enrolled in the order of knights, decorated with a warlike cloak, he remained entirely

secure concerning himself. But when he saw a companion of the interior warfare, caught in the war of temptations, now failing under a falling hail of darts, and, with the shield of patience lost, the hostile swords looming over him naked, he immediately leaped into the midst, and objected himself to the danger of death, imitating his emperor, namely the Redeemer of the human race, who, so that we might live, endured death, and, so that he might snatch us from the yoke of diabolical power, permitted himself to be crucified by the members of the devil. He was indeed present in body in the service of the consul, but in mind he had already crossed over to the service of the Creator. He was receiving from the former the stipend of the present life; he was expecting from the latter the perpetual citizenship of future blessedness. He was receiving from the former the gift which he saw temporally; he was hoping from the latter the prize which, with the race-course not yet run, he could not yet see, saying with the Apostle: "While we look not at the things which are seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal (II Cor. IV)." He was exhibiting to the former the obedience of military office; he was preserving for the latter the immovable foundation of perfect faith, observing already that Gospel: "Render the things that are Caesar's, to Caesar; and the things that are God's, to God (Luc. XX)." O how efficacious and living a voice then came forth from his mouth! how fervent a flame of charity surged from his warmed breast!

"Do not, do not," he said, "Ursicinus the physician, who have been accustomed to cure others, wound yourself with the arrow of eternal death." Nor could that descend cold into the heart of the hearer, which through the words of exhortation proceeded from the very fire of the Holy Spirit. For Ursicinus, hearing these things, with his knee placed on the ground, exhorted the executioner to strike him, performing penance for having feared the martyrdom of Christ.

But while the lapse of the blessed Ursicinus is heard of, someone's mind might perhaps be moved as to why almighty God permits those whom He has chosen forever, whom by a more abundant grace He also assumes to the summit of martyrdom, to fall into the abyss of dangerous fear through the impeding infirmity of the flesh. Whence, because we believe satisfaction can be given more quickly, we reply briefly. For holy men, who are raised to the summit of perfection through the grace of the divine gift, as long as they are in this life, are repressed by certain temptations lest they be proud with any elation, so that they may by no means be able to progress as much as they wish. Lest therefore they be extolled through the vice of pride, there is made in them a certain measure of virtues. For from this it is that Elijah, although he had progressed so far in high virtues, was suspended by a certain measure, while he fled from Jezebel, who though a queen, was yet but a little woman (III Kings XIX). I consider indeed this man of wonderful virtue drawing fire from heaven, and twice consuming

the commanders of fifty with their followers at a sudden petition (IV Kings I), opening the heavens for rains by a word, raising the dead, and also foreseeing future things by the spirit of prophecy. But again it occurs to the mind that, after he did all these things wonderfully, terrified by a woman's fear he fled before one little woman. I consider the man smitten by fear asking for death from the hand of the Lord and not receiving it, and avoiding death by fleeing from the hand of a woman. For he was seeking death while he fled, saying: "It is enough for me, Lord, take away my soul. For I am no better than my fathers (III Kings X)." Whence then was he so powerful that he performed so many virtues? Whence so dear to God that he restored life even to the dead, except because in the deep counsel of divine dispensation the measures of a hidden balance are weighed, so that these men of the highest religion might both be very powerful through divine power, and again be moderated by a certain measure through their own infirmity? For in those virtues Elijah recognized what he had received from the Lord, but in these infirmities what he was capable of from himself. That power was virtue, but this infirmity was the guardian of virtue. In those virtues he showed what he had received, in these infirmities he guarded that which he had received. In miracles Elijah was shown, in infirmities he was preserved. For it is written that Jezebel said: "May the gods do such things to me, she said, and add such things, unless by this hour tomorrow I set thy soul as the soul of one of them.

And Elijah heard, and feared, and fleeing went wherever his will carried him (Ibid.)." O violence of the word! o eminence of dread! At the hearing of a woman's word, Elijah fled; and he fled, not for one, not for two, not for three days, but rather for forty days and forty nights! For the speech of the woman entering into his heart had been like a certain sword, and with the counsel of reason lost he knew not what he should do. Tossed by fear agitating him through the space of so great a journey, just as when a whirlwind has seized from the opposite side the mast of a ship driven with a favorable course and reflected the impetus, so the woman's speech smote the mind of the prophet sailing with the sail of virtue, and tossed his whole ship through all the waves of dread, with the pilot disturbed. What therefore of you, Elijah? Are you indeed he who by a word had shut heaven and withheld the rains, who had commanded the air and brought forth divine fires, who had ordered the false priests to be wholesomely slain, who had constantly reproached the king to his face that he and his house overturned the people of Israel, who had said: "As the Lord liveth, if there shall be rain, or dew, but according to the word of my mouth (III Kings XVII)," who had made of the widow's house a floor of ears of corn and a press of oil, who had commanded all the elements, and now you dread the word of a harlot?

What wonder then, my brothers, if after excessive torments the blessed Ursicinus dreaded the sword of the consul, when indeed that emi-

nent one among the prophets, Elijah, hardly unequal to any of the saints, fled for a course of so many days like a stag struck by the arrow of dread, not at the sight of a man, but of a woman, not at the sight of a sword, but at the hearing of a word of threats? How great indeed the merit of Elijah was is quickly gathered from here, if evangelical authority is brought forward for testimony concerning him. For to Zechariah, concerning the promise of John, the angel says: "He shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luc. I)." Concerning the same John the Lord also testifies, saying: "Among those born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist (Matth. XI)." If therefore among men no one has risen greater than John, who is greater than Elijah, who had one virtue and one spirit with John?

But while we strive to defend the fearing Ursicinus with the fearful Elijah, the infirmity of the supreme pastor of the Church is also recalled to memory. For smitten by the voice of one woman, while he feared to die, he denied life. And then Peter on earth did not presume to offer testimony concerning the Lord (Matth. XXVII), when the thief on the cross did not fear to confess Him (Luc. XXIII). In which matter we must consider why almighty God permitted him whom He disposed to set over the whole Church to fear the voice of a maidservant and to deny Him. Which indeed we recognize as done by the dispensation of a great piety, so that he, who was to be the pastor of the Church, might learn in his own fault how

he ought to have mercy on others. Therefore He first showed him to himself and then set him over the rest, so that from his own infirmity he might recognize how he should tolerate the infirmities of others. To this also the holy Scripture indicates the lapses of such men, that is, of Elijah and Peter, so that the ruin of the greater may be the caution of the lesser. To this indeed both the penance and the pardon of the saints are insinuated, so that there may be hope for those perishing, a recovery of the lost. Let no one therefore be proud when Peter falls from his state; let no one also despair when Peter rises from his lapse.

On the contrary, how wonderfully divine Scripture presses down the proud, which raises up the humble. For it related one thing done; and in a diverse way it recalled the proud indeed to the dread of humility, but the humble to the confidence of hope. Inestimable indeed is this new kind of medicine, which, placed in one and the same order, both dries up the swollen things by pressing, and pours into the withered things by lifting up. For it terrified us by the lapse of the greater, but strengthened us by their reparation. Thus indeed always, thus the mercy of divine dispensation both represses those becoming proud, and supports us lest we fall into despair.

It is pleasant to consider within the fortified bosom of grace with how much favor of mercy God contains us. Behold, he who extols himself for his virtues, returns to humility through a vice. He who is extolled by the grace of a virtue received, is wounded not by a sword, but, as I

might so say, by a medicine. For what is virtue, if not medicine? And what is vice, if not a wound? Because therefore we make a wound out of the medicine, God makes a medicine out of the wound, so that we who are struck by virtue may be cured by vice. For we distort the gifts of virtues into the use of vices, but He assumes the evils of vices into the art of virtues; so that we who flee the humility of the one who cures, may inseparably cling to the one who grants salvation.

But among these things it must be known that most of men are bound more tightly by that in which they fall in many ways, and when the ancient enemy strikes them from one vice, that they may fall down, he also binds them from another, lest they rise. Let a man therefore consider with what adversary he wages war, and if he already weighs that he has failed in something, let him at least fear after the fault, so that the wounds by which he is frequently killed may be studiously avoided, for it is very rare that our enemy cures the sickness of the elect even with wounds. For the Lord often subjects His elect to the tempter to be instructed. Just as after the enclosures of paradise, after the secrets of the third heaven, lest the apostle Paul could have been extolled by the magnitude of the revelations, there was given to him an angel of Satan. Behold, he who first considers the secrets of paradise, returning to himself, labors against the war of the flesh, sustains another law in his members, by whose rebellion he teaches the law of the spirit to be fatigued. After the donation of the gift, therefore,

God proves the man, because He both lifts him up by the conferred gift, and by withdrawing it a little, He shows the man to himself. Which we undoubtedly suffer until we are reformed to the substance of promised incorruption, with the stain of sin thoroughly wiped away. But by this very temptation it is disposed that they who, being elated, could perish, being humbled, are preserved from perdition.

Therefore by a secret order of dispensation, whence the iniquity of the devil is permitted to rage, thence the benignity of God is piously perfected. By which our adversary obeys the nods of supernal grace from there, whence he exercises the wrath of his most wicked will. For while the blessed Ursicinus was enduring so many torments for the love of Christ, and remained immovable among the lacerating hands of the executioners, elation could perhaps have stolen upon him from the constancy of his fortitude, which would merge him much more deeply, unless a lighter breeze of temptation had struck him. For after the Lord strengthens our minds for perfection, He soon proves them by visiting with the stings of temptations. He who both by approaching anticipates our hearts to virtues, and by receding permits them to be shaken by temptation. For if after the gifts of virtues no breeze of temptation should shake us, the mind would already boast that it has this from itself. So that therefore it may both usefully have the gifts of firmness and humbly recognize its own infirmity, through the access of grace it is raised

to other things, and through the recess it wholesomely experiences what it is of itself. Which is well hinted to us also from the history of the sacred reading, in which Solomon is said to have received wisdom divinely, and yet after receiving the same wisdom he is remembered to have been immediately struck by the question of harlots (III Kings III). For as soon as he received the grace of so great a revelation, he endured the contest of shameful women, because undoubtedly often, when the respect of inner clarity illuminates our mind with granted virtues, slippery thoughts also disturb it, so that he whom perfection exalts, having been raised by the bestowed gift, also finds what he is, having been struck by temptation.

Moreover, the blessed martyr Ursicinus saw everyone around him raging cruelly, insanely and irrationally striving to destroy the name of Christ, all tending toward the precipice through the abrupt ways of error, all, having lost the eyes of the heart, ignorant of the way of truth; and therefore he could perhaps have thought with such reflection that no one remained who could be equaled by his merits. Wherefore divine piety willed him to fall for a moment, and soon He divinely excited a man from the earthly warfare who should raise him up, so that, while he perceived one even from a secular order to be much stronger and more robust than himself, he might humbly bow the neck of his heart to recognize his own infirmity. Hence it is that Elijah, of whom it was said above, while he fled terrified from

Jezebel, and estimated himself alone to be left to God out of all, saying: "Lord, they have slain thy prophets, they have thrown down thy altars, and I am left alone, and they seek my life (III Kings XIX)"; in order to repress the elation of his mind, the Lord answered saying: "I have left me seven thousand men, who have not bowed their knees before Baal (Ibid.)." It is indeed certain that he extinguishes the eyes of the heart who, when he acts rightly, neglects to consider the merits of his neighbors. But on the contrary, he illuminates himself with a great ray of humility who subtly ponders the good things of others; because while he beholds those things which he himself has done, done also abroad and by others, the swelling of pride is pressed down in him who strives to break forth from singularity within. "I have left," He said, "to me seven thousand men, who have not bowed their knees before Baal," so that, while he recognized that he had not alone remained, he might bow the glory of elation which was rising in him from singularity. He was indeed a prophet, and had often known supernal mysteries. Why then was it difficult to recognize that other faithful servants to God had remained in the world? But from here it must be shrewdly considered how wickedly elation closes the eye of the heart, because he who, being humble, had known the hidden things of God, being elated, knew not even the open things. Therefore, so that the blessed Ursicinus might escape the abyss of elation, it was worthy that by falling he should learn that he had stood not by his own, but by

another's virtue. Divine clemency permitted the lofty cedar of paradise to be lightly shaken, lest at the rushing in of a stronger whirlwind it could have been uprooted. He permitted His soldier to yield even for a moment to hostile swords, so that, repenting of the flight, he might have been able to repair his courageous breast more fervently for renewed contests again, so as to make of the one fleeing immediately one following, and of the conquered, by a change of turn, a conqueror. By loving his own flesh Ursicinus wished to desert Christ, but again by fearing Christ he delivered that same flesh of his own accord to be struck by the executioners. From that in which he sinned, from that he immediately studied to emend. Whence he admitted the fault, thence he sustained the penance. For Ursicinus, being consoled, with his knee placed on the ground, exhorted the executioner to strike, performing penance for having feared the martyrdom of Christ.

Learn, brothers, learn to perform perfect penance; learn to cleanse the stains of your guilt with the tears of full compunction, namely, that perfect laments may wash away completed evils, lest you be more constrained in the debt of the perpetrated work, and pay less in the tears of satisfaction. For it is written: "Thou hast given us to drink in tears in measure (Psal. LXXIX)," so that undoubtedly the mind of each one may drink the tears of its own compunction in repenting, as much as it remembers to have been dry from God through faults. For the blessed Ursicinus, by

fearing death, was already deserting the Author of life, but when he received the words of wholesome exhortation, immediately raising himself against himself, he delivered his flesh spontaneously to death, through the love of living for which he had sinned. Finally he did not resist, he did not raise himself into words of presumptuous defense, he did not delay penance, but soon humbly obeyed the wholesome command of the one reproving him. For there are some who, when they hear words of correction from the mouth of their neighbors, soon burst into anger, are puffed up by the vice of tumid elation, and burn with the torches of capital enmity: these undoubtedly make for themselves a matter of sickness out of the medicine of salvation, and an instrument of wounding out of the cautery of curing. Who provoke God to anger much more worse through the audacity of defense, than then when they were sinning by the common infirmity of the flesh. For one offends more by defending a sin than by committing a sin. To sin is indeed human, but to defend sin is diabolical. Whence also the Psalmist humbly implores divine help, saying: "Let not the deep swallow me up: and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me (Psal. LXVIII)." For he is swallowed by the deep who falls into the precipice of a grave sin. But then the pit shuts its mouth over him, lest he be able to go out, when the sinner merges himself more deeply by proceeding into the audacity of defense. Whence also the first man then as it were fell into the deep, when he ate the forbidden apple through disobedience. Then

the pit shut its mouth over him, when he boldly presumed to defend his fault. For he said: "The woman, whom thou gavest me to be my companion, gave me of the tree, and I did eat (Gen. III)." Who indeed through fear had fled to hide himself, but yet when required he made known how much he was swelling even while fearing. For when from sin the present punishment is feared, and the lost face of God is not loved, the fear is from swelling, not from humility. He is indeed proud who does not desert sin if it be allowed not to be punished, but rather presumes to defend it with tumid elation.

Let us strive therefore now, most beloved, to imitate the virtues of the blessed martyrs, that we may deserve to be crowned afterward by the Emperor of martyrs with the same. Let us keep their footsteps in the way, whose society we desire to have in the homeland. Truly there we shall be what they are, if here we shall have been what they were here. For if we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him; if we die with Him, we shall also live with Him (II Tim. 2). Let us not therefore be divided in the journey, if we wish to be joined in the arrival. Let the blessed Vitalis teach us to have the zeal of rectitude, let the blessed Ursicinus teach us to hold the form of humility; let each teach to preserve the bond of twofold charity. For the former, inflamed with the ardor of twofold charity, so that he might liberate his perishing neighbor and return to God His clean image, entirely despised himself, and did not fear the sentence of the most cruel persecutor. But

the latter humbly obeyed his neighbor reproving him, and hastened to proceed as quickly as possible to the sight of his Creator by the sword.

But since we proposed to write this sermon concerning the triumph of Saint Vitalis, yet more matter occurring we have spoken concerning Ursicinus, let no one think that we have deviated from the path of our proposed intention. For when the triumph of Saint Ursicinus is extolled, the praise of the most blessed Vitalis is also not silent. For the health of the sick is the praise of the physician; and the skill of the disciple is the glory of the preceptor. Great indeed was the former, who learned to die for life; but far superior was the latter, who taught to despise momentary life for eternal. Strong was the former, who could drink the bitter cup of salvation; but much stronger was the latter, who powerfully led him out from the very jaws of perpetual death. When therefore the triumphal virtue of Ursicinus is extolled, the glorious honor of the blessed Vitalis is also increased. Rather, whatever great thing is said of both, it all pertains to the glory of the Creator of both. "For neither he that planteth is any thing, nor he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase (I Cor. III)."

Among these things, most dear brothers, return to yourselves, discuss your acts with solicitous examination; and you who gladly hear the praises of martyrs, take care yourselves also to have a laudable life. "For praise is not seemly in the mouth of a sinner (Eccli. XV)." Those indeed worthily extol the saints with praises who live

laudably, and these usefully hear the virtues of the strong whom the heard praises inflame to the love of imitation. "For what things soever were written, were written for our learning (Rom. XV)." Whoever therefore rejoices that the martyrs of Christ have acted strongly, seize yourself also arms among the soldiers of Christ. External enemies are lacking, turn your hands upon yourself, and you will find many seditious citizens. Tame pride, strangle anger, extinguish lust, repress avarice, slay envy, and, to embrace all briefly with the Apostle, crucify your flesh with its vices and concupiscences (Gal. V); this is to act strongly, this is to fight manfully. For what does it profit if the ranks of persecutors do not besiege you around the rampart, and the barbarity of vices ranges within the walls of the city? Rather, what does it benefit if the members of the devil do not conflict with you externally, and the devil himself possesses you internally by quiet right? For whoever are subject to his will, are possessed as if by quiet right by him, and their proud king enjoys a certain security while he dominates their hearts with unshaken power. But when the spirit of each one grows warm again toward the desire of the Founder, when it deserts the torpor of negligence, and kindles the cold of its former insensibility with the fire of holy love, when it remembers its innate liberty, and being a slave held by the enemy it blushes, because the same enemy considers himself despised, because he sees the ways of God being apprehended, he grieves that his captive resists him, soon he is inflamed with

zeal, soon he is moved to contest, soon he excites himself against the rebelling mind and instigates in every art of laceration, so that by twisting the darts of temptations he may transfix the heart which he recently possessed by quiet right. He was as it were sleeping while he rested, lulled in the wicked heart, but he is excited in the provocation of the struggle, when he has admitted the right of perverted domination. For it is written: "Son, coming to the service of God, stand in justice and fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation (Eccli. II)." For whoever hastens to be girded in the divine service, what else does he do than prepare himself against the struggle of the ancient adversary, so that being free he may receive blows in the struggle, who quiet was serving in captivity under tyranny? In this struggle, most dear brothers, let our mind always exercise itself, let our mind be inflamed with all its innermost parts for the victory of this fight. "For he is not crowned, except he strive lawfully (II Tim. II)"; so that we who now contend to fight lawfully by imitating the blessed martyrs, having perceived the crown of victory, may ineffably exult forever with the King of martyrs himself. Who, triune and one God, lives and glories [reigns] for infinite ages of ages. Amen.

MAY. III. Sermon on the Finding of the Holy Cross. XI. Sermon on St. Anthimus the martyr. XIV. Sermon on St. Boniface the martyr. XV. Sermon on the Holy Spirit and His grace.

SERMON XVIII.

Finally, not only does the law prefigure this banner of human salvation through certain typical understandings and enigmas, but also the oracles of all the prophets and the authority of the entire Old Testament (*veteris instrumenti*) venerates it. For what page of the sacred eloquence is there that does not redolent of the mystery of the cross, and does not intend toward this, as if toward the head and principle of all human salvation? From which, surely, we believe it not idle if we bring forward here some testimonies which intimate the mystery of the cross, so that through those things which we touch upon here in a brief sermon, we may provide an approach of easier understanding also to those things which are kept silent. Therefore, let Abraham first come forward into the midst, who, while he wished to immolate his son to God, signed almost all the sacraments of the Lord's passion in order. For just as Abraham, who is called "exalted father" (*pater excelsus*), did not hesitate to offer his only and beloved son to God, so also the supreme Father delivered His only-begotten and beloved Son for us all. And just as Isaac himself carried for himself the wood upon which he was to be placed, so also Christ bore upon His shoulders the wood of His cross, on which He was to suffer for our salvation. But those two servants dismissed far off signify the Jews, who, since they lived servilely and savored carnally, did not understand the highest humility [poverty] of Christ,

and therefore did not ascend into the mountain, namely the place of sacrifice. Why, however, two servants, except because, Solomon sinning, two peoples were made out of the one Israelite folk? To whom indeed it is often said through the prophet: "Adversary Israel, and prevaricating Judah (Jer. III)." But that ass which Abraham then used was the senseless stupidity of the Jews. That plain brute stupidity carried all the sacraments, yet what it bore, like an irrational animal, it did not know. Now indeed, what is it that was said to them: "Wait here with the ass, but after we have worshipped, we will return to you?" (Gen. XXII.) Hear the Apostle: "Blindness," he says, "in part has happened in Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles should come in, and so all Israel should be saved (Rom. XI)." For what is it that is said: "Blindness in part has happened in Israel?" This is namely: "Wait here with the ass." Until the fullness of the Gentiles should come in, that is, after we have worshipped, where namely the sacrifice of the Lord's cross, having been fulfilled, shall have been preached through all nations. But that which follows: "And so all Israel shall be saved," this is: "we will return to you."

What, however, is it that a ram is found caught by its horns among the briers, which is offered immolated for Isaac? Surely the cross has horns, for two pieces of wood are composed together, and thus return the appearance of a cross. For from this it is that it is written of Christ: "Horns are in his hands (Hab. III)." Therefore the ram caught by its horns is Christ crucified among

the sharp and wound-inflicting iniquities of the Jews, as He Himself complains through Jeremiah, saying: "With the thorns of their sins this people has surrounded me (Jer. XXX)." The sacrifice being completed, it is said to Abraham, "In thy seed shall all the nations be blessed (Gen. XXII)," and after the Lord says: "They have dug my hands and my feet (Psal. XXI)," a little after in the same Psalm he adds: "All the ends of the earth shall remember, and shall be converted to the Lord, and all the kindreds of the Gentiles shall adore in his sight, for the kingdom is the Lord's, and he shall have dominion over the nations (Ibid.)." Abraham therefore having offered his son, and the ram having been immolated for him, he called the name of that place, "The Lord seeth," because our Redeemer, after being offered on the altar of the cross He paid the debt of our death, showed Himself henceforth to be seen by the gazes of His faithful, so that surely all the redeemed may now see Him through faith, who until then did not have the eyes of faith.

But while we pursue Abraham sacrificing with a somewhat longer sermon, we are hindered longer from other things which must be said. Indeed, Jacob also expressed this mystery of the cross figuratively when, among the other words of blessing, he brought in concerning Christ, saying: "He shall wash his robe in wine, and his garment in the blood of the grape (Gen. XLIX)." The robe of Christ and the garment is the multitude of nations, which the Lord then put on when He joined them to Himself through the grace of

redemption, as He promises through the prophet, saying: "As I live, saith the Lord, unless I put on all these as a garment (Isai. XLIX)." Therefore the Lord washed His robe in wine, and His garment in the blood of the grape, when He hung like a cluster (*botrus*) on the wood of the cross. For then from His side blood and water flowed out. But the water washed us, the blood redeemed us, surely that He might present to Himself a spouse not having spot or wrinkle (Ephes. V). The same Jacob then also patently exhibited the mystery of the cross when, preferring the younger Ephraim to the firstborn Manasseh, he changed his arms in the manner of a cross over them (Gen. XLVIII). For through the cross it was brought about that the people of the Gentiles, as if by the right of the firstborn being snatched away, should precede the people of the Jews. That also which is read in Exodus refers without doubt to the sacrament of the Lord's cross. For the Lord said to Moses: "Cast the rod which thou bearest in thy hand upon the earth: and he cast it, and it was made a serpent." Moses immediately feared, and fled. And the Lord said to him: Take hold of its tail; and he took hold, and it was made a rod again (Exod. IV). We all clearly know that the serpent persuaded death to man (Gen. III). Therefore death is from the serpent. But who is the rod, except Christ, of whom the prophet says: "Because a rod shall go forth from the root of Jesse (Isai. XI)?" Therefore the rod into a serpent is Christ into death. But Moses feared and fled, because when the Lord was suspended on the cross or dying, all that

number of the apostles feared, trembling, and receded from the solidity of certain hope and firm faith. Because indeed the tail is the extreme part of the body, what does it signify but the end of the Lord's passion? Moses therefore took hold of the tail, and nothing further of the form of the serpent appeared in the rod, because the mystery of the Lord's passion and cross being completed, every faithful one then returned to the faith, and Christ, death being consumed, repaired in Himself that very thing which He had been through the glory of the resurrection.

Now indeed, what is it that the Israelite folk is commanded to place the blood of the lamb upon the doorposts of the houses (Exod. XII), except that it prefigures us carrying the cross of Christ, who is the true lamb, upon our forehead? For the lamb was immolated in the evening, and in the evening of the world Christ suffered. The posts are surely anointed, lest the destroying angel dare to bring in destruction; and we bear the banner of the cross in our heart and forehead, lest the sudden enemy rushing in should be able to take away salvation. Whence also we sing secure: "The light of thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us (Psal. IV)." Which, however, we sing more securely and worthily if, the Red Sea now having been crossed and the enemy submerged, we carry the timbrel (*tympanum*) with Miriam [Mary], the sister of Moses (Exod. XV). What is it to carry a timbrel? Hear the Lord saying: "He that will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me (Luc. IX)." For he

who crucifies his flesh with its vices and concupiscences (Galat. V), who mortifies his members which are upon the earth by abstaining (Col. III), he truly carries the timbrel with Miriam, because he keeps himself dry from the harmful humors of earthly pleasure. Therefore, according to the consequence of reason, here also the timbrel designates the mystery of the cross not obscurely.

Furthermore, that also occurs not inconveniently, that namely the Israelite people in Marah murmurs against Moses, crying out namely that they cannot find what they may drink. Then the Lord showed Moses a piece of wood, which when he had cast into the most bitter waters, they were straightway turned into sweetness (Exod. XV). For what are those bitter waters, except that they hold the appearance of the killing letter, and of the hard and tasteless law? For it is written: "The Lord appointed to his people a law, and judgments, and tempted them (Ibid.)." And elsewhere: "I gave them precepts that were not good, and judgments in which they shall not live (Ezech. XX)." To which law, however, if the confession of the cross and the mystery of the Lord's passion is coupled, straightway that which had been bitter is turned into the sweetness of spiritual understanding. It is to be noted, however, according to the truth of history, that the water having been turned into sweetness, immediately the people came to Elim, where there were twelve fountains of waters and seventy palms. For what are the twelve fountains, but the twelve apostles, whom the Lord appointed for this, that they

should irrigate the dry and squalid breasts of the human race with the inundations of their preaching? What indeed are the seventy palm trees, but as many disciples, whom He therefore sent before His face (Luc. X), that through them the world might recognize the palms of His victory? And certainly the order of subsequent things seems disposed congruously enough, that first the people should be led to the letter of the law, from which surely, while it was bitter, it could not pass. But after it was made sweet through the tree of life, and began to be understood spiritually, straightway the people of God passed from the Old Testament to the apostolic fountains and palm trees, that is, to the grace of the Gospel. And well after the Decalogue had been received, a sevenfold number of preachers is appointed, because through the sevenfold grace of the Holy Spirit every commandment of the divine law is fulfilled. Nor clearly are the preachers of the cross undeservedly seen to be figured by the name of palms, while the cross itself may rightly be called a palm, because in it namely victory was made over the prostrate enemy of the world; as concerning the cross itself the bridegroom says to the bride, "I said," he says, "I will go up to the palm tree, I will take hold of its fruits; and thy breasts shall be as the clusters of the vine, and the odors of thy mouth as of apples, thy throat as the best wine (Cant. VII)." Surely all the elect are the fruits of the cross.

The Lord therefore went up into the palm tree, and took hold of its fruits, because as soon as He

hung on the cross for our salvation, He drew all the elect to Himself through the desire of love. And then the holy Church through the breasts of the two Testaments began to diffuse the wines of spiritual joy, and to inspire the odor of heavenly concupiscence into the nostrils of human minds, so that our mind, incited to obey and congratulating itself, should say: "Draw me after thee, we will run in the odor of thy ointments (Cant. I)." Which indeed that rock of Horeb in Rephidim also denounces quite expressly, which Moses, at the Lord's command, struck with a rod, and drew out waters (Exod. XVII). That this rock held the figure of Christ the Apostle also testifies when he says: "But they drank of the spiritual rock that followed them; and the rock was Christ (I Cor. X)." To this rock therefore the wood of the cross was added, and soon it poured out the large gifts of the Holy Spirit like an inundation of flowing water. To which waters indeed to be drawn He Himself invites all who thirst, when He says: "If any man thirst, let him come to me, and drink, and out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water (Joan. VII)." But this, the evangelist says, "he spoke of the Spirit, whom those that believed in him were to receive (Ibid.)."

But why do we delay longer in the rest, since it is established as clear that even the tablets themselves, which were written by the finger of God, displayed the sacrament of the Lord's cross? For ten precepts were written on them, and the number ten is designated by the letter X, which expresses the appearance of the cross.

In this letter, which contains the number ten in itself, one stroke is drawn from top to bottom obliquely, so that another also not unlike it is joined through a transverse line, with arms produced on both sides. And thus the junction made of both strokes not only holds out the exterior image of the cross, but also seems to indicate a certain mystical power of it. For the Lord says: "I am not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill (Matth. V)." Therefore through the sacrament of the cross He coupled the precepts of the Old Testament to Gospel grace, and, so to speak, He made the two Testaments as it were the body of one doctrine. And indeed at first the tablets were given, but immediately, the people prevaricating, they were broken (Exod. XXXII); but secondly the tablets are given, but to remain perpetually. Plainly the first tablets held the figure of the ancient law, which was afterwards to cease [fail] from the obedience of its worship. But afterwards the tablets are given, but they are not broken; because the grace of the New Testament, which was solidified through the mystery of the cross, knows no failure.

Furthermore, neither is that ark of the Old Testament to be believed to have lacked the treasures of the blessed cross. For it hid the incomparable riches of the cross, because it already served the cross through all the mysteries of its figures and enigmas. For of it even then it was already the minister, namely the image of truth, and the beginning of fullness. The ark, namely, was the holy Church. But three things were contained in

the ark, namely two stone tablets, which surely intimate the perpetual firmness of the two Testaments, which also we taught above to contain the mystery of the cross in themselves. Also a golden urn having manna. This surely expresses the pure and sincere flesh of the Redeemer, which without doubt includes the sweetness of perpetual divinity. Which sweetness then tasted in the palate of our minds, from when the soldier opened the side of the Lord hanging on the cross (Joan. XIX); when namely the cluster (*botrus*) was pressed, who while he was trodden, alone trod the winepress. Third in the ark was the rod of Aaron, which after aridity flourished (Num. XVII). Which surely signifies what else but that saving banner of our supreme and true high priest, always flowering with the greenness of immortal memory, and fecund with the fertility of exuberant fruits. For the cross always grows green in hope, flowers in faith, fructifies in charity. And after it was cut off from the earthly sod, it puts forth leaves, because whoever through love of the cross cuts himself off from earthly desires in the very root of the mind, grows strong to seize the unfading inheritance and the ever-green pastures of eternal life.

But what more shall I discourse concerning the praise of the blessed cross, since all those sacrifices which are commanded to be offered under the rite of legal ceremonies are referred to this one singular and true sacrifice which was offered on the altar of the cross? For by the calf (*vitulus*), which is commanded to be offered

from the herd (Exod. XXIX), our Redeemer, who descended from the progeny of the patriarchs, is figured. He surely with the plow of His cross tamed the earth of our flesh, and enriched us with the fruit of virtues from the seed of the Holy Spirit. This calf without spot was offered not in the tabernacle, but before its door by the sons of Aaron (Exod. XXIX); because the Lord also, who is without sin (Isai. LIII), was crucified under Annas and Caiaphas (Luc. III) outside the gate. He is the Lamb who wiped away the sins of the world (Joan. I). He is the kid, who slew the author of sin, the devil, with the sword of the cross. He is the dove, in whose species surely the Holy Spirit descended upon Him at the waters of the Jordan (Matth. III). He is also the turtle-dove, because He exists as the author of perpetual chastity, as is said to Him by the bride: "Thy cheeks are beautiful as the turtle-dove's (Cant. I)."

Furthermore, that same victim of the life-giving cross was designated by that red heifer, which is commanded to be of perfect age, but ignorant of the yoke (Num. XIX). Surely the red heifer is the flesh of the Savior, namely rosy with the blood of the Passion. Indeed, the Lord came to the Passion of perfect age, but the yoke of any sin whatever did not wear His neck. Those who offer the heifer are unclean, and those who crucify Christ, from whom the world is washed, are themselves damnably defiled. But he who, collecting the ash, casts it outside the camp, is clean; because whoever preach the mystery of the Lord's cross and passion throughout the breadth of the world,

purge themselves from the contagion of sins through the ministry of fraternal edification.

But perhaps it may displease some that we heap up so many examples of the sacred eloquence for the praise of the cross, and show as it were the instructed battle line of the Old Testament to obey, utterly intent upon this royal banner. To whom certainly what else must be said, except that which the Apostle holds out, saying: "The word of the cross, to them indeed that perish, is foolishness; but to them that are saved, that is, to us, it is the power of God (I Cor. I)." For whatever we discourse concerning the praise of the cross, it is not doubted to redound to the praise of Him who illustrated the banner of the cross by His own death.

Through these things therefore, my brothers, which have been said, we can clearly gather that this sign of heavenly victory, through which the world was to be absolved from the bonds of ancient captivity, the Fathers adore from the very beginning of the world, the Prophets foretell, and all the pages of the holy Scriptures prefigure. Surely what we adore in the gift, they already venerated in faith. And what among them was figured by certain enigmas, we already see fulfilled through the grace of the Mediator, so that what they presaged through the spirit, we already discern and embrace through corporal gaze. O admirable pious clemency of our Founder! O to be preached singular humility of our Redeemer! He deigned to undergo the penalty of the most atrocious death, that He

might promote us to the crown. He chose the most shameful punishment of the cross by His own will, that He might sublime us from the yoke of servitude to the kingdom. He did not refuse to be cursed, that He might absolve us from the curse of the law. He bore a shameful death, that He might deliver us from the reproach of eternal death. Whence also the Apostle: "Christ," he says, "hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written: Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree; that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, that we may receive the promise of the Spirit through faith (Gal. III)."

Because therefore, my brothers, having been loosed from the yoke of servitude, we have now obtained the blessing of Abraham in Christ, what remains but that we preserve those gifts of our Redeemer which we perceived by prevenient grace, also through the merit of life, lest we who are born again in Christ through baptism, living again according to the old man, should be recalled to the sentence of his damnation? For today also in the church we sing that word of David: "Cursed are they that decline from thy commandments (Psal. CXVIII)." Surely the sentence is to be considered, because it is not said, "cursed are they who are not born again in thy sacraments," but, "who decline from thy commandments," because namely not only are those obnoxious to the bonds of the curse whom the water of baptism does not regenerate in Christ, but those also whose depravity declines from the

rectitude of the commandments of God through the precipices of vices. What therefore does it profit that anyone is absolved from the bonds of the ancient curse, if through a reprobate life he is thrust back again into the same bonds? For the Apostle also says: "If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, maranatha (I Cor. XVI)." Where it is equally to be noted that he does not say: "Who is not born again in our Lord Jesus Christ," but "who loveth not," so that even if anyone is proved by baptism to be born again in Christ, if he be not also died together with Him by conduct, he is by no means entirely absolved from the bonds of the curse: "For if," according to the Apostle, "we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection (Rom. VI)." And again: "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him; if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him (II Tim. II)." But who is he who does not love Christ? For who of us, if consulted concerning the love of Christ, would not immediately, constantly, rather most promptly confess that he loves Christ? But he does not love Christ who does not love the cross of Christ. And who are those who do not love the cross of Christ? Hear Paul noting them with a manifest voice: "For many," he says, "walk, of whom I have told you often (and now tell you even weeping) that they are enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly: and whose glory is in their shame, who savor earthly things (Philip. III)." Let James also speak: "Whosoever,"

he says, "will be a friend of this world, is become an enemy of God (Jac. IV)."

Whoever therefore desires to be absolved from every bond of the curse, and to obtain the full blessing of new grace, let him love the cross, from which namely all fullness of blessing emanates. Through the cross let him bind himself to the commandments of God. Through the cross let him restrain the incentives of unbridled flesh. For just as by consenting to the flesh, we incur the sentence of the curse, so by refraining the flesh, the grace of blessing is merited. For from the winepress (*torculari*) of the cross the most large wave of blessing flowed out, which wiped away every poison of the ancient curse. From there surely the drippings of heavenly charisms burst forth, which healthfully irrigate the aridity of human minds, and fecundate them with the happy fruit of all virtues. For this is that cloud which appeared to Elijah under the footstep of a man in the time of drought, and soon the abundance of inundating rain burst forth subsequently. For thus the Scripture records: "Behold," it says, "a little cloud small as a man's footstep ascended from the sea (III Reg. XVIII)." For because it is said to have ascended not as a man, but as the footstep of a man, by this the cross, which was adapted to the Lord's members, is rightly designated. And well the cross is called the footstep of a man, because through it the God-man made His transition, when He returned to the Father, as it is said through John: "Jesus knowing that his hour was come, that he should pass out

of this world to the Father (Joan. XIII)." Indeed, Pascha is called transition [transitus]. And this transition was made through the cross, as the Apostle says: "Christ our Pascha is sacrificed (I Cor. V)." As therefore He descended to our things through the Virgin, so He returned to His own through the cross. Which that miracle performed under Elisha congruously expressed. For when wood was being cut near the Jordan, suddenly the iron of a certain one cutting the matter fell into the water. Then the prophet cast a piece of wood into the water, and soon the iron swam, and returned to the handle (IV Reg. VI). What, however, is the axe, except the wisdom of God operating through the body? What is the iron, except the divinity? What the wood, except the humanity? And rightly the body of Christ is called wood, because it hung from the wood. The axe therefore was cutting the trees near the Jordan, because the wisdom of God, near the fluid course of our mortality, deigned to correct the impious Jews with the austerity of His preaching, and to cut down as it were unfruitful trees from the state of rigid pride. Whence also John says: "Now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire (Matth. III; Luc. III)." Therefore while the wood is being cut, the iron fell from the handle into the water, because while Truth corrects the sylvan minds of the Jews, the divinity deserting the flesh descended to the depths of hell. But the wood is cast into the water, and the iron returns, because the body of the

Lord, which had hung on the wood, is placed in the sepulcher, then from the depths of hell, the spirit returning, it rose.

Whence it is to be noted, my brothers, and most diligently weighed, that our Redeemer Himself first passed through the cross, and thus sublimated His humanity into the glory of the Father's right hand. He exhibited an example to us indeed, so that from where the head is known to have preceded, through the same way also the subsequent members should walk. We prefer therefore the cross on our forehead, but let us hide the same cross much more healthfully in our heart. Let the destroying angel see the blood on both posts (Exod. XII), that excluded he may evade, not to perish he may rush in. Nor let anyone applaud himself concerning the sign of the cross alone, if he does not exhibit the truth of the cross in his works. For he had significantly expressed the cross in his own morals, who said: "For I bear the marks [stigmata] of Jesus in my body (Gal. VI)."

Cleansing ourselves therefore, most dear ones, from all defilement of flesh and spirit, let us be girded to break the impetus of opposing vices, to meet the passions of carnal allurement, piously to condescend to the necessities of our neighbors, and to bear even the contumelies inflicted upon us, charity having been preserved. Let our mind be free from every weight of earthly cupidity, so that balanced on the wings of holy desire it may now desert the lowest things, and returning to its Author it may rest sweetly in His

love. Let all things which we discern be a weariness to us. Toward those things indeed which we believe, let us hasten with the instance of continual labor. This surely is the cross which we ought to imprint on our morals and acts. This is what we are commanded to carry daily after the Lord. He who carries this truly communicates in the passion of his Redeemer. This sign separates the sheep from the goats in the final examination (Matth. XXV). And the Judge, who knows not the reprobate, recognizes this character in His own. To whom, however, He considers the stigma of His own death imprinted, He soon, as a grateful rewarder, invites to the rewards of eternal life: "Come," saying, "ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom (Ibid.);" with whom He Himself lives and reigns through all ages of ages. Amen.

SERMON XIX.

ON SAINT ANTHIMUS THE MARTYR. (MAY 11.)

When we recall the triumphal deeds of the blessed Anthimus, most dear brothers, we celebrate the victories of Christ triumphing in him. For He was fighting in him, He was overcoming, who both provided constancy of faith to his mind, lest he should yield to punishments, and suggested words of life to his lips, that he might recall the unfaithful and lost from the error of their ancient perfidy. "For it is not you," He says, "that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you (Matth. X)." The body was bound by the thongs of bonds, but the word of God was

not bound (II Tim. II). The narrow prison was horrible with darkness, but the mind, inhabiting the courts of supernal clarity, enjoyed the blessed light: saying with Paul: "Who hath raised us up together, and hath made us sit together in the heavenly places (Ephes. II)." The members were livid with the blows of stripes, but he said: "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day (II Cor. IV)."

With such armed ones our Jesus ascended into battle, Moses being dead and the Jordan crossed, namely the observance of the ancient law ceasing and the sacrament of baptism having been perceived. "For the law and the prophets were until John (Luc. XVI);" so that namely there the end of the law of the Old Testament should occur, from where the laver of new grace should find its origin of flowing forth for the salvation of men. That Jesus therefore, the leader of the Israelite folk, prefigured our true Jesus, the Savior of the human race, both in name and in deed. The former is sent to destroy the nations of the Gentiles; the latter came to war against the aerial powers. The former sends two spies into Jericho (Jos. II), the latter directs his preachers into this world under the sacrament of the same number. "For he sent," the Evangelist testifying, "them two and two before his face into every city and place whither he himself was to come (Luc. X)." Those were sent that they might seek out the sites of places with solicitous curiosity; these were sent that they might prepare the way of faith in

human hearts for the coming Jesus. Those are received in the hospitality of Rahab the harlot (Jos. II); these rest at the Church of the Gentiles, which had fornicated with idols. Furthermore, Rahab hung a scarlet cord, namely of blood color, in the window of her own house; and the holy Church places the redness of blood as it were in the window of her house, while she both publicly confesses the passion of Christ in her voice, and openly carries the sign of the cross on her forehead. Whence well the bridegroom says to the bride in the Canticles: "Thy lips are as a scarlet lace, and thy speech is sweet (Cant. IV)." For what are understood as the lips of the bride, except the doctors of the Church. But scarlet has the redness of blood, or the appearance of fire, which signifies charity. Therefore the lips of the Church, that is, the holy preachers, are similar to a scarlet lace, because they preach the death of Christ, and they constantly affirm that He underwent the gibbet of the cross for the charity of the human race. And well is the order of preachers signed by the scarlet lace. For a lace binds the hair, and constrains it into one, and the holy doctors gather the multitude of the faithful into the unity of faith by their preaching and reduce them into one beauty under the bond of mutual charity. Finally, whoever was found outside that house did not avoid the swords; whoever also shall be exterior to the limit of the Church, which is faith, without doubt incurs the danger of death.

Outside this house that sacrilegious Ceremon was found, who having received codicils from

the imperial tyranny, while he raged against the Christians with insane fury, and hungered for their death with bloody teeth, was suddenly seized by a demon and fell from his vehicle, and having been vexed for a long time, while he invoked the saints whom he himself had cruelly mangled, he expired. To this house Pinianus made his refuge, who as soon as he heard the word of salvation through the blessed Anthimus, believing in Christ, escaped all the molestation of the desperate illness from which he suffered. And well made a fugitive (*transfuga*), while he attached himself to the camp of the victorious Jesus, he passed from a stranger to a domestic, and as an alien he entered into the Israelite inheritance. For in the mouth [work] of the blessed martyr Anthimus, a certain scarlet cord hung as if from the window of a house, because he did not cease to make the trophy of the cross of Christ known to all. Nor let it seem a wonder that we described the blessed Anthimus above as having come armed with the leader Jesus, and now we declare him to hold the figure of Rahab's house. Because, as is clear, both preachers and listeners, sheep and rams together, are gathered within one fold, just as they are known to have one Shepherd.

Furthermore, the blessed Anthimus, whose victories the earth already testified through many contests, so that his noble palm might shine in another element, was submerged in the flowing waters of the Tiber. And so that the skilled rage of the executioners should leave

nothing unattempted, carrying hearts of stone, they bind the weight of a rock, trusting less in corporal gravity. But in vain does the stony mass weigh down him whom the feather of merits lifts up. Alien perversity inanely depresses him whom the virtue of his own holiness, seeking high things (*altipetax*), extols. Happy that bound one, who, while he is destitute of human solace, lest he become faint-hearted, is visited by an angel. Happy, I say, the shipwrecked one, who, that he may be reported from the abyss of the sea to the station of the shore, does not enjoy the office of an earthly rower, but is carried by the vehicle of a heavenly messenger. For the angel of the Lord coming, as is told in the history of his passion, both loosed the bond of the chains, and recalled the blessed martyr to the cell of his oratory.

Let us imitate this excellent man, most dear ones, by living holily, by refraining the incentives of the flesh, by contemning the glory of the world. Let the blessed martyrs precede us in operation, that the holy angels may succor us in tribulation. For he is a delicate soldier who wishes to triumph before joining battle, to thresh before plowing the fields.

Considered indeed according to the order of the Scriptures, the series of our actions is rightly weighed. For first the law, then judgment, and finally the history of the kings follows. Now it truly behooves us to keep the mandates of the divine law enjoined upon us; afterwards we are compelled to give an account of our works before the tribunal of the terrible Judge; finally it will be

given to reign without end in that glory of supernal brightness. Therefore, let him hold the order who wishes to avoid Babylon. He surely confuses the order of his life by living, who wishes to laugh before he weeps, since Solomon says: "A time to weep, and a time to laugh" (Eccles. 3). He also deserts the line of right order who postpones the Creator of all things in love to created things. Just as it is said to the perverse man by the divine voice: "Thou hast put me behind thy body" (3 Kings 14). For he puts God behind his body who studies more to consult the utility or pleasure of his flesh than to keep the precepts of God. Hence it is that the Spouse says in the Canticles: "The king brought me into the wine cellar, he ordered charity in me" (Cant. 2). He does not say: he gave, which he did not find; but he ordered, which he found inordinate. For some have in the principal place of their heart wives, children, estates, or honors; but in the second place, in a certain way, they put God, while they love Him less. These indeed seem to have charity, but inordinate; nor do they keep that order of charity which Truth itself disposed, when He says: "To love God with all thy heart, this is the maximum and first commandment; and the second is like unto this, that he love his neighbor" (Matth. 22). Therefore, let no one boast that he has charity if it is not ordered, just as neither faith, if it be without works and thereby idle (James 2).

For it is read that Solomon had wives as queens, seven hundred, and three hundred concubines (3 Kings 11). But what have I to do

with Solomon's Gynaeceum? But the chaff of words being shaken out, the mystery is found in the marrow. For what is understood by the seven hundred, who are mentioned as both wives and queens, unless those souls who both have the Spirit of sevenfold grace, and over the movements of resulting vices obtain a sort of royal principality? But what is figured by the same three hundred concubines, unless those souls who, through the faith of the holy Trinity alone, have indeed entered the chamber of the king, but not having the purity of chaste conversation and a sort of matronly modesty, do not deserve the dotal tablets of wives? These indeed are joined to Solomon through carnal commerce; because they perceive the sacraments of our truly peaceful Savior, and yet through the degenerate torpor of a pandering life, not having the affection of shame for one husband, they do not rise to the dowry of the nuptial covenant. But indeed those souls are worthy of the name of wife and queen, who rest in the desire of the heavenly Spouse alone, who fight unconfederably against the temptations of the evil spirits. As the Scripture testifies of the same Solomon: "Because he made all the aliens tributary; but of the children of Israel the king did not appoint anyone to serve, but they were men of war, and his ministers, and princes, and leaders, and prefects of the chariots and horsemen" (3 Kings 9). Where it is clearly shown what the distance is between concubines and queens. What differs between those who, as servants of sin, pay the tributes of harsh exaction, and

those who, through the settled wars of contests, obtain the fillets of principalities. Among these princes indeed, and the warriors of the heavenly host, the blessed Anthimus shone distinguished, who did not yield to the bloody hands of the impious in persecution, and being placed in peace, truncated the monsters of rising vices with the spiritual sword of virtues. He exposed the members of his flesh to torments, he kept the bowels of the interior man unhurt. He did not fear to submit his head to the striking sword, so that he might deserve to adhere inseparably to Christ the head. For there was in him faith, not that which was dead in itself, but which worked through love. The faith of some is plainly vain, flaccid, pretending indeed on the surface a likeness, but not having truth within.

Moreover, they held the figure of those who, formerly coming from the people of Ephraim to the fords of the Jordan, while they did not know how to express *shibboleth* (Judges 12), but rather uttered *sibboleth* as if with a foreign tongue, were slain by the swords of the Gileadites. For what is understood by the Jordan, in which our Savior deigned to be baptized, but baptism? What truly by *shibboleth*, which is interpreted as an ear of corn (*spica*), but faith? For just as an ear of corn provides food for men, so it is said of faith: "that the just lives by faith" (Hab. 2; Rom. 1). And just as an ear of corn hides many grains in its awns, so also the symbol of our confession collects many seeds of faith in itself. Therefore, the Ephrathites coming to the Jordan

are asked by the Gileadites how they express the ear of corn; the catechumens coming even to the washing of baptism are inquired of by the priests how they believe. And since Gilead is interpreted as a "heap of testimony," the priests of the Church are rightly understood by the Gileadites, who testify to divine works by their preachings. By Ephraim indeed, which sounds like "fecundity," those are designated who for this reason arrive at the ear of corn of faith, that they may bring forth the harvest of fecundity through the crop of good work. Therefore, just as those who come to the Jordan understand the ear of corn indeed, but because they do not know how to express it, they die; so also those who seek the font of baptism fall utterly from life, unless they study to bring forth that same faith, which they were taught to believe, also by the enunciation of good works. Thus indeed the one depends on the other, so that the seed of faith ought to rise into the ear of corn of operation. Which also our Savior evidently showed. For when He commanded the disciples, saying: "Go, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," He immediately added: "Teaching them to keep all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matth. 28). As if He clearly says: Sow the seed of faith in the hearts of men, and soon teach how they ought to express the ear of corn of the germinating commandments with the tongue of operation, lest they make a solecism in the ear of corn of work, who testify

that they are from the mountain of Ephraim, that is, from the height of ecclesiastical fecundity.

Therefore, most dear ones, let us beware lest our faith deceive us with the color of profession alone brought over it, and like an empty ear of corn, with vacant stalks, it become flabby without the marrow of charity. Let us imitate the faith of the martyrs, through which, conquering the kingdoms of the earth, they obtained the promised rewards of the heavens (Hebr. 11). Let our faith therefore be solid, let it be true, let it be robust, so that now going through faith, we may arrive at the species, seeing through the mirror of an enigma (1 Cor. 13), and eventually be led to the sight of the supreme truth itself, where now the blessed martyr Anthimus, the burden of corruptible flesh being laid down, has obtained the robe of angelic brightness. For behold, he shines among the fiery stones of the supernal Jerusalem: behold, he exults as victor and crowned among the purple legions of the martyrs. For the course of the glorious contest being consummated, he received that same one in the reward of blessed remuneration who was made also the price when He redeemed him, Jesus Christ our Lord, who with God the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns through all ages of ages. Amen.

SERMON XX.

ON SAINT BONIFACE THE MARTYR (MAY 14).

The glorious feast of the blessed Boniface, my brothers, while it becomes a common joy

to all the faithful of Christ, especially however to sinners it grants an increase of certain hope for deserving pardon. For when we run through the deeds of his life and blessed consummation, what else do we find than that the straw of hell (*tartari*) was made a cedar of paradise? And, if I may so confess, a firebrand of hell was made a splendid star of heaven. From a brothel (*lupanari*) indeed he came forth to fight in the stadium; from the stadium he is suspended for torment; from torment he is led to the sword; from the sword he is lifted victor and crowned to heaven. Truly by degrees this sinner returned to life, because also through certain degrees He who is without sin (1 Peter 2) descended to the depths of our mortality. Hence it is that from the person of the holy Church it is said through Solomon: "Behold he cometh leaping upon the mountains, and leaping over the hills" (Cant. 2). For our Savior exhibited certain leaps, as it were, when He came to redeem the human race. For from heaven He came into the womb of the Virgin, from the womb He came into the manger, from the manger He passes to the circumcision, from the circumcision to the temple, from the temple to baptism, from baptism to the cross, from the cross to death, from the death to the sepulcher, finally He even descended into hell, that from there He might rescue His saints, whom He might recall to heavenly glory, the empire of death being trodden under foot. Plainly, so that He might make us run after Him, Truth manifested through the flesh disposed these degrees for us by descending

to us, and Christ the Sun of Justice distinguished these moments by inclining Himself toward us, as if of a certain mystical horologe. Who indeed exulted as a giant to run the way (Psalm 18), so that we might say to Him from the heart: "Draw me after thee, we will run in the odor of thy ointments" (Cant. 1).

And perhaps these are the degrees of that horologe, in which King Hezekiah asked that the shadow return by ten lines. Which indeed the prophet Isaiah, invoking the Lord for a sign of recovering health, immediately obtained (Isa. 38). For the sun had descended, the ten degrees of the horologe having already been measured, but through the same degrees it returned again. Which indeed was a sign by which King Hezekiah might trust that he was to be restored to his former health. But indeed neither did the human race convalesce from the sickness of its languor to the health which it had lost, as long as Christ the true light ran through those ten degrees of the mystical horologe which we have enumerated, by humbling Himself toward the sunset. Although through the shadow of the ten degrees we can understand the sacrament of supernal dispensation in another way. For the diversities of times are like certain distinctions of lines in the horologe. For the first degree of descent to us for Christ the Sun of Justice was from God into an angel. Whence it is that also through Isaiah He is called the Angel of great counsel (Isa. 9). And the God who spoke with Jacob is called an angel. Hence it is that it is said through the same Jacob:

"The angel of the Lord said to me in a dream: I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the stone and vowedst a vow to me" (Gen. 31). Surely, so that He Himself who speaks might be shown to be both God and angel at the same time. The second degree of descent was in the patriarchs, through whom indeed the Lord Himself constituted the cult of one God and the foundations of true faith. The third in the promulgation of the law, which He Himself first brought forth in the hearing of the people, and afterwards described in stone tablets with His own finger writing. The fourth in Joshua (Jesus Nave), in whom, as in name so also in work, living He introduced the people into the land of promise. The fifth degree was in the judges, through whom indeed He Himself ruled the Israelite people. The sixth in the kings of the Jews, because in them He Himself principally reigned. The seventh in the prophets, because through them He Himself was both announced and spoke. The eighth in the pontiffs, in whom He Himself, who is the High Priest, figured the mystery of His true and eternal priesthood. The ninth degree was designated in man. The tenth in the passion. Through these ten degrees, therefore, as if through the shadow of the Old Testament, Christ the Sun of Justice descended into the sunset of our mortality, and through them again after His resurrection He ascended victor into heaven, and illustrated all that shadow of the old law with the rays of His truth and new grace, revealing obscure things, opening closed things, and denuding all things

covered under the veil of the letter. And just as then the sun had proceeded line by line and slowly, but suddenly returned to the origin of its rising; so indeed, so our Redeemer suddenly made manifest those things which He had signified concerning the mystery of His incarnation through long intervals of time, in the sole glory of His resurrection and ascension. It is not therefore a wonder, if the blessed Boniface deserved to reach the crown by certain degrees, since even the Author of human salvation, for our charity, as if through certain lines of His dispensation, descended to punishment. He descended here to the sunset, so that he might return to the sunrise. The Lord bore the evening of our temporality, that He might lead us back to the light in the sunset-less perenniality of His own. But it is to be considered, my brothers, how between the very shadows of a reprobate life the spark of holiness did not desert the blessed Boniface, but fostered him in small things for so long, until it led him to great ones. For he was, as is contained in the history of his deeds, a drunkard and an adulterer, and a friend of all the vices which God hates.

We have heard the most obscure shadows of depravity, let us see also even a thin spark of rectitude shining. He had, it says, hospitality, largesse, and mercy; which three things nevertheless are one, and are members of one charity. The history still follows, and what it briefly premissed, it explains: who if ever, it says, he saw a stranger, or one coming from a journey, with all haste and alacrity he exhorted him to enter his lodging, and

ministered to him; but at nights he went around the squares and streets of the city, bestowing upon them those things which were necessary. Behold, among the thickest thickets of horrifying thorns, although rare, nevertheless lilies and flowers of virtues were found. And many are the blows which weigh down the bird of the Lord to the earth; few are the feathers which lift it up. But it is easy for God the physician of souls to compose the patent wounds with a thin medicine, and where He finds anything healthy, to recall the other things, which are putrid all around, to their former health. Moreover, just as it is possible for the sea to wash the body of one man, so it is very easy for God to purge the soul of a man, however fallen, however a sinner, from all the squalor of guilt. But just as one as long as he consists in a mountain is not washed by the marine waves, so a sinner as long as he perseveres in the tumor of pride, although it be large, the abundance of divine piety does not expurgate him. Let him approach therefore through penance to the font of mercy, who desires to be washed from the contagions of fault. And he who asks that mercy be made to him by God, let him also mercifully expend the bowels of mercy upon his neighboring indigent. You see, most dear brothers, that the sole work of mercy delivered this blessed Boniface from so many crimes which he committed. So that not only would he escape the bonds of sins, but also would reach the happy glory of martyrdom with distinguished titles of victory. And indeed he was not worthy to be received by

God, but by giving his own things, he merited to give himself as a sacrifice to God, and, who until then had lived carnally, to offer himself as a spiritual host in an odor of sweetness.

For some first offer themselves, afterwards their things. Just as it is written of the son of the first parent: "The Lord had respect to Abel and to his gifts" (Gen. 4). For just as Abel had first offered himself to God, and afterwards offered gifts, so also the Lord is said to have had respect first to him, then to his gifts. Some indeed first offer those things which are theirs, then they superadd themselves, with merits helping. Just as that centurion Cornelius, who while still a gentile insisted on alms and prayers. With which indeed suffragating, he arrived afterwards at the sacraments of baptism. To whom surely the angel, the grace of regeneration not yet having been perceived, said: "Thy prayers and thy alms have ascended for a memorial in the sight of the Lord; and now send men to Joppa, and call Simon Peter. He will tell thee what thou oughtest to do" (Acts 10). As if he clearly said: now thou hast offered to God those things which are thine, for the rest nothing remains, unless that thou also oughtest to be superadded as a far more excellent gift to thy gifts, and thou shouldst add thyself as possessor to thy faculties, so that one from all may become, not now a sacrifice, but rather a holocaust (*holocaustum*).

To the example of this centurion, therefore, the blessed Boniface first gave his things, afterwards himself; because according to the precept

of the law (Exod. 12), he could not find a lamb of innocence in his flocks, he took care to offer himself as a kid of penance. For the innocent offer a lamb, sinners offer a kid. Nor is it a wonder if any saint converted after sins is called a kid, since He Himself who came from heaven for sinners deigned to be figured by a goat. Whence it is that in Leviticus the high priest is commanded to offer a living goat in this manner, that both hands being placed upon its head, he should confess all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their offenses and sins, which imprecating upon its head, he should send it out into the desert (Lev. 26 [16]). What is it for the goat to be subjected to both hands of the high priest, but for the Son of Man coming in the likeness of the flesh of sin (Rom. 8) to be weighed down by the persecution of both peoples, namely the Jewish and the Gentile? Plainly He wished to be subject to the hands of both, who had come to deliver both peoples from the yoke of the devil. But what is it that after the confession and imprecation of all the iniquities of the children of Israel upon its head the goat is sent into the desert, but that He who bore our sins, who sustained the curses of the law, immediately reported the hundredth sheep into the desert, where He had left the ninety-nine? (Matth. 18.) Whence also the Apostle: "That He might deliver us, he says, from the curse, He Himself was made a curse" (Gal. 3). By the goat therefore was figured the Lord, who came for sinners. Boniface offered a kid, who converted himself to bearing His cross after sins.

And because in the law it is commanded that he who cannot make the Passover in the first month should make it in the second; but the first month is the first grace. This blessed martyr, because he had not offered the paschal lamb in the first month of an innocent life, offered a kid in the second, namely of fruitful penance. Who while he seeks to honor the martyrs, is made a martyr, just as also that Obadiah, not disparate in hospitality, while he feeds the prophets in caves, himself merits the grace of prophesying (3 Kings 17 [18]).

You see, most dear brothers, how great is the power of alms before God; consider how great is the majesty of empress mercy. For does not this seem to stand out like a preeminent queen among the other virtues, which indeed from the common people promotes some to the grace of prophecy, and to others gives the crown of martyrdom? To that one she gives to feed the Church of Christ with the banquets of the heavenly oracle; to this one she provides that, after the palm of victory, he may approach happily to feast at the nuptial banquet of supernal glory. Let us have mercy, therefore, brothers, so that we also may obtain mercy; let us take care to insist on alms and works of piety, in as much as faculty permits. Let it delight to serve with the study of hospitality and fraternal reception, so that we who behold the senators of the heavenly court to have deserved the glory of such great dignity through works of piety, may ourselves at least trust without doubt to arrive at the indulgence of our sins, Truth promising, who says: "Blessed

are the merciful, for God will give them mercy" (Matth. 5), who one and true in perfect Trinity lives and reigns for ages of ages. Amen.

SERMON XXI.

ON THE HOLY SPIRIT AND HIS GRACE (MAY 15).

First, therefore, it must be noted, my brothers, and committed to memory with all effort, that unless one deserves to be breathed upon by the grace of the Holy Spirit, although he may try, although he may seem to strive for a time, yet he can never rise to perform good deeds, never can he bring forth the fruits of a work pleasing to God. For a tree, fixed by its roots in the soil, conceives juices from the moisture, which, being diffused through its inner parts, both raises it in the strength of its vigor and puts forth a bud. And we who are faithful are trees within the grove of the holy Church, planted by the disposition of that supreme Husbandman. Paul indicated this planting to the Ephesians when he said: "That he may grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell through faith in your hearts, being rooted and grounded in charity (Ephes. 3)."

But our earth, where the root of our hope rests, is surely that of which it is said through the Psalmist: "My portion in the land of the living (Psal. 141);" or even the humanity of Christ, of which the same prophet elsewhere testifies, saying: "For he has established the world, which

shall not be moved (Psal. 91)." If, therefore, we do not wish to wither like unfruitful trees, if we fear to be cut down by axes and uselessly assigned to the fires, let the root of our hope always cling through the glue of charity in that fatherland of the supernal citizens, in the humanity of our Redeemer, so that it may firmly grow strong in the vigor of fortitude to bring forth the fruits of good operation. But just as a tree, if it is deserted by the moisture of its life-giving juice, immediately withers, so also our soul, unless it has been bedewed by the dew of the grace of the Holy Spirit, being thoroughly dried up, will be unable to be fruitful for the bud of any holy operation. For He brings light into minds, excites desire, and pours in strength. Indeed, He enlightens that we may see; He provokes that we may will; He strengthens that we may be able to fulfill the good things we will. From that fecundity, indeed, our tears proceed, from that the compunctions of minds, from that the confession of sins. For as the soul is the life of the body, so also the Holy Spirit is the life of our soul. And as our body, when the soul departs, collapses, so also the same soul, if the life-giving Spirit has departed, must necessarily die; without whose gift, namely, we can neither reach the knowledge of God by any reason, nor can we in any way penetrate those things which are of God, as the Apostle testifies, who says: "The Holy Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God (1 Cor. 2)." To which sentence he immediately joins as a consequence: "For who among men knows the things of a man, except

the spirit of the man which is in him? (Ibid.)" even so the things that are of God, no one has known except the Spirit of God.

But do you wish, most dear brothers, perhaps to inquire how we can know whether we have the Spirit of God? In this it surely consists: that you have the Spirit of God if you truly know God. For if, according to the apostolic words, "no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God (Ibid.)," who could know God Himself, unless he deserved to have His Spirit? But this itself perhaps still comes into doubt for you, whether you know God. But hear John the Apostle saying: "He who says he knows God, and does not keep His commandments, is a liar (1 John 2)." He, therefore, truly knows God, who keeps His commandments. Whence also that perfect keeper of the commandments of God said securely: "We have not received the spirit of this world, but the Spirit of God, who is from God (1 Cor. 2)."

But what is the spirit of the world? It is surely that which persuades men to despise divine precepts, to sweat delightfully in earthly businesses, to desire the summit of worldly domination, to be shamefully subject to the passions of carnal allurements, to extend the boundaries of transitory possession, to seek the rights of power over neighbors with the swollen pride of arrogance. On the contrary, the Spirit which is from God provokes to heavenly things the minds which He fills, and, the cold of body and negligence being expelled, inflames to divine love, represses petulant desires of the flesh, and suspends the free

heart from all earthly delight. He makes a man rigid to despise prosperity, robust to overcome adversity; He exhibits him humbly subject to those living well; He sets him up in the rights of free authority against those acting wickedly; He whom He fills, He prudently inebriates, and knowingly alienates from the sense of the present life. Were they not truly drunk with divine sobriety, of whom it was said by those evilly insane: "Because these are full of new wine (Acts 2)?" Is it not indeed a certain divine ebriety to despise all things present and placed before the eyes, and to pant from the innermost heart with all desire of the mind for those things which are not seen, to despise all things soft and pleasant, but to bear willingly things hard and sharp for the sake of divine love? This ebriety, my brothers, we must seek with the insistence of continuous prayer; for this, as if with the parched throats of our mind, we ought to thirst with all intention.

Therefore, let our soul seek assiduously this Spirit, by whose life-giving power it may live, by whose enlightening it may see, by whose teaching it may be wise, by whose leadership it may tend toward the fatherland in the unoffended course of love. Let us, therefore, seek from our God, not what any poor people seek from the rich of this world, namely, not a coin, not digestible food, not a garment for the naked body. For He who forbids us to be solicitous for these things knows that we need all these. Let us, therefore, demand that which is necessary for us above all things, and which He is more delighted to give

to those who ask. That, I say, let us seek from Him without ceasing, to the seeking of which He Himself both provokes us, and confirms us to hope for with a certain promise, saying: That if we ask, if we knock, "it shall be opened to us; and our Father from heaven will give the good spirit to those who ask Him (Matth. 7; Luke 11)." But we who seek alms from our Rich One, so that the abundance of obtaining may be granted, let us borrow the form of seeking even from the poor of this world. For the poor, when they desire to receive something from those living in higher places, soon loosen the mouths of their purses, and thus prepared to receive, they cry out with the voices in which they prevail, so that while each one thus prepared is seen through the window of the house, he may easily obtain mercy.

Our purse, indeed, is our heart, into which if we wish to receive the new gifts of heavenly grace, it is necessary to empty it of all earthly concupiscence, namely, of the old leaven. We surely expand the bosom of this purse without doubt if we pant for heavenly gifts with the fire of perfect love. Paul had well loosened the mouths of this purse when he said: "Our mouth is open to you, O Corinthians, our heart is dilated (2 Cor. 6)." He warned them also to loosen it, when he added: "You are not straitened in us. And a little after: I speak as to my children, be you also enlarged (Ibid.)." Let us also consider how that poor man had prepared himself to perceive the gifts from above, when he cried out, when he shouted, when he prayed, when he redoubled the voices

of the internal organ, saying: "My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready (Psal. 56, 107)." As if he said openly: I prepare my heart, Lord, to take the gifts of Thy bounty, who purge this from all the squalor of evil thought, and nothing is left in it by which the gift of Thy grace coming from above may be poured back. I have taken care to cast out the things that were badly kept within, do Thou hasten to fill it worthily from the house of Thy piety. I hold my heart emptied and ready for Thee, because, the rubbish of vices being dug out of it, I sigh with all intention of mind to embrace the grace of Thy Spirit. Behold, you hold the heart of the poor man of God ready, you who keep it clean from evil thoughts. But unless someone hears the one crying out, unless someone hears the one shouting from the inner chambers of the higher dining room, about to reach out alms to the poor man, let no one approach. After he said, therefore: "My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready; immediately he added: I will sing, and I will say a psalm to the Lord (Ibid.);" as if he were saying: I indeed prepare my heart, and I emit voices of importunate petition, so that both the heard voice may move to pity; and the ready heart may not pour out that which is emitted from the bounty of the one pitying.

These two things indeed, my brothers, are especially necessary for you, who inhabit the more remote parts of the desert with the study of singularity, who sweat in the speculations of the contemplative life. It is expedient for you to insist vigilantly on the assiduous modulation of

the psalms and on frequent prayers, and to fight against the onslaughts of ingressing thoughts with all the endeavor of virtues. Let us, therefore, eliminate all filth from the guest-chamber of our heart, and let us sprinkle it with the various flowers of virtues as we can. May God be delighted to enter the bright tabernacle of our breast, and to feast on the sweet delicacies of good works in it. And thus, with the decorous ornament of the inner house prepared and composed, let us sing psalms, let us pray, and let us invite Him with whatever supplications of a clamorous mind we can. And thus will be fulfilled in us that prophetic voice, by which it is said: "My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready; I will sing, and I will say a psalm to the Lord." Let us, therefore, assiduously deprecate our Redeemer and implore Him with all our bowels, that He may deign clemently to visit our heart, and, all darkness of vices being removed, to enlighten it by the grace of the Holy Spirit, so that we may be able to reach Him by a right path, Him in whom we believe as the one regenerating, by His inspiration. Who with God the Father and the same Holy Spirit lives and reigns for all ages of ages. Amen.

JUNE. III. Sermon on the holy martyrs the brothers Laurentinus and Pergentinus. XXIV. Sermon on the Nativity of St. John the Baptist. Sermon II on the same. Sermon III on the same. XXIX. Sermon on St. Peter the Apostle. Sermon on the SS. Apostles Peter and Paul.

SERMON XXII.

ON SS. LAURENTINUS AND PERGENTINUS (JUNE 3).

Today's festivity, most beloved, as you know, is venerably celebrated in honor of the blessed martyrs Laurentinus and Pergentinus, and their birthday is enlightened as if by two golden stars. If we carefully attend to this double star, we who navigate through the sea of this life cannot err, but after the measured dangers of floods and storms we arrive with joy at the bosom of the quiet port. Whence not without a certain presage of supernal disposition did they obtain such a name, that they are called Pergentinus and Laurentinus. For both proceed together to the laurel, and preceding us, if we do not neglect to follow them, they provoke us to the crown. For all who are not sluggish, but fervent and agile, hasten to the fatherland, they do not fix their steps on the way, but proceeding assiduously from virtues to virtues, they strive from good things to better. Nor on the journey of this pilgrimage do they show themselves as citizens or inhabitants, but they pass through always as guests and exiles. Whence also Peter: "I beseech you," he says, "as strangers and pilgrims, to refrain yourselves from carnal desires which war against the soul (1 Pet. 2)." And Paul says: "We have not here a lasting city, but we seek one to come (Hebr. 12)." Hence also that Paul, who proceeding from Egypt entered the land of promise, was called Hebrew, that is, passing through. And whoever of us enters the land which flows with milk and honey from the Egypt of carnal life, is commanded not

to fix footsteps, but assiduously to pass through, so that according to John, "he who is just, let him be justified still, and he who is holy, let him be sanctified still (Apoc. 22)." For milk flows from the flesh, honey descends from higher things into the depths. And what is that land, watered indeed with milk and honey, to which we are so greatly provoked, if not the one person of the Mediator of God and men? In which indeed both the flesh is manifest, which came forth from the Virgin, and the internal sweetness of divinity, which proceeded from the paternal substance.

To which land indeed no one is admitted unless a Hebrew, nay, as I may so speak, no one unless a Pergentinus and a Laurentinus; because whoever labors to arrive at Christ, it is necessary that he in no way fix the footstep of his mind in this world as if in a habitation: but always showing himself a Hebrew, let him both proceed with Pergentinus passing through the way of justice, and at the same time with Laurentinus let him desire from his labors not the advantages of this life, but only the crown of glory. For concerning the inhabitants of this world, as is said in the Apocalypse, the blessed martyrs cry out: "How long, O Lord (holy and true), dost thou not revenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? (Apoc. 6)." But concerning those who do not dwell, but by proceeding continually pass through, Isaiah, after he premises: "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf, and the lion, and the sheep shall abide together," immediately

added: "and a little child shall lead them (Isa. 11)." Who is this little child, if not He of whom it is said through the same prophet: "A child is born to us, and a Son is given to us? (Isa. 9)." Who leads those dwelling together, because lest our hearts cling to earthly things, He incessantly inflames the predator of heavenly desire. And this very leading is to enkindle us to His love with the flame of continuous charity; lest when we love each other with a vicarious love, being forgetful of Him to whom we ought to return, we remain in mind in this exile. Therefore the little child leads the troops of diverse animals, because our Redeemer, who insolubly fuses the manifold minds of men in fraternal unanimity, while He enkindles them to the love of the heavenly fatherland, does not permit them in this world as if to fix a foot. For one goes to God not by the footsteps of feet, but by the steps of good works, nor is anyone able to ascend to Him through the approach of corporeal effort, but through the assiduous increment of holy work.

Let us see, therefore, also these blessed martyrs, how they could not rest, being flagrant with divine fire, but always labored to hasten from good things to the best. For while even before the point of persecution they were already of such great sanctity that God showed signs and virtues through them, not content with that, they are drawn before the judge, and in war they declare how much virtue they also had in peace. And first indeed the artisan of the ancient enemy and his versatile wickedness began to act with them

as if more mildly through his vessel, then, not being able to bear their immobile constancy, he applied himself to rage cruelly against them. For with the executioners raging on all sides, each martyr, as if one mind and the same flesh, is beaten with stripes, slaughtered by the slaughter of blows, soon is delivered to prison custody, and is tortured by the want of hunger. But was divine protection ever wanting to His warriors, and did it not show by a clearly evident sign that God Himself was fighting in them? For while the executioners were wearing them down with stripes, their arms, which were raving in the blows, withered, so that the stony breasts and those alienated from the bowels of piety might learn, at least through the rigor of the withered flesh, to have the softness of heart, and might collect in the knots of their members how fearful that virtue was against which they were so furiously, so atrociously fighting.

Now indeed, how sublime a merit of grace is that, how great an indication of familiarity with God is it known to be, that, being placed in prison and at the same time macerated by a three-day fast, they are visited by an angel and perceive the nourishments of the heavenly table. For in them Christ was hungry, in them He bore the punishments, with them He was shut in prison, with them in chains, with them He was an individual companion in torments. And He who lately was seen as the fourth among the youths walking in the Chaldean furnace, Himself without doubt was made the third with these most invincible

warriors of His. "Behold," said the king, "I see four men loosed walking in the midst of the fire, and there is no corruption in them, and the appearance of the fourth is like the Son of God" (Dan. 3). Hence it is that even that persecutor Tiburtius, moved by the gall of raging wrath, vomited out the flames of his furious breast steaming from the furnace, and commanded the blessed martyrs to stand with naked feet upon the burning coals. But immediately both the coals were extinguished, and the glorious feet of the martyrs were delighted with a soft step as if upon white lilies or the yellow flowers of roses. Nor does the fierce spirit of wickedness cease yet. It leaves nothing unattempted, but runs through all arguments of versatile fraud, all of rabid fury. But by the more darts it attacks the soldiers of Christ, by so much does blind cruelty render them more illustrious. And by how much more roaring the immensity of the battle rushes upon them, by so much more abundant an occasion of triumphing is provided. Therefore an idol is set up, and the insane rage of the judge commands it to be adored. But while not the idol, but almighty God is adored, the ghostly figure, reduced to dust, collapses. Finally, those who disdained to bow their necks to idols, eagerly submit their blessed necks to the sword, and thus purpled with glorious blood, they return to their Emperor, the victory having been achieved.

O blessed brotherhood, which could not be divided in conception, nor discerned in birth, nor separated in the kind of precious death, equal

in punishment, coequal in glory! Together they are poured out into the world from the maternal womb, together they arise in heaven, having been consummated from the agony of the contest. This birth must be called in some way happier than that of Rebecca. For, with Scripture as witness, the little ones were colliding in her womb, because they were to live under a diverse quality of morals and successes. Whence it is said to her divinely: "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples shall be divided from your womb, and people shall overcome people, and the elder shall serve the younger" (Gen. 25). But in these there is no diversity, whom indeed both a not dissimilar life federates, and the unanimity of individual charity fuses. Happier also is this birth than was that of Tamar, from whom indeed Perez and Zerah arose (Gen. 38). Of whom one is interpreted as "division," the other as "rising." And just as the interpretation of the names disagrees between themselves, so there is a certain diversity in the works of each, nor do they hold the same mystery in figure. But these blessed martyrs do not disagree in the interpretation of their names, because in a certain way what they designate is one, and the name of either agrees with both. For Pergentinus and Laurentinus, each proceeds to the laurel, and for whom there is one way, there is one desire; walking together they arrive at the crown. Although also in these, as their history witnesses, a certain difference is found to be. For while violence dragged them to the tyrant, Pergentinus delegated the office of

responding to his brother, because he judged him more eloquent, so that he might speak as Aaron to Pharaoh, while they stood before the governor. This, therefore, differs between the twins of this blessed brotherhood which Scripture commemorates as differing between Moses and Aaron. Of whom one complains of himself, saying: "I beseech thee, Lord, I am not eloquent from yesterday and the day before, and since thou hast spoken to thy servant, I am of a more impeded and slower tongue" (Exod. 4). But of the other it is said: "Aaron thy brother the Levite, I know that he is eloquent; he shall speak for thee to the people, and he shall be thy mouth" (ibid.). Behold therefore the blessed martyrs in that matter, because they are found to have been dissimilar to each other, in a certain way appear to have existed equal to Moses and Aaron. And perhaps not incongruously. For just as through them the law was once given to the Israelite people, so through these the Christian faith and the Gospel shone upon the citizens of Arezzo. For when the rite still bristled pestilently in heathendom and the fury of persecution bubbled up immensely against the Christian name, then indeed when Blessed Donatus purpled the Church of Arezzo with his precious blood, the twentieth emperor however is Julian, under whom Blessed Donatus shone as a distinguished martyr, from the prince Decius, whose persecution crowned these glorious martyrs. But if you also studiously run through the catalogue of Roman pontiffs, you will find that from Blessed Sixtus, whom Decian fury, while it

raged, forced to serve, up to Pope Liberius, who presided over the apostolic see in the time of Julian, twelve pontiffs preceded.

Since therefore these glorious martyrs are known to have preceded Blessed Donatus by so much time, they are not undeservedly called the leaders of the believers, the princes of the faithful, and, so to speak, the founders of the entire Church of Arezzo in these regions in which they suffered. These indeed are now glittering gems and ruddy pearls, which radiate splendidly in the diadem of the eternal Emperor, and coruscate with inextinguishable splendor among the fiery stones of the supernal Jerusalem. Furthermore, just as the twin light of the eyes placed in the head adorns the subject members of the body, so Blessed Donatus with these two stars of heaven, as the head of sanctity and the principle of faith, excels all adjacent places, and, as I may so confess, bathes the whole body of Tuscany with the brightness of extraordinary splendor. For they are now as much conspicuous with the clarity of more eminent glory as they had been depressed by the more heavy immensity of the rabid persecutor. Therefore they have been translated from punishments to glory, from the contest to the crown. He himself indeed was made the reward for them when He received them, who had offered Himself as the price for them when He redeemed them, Jesus Christ our Lord, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns for ages of ages. Amen.

SERMON XXIII.

I. ON THE NATIVITY OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST. (JUNE 24)

Today, most beloved, a distinguished day has dawned, as much holier than other days as it poured forth a holier man onto the lands. For on this day was born that splendor of the saints, the glory of the just, the joy of the angels, the most excellent man, the kinsman of Christ, the friend of the Bridegroom, the preparer of the Bride. He is one and has not a second, who, interwoven with the angelic choirs, transcends the ascent of human universality by the titles of a more sublime crown. Finally, "among those born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist" (Matth. 11). Happy man, who happily traversing the workshops of the heavens follows the Redeemer with most swift course, nor is he excluded by the height of any dignity, whom the immensity of the highest happiness has more largely bedewed! The angels rejoice, and the multiplicity of either nature admires the man thus having entered the abyss of light and absorbed into the sea of eternal divinity, so that he reflects the very origin of angelic purity. Let all be elevated, and let them exult by the prerogatives of merits before the consistory of majesty; there will not be any, however, who would dare to aspire to the privilege of John the Baptist. Come, now let us approach the insignia of virtues, which the God of majesty has signed in His friend with a glorious accumulation; for he thus conversed

with men from the rising of life even to its setting, that his form of life may be held as an information of morals. And although here the beauty of golden speech does not glow, we will nevertheless attempt to touch upon the truth of things with whatever style, attending to that of the Wise Man: that to prudent men feathered things do not please, but strong things (Eccli. 9).

His first honor is glory in the annunciation. It must not be passed over with a dissembling silence how solemn was the glorification of this child announced at his entry into this world. The angel Gabriel is present, and the strength of the Lord descending from the superior hinge of the heavens, stands at the right of the altar of incense (Luke 1), nor any angel whatever, but that more sublime one, who brought the singular message to the blessed Virgin, and was chosen that he might announce the soldier who was to announce the King (ibid.). The priest stands clothed in sacerdotal things and with a manifold variety of garments, prefiguring the image of heavenly sacraments, he presignifies the purgation of sins by the aspersion of mystic blood. He consists before the ark of the covenant and before the tables of the testament, having a golden urn containing manna, the rod of Aaron, Cherubim and the propitiatory, solemnly infulated, he celebrates vows before the face of God, the gloria of majesty, the Lord of all things. The solemn day is at hand, and more celebrated than other days to the multitude of the Jews, sublime by the attestation of the Lord commanding, plainly spectacular

and festive, in which alone it was permitted to the pontiff alone to enter into the Holy of Holies, and with a multiform aspersion to refresh the wrath of the supreme divinity. There is a gathering from everywhere into the holy city, and the more frequent crowd of peoples accumulates the matter of joys. Standing among these sacred things the archangel says: "Fear not, Zechariah" (ibid.), because there shall be born to you a son, the joy of parents, the nobility of the race, an example to the world, the end of the law, the beginning of the Gospel, the expulsion of death, the gate of life, the beauty of men, the splendor of conversation, the princedom of all justice. And lest we confound the excellence of things with a more diffuse treatise, the integrity of his birth and conversation is more fully assigned in the evangelical books.

Consider the sublimity of the one announcing, the dignity of the place, the reverence of the day, and then you will be able to understand with how superexcellent glory the birth of John the Baptist is predicted. Saving therefore the reverence of the Redeemer, because we do not derogate from the King if we honor the King's soldier, since He is the Lord, he the servant; He the Creator, he a creature; John is announced with a more worthy premonstration than Christ. Christ perhaps in a chamber, John in the temple; and not only in the temple, but even before the Holy of Holies on the distinguished day of their solemnity. John is preached by the same archangel, in a more worthy place, at a more sacred time, by a more open miracle. Recall Isaac announced by angels (Gen.

18), Samson preached through an angel (Judges 13), and look around at the entire sect of the Nazirites, and you will find only the Baptist more worthy both in this and in other things.

The second honor is sanctification in the mother's womb. Whoever of us enters the world from the prevaricating mass, we draw with us the long rope of original sin. He alone who did no sin (1 Peter 2) is excepted, whom the Virginal chamber, ignorant of man, poured forth to the lands; for He was conceived far otherwise and in a dissimilar way, with the Holy Spirit inundating and cleansing the Virgin with all majesty, surpassing the use of the flesh, the order of nature, the commingling of man. For thus it was fitting, that He who took away sins should not know sin, that He should assume the likeness of the flesh of sin, but not the flesh of sin. Since therefore all have been conceived in iniquities (Psalm 50), we read of no one of mortals ever having been sanctified within the maternal bowels, except Jeremiah and John the Baptist; although concerning the singular Virgin there is no ambiguity, but that she, surrounded by the maternal bowels, was cleansed by a more sublime kind of sanctification, as that sanctuary in which God, the Son of God, was to assume flesh. But far less was the sanctification of Jeremiah than that of John. That one indeed was sanctified in the mother's womb, this one is known to have been filled with the Holy Spirit. For it is much more excellent to be filled with the Holy Spirit than to be sanctified; for there sanctification signifies a cleansing, here filling

signifies an inundation. Finally also the apostles, who handled with their hands of the Word of life (1 John 1), when they had received the Holy Spirit from the breathing of the Savior (John 20), could scarcely on the fiftieth day from the day of resurrection arrive at that degree that it might be said of them: "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2). And although the Holy Spirit then filled the hearts of the believers with a larger gift, this however John is read to have attained in the womb, which the apostolic height at length merited to obtain by a larger promise.

Attend, I beseech you, diligently, with how ordered a disposition that manifold Spirit sanctifies Jeremiah, fills John, comes upon Mary. And indeed the sanctification of Jeremiah is admirable, because even if he was conceived in sin, he is nevertheless born without sin. For before he went out from the womb he was sanctified, nor could he be born not holy, who in the mother's womb had been sanctified. A wondrous thing, and unheard of from the ages past, a man conceived in sins to be born without sin. But a far more glorious virtue filled John, who was both sanctified from sin, and thus superfused by the dominating Spirit, that he might both go out purged and filled. Truly great before the Lord, whom an angel announces, God sanctifies, the Holy Spirit fills, life commends. But in an ineffable way He came upon the Virgin, whom the whole fullness of the divinity without discretion of measure perfused, so that He might take the whole, who made the whole; so that she is believed not only to have

been washed from sins, filled with the Spirit, but also to have conceived from the Holy Spirit, because "that which is born in her, is from the Holy Spirit" (Matth. 1). Hence it is that with a singular prerogative the Catholic faith confesses the Son of God born of the Virgin, conceived from the Spirit; so that the adjoined connection of the indivisible deity and humanity may be designated by the indifference of the names. Do you see therefore with how more remote a privilege He who is "beautiful in form before the sons of men" (Psalm 44), was discerned from the sons of men in conceiving? For those were conceived of sins and in sins; this one is conceived in the Spirit, and from the Holy Spirit. These things indeed are said concerning the conception of John, prejudicing nothing to one who tastes more soundly. But even if in anything they seem to meet with the authorities of the saints, we wish that they be undermined without any patronage of excuses or defenses.

The third is excellence in exultation. From the beginning of the world it has not been heard that anyone exulted in the mother's womb, when here he is read to have exulted in joy. A thoroughly astounding condescension, for a child scarcely conceived to break out into the movement of exultation, and to meet Him gratefully with a sweeter service whom he sensed infused into the virginal substance. Blessed soul, which did not stand in the way of sinners, but departing from the heavenly workshops by a more secret path, was allotted the sweetness of an unheard-of grat-

ulation. Happy Elizabeth, to whom the mother of the Redeemer hastens, whom the empress of the heavens addresses with salutatory obsequies. But much happier is the child, who, recognizing the majesty of the one saluting, rejoices with joy within the dark volumes of the bowels, because he attends to the force of so blessed a salutation. "And it came to pass," it says, "as Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant exulted in joy in her womb" (Luke 1). The Virgin ascends with haste into the house of Zechariah to salute Elizabeth, bearing in her womb the Son of God, the King of glory, the Lord of majesty. Elizabeth meets her, and lacking the reproaches of her ancient sterility, she carries in her most happy womb the friend of the Bridegroom, the herald of the Word. Embraces are joined, they come to kisses, the happy wombs are coupled, and only two most tender walls separate the King and the soldier. What wonder, if the child wonders and exults at the touch of so near a breath of divinity? Could he be void of any miracle to whom the presence of the King was present, the Mother of the one reigning, the Redeemer of the world? What about the fact that the conjunction of such holy embraces was celebrated not only once? "And Mary remained with her about three months," says the evangelist (ibid.). For so much time the virginal integrity remains with Elizabeth, and now with a sweeter colloquy, now with a happier embrace, she consecrates and distinguishes the child John. And perhaps even unto the day of his birth the glorious Virgin stayed

with her kinswoman, until she might cherish the born child in her most blessed bosom, and with one wall removed, might render him nearer to the presence of the Creator. Moreover, it is easy to conjecture this from the Gospel, because already six months from the conception of John had flowed away when the archangel was sent to the Virgin, who brought the renovation of the world to virginal modesty with a new salutation. From this the Virgin hastens to Elizabeth, and for three months deigns the hospitality of her kinswoman with her presence, until, the end of the ninth month being concluded, the birth of the patriarch is imminent. Others, who have inspected the book of the just with more diligent eyes, testify that they saw there that the mother of God herself first raised the happy child from the earth, and followed the birth of her kinswoman with all service. In whatever way, however, the truth of this matter may be decreed, that for certain is certain, because so happy and lingering a hospitality of the unviolated mother contributed not a little to the child to be born.

The fourth indeed is joy in birth. Blush, Lucifer, who rose in the morning (Isa. 14), and with the broken impulses of your efforts understand at length that in the last of days you will remain as the most foolish partridge. By your machinations it was done that the universality of the human race was conceived in sins, was born in sadness (Gen. 3). But behold, this one is sanctified in the womb, arises in joy, and pours back gladness to the world by his birth. Behold the kind of

armor which you had constituted for yourself for victory, is born for John for a crown. Take up the arms and the shield, and rave with the whole spirit of your malignity, yet you will not be able to break into the privilege of John, which the benign hand of the writer signed with its own character. You are much deceived, much deluded. Or are you ignorant that a warrior man rises up against you from adolescence and even from the mother's womb? Do you not know that from the days of this one "the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent bear it away?" (Matth. 11). Or have you forgotten that this one is sent to prepare for the Lord a perfect people? (Luke 1). Gaze upon the order of things, and from the very beginnings of his conception you will find that he broke into your strength with a more valid effort. You made it so that the fratricide Cain, who was born first (Gen. 4), went out polluted and enveloped, and was besprinkled with the infamy of original sin. The terrified world received him, and the followed birth of the human race transmigrated to the heap of infinite sadness. But the birth of this man is in joy and in a distinguished solemnity. The world rejoices, and the four climates of the world resound with the instance of the glorious festivity, celebrated and famous even to the heavens themselves. "Who do you think this child shall be?" The friend of the Bridegroom, an enemy to you, more powerful than your power. It must be considered with how great dignity the celebrated devotion of this birth excels, and how great grace it could find in the eyes of the Church.

The birth of no man, except only of God and His mother, has the Church received into the citadel of authority, the exception of this one being preserved. For she knows that the day of death is better than the day of birth (Eccl. 7), and that the rising of men is accompanied by sadness. Hence it is that the Church solemnizes the deaths of the martyrs, not their births; naming their death by the name of Birthdays, by which a birthday was made from death. For then they began to be born to life, when they laid down life for life. But the spouse of Christ received the birth of this one with so much more secure and most benevolent condescension, as the irrefragable authority of evangelical truth singularly commends it.

The fifth is singularity in conversion and conversation within the tenderness of years. For this blessed boy was led to the desert, the Spirit leading; nor did the infirmity of age withstand, which the majesty of the Lord made fecund. For the Holy Spirit does not attend to the difference of sexes, the fragility of bodies, the age of times, but fills whomsoever and howsoever He wills with most deigning benignity. John leaves the world, flees men, knows not the fatherland, spurns parents, and fixes the gaze of blessed contemplation on the peak of the divinity alone. A wondrous conversion of things, for a man scarcely entered the world to flee the glory of the world, and not only to forget the desires of the age, but even not to know them, and to establish a perpetual consortium with the divinity. The recesses of the mountains, the windings of the

forests, and the underlying vastness of the valleys provided dwellings for the boy patriarch. Let not Jeremiah be opposed to me, nor let the virtue of his preaching boyhood dare to meet it, because if that one is consecrated as a prophet (Jer. 1) this one is more than a prophet (Matth. 11); and although that one preached future things to the people, he did not however decline the sight of human conversation. Thus, thus John, having overstepped the infancy of age, and forgetful of the generosity of a nobler race, is vacant for the divinity alone, the form of life, the purpose of monks, the principle of anchorites, the assertion of all religion. And these things indeed are for the conversion. Moreover, how great the sublimity in conversation was, is not to be discussed with the delights of a running tongue, but to be proved by the eloquence of evangelical dignity. "John," it says, "had a garment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; but his food was locusts and wild honey (Matth. 3). Behold they who are clothed in soft things are in the houses of kings (Matth. 11)." A rigid garment, and interwoven with the hardest bristlings, affects the body of the patriarch with a squalor-bearing rigor, and coarcts the most tender flesh with an immature ferocity of discipline, the longitude of continuous martyrdom shakes the tender limbs, superfused with a more sacred spirit. Moreover, what kind was his food? Phasian birds are not sought, nor is it run through the whole region, so that the patriarchal stomach may be filled. But "his food was," it says, "locusts and wild honey." He is fed by the

dew of heaven and is satiated by the eating of a most vile animal, and the austerity of the fasting one receives nothing cooked. Indeed, to the chastened belly, and distended by long-lasting maceration, the variety of dishes was unknown, nor did that enter into his mouth which might allure the throat, suffice for the belly, flatter the stomach. Elijah ate flesh (3 Kings 17), and if anything else is served, he perceived it with the action of graces, nor do we read of anyone, unless I am deceived, in the ancient workshop to have aspired to the height of this law. A rough garment, thin food, a devoted mind, consecrate a perfect patriarch.

The sixth is novelty in preaching. Here I wish your attention to attend more closely, because the magnitude of the matter commands a slightly more subtle beginning. After the sin of Adam and the solemn devastation of that flood, an infinite plurality of the just was chosen, with whom God is recognized to have spoken face to face. Enoch is translated (Gen. 5), Noah is chosen (Gen. 6), Abraham is called (Gen. 12), Isaac is loved (Gen. 17), Jacob contemplates God face to face (Gen. 33), Joseph is called the Savior of the world (Gen. 41); yet no mention is made by God to them, or by them to men, concerning the perpetual mansion of the heavenly kingdom. Moses is assumed as leader of the people of the Jews (Exod. 3), he is constituted as a God to Pharaoh. God does great things in Egypt, and wonders in the land of Ham, terrible things in the Red Sea (Exod. 7, 8, etc.). Moses ascends to the darkness in which

God was. A manifold authority of precepts is given on the mountain. He speaks with God as a man to his neighbor. That which the Lord does in secret is not hidden from Moses, and the glorious name Adonai, which had been veiled from all, is revealed (Exod. 4, etc.). But in all these the memory of the kingdom of heaven is neither named nor heard. Aaron the high priest stands, the bearer of the powerful rod, anointed and besmeared with the unction of heavenly sacraments. Joshua succeeds, and all that multitude of judges, nor is there even any thin mention of the heavenly Kingdom (Jos., lib.). The Lord found David a man after His own heart (Psalm 88), He heaps up singular wisdom upon Solomon his son (3 Kings 3), and the Holy Spirit orders and infuses all that prophetic choir, and nothing is prophesied concerning the glory of the heavenly kingdom. Elijah shuts the heaven for three years and six months (3 Kings 17); Elisha dead restores a dead man to life (4 Kings 4); and from these not even any spark of the blessed mansion shines forth. Why more? From the beginning of the world even to John, recollect the election of human universality, and you will not be able to find the sweetness of that sanctuary in the speech or work of any. Come therefore to John, and hear the voice of exultation, the voice of novelty, the voice of joy, the word of mercy, the speech of glory, the largesse of grace; what God had concealed, the angel had been silent about, had been hidden from the patriarchs, the prophets had not known: "Do penance," he said; "for the kingdom

of heaven will approach" (Matth. 3). The sweet word of penance, and the joyful and adorable glorious word of the kingdom of heaven, fitting for him alone primarily who first laid the foundations of the New Testament. This is that voice, concerning which that greatest contemplator of heavenly visions proceeds in these words: "And the first voice which I heard, as of harpers harping on their harps" (Apoc. 14). From the days of Adam even to John our organ was turned into the voice of those weeping, because there the frequency of sins, nor a place for penance, was a double matter for deploring. Do you kill? you are commanded to be killed. Do you gather wood on the Sabbath? you are commanded to be stoned (Num. 15), and He, to whom it is proper always to have mercy and to spare, knew only how to strike. For the betrayer of the precepts had given them precepts not good, and justifications in which they could not live (Ezech. 20). This is what the just man wonders at saying: "Where are thy ancient mercies, O Lord?" (Psalm 88.) John being born showed the medicine for the wound, penance for sin, pardon for iniquity. This is the first voice which the voice of one crying in the desert (Matth. 3) proposed: "And the voice of the turtle has been heard in our land" (Cant. 2). From then He sent into our mouth a new canticle, a song to our God (Psalm 39), and there resounds in our mouth the action of graces, and the voice of praise; mercy is superexalted over judgment, sinners are spared, piety reigns, justice is dissembled, and the merciful and compassion-

ate Lord seeks an occasion of having mercy, not of striking. Therefore they harp on their harps, who reverberate the effusion of pleasures with the strictness of penance: and breathing again from the deep abyss of sins, with Pharaoh submerged, they sing in the ways of the Lord, "for great is the glory of the Lord" (Psalm 137).

The seventh is dignity in baptism. A thoroughly singular humility, the Word made flesh, and going out into a perfect man, having left the universality of men, seeks John, desires John, goes to John. God terrible in counsels over the sons of men (Psalm 65), and bearing all things by the word of His power, making purgation of sins (Hebr. 1), came from Galilee into the Jordan to John, that He might be baptized by him. John is stupified and is shaken with fear, and an infinite horror consumes the whole patriarch. "I," he said, "ought to be baptized by thee, and comest thou to me? (Matth. 3.)" The Savior also says: "Suffer it now; for so it becomes us to fulfill all justice (ibid.)." It is acquiesced on both sides to the salutary monitions, and John girds himself for baptizing and for suspecting the Lord of angels. The King of glory, the splendor of light, and the figure of the substance of God, is stripped of his garments, and is handled by the hands of John. That flesh assumed from the Virgin, and derived from a brighter matter, is stripped in the river, to be infused by the happy hands of the Baptist. The angels descend; and the whole hosts of the heavens run with all reverence to the Creator, and the dominating deities encompass both

the one baptizing and the one baptized. A nobler creature pours water on the head of the Creator, and a mortal right hand handles and touches the vertex of God. The heaven fears, the earth is stupified, the Jordan smiles, the archangels wonder that the Lord of Sabaoth is included between the hands of the one baptizing. What is it, John? The Cherubim and Seraphim scarcely dare to look back, and you presume to hold the naked one! This is He, into whom the angels desire to look (1 Peter 1); to whom, Holy, holy, holy, the assembly of the blessed city ingeminates with the sublime organ of melodies (Isa. 6; Apoc. 4); who alone dwells in inaccessible light (1 Tim. 6), the Lord of virtues, the God of sciences, the father of mercies, and you do not fear! To you it was given, which was denied to all, to baptize Him who baptizes in the Holy Spirit and fire, and to bedew the virgin Son of the Virgin with virginal hands. I am totally astounded at the one baptizing, and I revere the man as the teacher of God, I admire the one deigning, I venerate the condescension, and I see a man bring violence to the heavens themselves. Furthermore, of what kind is that by which in this baptism the law is terminated, prophecy receives an end and all that multitude of sacrifices is repelled and driven away? Here begins and is established the lasting purgation of the new regeneration, and the expenditures of the legal figures pass into one form of baptism. For at the washing of water and the invocation of the Holy Spirit, the bloody heap of goats and calves is buried, and we leave the cattle to the

Jewish cattle, attending to that of David: "Whole burnt offering and for sin thou hast not required (Psalm 29)."

The eighth is the first revelation of the Trinity. From the creation of heaven and earth up to this place, the Trinity never appeared manifestly to men, but the eternity of so great clarity was wrapped in the veils of things and words. Finally, the Creator of things, commending the creation of man with the highest dignity, said: "Let us make man in our image and likeness (Gen. 1)." A truly venerable privilege, nor handed down to any creature. That more sublime number of angels is created, and the varied connection of all elements is ordered, but the presence of the Almighty looks forward to so great a work with deep silence. But when it comes to man and the noble creature is disposed to be created, the Trinity girds itself for creating, and Wisdom takes counsel, so that the dignity of the creature might be shown clear by the privilege of the Creator. Yet even there the names of the divine majesty did not shine forth clearly enough, since some refer the oracle of the divine speech to the obedient angels, or, if this is less cautious, a marked plurality is preached without difference of names. Abraham saw three, and adored one (Gen. 18). But even there the reverence of the holy Scripture closes the speech now mixed, now separate, so that it pleases to name now the Lord, now men. The Jews, however, weave a long parable of reprehension here, asserting that three angels were sent by the Lord, one to foretell the birth of

Isaac, two to subvert Sodom: for that one, with whom the just man spoke, saying: "Lord, if I have found grace in thy eyes (ibid.)," they dream in a prophetic spirit to have known that the herald of the birth of Isaac had come. Him he adores, just as Bathsheba the king David, and assists untired his companions on account of his reverence (2 Sam. 3). Whence also not but two are numbered in the subversion of the unhappy cities, that one having already returned above, who had completed the birth of Isaac with faithful devotion. For three men command Sarah to be called, but it is one who manifests the secret of the unhoped-for promise. These things the Jews, and those who chose rather to Judaize than to believe. But, that we may conclude briefly, all that coupled society whether of patriarchs or of those prophesying, is found to have made no open mention, whether in words or in things, of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Come therefore, and behold the son of Zechariah holding God and man with his own hands: and see that the heavens are opened there, and the Holy Spirit descends in bodily shape like a dove upon Christ; and the voice of the Father was heard: "This is my beloved Son (Matth. 3)." Do you see, that for the novelty of the most sacred names the palaces of the heavens are unlocked? The Father is heard in the voice, the Son is baptized in the river, the Holy Spirit is shown in the shape of a dove. John is present as the mediator of the whole Trinity, and the personified names of the undivided substance sanctify the glorious Baptist; and the name of the

Trinity, veiled in prior ages, shines forth without the overshadowing of any veil. Lord, who is he, that thou hast made thyself known to him?

The ninth is the testimony of Wisdom. When John had heard in bonds the works of Christ, he sent to Him his disciples, and it was answered to them: "The blind see, etc. (Matth. 11)," which the copious narrative of the evangelical truth follows. But when the messengers had withdrawn, lest by chance in their presence He should seem to smell of adulation, Jesus began to say to the crowds concerning John: "What went you out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind? (ibid.)" O wonderful testifying of the Redeemer! Who has entered the world, and has not known the world even in something? Who is he, whom either windy felicity, or turbid adversity, or any thinner breeze of sin has not bent? At the end there is subjoined what exceeds the earth, passes the heaven, and touches the very vertex of angelic dignity. "Among those born," He says, "of women, there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist (ibid.)." What do you want more? Of no other could it be said, says Augustine, what was said of John. Do you not oppose to me the evangelist more beloved among the other apostles? Not the prince of the apostles preferred to all the apostles; not the Vessel of election translated to the secrets of the third heaven; nor let the apostolic splendor dare to run against the Precursor, because all those had already exceeded the goals of adolescence, when it was brought forth by the Truth: "Among those born of women there

has not risen a greater than John the Baptist." Consider the mansions of the kingdom, and walk about the whole order of human generation, and you will see that John alone is set before both the new and the old.

The tenth is the assertion of Mother Church. The edge of the cloak is woven and the ointment poured on the head, also flows abundantly into the extreme fringe of the garment. For that mother and teacher of all Churches, the Roman Church, to which it was said: "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not (Luke 22)," was consecrated and signed in the honor of John the Baptist, after the name of the Savior. For it was worthy that the authority of the bride should follow the sentence of the bridegroom, and should promote his singular friend thither, where she herself ascended the princedom. An election without doubt singular, to vindicate the primacy of the Church for John in that very city, which the two lights of heaven consecrated by a most clear death. Peter is crucified, Paul is beheaded, the dignity remains to the Precursor. Rome is empurpled by the multitude of martyrs, and the whole sublimity is poured back to the blessed patriarch. John is everywhere greater, singular in all things, wonderful above all. Who was so gloriously announced? Who is read to have been so specially filled with the Holy Spirit in the mother's womb? Whom have you read to have exulted within the mother's womb? (Luke 2.) Whose birth have you seen the Church of God celebrate? Who so as a boy desired the desert? Who is read to have con-

versed so sublimely? Who first showed penance, and the kingdom of heaven? Who baptized the King of glory? To whom did the Trinity first reveal itself? To whom did God bear such testimony? Whom did the Church so honor? See if all these things are not so singularly singular here, that no mortal should dare to gape at the aforesaid dignities.

Perhaps you dispose to oppose to me that he has these things as his own in such a way that he does not touch the other common things of the saints. Hear therefore: John is a patriarch, nay the end and head of patriarchs; John a prophet, nay more than a prophet: because Him whom he announces coming, he demonstrates with his finger: John an angel, but also chosen among the angels, by the testimony of the Savior, who says: "Behold I send my angel, who shall prepare the way before my face (Matth. 11)." John an apostle, but also the first and prince of the apostles; because, "there was a man sent from God (John 1)." John an evangelist, but also the first reaper of the Gospel, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom. John a virgin, nay the ensign of virginity, the title of modesty, the example of chastity. John a martyr, but also the light of martyrs, between the birth and death of Christ the form of the most constant martyrdom. I pass over that he is the voice of one crying in the desert (Isa. 40), that he is the herald of the Word, that he is the precursor of the Judge. I leave that too, that until John were the law and the prophets, that John himself is Elijah, that he is a burning and shining lamp, that

he is the friend of the Bridegroom, the preparer of the Bride. I pass over in silence that he was so inserted into the nine orders of angels, that he is even transferred to the apex of the Seraphim. Truly this is of a laborious work, and the poverty of our sense does not suffice. Let these things which have been said of the praise of John suffice for the present to the glory of the Redeemer, who is God blessed forever. Amen.

* SERMON XXIV. II. ON THE NATIVITY OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST. (JUNE 24.)

Today's festival, dearly beloved, conspicuous in the whole world, irradiates our minds so much the more clearly with a certain splendor of a new light, by which it also invites us to recollect the beginning of our redemption and the rising of the true light. For to whom meditating on the nativity of John does the nativity of Christ not soon occur, especially since no other cause existed for John being born of an old father and a sterile mother, except that being wonderfully born he might precede Him who was to be singularly born. Namely, that the friend might precede the Bridegroom, the servant the Lord, the voice the Word, the lamp the Sun, the herald the Judge, the saved the Savior. John himself also testifies that this is the cause of his coming, not that he might simply come, but that he might precede the Lord for the indication of his manifestation. "After me," he says, "comes a man who was made before me; because he was before me: and I knew him not: but that he might be manifested

in Israel, therefore am I come baptizing in water (John 1)." He preceded Him by being born, by preaching, by baptizing, by dying, and finally also by descending to the lower parts. And so he preceded the Lord, and preceded even himself. For before he was conceived in the womb, unbelief closed the paternal mouth; which he himself, before he spoke, wonderfully unlocked by the expression of his name. Plainly when he could not yet bring forth words to men, he could by exulting announce the King of heaven latent in the Virgin's womb to the maternal bowels. For the Holy Spirit, who animated him before he drew the vital breezes, also filled the guest-chamber of maternal modesty in which he dwelt. Whence Elizabeth: "Behold," she said, "as the voice of thy salutation was made in my ears, the infant in my womb exulted in joy (Luke 1)."

Where it is to be asked how it could be that the Holy Spirit should diffuse His gifts into him; when, according to the rite of human condition, he still existed conceived in iniquities, and had not yet loosed the bond of original sin by the circumcision of the legal observance perceived, when through Moses the divine voice says: "The male, the flesh of whose foreskin shall not be circumcised, that soul shall perish from my people, because he has made my covenant void (Gen. 17)."

But it is to be noted that the grace of the Holy Spirit is not bound by the law, is not held by the bond of necessity; but as it breathes where it wills, so also it dispenses its gifts freely to whom

it wills. For even the centurion Cornelius, before he received the washing of baptism, it inspired (Acts 10): and upon certain ones still gentiles, while Peter was speaking, not only as Scripture testifies, did it fall, but even instructed them that they should speak with tongues (ibid.). What wonder then, if the Holy Spirit filled Blessed John before any remedy of the legal mandate, whom divine providence constituted as a certain limit and, so to speak, an impassable term of the law itself, and of the Prophets and of the whole Old Testament? For the Law and the prophets, as Truth says, were until John (Matth. 11). For this John, with the Lord, indeed received circumcision in his flesh, but in receiving it he terminated it. And therefore he who shone forth as the herald and magnificent announcer of the new grace, did not need circumcision to evade original sin, but divine election promoted him above the law, above the order of human condition, to whom also the glory of so great honor was conferred that the Mother of God herself was present at his birth, and the Founder of the world, latent in the womb, dedicated his beginning by His presence. The evangelist Luke testifies this when he says: "And Mary remained with her, namely Elizabeth, as it were three months, and returned to her own house (Luke 1)." For from the conception of the Lord, up to the nativity of Blessed John, there are three months. Mary therefore was unwilling to depart, until she should spend the service of diligence on the aged woman and the one about to bring forth, and should see the herald

precede Him whom she was carrying in the hall of her body as King. Happy birth, which that light receives which enlightens every man coming into this world (John 1)!

But while we speak these things, suddenly a question arises for us, which not without cause seems to bring in doubt. For the Lord testifies that among those born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist (Matth. 11). He excluded therefore a greater, he did not deny an equal. Hence it is that the angel says to Zechariah: "He himself shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1)." John therefore seems equal to Elijah, in whose spirit and power it is asserted he is to come; especially since also elsewhere Truth itself says: "Elijah has already come, and they knew him not, but did unto him whatsoever they would (Matth. 17:12):" and if you will know, John himself is Elijah. But behold on the contrary that occurs, that Elisha received a double spirit of Elijah, according to the manner of his petition. "I beseech thee, Lord, that thy spirit be double in me (2 Kings 2)." Because if Elisha excels Elijah doubly, how does he not surpass John equal to Elijah, than whom among those born of women no one greater has risen?

However, that the question may be solved, the sense is to be weighed, so that what sounds hard in exterior words, the discretion of one soberly perceiving may understand to proceed from a pious intention. For it sounded hard that Elisha sought a double spirit of his master; since the disciple is not above the master (Matth. 10). But that

petition proceeded from a pure mind, because he asked not for something earthly, but for spiritual grace. Whence also Elijah, as it were somewhat indignant at the words of the incautious disciple, rebuked him, saying "Thou hast asked a hard thing (2 Kings 2)": but looking at the simplicity of the pious intention, he subjoins at once: "Nevertheless if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be what thou hast asked (ibid.)" Not plainly the duplicity, which the incautious speech pours out, but the gift of the spirit, which he sought with a humble and sincere intention of mind. In this way, therefore, Elisha by no means surpasses John, just as neither is he greater than Elijah. Nevertheless, if we inspect the tenor of the sacred history diligently, we find Elisha to have been richer or clearer than Elijah in the virtues of miracles. That one indeed, living, restored a dead boy to life (1 Kings 17), this one already dead raised a dead man (2 Kings 13). By that one prophesying, the jar of meal and the cruse of oil failed not (1 Kings 17); this one offered at once on the second day incredible supplies of the hostile camps to a besieged and afflicted city (2 Kings 6). And, that I may conclude all briefly, Elijah shone forth with twelve, Elisha, as the truth of Scripture hands down, with twenty-four signs of miracles, which indeed, because we avoid fastidiousness, we postpone to enumerate here. How therefore shall I expedite myself from the knot of this question, so that the magnitude of John being brought forth, the sentence of the Truth may not waver, by which it is said that among those born of

women there is not a greater than John the Baptist? For if Elisha is greater than Elijah, therefore he is also greater than John. Which is impossible to be.

But it is to be noted that it is one thing to do some great thing in signs of miracles, another to be great in the excellence of merits. For if it is treated of miracles, John is found in the pages of the Scriptures to have done no miracle. But shall he on this account be the lowest of all the saints, because he is handed down to have done no signs of virtues? Elisha therefore is greater than Elijah in the exhibition of signs, whom nevertheless he by no means surpasses in the heap of merits. So also John is indeed equal to Elijah; because as that one is to be the herald of the judge; so also this one was made the precursor of the Redeemer, but greater than Elijah, because Him whom he demonstrated, he also baptized. Finally, in that sacrament of baptism the wave of the Jordan was rather washed than washed, from which moreover the water everywhere on earth conceived the power of all sanctification. There Blessed John heard the voice of the Father, beheld the Holy Spirit descending in the shape of a dove, and dipped in the waters the Son of God, to be feared by the angels, bowed down by his own hands. For he showed in things that foundation and origin of baptism, which Truth afterwards taught the disciples to do in words full of power. "Go," He said, "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Matth. 28)." There the thing is manifest

and not words; here words and the thing true, but hidden. John therefore is the limit of human merits. For however much the authority of the apostolic senate may excel, however much the faith of the patriarchs may profit in divine recognition, or the oracles of the prophets may grow strong to report secret mysteries, however much certainly the glory of the triumphant martyrs may be heaped up, however much the budding modesty of virgins may flourish, or the tongue of doctors may exercise itself in the words of life, all are restrained within the goal of John, and nothing of human virtue, nothing of religion, nothing of perfection proceeds beyond. Whose incomparable series of life no historiographer wove after his death, but that principal archangel before he was conceived in the womb, as of the Lord, so also of this one narrated the wonderful works. His heraldry indeed we have learned not from the assertion of any veracious man, but from the mouth of the highest Truth itself. And he is the asserter and praiser of John, who is praised and blessed by all celestial and terrestrial creatures. Finally, from that word the praises of John were drawn, through which the dry land was founded, the stars are moved, the elements were created. Indeed of what great magnificence is it to merit the glory of praise from Him, with whom the highest felicity is to obtain the pardon of piety, and to be preferred to men by Him, by whom it is glorious to be approved in any way? For He said: "What went you out to see? a prophet? I say to you and more than a prophet (Matth. 11)."

But because a prophet is outstanding and distinguished among other men, who having no equal in the common race of men, is even set before a prophet, it remains, that he should now be called not a man, but an angel. Whence also he added: "For this is he of whom it is written: Behold I send my angel, who shall prepare the way before thy face (ibid.)." But also in his own supposition Blessed John is better shown how much he is preferred to other men, concerning whom the Lord said: "But he," He says, "who is minor in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than he (ibid.)." Because namely our Redeemer, who is minor than John on earth through the access of succeeding age, is greater in heaven through the privilege of eternal majesty. O happy that dejection, when man is supposed to God, the creature is preceded by the Creator, the small is surpassed by the glory of immensity! Christ is said to be greater than John in heaven, where He is adored by all the virtues of angelic dignity, to whom the cherubim and seraphim humbly fall down, whose Princedoms and Powers tremble at His empire, whose face finally the angels desire to look into (1 Peter 1); He shows that He precedes John in celestial dignity, in whose sight plainly all nations are as a drop of a bucket, and according to the prophecy of the prophet, are reputed as nothing, and a void (Isa. 40); He does not disdain to set himself before the blessed man in comparison, so that man may be found to have as it were a place of comparison with God for the excellence of merits. For He who is the author of loftiness, He

was made for us the teacher of humility. To Him be glory and empire, both now, and from now, forever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XXV.

III. ON THE NATIVITY OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST. (JUNE 24.)

Many things, dearly beloved, we have known composed with a polished style by our fathers in the praise of Blessed John, and clearly expressed. Wherefore we, the rude, are ashamed to thrust ourselves among the learned, and to babble among the eloquent. But who may be silent at the birth of the voice? Who may be mute from the praise of the herald, except perhaps he who distrusts that which is heard from the angel? Zechariah, indeed, while he does not believe the oracle of the angel speaking, is soon deprived of the office of speaking, and at the arrival of the voice, loses the eloquence of the voice (Luke 1). But truly with the offspring brought forth, who decorated the lineage of the paternal race with the title of a new glory, while he no longer doubts, but rather exults to impose the name, not only is the organ of speech reformed to him restored, but also he is heaped up with the grace of the prophetic spirit; and he who had until then lost the power of bringing forth any speech, now enriched by the oracle of the prophetic vaticination, reveals the secrets of the salutary mystery. John plainly was the voice, he preceded the Word, and announced the Word. Of this voice,

or herald, even Isaiah the distinguished herald of the prophets had been made, when he cried: "The voice of one crying in the desert: Prepare the way of the Lord (Isa. 40)." Through Malachi also the divine voice says: "Behold I send my angel, who shall prepare thy way before thee."

Let us weigh, most dear brothers, this man by the privilege of how magnificent a sublimity he stands out, by what incomparable loftiness of merits he excels among the choirs of the saints, who after the likeness of the Savior, was both foretold before by the prophets, and announced by the same angel as the Lord: moreover, by the testimony of the Truth itself he stood out glorious with immense heraldries of praises. Such a one indeed it was becoming that the celestial Bridegroom should have as a friend; such a one it was fitting should be the federator of the celestial nuptials. "He who has," he says, "the bride, is the bridegroom (John 3); but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices with joy because of the voice of the bridegroom." But so that the holy Church might be purged from all filth of contagion, and not having spot nor wrinkle (Ephes. 5), might merit to enter the chambers of the celestial Bridegroom, it was done by the mystery of this blessed paranymph, who both immersed in the Jordan waves, and washed the author of that same baptism and of all purity, cleansing the very floods.

Of these nuptials indeed that Judah held a figure, who went down to shear the sheep in Timnah with Hira, namely the shepherd of his

flock (Gen. 38). But Timnah is interpreted as "failing," through which namely the Synagogue, in which kings and prophets had failed, and at the same time the anointing, until He should come to whom it was laid up, is shown. Whence also it is said through the prophet: "When the Holy of Holies shall come, the anointing shall cease (Dan. 9)." What therefore is understood by Judah, who came to shear the sheep in Timnah, unless our Redeemer, who is known to have come to the Synagogue that He might exonerate from sins the sheep which had perished of the house of Israel (Luke 15)? Whence also the Bridegroom to the bride in the Canticles: "Thy teeth are as a flock of shorn ones, which have ascended from the washing (Cant. 4)." Furthermore, the teeth of the Church are known to be the holy doctors, to whom it was first said: "Kill, and eat (Acts 10)." As if he should say: From that which they are, kill with the sword of the spirit, that is by the word of preaching, and transfer into the body of the Church. The teeth therefore of the bride are the holy doctors, who because they are simple through innocence, and leaving all things, are stripped of the fleeces of their faculties, and purified by the wave of sacred baptism, are as a flock of shorn ones, which have ascended from the washing. Judah therefore came to shear the sheep, not indeed alone, but with his shepherd the Odollamite, whose name was Hira. Whom do we understand by the Odollamite, unless John? But Odollamite is interpreted as "testimony in water." With this testimony plainly the Lord

came to the water of baptism, having indeed a testimony greater than John, but on account of the weak sheep, He deigned to use this testimony in the water. Whence when he saw Him approaching to the floods of the Jordan, at once exclaiming, he said: "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who takes away the sins of the world (John 1)." And the evangelist says: "John bore testimony saying: Because I saw the Spirit descending as a dove from heaven, and it remained upon Him, and I knew Him not; but He who sent me to baptize in water, He said to me: Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining upon Him, this is He who baptizes in the Holy Spirit (ibid.)." To which vision namely also the name of that shepherd fits most aptly. For Hira is interpreted as "vision of my brother." For the Lord was the brother of John, not only according to the seed of Abraham, but also according to the kinship of Mary and Elizabeth.

For that also which follows in the history, that Judah gave to Tamar his staff, and ring, and bracelets (Gen. 38), what else does it signify, but that our Redeemer gave to the Church the scepter of the kingdom, the sign of faith, and the bond of charity? For by the staff, the royal power is expressed; by the ring, the integrity of the faith; by the bracelets, which are usually worn on the arms, the exercise of good work, or the bond of mutual dilection is understood. And these indeed he gave to her as a pledge, until he should send the kid which he had promised. But that Kid, namely the Savior of the world, who came

in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. 8), when the fullness of time came, he was sent to the Church. But he sent Him, because He came into this world as it were through the hands of John. For John was the mediator between the Law and Grace, between the Synagogue and the Church, between Christ and the world. Who although he was already dead when the Lord suffered, nevertheless he is rightly said to have brought Him to the Church, because he both showed Him present, and by baptizing him, as it were by his own hands, delivered Him to the world. Of this kid, namely our Redeemer, it is said in the Law: "A kid without blemish ye shall offer to the Lord (Exod. 12)." For He indeed is the Kid, because He was made for us sin (2 Cor. 5); but without blemish, because He did no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth (1 Peter 2). This kid therefore Judah sent to Tamar, when through the preaching of John, the Redeemer of the world was manifested to the Church.

But it is to be noted, that he sent him through his shepherd, the Odollamite. For John indeed, as we have said, is the Odollamite, that is, the testimony in water. Through whom namely the Lord is sent to the Church, because by his testimony he is made known to the believers. Who although he was a friend of the Bridegroom, nevertheless he is called his shepherd, because he was the leader and teacher of that people, which he had gathered by the word of preaching. Whence also he had disciples, whom he instructed in the way of life. But when the Bridegroom came, he did not

envy his glory, but rather exulted in his voice. "He who has the bride," he said, "is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices with joy because of the voice of the bridegroom (John 3)." O great humility of the Precursor! He does not seek his own glory, but the glory of Him who sent him. He does not wish to be called the Bridegroom, although he was thought to be the Christ (Luke 3), but he confesses himself to be the friend of the Bridegroom. He stands indeed, because he does not fall through pride; he hears, because he obeys the divine commands. And he rejoices with joy, not because of his own praise, but because of the voice of the Bridegroom, that is, because of the manifestation of the Truth.

John therefore saw his brother while still enclosed in the womb, he saw him in baptism, he saw the man with the eyes of the flesh, and he saw the majesty in the spirit. Whence also the interpretation of both these names, namely Hiras, which is the vision of my brother, and Odollamite, which sounds as testimony in water, the same John comprised under the verse of a single sentence, saying: "And I saw, and I gave testimony, that this is the Son of God (John 1)." Therefore, when Judah came to shear the sheep, Tamar changed her habit, because she changed her spiritual name. For Tamar is interpreted as changing. For from the Synagogue comes the Church. But according to the letter, the same name of bitterness remains: not that in which the soldier offered the Lord gall to drink; but

rather that in which Peter wept bitterly after his fall (Matt. 27). Moreover, Judah (Matt. 26) is called confession. Tamar therefore, sleeping with Judah, immediately conceives; because when bitterness is mixed with confession, the holy Church is soon fecundated to bring forth the fruits of penance. Whence also John: "Bring forth," he said, "fruits worthy of penance (Matt. 3)." Which fruit of penance indeed first erupted in Jerusalem, and thus afterwards budded through the whole breadth of the world. Hence the Truth says: "It behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead the third day, and that penance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24)." For even the harlot's habit itself signifies the confession of sins; or because Tamar is composed of two corrupted words, namely Thamna, which is called failing; and Mara, which is bitterness. Well did bitterness fail in her, when having been made fecund from being sterile, she procreated the sweet offspring of a new germ. Tamar therefore is made pregnant by one not knowing her; because the holy Church, as far as the gentiles are concerned, in the beginning, while she conceives the seed of the new faith, is not recognized. Whence also it is sung: "A people, whom I have not known, hath served me (Psalm 17)." And Isaiah: "Behold," he said, "thou shalt call a nation that thou knewest not; and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee (Isa. 55)."

Moreover, that the kid is sent to her through the same Odollamite, what does it designate, if not the reproach of sins made through John? For as it were the bearer was bringing a kid to the harlot, when to the crowd hastening to the laver of baptism, he said through a rebuke: "Generations of vipers, who hath shewed you to flee from the wrath to come? (Matt. 3)." Moreover, Hiras the Odollamite sought from Tamar the ring, the bracelet, and the staff. By the ring is designated the seal of faith, by the bracelet the labor of work, and by the staff the rest of hope. For he sought as it were the ring of faith, when he said: "He that believeth in the Son of God, hath life everlasting; but he that is incredulous to Christ the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him (John 3)." Or did it not also pertain to the ring, when he said: "He that hath the bride, is the bridegroom (Ibid.)?" And he exhibited the bracelet of labor, when he said: "Do penance (Matt. 3)." Also the rest of the staff, when he immediately subjoined: "For the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Ibid.)." As if he were clearly speaking: Do not grow weary under the labor of the penance enjoined upon you, but rather strengthen your mind with firm hope in the approach of the heavenly kingdom.

Moreover, Judah sought her in the crossway, but he could not find her; because she who in public, according to the prophet, and under every leafy tree had been prostituted (Jer. 2, 3), had now constrained herself in the paternal house, namely under the discipline of Christ: nor did

the reproach of sin find her, whom the bitterness of confession had changed. She clothed herself in the garments of widowhood; because besides the heavenly Bridegroom, who died for her, she admits no other. But as for the fact that twins appeared in the womb, there are two peoples generated in the bosom of the Church through the grace of the Holy Spirit. In the very effusion of those being born, one put forth his hand, and having tied a scarlet thread, soon drew it back; and thus opened the way for the other to be born before him. Because indeed the Jewish people, who first began to be born to the light of the Spirit, showed their works polluted with the blood of the preceding prophets, and of the Lord Himself. Whence also Zara is interpreted as rising; because that Hebrew people rose earlier according to the letter of the law, but was made later to receive the grace of the Gospel. In this way therefore he drew back his hand, the people of the Jews who had already begun to be born through the spirit; and soon broke forth, and was made the first-born, the people of the nations. Namely so that, according to the sentence of the Truth, the last should be first, and the first should be last (Matt. 20). Well therefore Pharez received the name of division. Whence also the midwife, as he was being born, cried out: "Why is the wall divided because of thee?" For all the human race, as it were distorted twigs of the woods, had made a wall against the Lord coming in the flesh: and lest he should enter to perform the mystery of redemption, they unanimously resisted. Whence

also Paul: "We," he said, "preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews indeed a stumbling-block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness (1 Cor. 1)." But the gentile people divided this wall, as it were by being born, when through Cornelius the centurion, and other first-fruits of the faith, receiving the laver of baptism, they flew together under the title of Christ (Acts 10). Blessed John was considering this alternation of being born, when he said to the crowds of Jews flocking together from every side: "Begin not to say: We have Abraham for our father. For I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham (Matt. 3)." As if he were say plainly: The gentile peoples, who are stones because they worship stones, shall become first-born to you for the sacrament of regeneration and new grace, whose primacy you seemed to have refused through legal ceremonies.

These things, most dear brethren, we have briefly run through, not by explaining them, but by touching upon them in some way, so that we might demonstrate Blessed John as the minister of new grace, and the paranymph of spiritual nuptials, even from the ancient pages of holy Scripture. For the Savior chose this distinguished and eminent man of the whole human race as a companion for Himself, to run, like a giant, the way of our mortality; and He chose him to perform the business of our redemption, that he might be in some way a participant and collaborator. Whence when He came to him to be baptized; the sublime and humble servant

tremblingly excused the ministry enjoined upon him, saying: "I ought to be baptized by thee, and comest thou to me? (Matt. 3)" He answered: "Suffer it to be so now. For so it becometh us to fulfill all justice." O Lord, thou hast said: "Let there be light, and there was light (Gen. 1)." Let the stars of heaven be made, the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, the fish of the waters. All these were established at the sole command of thy bidding, all are disposed at the single nod of thy will, nor didst thou employ the aid of any angelic power to perform these things; how then dost thou now say, as it were coequating thyself to a man of earthly condition, and tempering thyself to our infirmity: Suffer it to be so now; for so it becometh us to fulfill all justice? For behold, he whom thou provest to the participation of thy cooperation, whom in some way thou liftest up to the summit of thy likeness, let him say what comparison can be made of thee to him. He says therefore: "God giveth not the Spirit by measure (John 3)." The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand; but because he declares that thou hast no measure of the Spirit, let him say what he feels about himself: "We all," he says, "have received of his fullness (John 1)." As if he were to say: We are vessels, He is the fountain. He dispenses in us according to the measure of His moderation, whence the fullness of His immensity redundantly overflows beyond comparison. Moreover, what comparison there is between thee and him, he again manifestly declares when he says: "He that is of the earth,

of the earth he speaketh; he that cometh from heaven, is above all (John 3)." How much service of subjection indeed he owes to thee, he cries out with public voices to all the people: "There cometh one mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to loose (Luke 3)." O lofty majesty of blessed humility, which while by its own judgment it is depressed to the depths, by the promoting divine clemency it is raised to the heavenly things; and while it humbly subjects itself to God, it rises excellently to the fellowship of God! For he indeed declares himself with other men to be earth, and speaking earthly things; but the Lord testifies that among those born of women there hath not risen a greater than he (Matt. 11). He cries out that he is unworthy to loose the latchet of his shoe; the Lord subjects His whole body to his hands, when He comes about to undergo the laver of baptism. He humbly denies that he is a prophet, whom the Savior affirms to be more than a prophet, and moreover an angel, of whom He afterwards says: "He was a burning and a shining lamp (John 5)."

Consider, my brethren, how admirable, nay how angelic was the life of blessed John, how certainly magnificent it had shone in the opinion of all, who while he showed no sign of virtue to any, nevertheless all the people estimated that he was the Christ, Luke testifying, who says: "And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or not (Luke 3)." For what religion, what perfection, what virtue finally, what kind of holiness is

found in any of the saints, which in John does not hold the primacy as if of a certain prerogative? For there are holy hermits and anchorites, but who fixed for himself a rule of living on wild honey, and the inedible food of locusts? To whom moreover would the haircloth garments of goats not suffice for harshness of clothing? This man, girded with a leathern girdle, is clothed with the hairs of camels. Indeed there are holy renouncers, and those leaving the world; but this man, still of a boyish disposition, when he had not yet learned to live civilly, penetrating the deserts, decreed to dwell solitary; nor did he deign to succeed his father in the priestly dignity, that he might have been able to preach the true and highest priest of all with a free voice. The prophets vaticinate the future coming of the Savior, the apostles and other teachers testify that it is fulfilled; but John shows Him present, whom the preaching of the whole world, namely both ancient and modern, served.

In this also he surmounts all the prophets, because they receive the Holy Spirit through the increments of ages; but he indeed, still enclosed in the maternal bowels, conceived the power of the Spirit, grace preventing; and at the approach of the Author of all joy, he exulted with the nods of a body scarcely yet formed. Others remained virgins not defiling their garments; but he, so that he might cut off from the very root all the allurements of the flesh in himself, and might keep not only the genital members, but also the ears and eyes in the unfailing greenness of

a flourishing and flowery virginity, rejected the companionship of human cohabitation, and for the fervor of the spirit immersed himself in the dens of wild beasts. Also among the purple-clad choirs of martyrs Blessed John presides in the chair of mastery, because he fell as a strenuous warrior for the testimony of truth, and having been made the leader of all those struggling for Christ, he was the first to bring the triumphal banner of martyrdom into heaven. Blessed John therefore has been made a participant in the choirs of all the saints, because no virtue of holiness was lacking to him: nay, he shines so much more distinguished among all the orders of the saints, as he approaches more sublimely to the Author of all through incomparable merit. Who in the perfect Trinity lives and reigns one and true God forever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XXVI.

ON SAINT PETER THE APOSTLE. (JUNE 29.)

Upon that of the Canticle of Solomon: The young maidens have loved thee exceedingly.

Peter the apostle, prince of the apostles and first of princes, has rendered this present day more bright for us. Truly a sacred day, because consecrated to a most sacred man, and assigned to the praises of him whom the angelic assembly reveres in no small measure. For he is the one whom the insignia of a singular primacy pre-ennoble, the key-bearer of the kingdom of heaven, the tongue, the foundation of the faith.

The honor and glorious worthiness are consummated, that a man placed on earth should rule the heavens, and should exercise the virtue of judicial power among the choirs of angels. The Lord as ruler sits among the ranks shining with a brighter light, and flying from the Thrones to the Cherubim, He interchanges the turns of sitting. Wherefore the change of sittings is indeed to be admired, and far brought over the sights of human reason, since He is read to have sat now upon the Thrones, now upon the Cherubim. And although the angels assist awaiting the command of the one presiding, and the administrative spirits allot the ministries assigned to them; nevertheless none of them possesses the power of binding and loosing. Peter is present, and at his will the whole universe is loosed and bound; and the sentence of Peter precedes the sentence of the Redeemer, because not what Christ [binds], this does Peter bind, but what Peter [binds], this does Christ bind. He himself attesting this very thing: "Whatsoever," he said, "thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven (Matt. 16)."

O how powerful a dignity, how worthy a power! Peter judges, and the Almighty confirms the judgments of Peter, and in the hand of Peter is the hand of the Most High; and he alone is made an intimate of Christ, who shall have had the intimacy of Peter. What is it by which, the ranks of angels and men having been excluded, Peter alone resides in the fellowship of the divine majesty, and with the Lord presiding? Sweet colloquy, holy conversation; a special council of

Peter and God, where the indifference of secrets joins and unites mortal man to God. It is not therefore a wonder if Peter the apostle loves the Savior with a more burning affection, since a singular love has been poured back into him, so that he both loves singularly, and is specially loved. His soul is one of the young maidens who loved him exceedingly. A boyish age is not yet suitable for love, an old age has ceased from love. He is a boy, who has not yet begun to study eternal things; he is an old man, who had begun, but left off. Both of these therefore that highest lover excludes, and eliminates from the majesty of his love. Only adolescence, glowing with the most burning fires, does not receive an eclipsed love, but claims for itself a copious ardor. Among the young maidens therefore, namely the souls of the elect, who promised love and faith to the heavenly spouse, she alone loved more ardently, and impatient of love, said: "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee upon the waters (Matt. 14)." He did not fear the singular trouble of the element, and the waviness of the raging sea could not restrain the affection of the Apostle. But what is it that he says exceedingly, when he cannot be loved exceedingly, who is commanded to be loved with the whole heart, with the whole soul, with all the strength?

There are three degrees in the love of God, to any one of which to ascend without the other either avails little, or nothing. The Apostle ran thither with a swifter foot, until, placed at the summit of the third, he should fly forth to the

heavenly palace. For God is to be loved sweetly, wisely, and strongly. But now let us see what it is to love God sweetly. For He is sweet, and ought to be loved sweetly, who does not cease to minister the multitude of His sweetness both to those loving Him and to those fearing Him. He is loved in sweetness when He is loved in the flesh; when we know nothing but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified; when the whole attendance of His flesh is retained by frequent memory; and the worthiness of such great commiseration shakes our bones to the marrow. For when we remember the King of glory sustaining the miseries of a wailing little child, rolled in the vileness of vile rags, sitting weary from the journey, passing through the reproaches of the Pharisees and the insults of the Jews with a most patient ear; ought we not to be moved with compunction at the sight of such great piety? Consider the Son of the Virgin smeared with spittle, livid with blows, fixed with nails. Behold the ruler of heaven standing on the cross, pale with death, deformed in the flesh. Do not pass by the Lord of angels, made the reproach of men, a man of sorrows, and knowing infirmities, a man struck by God and humbled, a man leprous and exposed to all detriments. This recollection kindles the heart, burns the breast, feeds upon the inner parts. Such memory elicits tears, suffuses the eyes, moistens the countenance.

Around this degree almost all the insistence of religious people is revolved, and rare is the bird on earth which can pass this progress. For there stands before those praying either the image

of the God being born, or of Him hanging on the cross, and the glowing affection holds the affection of the mind, and scarcely permits it to run forth to further things. In this degree Peter stood impressed, when loving most tenderly the flesh and conversation of Jesus Christ, he would even withdraw the Savior from the salvation of the human race, saying: "Be merciful to thyself, Lord, let not this be (Matt. 16)." To whom the Lord: "Go," He said, "behind me, Satan, because thou savourest not the things that are of God;" blaming the counsel, not the affection. For he loved sweetly, yet not wisely; for how wisely, who was striving to exclude the redemption of the world and the providence of God? But a sweeter intimacy had kindled his heart, and the kindness of the one loving could not bear the word concerning the absence of the Redeemer. Here God is loved with the whole heart, when affection and sweetness dwell in the heart of man, and the heart alone keeps the sweetness of the name of love with persevering stability. Whence also common usage has obtained, that when we see someone to be loved vehemently by someone, we say: He loves him from the heart, whom namely he loves and follows.

The second is to love wisely. This degree is of much height, and promises an exceedingly difficult ascent. Moreover, no one escapes to its summit except a purer mind, and one which by wisdom may prevail over the wisdom of the angels of this world. The accumulated devotion of the God being born or journeying is not

attended to here, but the Word in the beginning with God (John 1). Remember the Son of God fashioning all things with the Father, creating the angels, joining the elements, disposing the world, governing all things; and know how much higher this knowledge is than that. Gaze upon His ineffable generation, and the Begotten not unlike the Begetter; nor the Father earlier than the Son; and then thou shalt understand how great a difference disjoins both births; since it is one thing to be born in glory, another in misery; one thing to be equal to God, another to be less than the angels. This is singular wisdom, to step over the obstacles of the body and of bodies; and to leap into the splendor of that light, where light is seen in light, and God is shown not serving, but commanding. Happy the soul which, the matter of the dreggy flesh having been overcome, rests in the light of this wisdom! Dost thou wish to see Paul, how he ascended from the first degree to the second? When he had said: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!" (Gal. 6), he wrote in another place: "And if we have known Christ according to the flesh, but now we know him no more" (2 Cor. 5). This affection of wisdom sits in the soul, which alone is capable of reason; and it looks forward to the incorporeal and uncircumscribed spirit with indefatigable meditation. Here God is loved with the whole soul, that is, out of the whole wisdom, who before was loved with the whole heart, that is, out of sweetness.

The third degree is to love strongly, that is, from all one's strength. He loves strongly who, when it shall be necessary, exposes body and soul to torments for the faith of the Savior. This is the fruit of the work, the consummation of labor, the proof of love. For from the degree of sweetness to the degree of wisdom the apostle Peter had ascended when he said: "I lay down my life for thee" (Matt. 26). Nothing is wiser nor stronger than: "I lay down my life for thee"; nothing more unwise nor weaker than: "I neither know nor have known what thou sayest" (John 15). Truly he already loved sweetly, already wisely; but he lost both when he did not love strongly; when at the voice of a little woman he quickly denied his Lord and Master. But when he disposed to die for Christ, he loved exceedingly; because "greater love than this no man hath, than that a man lay down his life for his friends" (Ibid.). Fastened to the cross, he could not be separated from the faith. Thou seest therefore how these three degrees agree with the threefold law of love. Therefore let us love sweetly, wisely, and strongly, that we may be able to reach the Master of Peter by his intercession, who is blessed forever. Amen.

SERMON XXVII.

ON THE HOLY APOSTLES PETER AND PAUL. (JUNE 29.)

This present day, most beloved, is bright and solemn, and it sanctifies and infuses the whole creation with its light. For it is not an unknown festival, or one obscured by the darkness of any

obscurity, but known to the whole world from the rising of the sun to its setting, shining also to the heavens themselves with a clear light. For the two princes of the apostles, luminaries of the Church, highest martyrs, teachers of the law, friends of the bridegroom, eyes of the bride, pastors of the flock, guardians of the world, on this day ascended the heavenly kingdoms by a happy martyrdom; one the prince of the heavenly kingdom, the other caught up to the third heaven; one set over the Jews, the other given to the Gentiles; companions in life, consorts in death, peers in the crown, equals in glory; judges of the world, confessors of the Lord.

The disposition of the Redeemer is altogether to be admired, and the judgments of God are a great deep (Psalm 35), since He set those over His Church who fell so criminally that they were absorbed in the floods of sins. When I gaze upon Peter, whom the very hand of the Almighty invested with the keys of the heavenly kingdom, to whom the Father revealed the majesty of the Son, upon whom the Church is founded, to whom the power of binding and loosing is granted (Matt. 16), who closes and opens the heavens, which it is not read that the cherubim and seraphim have, I admire vehemently. Again, when I turn back my eyes and see the same Peter following the Savior from afar, and at the voice of a single maidservant detesting and swearing "that I know not the man," and leaving Him, whom he had confessed to be the Son of God, with a trembling flight (Matt. 26, Luke 22), I am shaken with fear, saying

with myself: "Who hath known the mind of the Lord?" (Rom. 11.) When I look at Paul breathing threats and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, leading them bound, condemning them to death (Acts 9), and raging with all revelry against the body of the Church, I tremble within myself, saying: "Man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred" (Eccl. 9). When I look from above, and see the vessel of election carrying the name of Christ before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel, being caught up to the secrets of the third heaven, and hearing arcane words which it is not lawful for a man to speak (2 Cor. 11, 12), and fixing clearer eyes upon that very Trinity, I rejoice saying: "This is the man who was not forsaken by the Lord" (Wis. 10).

Why is it that they so fall, who are set over the Church? Wisdom sweetly disposing all things, did these things for this reason, so that the aforesaid princes might learn in themselves how they ought to have mercy on others.

The present chapter endeavors to demonstrate the virtue of this mercy. "These are," it says, "the two olive trees" (Rev. 11). The comparison of the olive tree to the apostles is altogether worthy, nor has another more worthy been found. For that tree is always green, and pours out that most excellent liquor of oil, without which neither royal nor priestly authority consists. Moreover, oil has four things: it floats above all liquids, it illuminates, it feeds, and it anoints. For upon whatever liquid thou mayest place oil, it immediately claims for itself the power of the higher

place; so also the mercy of God is preferred to all His works, the Psalmist testifying, who says: "His tender mercies are over all his works" (Psalm 144). The Lord is preached as compassionate and merciful, patient, mild of heart, and sweet to all (Psalm 85, 114). But He is also just (Psalm 10), but He is never read in Scripture to be much just, as He is much merciful. Dost thou wish to see how the disciples follow their Lord and Master? See how great an affection of piety infused itself into the prince of the apostles, when all the widows stood around him, weeping and showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas made for them (Acts 9). The prince of the apostles is surrounded by a multitude of the poor, and he is shaken by the tearful voices of the widows, and the multitude of clemency breaks into the apostolic breast. The Apostle prays before the face of glory, in the presence of the Lord of majesty; the woman is raised, and she who offers mercy is restored to the miserable. This mercy makes Peter run from Jerusalem into Antioch (Acts 10), and from Antioch to come to Rome, to preach the word of God, to succor sinners, to spare sins, to superextol mercy over judgment.

Behold also Paul, and understand how the accumulated kindness of a sweeter mercy had kindled the whole mind of the apostle with true compassion. "Who is weak," he said, "and I am not weak? I grieve," he said, "and I mourn over those who have sinned, and have not done penance" (2 Cor. 11). Blessed soul, which had made the miseries of all its own, so that it might

gain all. With this affection he sails the sea, runs into Jerusalem, is stoned, is beaten, is afflicted; thence he runs to the Ephesians, seeks the Corinthians, goes around the Colossians, visits the Philippians, returns to the Romans, scatters mercy, everywhere diffuses piety, and sows the seeds of heavenly joys. Thou seest therefore, that just as oil excels all liquids, so also apostolic piety is preferred to all their virtues.

Oil illuminates, and the apostles also illuminate. Recall the Acts of the Apostles, and see with how much light the apostle Peter shines. «In the streets,» says the Scripture, «the sick were placed in beds so that, as Peter came, at least his shadow might overshadow any of them, and they might be delivered from their infirmities (Acts 5).» Oil is an infinitely admirable light, and brighter than any sun: at the shadow of the apostolic body, languors flee, infirmities depart, and every onset of diseases is chased away with unheard-of speed. Did not a copious immensity of light leap more abundantly from the mouth of Peter, when he said to the lame man: «In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk» (Acts 3)? Behold Paul traversing all Illyricum, raising the dead, subverting the temples of the gods, and in the splendor of this place illuminating the circuit of the whole world (Rom. 15). Paul runs, and by the powerful virtue of his words illuminates those things which are in darkness; bright in speech, brighter in work, brightest in the flashing of miracles. «Keep our form,» he says, «and attend not only to what you have heard, but also to what

you have seen in me (Phil. 3).» A good and perfect teacher, who confirms faith by words with a better work; in the clearest serenity of this light, thy flashes, O God, have shone upon the world (Ps. 76). The earth was moved, and trembled at the voice of the apostles, when their sound went out into all the earth (Ps. 18).

Oil feeds, and the apostles also feed. Do not the Epistles of Peter, and that sublime doctrine of his words, wonderfully feed the Church of God? Hear what the Savior says to him about this very feeding: «Feed,» he says three times, «my sheep (John 21).» Feed by word, feed by example, feed by prayer. Feed by word, that thou mayest be able to exhort in sound doctrine, and to reprove those who contradict; feed by example, that what thou preachest with thy voice, thou mayest fulfill in work; feed by prayer, that thou mayest intercede for those whose souls have been committed to thee. The vessel of election, the apostle Paul, see how he feeds the people of God with a variety of different dishes: «Milk,» he says, «I gave you to drink, not meat (1 Cor. 3);» but solid food is for the perfect, for those who by practice have their senses perfected. And elsewhere: «You have become such as have need of milk, not of solid food (Heb. 5).» And again: «We speak wisdom among the perfect (1 Cor. 2).» Seest thou how he tempers and conforms himself, imbueing the former with sublime, and the latter with tender doctrine?

Oil anoints, and the apostles also anoint. Does not the apostle Peter anoint all, when he says: «But you are a chosen generation, a kingly priest-

hood, a holy nation, a purchased people; that you may declare his virtues, who hath called you out of darkness into his admirable light» (2 Pet. 2)? Does not Paul himself also command, saying: «If a man be overtaken in any fault, you, who are spiritual, instruct such a one in the spirit of gentleness» (Gal. 6)? The olive is always green, nor is it struck by the immensity of cold; and the faith of the apostles remains unshaken, nor could it ever be overcome by tyrannical rage. And if Peter was pushed that he might fall, yet he did not fall, because the Lord took him up. Stupefied indeed for a moment the apostle hesitated, but immediately returned in the virtue of faith; who, when the Lord looked back, wept bitterly (Luke 22). And if he was shaken for a time, yet he could not be cast down; because the sentence of Truth could not be made void, saying: «I have prayed for thee,» Peter, «that thy faith fail not» (Ibid.). For on this day Peter is crucified, Paul is beheaded, and they lay down their lives for the faith of Christ, so that the faith of Christ may not fail. These, therefore, are the two olive trees, men having faith, illuminating their country, feeding the Church, anointing sinners. What this Scripture therefore says: «These are the two olive trees (Apoc. 11);» elsewhere it reveals more plainly, saying: «These are men of mercy (Isai. 57).»

It follows: «And two candelabra shining before the Lord.» A candelabra rests on three feet, and rising to the heights, it carries a candle, so that those who enter may see the light (Luke 11); so also the apostles, resting on three virtues

—work, preaching, and the flashing of miracles —showed the true light, the Lord Jesus Christ, with all clarity to those entering into faith. And it should be noted that it says, «before the Lord.» For hypocrites shine, not before the Lord, but before the world; so that they may be seen by men. But the apostles shone before the Lord, and not before the world; because having experienced mockeries and scourgings, they studied to please the divine majesty alone. That they themselves are the two olive trees, and the two shining candelabra, and before the Lord, the prophet Zechariah clearly indicates with these words, saying: «These are the two sons of the oil of splendor, who assist the Ruler of the whole earth (Zech. 4).» For they are sons of oil, because they are men of mercy; they are also of splendor, because they are shining candelabra; they shine before the Lord, because they assist the Ruler of the whole earth.

It follows: «They have power to close heaven with clouds.» The serenity of heaven is impeded by clouds, so that it may not be seen; the contemplation of divinity is closed by our sins, so that God may not be seen, as the prophet testifies, who says: «Thou hast set a cloud against us, that prayer may not pass through (Lam. 3).» A cloud is set against us, so that prayer may not pass, when our sins separate us and God. They have power to close heaven with clouds, that is, for sinners, and to open its gates for the faithful. A wondrous thing, and worthy of all amazement, that at the

tongue of men the palaces of the heavenly mansions are closed and opened. Amen.

JULY.

XVII. Sermon on St. Alexis the confessor.

XXII. Sermon on St. Mary Magdalene.

XXIII. Sermon I on St. Apollinaris, bishop of Ravenna and martyr. Sermon II on the same. Sermon III on the same.

XX. Sermon on St. Christopher the martyr.

XXIX. Sermon I on SS. Flora and Lucilla, virgins and martyrs. Sermon II on the same.

XXX. Sermon on St. Rufinus the martyr.

SERMON XXVIII.

ON ST. ALEXIS THE CONFESSOR. (JULY 17.)

Today's festivity, most beloved, not only provokes us to celebrate eagerly the triumph of Blessed Alexis, of whom we specifically treat; but it also proposes the very parents of him to us as an example of salutary edification. For though they are reported to have abounded with so many resources and such incomparable riches, that three thousand servants reverently assisted their sight, who were both adorned with silk garments and girded themselves with golden belts, they did not cease daily to prepare sumptuous tables of food for widows, and orphans, and any needy persons, while they themselves once a day were mostly content with bread and water alone. Adorned, therefore, with these and other flowers of spiri-

tual virtues, and conspicuous for the honesty of their pious conduct, they were such that to them also not undeservedly fits what the evangelical history tells of the parents of Blessed John the Baptist: namely, because «they were both just before God, walking in all the commandments and justifications of the Lord without blame (Luke 1).» It was worthy, therefore, that from such a chaste, so holy, and finally so immaculate chamber of conjugal modesty, such a distinguished offspring should be born. As it is said by the Prophet: «The generation of the righteous shall be blessed (Ps. 111).» For this is the generation of those seeking the Lord (Ps. 23).

Wherefore you, my brothers, you, I say, I now specially address, who having not yet approached the summit of spiritual life, are still given to secular acts, and bound by the bonds of conjugal union: insist vigilantly on the studies of piety and mercy, minister necessary subsidies to brothers laboring in penury, contend to exhibit a chaste, sober, and honest life, as much as your order dictates, so that for the conservation of the race of your posterity, you may be able to procreate an offspring worthy of God. For although that sentence of the prophet is true, by which it is said: «The soul that sinneth, the same shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, and the father shall not bear the iniquity of the son. The justice of the just shall be upon him, and the impiety of the impious shall be upon him (Ezek. 18);» nevertheless, according to the conduct of parents, the merits of children often proceed; so

that to honest progenitors an honest offspring corresponds, and a reprobate offspring concurs with reprobate parents in depravity. Wherefore these also say: «We are the children of saints, and we look for that life which God will give to those who never change their faith from him (Tob. 2).» And to those, on the contrary, it is said: «Offspring of vipers, who taught you to flee from the wrath to come?» (Matt. 3.) Indeed, if you live religiously, if conversing in a disciplined manner, you keep the commands of God, you benefit both your children and yourselves; but if otherwise, you harm both them and yourselves. For indeed on account of the merit of holy David, when on account of idolatry his posterity was liable to rejection, they held the royal principality for a long time. On the contrary, Jonathan, though he was both pious toward God and a friend to the holy Prophet, nevertheless on account of the pride of his father's haughtiness, succumbed to the sword of the impious (3 Kings 18, 19, 20, 31).

To return, therefore, to blessed Alexis: deservedly did his parents beget such an offspring, so that from a holy root a holy branch might break forth, and a branch of a good tree, growing by the increments of heavenly grace received, might offer fruits of good works worthy of its kind. Indeed, merit is not suddenly granted to any holy man of consummate perfection, but he arrives at this little by little through the increment of pious devotion and special exercise; and while the mind, having perceived the fire of divine love, is raised on high through heavenly desire, it is

promoted to the summit of internal perfection, as if by certain steps of ascension. Wherefore that holy man said: «By each of my steps I will pronounce him (Job 31).» Of these steps of merits it is said. «They shall go from virtue to virtue (Ps. 83).» Of these same steps the Prophet, while he contemplates the holy Church, says: «God shall be known in her steps, while he receives her (Ps. 47).» For, as was said, the highest things are not reached suddenly, but little by little through the vow of pious devotion and the exercise of holy labor the human mind is raised to the height of spiritual virtues. Hence it is that it is said by the same Prophet: «I was exercised, and my spirit failed a little while (Ps. 76).» For what is it that he says, «my spirit,» but the spirit of elation? the spirit of the flesh? And because by occult grace we profit toward the love of God in a tempered measure from above, by as much as the divine spirit grows in us daily, by so much more our own spirit, that is, of carnal desire, fails. This harmful and abominable spirit, because it is not suddenly and completely amputated from us, nor immediately cut off as we attempt, is rightly said to have failed «a little while,» that is, little by little. Then, however, we fully profit in God, when we truly feel ourselves to have failed from ourselves. This increment of increasing virtues, moreover, arrives at consummate holiness gradually and slowly through the accumulation of daily progress. For every elect person first begins from the tenderness of his rudiment, and so afterwards grows strong toward robust and forceful

things. Which Truth openly indicates, while in the Gospel it says: «So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the earth, and sleep, and rise night and day; and the seed should germinate, and grow, while he knows it not (Mark 4).» Denouncing the increments of this seed, he added saying: «For the earth of itself brings forth fruit, first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear;» and soon he subjoins: «And when the fruit has produced itself, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the time of harvest is come.» Behold, by the voice of Truth, the increases of merits are distinguished by the diversities of the crops. For he says, first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. Let us see, therefore, the example of this Dominical sentence, how through each word it concurs more clearly than light in blessed Alexis.

For it is well known that this wondrous man, as his distinguished history testifies, in the midst of the festive solemnities of nuptial joys, dismissed his wife, with the virginity of both preserved, cast off his parents, and changed the habitation of the Roman city for a pilgrimage to the very small town of Edessa. He postponed a wife of royal race to the love of Christ, and following his poverty, contemned the most ample resources of principal opulence. As, therefore, in that evangelical sentence there are four things which are related by the Lord; so no less there are four things to be admired which are found in the servant. For there is said first the blade, then the ear, afterwards the full corn in the ear; and in

the fourth place the sickle is put in, and what is mature is cut down. There are four things, therefore, as was said, most aptly congruent to these, which are found in blessed Alexis. The first is, that he contemned the world and all worldly things; the second, that as a pilgrim, and stripped of every resource, for seventeen years in the city of Edessa in Mesopotamia he bore the penury of all things: now the third is, that returning to his own home by a happy return, and having attacked a hard contest, between his wife and both parents, between the house-born servants and the diverse family, so that he might be truly known to God alone, he deceived the sight of all. Finally, the fourth is, that there, after the slaps and scourges of the little servants, after the mockings and insults of those deriding him, after the blows of those laughing and raging, finally after the intolerable injuries of calamity most patiently endured, he at last died happily, and completed the immense contests of so much labor with a blessed end.

When, therefore, this distinguished man deserted the world, was he not then in a certain way the blade? Weak indeed still through the rudiment of his novice conversion, but already burning through the desire of heavenly hope which he had conceived in his mind. For unless the world had withered in the field of his merits, he would not have despised it; and unless the greenness of supernal hope were in him, he would not have hastened so much to God, having dismissed all things. In that inheritance, namely, which

blessed Peter calls «uncontaminated, unfading, preserved in the heavens (1 Pet. 1),» and the Lord names pastures (John 10): that blade had fixed its root, and therefore was blooming with the greenness of supernal grace. But when he persisted for a long time in the exile of an unknown region, and strengthened himself to bear the troubles of such continual penury and laborious calamity; what else did he do but, so to speak, the tender blade rose into the ear. Afterwards, however, when through the infusion of the Holy Spirit, having conceived the vigor of internal strength, he entered his father's house to endure contests most sharp and heavy beyond human strength; what else than that this rich ear arrived at the full corn? This ear, namely, had grown strong into a state of such vigor that the blasts of shameful insults might flow from the mouths of the servants and not overwhelm it; the waves of temptations from the daily sight of his wife and parents might strike against it, and not have been able to lay it low. For indeed the house was founded upon a firm rock (Matt. 7). And indeed while external poverty made him needy, and his ragged habit and unkempt hair made him deformed, he seemed like vile stalks and sterile awns in the chaff, but the full grain lay hidden within the sheath of conscience. That grain, namely, which said of itself: «Unless the grain of wheat falling into the earth die, it remaineth alone (John 12).» In the fourth place at last the sickle was put in, so that the ear, which had come to the fullness of maturity, might be reaped, when the sentence of

divine disposition cut off its elect from this life, and having cast away the chaff of all calamities, stored him up clean and entirely purged in that storehouse of the heavenly granary with a happy consummation. Thus, therefore, the measure of the heavenly husbandman disposing, the seed rose into the blade, the blade grew into the ear, the ear came forth into corn, the corn arrived at the granary. For the fullness of virtues, as was said, is not granted all at once, but through increments; so that it is ascended to by the access of long advancement, as if by certain steps of great moderation.

Clearly this fourfold disposition of our progress, which is described by the Lord himself under the figure of seed, is designated by the prophet Ezekiel through the word of water. For concerning the man whom he had seen on the high mountain, he relates these things in order: «He measured,» he says, «a thousand cubits, and led me through the water up to the ankles; and again he measured a thousand, and led me through the water up to the knees; and he measured a thousand, and led me through the water up to the loins; and he measured a thousand, a torrent which I could not pass through, because the deep waters of the torrent had swollen, which could not be waded (Ezek. 47).» What is clearly designated in the number of a thousand, but the fullness of the gift bestowed? What is water here, but heavenly wisdom? Wherefore it is said through Solomon: «By the wisdom of God the abysses have broken out, and the clouds grow

thick with dew (Prov. 3).» Therefore the man who appeared measures a thousand cubits, and the prophet is led through the water up to the ankles; because our Redeemer, when he gives to us converted to him the fullness of a spiritual beginning, pours in, as it were, the first footsteps of our operation by the gift of supernal wisdom. For the water arrives, as it were, up to the ankles, when through the wisdom received we fix the initial footsteps of the desired rectitude. He who again measures a thousand cubits, and the prophet is led through the water up to the knees; because now the vigor of our wisdom is increased to this end, that it may not be bent to perpetrating works of depravity. Wherefore it is said through Paul: «Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight steps with your feet, lest any one stumbling should err, but rather be healed (Heb. 12).» But the water arrives up to the knees, when the wisdom perceived perfectly binds us to the rectitude of a good work; so that now our mind may not waver and totter, but may confirm its fixed footsteps in the good which it had begun. The aforesaid man also measured again a thousand, and the prophet is led through the water up to the loins; because then namely the fullness of a holy work grows in us, when the wisdom perceived in us shall have extinguished every pleasure of the flesh, as much as is possible. For unless the pleasure of the flesh were in the loins, the Psalmist would not say to God: «Burn my loins, and my heart (Ps. 25).» Therefore the water comes to the loins, when the wisdom

infused into us extinguishes the petulant allurements and incentives of the flesh. Which man still measured a thousand, a torrent which, as is said, the prophet could not pass through; because the deep waters of the torrent had swollen, which could not be waded. In which, namely, what else is indicated to us, but that after our feet are now established in the journey of a good work, after the knees of the heart are no longer doubtfully wavering, but firmly strengthened for walking through the path of justice, after the delights of the loins and the incentives of the seething flesh are extinguished, every perfect man is raised to such a fullness of contemplation, that while he cannot clearly comprehend such an extraordinary depth, the human mind may not be able to cross the ford of the overflowing wave.

All which things indeed are seen to be most congruously adapted to the deeds of blessed Alexis. For when, receding from his paternal hearth and from the vanity of this world, he sought exile; then in a certain way the water of this torrent arrived up to his ankles. This water was ascending up to the ankles of Moses and Joshua then, when the divine voice commanded them that they should loose the shoes from their feet (Exod. 3; Josh. 5). This water afterwards flowed upon the apostolic feet, when it was said to them: "Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes (Luke 10)." For it was fitting that the announcers of the Old Testament, and the preachers of the evangelical faith, should walk through the way of true humility, and should not protect

their footsteps with the covering of dead skin—they who were to announce life to the people—but should show in themselves that spiritual covering of which the Apostle says: "Having your feet shod in the preparation of the Gospel of peace (Eph. 6)." Wherefore it is said through Isaiah: "Blessed are the feet of those evangelizing peace, evangelizing good things (Isa. 52)."

But when St. Alexis for very long spaces of time constantly and most patiently bore the penury of so much poverty in unknown borders, then the water of the torrent rose to his knees, because the hope of the world being altogether extinguished, he now firmly and most invincibly strengthened the footsteps of his mind in the way of the Lord. Afterwards, however, when he dwelt within the courts of his father's house, when he saw carnal affections on every side, when he could not avoid the necessity of his parents, nor certainly—which was more difficult and intolerable—the beautiful appearance of his spouse from daily and mutual sight, then the water of the torrent grew as it were to his loins. For so heavenly wisdom subdued and extinguished the incentives of his flesh; so the heat of the Holy Spirit cooked his loins and kidneys, that while he infused his little vessel with the daily flows of supernal grace, the material of the extinguished flesh might minister no tinder to titillating luxury. To the loins of the blessed man, therefore, the water then arrived, because the Holy Spirit seething in him, bedewed the fire of youthful age and the alluring movements of titillating passions with the occult

moisture of his dew; and thus consumed every tinder of luxury, which could naturally burn in his marrow and bowels.

But that the whole oracle of this prophecy may be suitably adapted to this blessed man, that also does not dissonate from him, which last the aforesaid prophet could not pass through the torrent, of which namely it is said: "Because the waters of the torrent had swollen, which could not be waded (Ezek. 47)." From small and level waters one arrives at the impassable fullness of a deep torrent; because from a small contemplation, namely fleeting and rapidly glimpsed, which any holy man enjoys while still in this corruptible flesh, as soon as he dies, he is raised to the fullness of a deep and most perfect contemplation, so much so that he is promoted to behold the very appearance of the highest truth (1 Cor. 13). Then, therefore, the torrent cannot be waded, because the eternal sweetness of mellifluous contemplation can now be enclosed by no end, nor finished by any length of times. That torrent, therefore, of eternal contemplation, which is not then sought through faith, but is already held through sight, because it knows not how to pass away, cannot at all be passed over; and because it cannot be expressed by human words, it cannot, as is said, be waded by man. For this torrent he thirsted, who under certain hope already congratulating said: "But I shall appear in thy sight with justice; I shall be satisfied when thy glory shall be manifested (Ps. 16)." Of this again he says: "They shall be inebriated from the fatness of

thy house, and thou shalt make them drink from the torrent of thy pleasure, because with thee is the fount of life (Ps. 35)." To the deep flows of this immense torrent blessed Alexis arrived, when in his father's house after the triumph of a glorious victory he happily died. A triumph, I say, because the admirable life of this holy man is truly a triumph and a new and almost unheard-of victory. And since, according to the Prophetic voice, God is wonderful in his saints (Ps. 67), in the recruitment of the spectacle of this his unconquered soldier he stood out so much more wonderful, by as much as through him he fought against the allurements of the flesh, against the temptations of diabolical fraud, with a new and unusual kind of martyrdom.

Ancient history indeed relates (Eutropius, Hist. Rom. lib. II at the end), that the Romans, clashing with the Carthaginians in a naval contest, obtained the victory; nor could any triumph ever be more pleasing to the Romans, as is read there, as those who hitherto had been terrible to their enemies in earthly concertation, were now also victors among the marine flows. That victory, therefore, was more dear because it was rare; and more glorious because it was new. As, therefore, that naval triumph, because it was new, was more pleasing to Rome; so indeed the virtue of blessed Alexis, on account of its unusual novelty, pleases the Church more.

David indeed, while he feigned himself furious and mad before Achish, king of Gath, wisely escaped his sword (1 Sam. 21). Our Savior de-

scended into hell, not that he might inhabit it as a dweller, but that as a destructor and over thrower he might dissipate the lairs of diabolical iniquity. So also blessed Alexis, while he enters his father's house as a retrograde renouncer, deceived the prince of the world, and eluded the author of all fraud and malice.

Wherefore a new kind of martyrdom provides a new spectacle in admiration. For to the martyrs a prison was the penalty, a chain the pressure; but to this man his own house decorated with golden dining rooms was the material of temptation. An armed hand of executioners tortured them; the daily beheld piety of his parents punished him more gravely. The horrendous rage of a judge roared against any martyr; the bland, mild, and beautiful face of his wife impugned this man. Upon the martyrs in the hall of princes was urged the penalty of torturers; but this man was invisibly tortured in the house of his own right, as if on the floor of a tribunal. To them a punishment had been a penalty; to this man, on the contrary, allurements were a torment. Lazarus indeed, who lay at the gate of the rich man, was hungry against his will, and desired the crumbs falling from the table, which nevertheless were by no means given to him (Luke 16); wherefore beyond doubt this poor man was of greater merit than Lazarus. He namely desired not only to receive something small, but even to be satisfied, as Truth relates, to whom nevertheless no one mercifully indulged food; but this man, when a sumptuous abundance of all riches was volun-

tarily at hand for him, when all the glory of this world deigned itself to him and offered itself freely, nay even violently urged itself upon him though unwilling, he repelled all, contemned all, and irrevocably turning away, cast all aside. O strenuous soldier of Christ! O altogether unconquered, and most distinguished warrior of the heavenly militia!

In the Annals of the Romans it is certainly read (Eutropius, Hist. Rom. lib. III at the beginning), that the consul Marcellus, while he had imprudently fallen into the hands of the enemies, and a crown of Gauls surrounding him, he found no exit through which he might escape, suddenly as a most fervent warrior he immersed himself into the midst of the enemies, and killed their king, by name Viridomarus, with an unexpected audacity that struck all; and where it would seem a great victory to have come forth if he only escaped unharmed, from there beyond all hope he brought back the spoils of the spolia opima. So namely also this our Marcellus, no longer a defender of Rome, but a soldier of the holy Church, when it would not be doubted to be a great victory if he escaped naked from such ample and magnificent resources, it did not seem to him to suffice unless, returning home, he voluntarily provoked intolerable contests against himself. But by the Lord himself, who is namely the author of virtues and the leader of spiritual warriors, we are commanded indeed to dismiss all things, but not to fight daily against them at close quarters, as if joining hands in turn: to the Israelite people an

exit from Egypt is commanded (Exod. 3), a return is not commanded. Abraham went out from his land at the command of the Lord ordering him (Gen. 12); but afterwards by no means did he return to the revived contests of the Chaldeans. Peter, excited by the angel, deserted the Herodian prison (Acts 12), but did not turn back again to Herod. It suffices, therefore, if only we leave what we possessed, nor does it remain that we return again to endure the contests of those things.

Therefore blessed Alexis, when he dismissed all earthly things, when he cast off all resources and riches of his paternal right, fulfilled the commands of the supernal bidding (Luke 18); but when he returned to his own things, the distinguished renouncer beyond doubt exceeded the goal of the divine law. And because all the elect receive a good measure, pressed down and shaken together into their bosom; and each one receives his own reward according to his own labor (1 Cor. 3); he possesses immeasurable glory here, who did not hold a measure in labor. And he who transcended the evangelical rule in the contest of his struggle, received a supereminent prize from the hand of the just remunerator. For he himself was made the prize of retribution, who had been to him the cause of the contest, and he who had been the author of the fight, was made the crown of victory, Jesus Christ our Lord, who with God the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns for ages of ages. Amen.

SERMON XXIX.

ON SAINT MARY MAGDALENE. (JULY 22.)

Today mercy and truth have met each other, and the multitude of the Lord's miserations has been poured out upon a sinful woman (Luke 7). For the Son of the Virgin is touched by the hands of a sinful, menstruating woman; and the infirm woman touches God, and the Son of God. She touches the feet of the world and of the one cleansing, herself unclean, and the criminal woman prostrates herself at the footsteps of the Creator. The prevaricatress passes into the affection of the heart, and returns to the heart, and the multitude of her tears condemns the magnitude of her crimes. Piety dissimulates the office of the one touching, and that remunerating eye of majesty does not look upon the urgency of the obsequies with a happy disdain. Mary kisses the feet of Christ with frequent kisses, and with inundating eyes bedews the footsteps of the Redeemer, wipes them with her hair, anoints them with odoriferous things, and sprinkles them with ointments. The lover of singularity sees, and envies, and the boastfulness of the Pharisee rebukes both, him for ignorance, her for presumption. But deliberating providence suspends judgment, while it affects the obsequy, and retains the prepared invective, until the sacrifice of Mary passes into a holocaust. The angels rejoice over the sinner doing penance (Luke 15), and that heavenly convention is sprinkled with the fragrance of the odor, and the sweetness of mercy girds both the savior and the one to be saved. Where sin

abounded, grace superabounds (Rom. 5); and preponderating piety shuts out the numerosity of crimes.

How great is the multitude of thy sweetness, O Lord (Ps. 30), in the confession of the sinful woman! How just the reprehension in the Pharisee's pride and abuse. The obsequy of the submissive one is enumerated, and the iniquity of the indignant one is touched indirectly, the whole literal coherence impugning the envy of Simon. And because where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty (2 Cor. 3); sins are forgiven her, who loves much; rather they are cast upon him, who neglects much. He was not satisfied from the breasts of the spouse, nor had he put on the affection of compassion rereading the law, which knows not mercy, knows justice. A hard law promulgated for the hard and stony, ready to strike, knowing not how to pity. A law excluding the place of penance, denying pardon, ignorant of emendation. A law of hard and acid wine, expressed from most bitter clusters, consecrated to ferocity, derived to Israel, offered to the Savior to drink. Wine, from which the teeth of those drinking are set on edge, not from the offspring of that vine, which the Savior drinks new in the kingdom of his Father (Luke 22). Truly better are the breasts of the spouse than this wine (Cant. 1). But what are those? Let the apostle Paul come forward into the midst, and assign to us the breasts flowing with happy milk. «To rejoice,» he says, «with those rejoicing, and to weep with those weeping (Rom. 12).» O how in a very brief little

sermon he depicted the ensign of all religion, in such an elegant clause he proposed piety, established equity, removed envy. With these breasts mother Church suckles those progressing, nourishes the perfect. «To rejoice,» he says, «with those rejoicing.»

Let the insanity of secular applause depart hence, and let worldly joy recede; because there is no rejoicing for the impious, says the Lord (Isa. 48). Dost thou think the mouth of those is filled with joy, who rejoice when they have done evil, and exult in the worst things? (Prov. 2.) Or have they, who are carried away by the praises of a flatterer, known the joy of divine jubilation? Will they who are clothed in purple and fine linen, and feast sumptuously every day (Luke 16), obtain joy and gladness? Far be it that in the land of those living sweetly, the material of joys should be found, when the face of the world is changed by such great alternations; so that he who is elevated may be dashed down, and he who is dashed down may breathe again. But there is a joy most firm in the continual pleasantness of itself, which a perfect mind promises to itself from a secure conscience. For a mind purely and closely wiped clean from the sprinkling of this world, and fixing the whole affection of its desire in the sharpness of divine contemplation, rejoicing, rejoices in the Lord, and its soul exults in its God (Isa. 61). Such a soul spurns threats, knows no fear, eludes false hope, and immune from all scandals, sleeping in peace in that very thing, it rests (Ps. 4). «Much peace to them that love thy law,» says the just

man, «and there is no scandal to them (Ps. 118).» For he knew that lictors do not persecute martyrs, but crown them. With those rejoicing in this way the Apostle rejoices (Rom. 12), and that they may rejoice more abundantly, he promises with all security. This joy is full and certain, and it is the more certain as it is imprinted more closely around identity. This is the breast of congratulation, from which the milk of exhortation is poured out, by which the perfect are nourished (Isa. 66), so that when they shall have been withdrawn from this milk, they may feast from the entrance of the glory of God.

The second is, to weep with those weeping. Does the Apostle command to weep for the loss of things, the intermission of pleasures, the deaths of children, the urgency of diseases, the gravity of penury, the power of a stronger one? Far be it. For they are to be bewept, who weep in such a way. For religious sadness either mourns another's sin, or its own. Blessed are they whose mourning is occupied in this intention, because they can expect consolatory sweetness. With how mild and sweetest a spirit is his spirit imbued, who knows how to instruct those sinning in the spirit of gentleness, to suspend vengeance, and by affectionate offices to incorporate the sinner into his own bowels, until he be restored to life. From this breast of compassion the milk of consolation is poured out, and with this milk the Apostle feeds those who cannot eat solid food (1 Cor. 3). The lover of innocence, the friend of peace, compassionating those suffering, and conrejoicing with

those rejoicing, touches the goal of perfection, his course being consummated. These are words bedewed with milky liquids, better than wine, sweeter than honey, sounding of mercy, redolent of piety. «Fragrant,» he says, «with the best ointments (Cant. 1).» Breasts truly worthy, from which an infinity of ointments is expressed, with an odorous flowing, sprinkling the city of the living God on every side. These are the ointments which the queen of Sheba brought to Jerusalem, of which the Scripture says: «There were no spices brought any more so good, as those which the queen of Sheba gave to Solomon (3 Kings 10).»

How excellently that subtle spirit, who takes total possession of this book for himself, has set forth the best things. For there is a good ointment, which Mary poured upon the feet of the Savior (Luke 7). There is also a better one, which the same woman—if indeed it was the same—poured upon the head of him as he reclined (John 12). And there is the best, which she herself prepared for the whole body of Christ (Mark 16). The first is the ointment of contrition, descending from the remembrance of sins, from a contrite and humbled spirit. With this are anointed the feet of him who walks upon the wings of the winds (Ps. 17). Here Mary adores in the place where his feet have stood. They stood, I say, because with a most powerful hand of love she held back both feet, until she anointed both and heard the remission of her crimes, her dismissal in peace: "Thy sins," he said, "are forgiven thee,

and go in peace (Luke 7)." A great mercy indeed washed and wiped away a great misery; and this indeed hastily, because the tears of the female sinner and the indulgence of the Savior are joined without any interval. Sins are forgiven, and she is dismissed in peace, so that she may not be solicitous concerning the past, but secure concerning the future.

These feet are mercy and judgment, to kiss one of which without the other is either rash security or a despair to be avoided. For who, incessantly attending to the mercy of God, would not immediately long for the rest of a more lukewarm life? For when he reflects that the Lord of the universe took the form of a servant for servants, that for thirty and three years he worked our salvation in the midst of this earth, was captured, bound, pierced with a lance, crucified, and suffered all this for the sons of men, immediately he flatters and alludes to himself with a deceptive hope; he rejoices to be occupied with mercy and commiserations, he knows not judgment, he ignores justice, and thinks that things to be punished are not punished. He is deceived, who so kisses the foot of mercy that he does not attend to the foot of judgment, who presumes everything from the piety of the Merciful one; believing this alone to suffice for salvation, that he believes. Again, when he withdraws his mouth, and touches the foot of judgment with more frequent kisses, the substance of flesh and soul is shaken, and a more vehement breeze strikes the state of both men. For it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of

the living God (Heb. 10), to offend the Creator, to be ignorant of the Lord, to kick back against the command of the Ruler, who has power to cast body and soul into hell (Matt. 10). Terrible certainly, as the Apostle says, is a certain expectation of judgment (Heb. 10), when a fire shall burn in his sight (Ps. 49), and the powers of the heavens shall be moved (Luke 21), and a most powerful fire shall burn the breadth of the world for wavering consciences. Nothing is more terrible than to see the workshop of the robber full of blood, heaped with reproaches, overflowing with torments. Who, thinking on these things for a long time, would not immediately tremble, and be whirled into the abyss of despair? Therefore one must not lean morosely upon this foot, lest the ferocity of the one judging shut out the intuition of piety. Therefore let the affection of the penitent soul anoint both feet, and now embracing mercy, now kissing judgment, let it offer the holocaust of a humbled spirit.

See Mary strongly attending to the foot of judgment, while the noble and lascivious woman does not attend to the face of those feasting, but with her body extended is prostrated at the feet of majesty, full of grief, impatient of fear, wounded by the dart of compunction; but she also kisses the foot of mercy with more pressed lips, in the hope of which she firmly clings to the footsteps of him reclining, until she hears: "Thy sins are forgiven thee (Luke 7)." Truly a precious ointment, with which not only the earthly house, but also the heavenly is sprinkled. Most vile, however, are

the species from which it is composed, and a great abundance of them can be found within our little gardens. Our sins, therefore, planted in our consciences, whose number cannot be counted because of their multitude, are its species. Therefore, these being bruised in the mortar of penance with the pestle of maceration, and sprinkled with the oil of discretion, with the fire of grief placed beneath, and cooked in the cauldron of discipline, it exhibits a precious ointment, and accepted at the feet of the Savior. We have composed it briefly, leaving the occasion of things entirely to the wise. And although the material may seem rather unworthy, meanwhile however that ointment is good which fills the house, penetrates the heavens, gladdens the angels, and pours back gladness and joy to the blessed city. This is the sacrifice of justice, because a humbled spirit is a sacrifice to God (Ps. 50).

The second ointment is that of devotion from the remembrance of the benefits of God. Altogether most worthy is the composition of this ointment, and in comparison of this the former sprinkling is to be held of little value. For its species were brought from the heavenly paradise, and cannot be found in the land of the sons of men. For the virtues collated divinely, and rubbed in the mortar of thought with the pestle of most diligent meditation, and poured over with the oil of exultation, with the fire of justice suffused, and cooked in the cauldron of humility, make an ointment wonderful both in odor and in virtue, which alone can be poured out upon

the head of the Lord as he reclines and exhibited to the reverence of majesty. But this also we have recollected briefly, reserving the multitude of words for those who have learned to carve much from little. Yet the difference of both is to be noted, and the sublimity of the second to be attended to; because that is to God a sacrifice of a humbled spirit (Ps. 50), and this a sacrifice of praise (Ps. 49), which honors God. Therefore we anoint the feet of the Redeemer when we are pricked by sins; we anoint the head when we heap up thanks for the collated virtues to the giver of virtues. Yet there ought to be a morosity of interval between the feet and the head; because indeed it is a most difficult and presumptuous leap to fly across from the footsteps to the crown of the Lord. For neither did the same woman who anointed the feet, anoint the head; since the former was a harlot, the latter is read to have done none of these things, according to that: "Turn the impious and they shall not be (Prov. 12)." Mary, therefore, anointed the holy crown of God, being already beloved, already made familiar, and evolved far from the contagions of that female sinner whom that unhappy sevenfold group confounded.

Furthermore, if the two aforementioned ointments are of such dignity that one pleases the feet, the other the head of the Ruler; where then shall we be able to find that third, which is best and superexcellent? But far be it that the spouse of Truth should dissent from the truth; and boast that she has something such

which she cannot have. There is therefore a third ointment of piety, which is above all aromatics, healthful for all diseases and perils, and which is found to be ineffective for no plague ever. For of it we read thus: "Mary Magdalene, and Mary of James, and Salome bought aromatics, that coming they might anoint Jesus (Mark 16)." Seest thou proposed in the first front of the chapter, that not one, or two, but three are scarcely sufficient for buying an ointment of so great composition? Understandest thou that not the feet, or the head, but the whole body of the Crucified one this preparation claims for itself? A preparation without doubt precious, which may suffice for the whole body of the Creator? And attend, because the ointment poured upon the feet he received with such most worthy leniency, that he convicted the murmuring Pharisee with parabolical prolixity, and rebuked him with a retorted example (Luke 7). But also concerning the ointment poured over his head he rebuked the indignant disciples, protesting it to be a good work of the woman, and checked their swollen animosity with moderate words. This indeed so salubrious, and so wonderful he wished to be expended on his dead body, which he certainly reserved while living. For Christ has two bodies, one which he received in the Virgin; the other of the Church, which the benignity of the Redeemer holds more dear. Finally, he exposed that one to death for this one, and to torments, addicted to the cross, bound with the wicked, condemned by a most shameful death. Shall we be able to pre-

pare so salubrious a preparation? All the miseries of the miserable, as much of souls as of bodies, inspected with the eye of piety, are its species. These therefore in the mortar of largess, broken with the pestle of sweetness, and smoothed with the oil of charity, with the fire of compassion kindled, and scummed in the cauldron of perseverance, make an ointment to be admired even by the angels themselves.

There are men of riches in the house of the Lord of virtues; let us track down whether such ointments are held among them. Paul occurs to me first, as he is accustomed everywhere, all anointed with the present ointment. "Who is weakened," he says, "and I am not weakened?" (2 Cor. 11.) Happy soul, made to itself as a lost vessel, that it might bind together the miseries of all in its own conscience. He had given himself whole to the whole body of Christ, made all things to all, that he might gain all (1 Cor. 9). But also that man simple, and upright, and fearing God, see how he walked not according to man, nay rather according to man; and what is truer, above man: "I was an eye," he says, "to the blind, and a foot to the lame; I was a father of the poor" (Job 29) and the rest, which had so anointed him with this ointment, that he went out more largely bedewed from the bridal chamber of mercy. I recollect Samuel, who not once, but all the days of his life was mourning over Saul; and although he knew him to be removed farther from the eyes of divinity, yet compassion did not cease, which had crept into the mind of the one condoling,

pouring out tears, and if not to be profitable, yet pious (1 Sam. 15). David bewailed his parricidal son with continual lamentation (2 Sam. 18), bewailing in him not the necessity of the flesh, but the destruction of faith. See how Joseph was all anointed with this honey (Gen. 43). The brothers come, now standing not before a brother, but before a lord, conscious of betrayal, guilty of homicide, successors of fratricide. Joseph seeing them, and unmindful of all injuries, is inundated with the sweetest weepings, and the fat of piety, which lies hidden within, emanates without through the eyes. Hatred flees, he knows not anger, he reserves no time of wrath, rendering good for evil, sweetness for trust. I almost forgot Moses so bedewed with the moisture of this sacred liquor, that he is all overspread from it and flows out. Israel sins, and Moses strives to reconcile the sinner to the Creator; but the Lord dissembles to hear the one asking. The Creator of all promises very many things to Moses, and seeks license of striking from Moses, who made Moses. "Let me alone," he says, "that my fury may be angry against them, and I will make thee into a great nation." Moses answered: "If thou dismissest, Lord, dismiss; otherwise blot me out of the book which thou hast written" (Exod. 32). O stupendous sweetness indeed; he both rejects the principality of a strange nation, and desires to be blotted out from the book of the living, unless the offense be forgiven to the sinners. These are the ointments of propitiation and mercy, which are drawn out from the breasts of the spouse,

putting to flight all infirmities, putting to flight passions.

Happy Mary anointed the feet of Jesus, happier the same anointed the head of the author, happiest she who prepared the ointment-dew for the whole body of Christ. Consider with what most vehement affection of love this blessed woman loved Christ the king. "Lord," she said, "if thou hast taken him away, tell me, and I will take him away" (John 20). Whom dost thou call "him", Mary, when thou hast made mention of no one to whom thou mayest make relation? Dost thou think that in the hearts of all the memory of thy beloved is so turned, just as in the consistory of thy heart? "And I," she said, "will take him away." A wonderful thing. A man of perfect age, for whose body scarcely a hundred pounds of ointments suffice, thou a most tender woman wilt carry and take away? A burning and affected speech, which poured back from the love of purity, promises what it cannot fulfill. For nothing seems difficult to a lover. Who ought to despair, so great a sinner following not only pardon, but glory? May she herself today intercede for our sins, and render to us placated our judge, her spouse, who is God blessed forever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XXX.

I. ON SAINT APOLLINARIS BISHOP OF RAVENNA AND MARTYR. (JULY 23rd)

Today, dearest brothers, we have come to a most pleasant and sufficiently delectable spectacle, and we have contemplated the contest of a glorious arena with the eyes of faith. For we have seen one citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem proceed strenuously to wars for his king, and the innumerable crowd of Babylon fight ferociously against one head with a unanimous conspiracy. We have seen this soldier of Christ bring in the triumphal banner of the cross against the world; we have seen on the contrary the lovers of the world meet him with thick wedges for their beloved. Finally, those surrounded on all sides cast diverse weapons, emit arrows, erect machines; and that they may be able to break through the rampart of Christ, they compose all arguments of battle; but this one, girded with the sword of the spiritual word, clothed with the breastplate of faith, forearmed with the helmet of hope (Eph. 6), collects himself under the shield of his patience, and leads this around with a vigilant eye against all blows of the warlike tempest. Those apply fire; but he, kindled by the heat of immense charity, does not feel the burnings of the exterior flame. Those pour over his mangled members with boiling waters; he is divinely refreshed by a large shower of the Holy Spirit, singing with the Prophet: "We have passed through fire and water, and thou hast led us out into refreshment" (Ps. 65). Those beat him with rods, break him with stakes, hang him on the rack, send him into prison, finally they direct him bound in chains into exile; but he, established

in the citadel of his mind, beholds what is done toward him as if someone else were looking from afar, saying with Paul: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Cor. 4). And again: "Though our outward man be corrupted, yet he who is within is renewed from day to day. For that which in the present is momentary, and the light of our tribulation, works in us a weight of eternal glory beyond measure in sublimity" (ibid.).

All the darts of the enemies, therefore, were made the material for blessed Apollinaris to conquer gloriously. And from where their cruelty strives to cast him down, from there his patience is strengthened to stand more firmly. For the holy man caught in the wars of persecutions, the more harshly he beholds the hail of weapons to shudder, the more cautiously he opposes on all sides the shield of his gravity. And the more violently he sees the impulses of the fight to rush in, the more he strives both to collect himself into strength, and to excite himself to act strongly. Everywhere he stands ready, everywhere he intends vigilantly, and he meets the swords coming from all sides undisturbed.

Because indeed, my brothers, we have named the contest of blessed Apollinaris an arena above, if it pleases, let us inquire a little more subtly whether it be congruously placed. For the wrestler wrestles naked, and blessed Apollinaris is known to have been naked of the garment of mundane possession. In the spectacle of the citizens, however, a wrestling of this kind is proposed, as blessed Paul congruously testifies

concerning himself and other warriors of Christ, saying: "We have been made a spectacle to angels and men" (2 Cor. 4). But it is customary for boys that oil, which namely is called "ceroma" by them, be given by the camp-masters, from which all the members of their body ought to be anointed. Saint Peter the apostle was of blessed Apollinaris—I will not say camp-master, but master—who bedewed him with the unction of the Holy Spirit when he sent him to the contests of persecutions. For as is related in the holy history of his deeds, blessed Peter the apostle says to Apollinaris his disciple: "Why sittest thou with us? Behold, thou art learned concerning all things which Jesus did. Rise, receive the Holy Spirit, and at the same time the pontificate, and proceed to the city which is called Ravenna." For what he says, "Receive the Holy Spirit, and proceed," is such as if he said: Bedew the members with oil, and join the battle manfully. For of this oil of the Holy Spirit it is said through the prophet: "The yoke shall rot from the face of the oil" (Isa. 10). Of this also it is sung through the Psalmist: "I have found David my servant, with my holy oil I have anointed him" (Ps. 88).

For it is accustomed to be the custom of camp-masters, that they first provide for the members of the disciples about to contest, namely how broad and strong the chest is, how healthy and full the arms swell, how the belly placed beneath neither burdens with mass, nor weakens with attenuation; and if they shall have seen all things fit for warlike use, soon they correct his sluggish-

ness with harsh severity, and kindle the minds yet idle into the love of praise, they exhort and instigate; and lest they ought to fear, they praise their own strength before him.

So indeed, so the blessed apostle considers the members of his nursling as if before the very vestibule of the arena; and that he may prepare him for joining battle, he inflames him with words of persuasive exhortation. For what is it to say, "why sittest thou with us?" but now lay aside idleness, that after the victory has been achieved thou mayest arrive at the crown? And what is it to say, "Behold, thou art learned concerning all things which Jesus did," but that all the joints of thy body already flourish with perfect strength, and nothing now remains for thee but that, with fear put aside, thou mayest begin to fight? Whence it is aptly subjoined: "Preach to them concerning the name of Jesus, and do not fear;" as if he said: Proceed by the authority of my command, join arms, that thou mayest be able to report the common victory of both kings from the triumphed enemies. Run through the stadium unslothful, that thou mayest merit to reach the prize proposed to the victors. Do not hesitate to seize the fight, concerning which thou wilt report the noble palm of victory, God being the author. I, I command thee, because I have the power of binding not only on earth, but also in the heavens; I send thee to feed the Lord's sheep, I who guard the fold of the whole holy Church with the care enjoined to me. Therefore let the prerogative of the master be the audacity of presuming for the

disciple, and let the authority of the one sending be the confidence of the one sent.

O blessed apostle, how gladly, how alacritously I behold the movement of thy diversity: and now I contemplate thee weak, now strongest with a beautiful variety! Weak, I say, by denying the master, but strongest by sending the disciple for the confession of the same master. Thou fearest not to assign to the disciple Ravenna, the mistress of many cities, who hadst thyself trembled at the handmaid of one priest. Thou fearest not to send him alone into the stormy waves of a most turbulent city, who with the Creator of the seas himself hadst trembled to walk upon the marine waves. For to him it was said: "The North and the sea thou hast created" (Ps. 88). For although thou saidst: "Lord, bid me come to thee" (Matt. 14): yet unless thou hadst feared, thou wouldst certainly not have begun to be submerged; unless thou hadst borne some wave of shipwreck in the ship of faith, thou wouldst by no means have heard from the mouth of Truth: "O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?" (ibid.) Nor is it a wonder that thou then fearedst the danger of the sea, who for the same infirmity of mind didst not wish thy master and Lord to undergo the gibbet of the cross. For when he said to thee, that he was to be crucified for the redemption of the human race, immediately thou answeredst: "Be it far from thee, Lord, be propitious to thyself, Lord, let this not be" (Matt. 16). What is this, blessed apostle? Dost thou wish to shut the place from where the price of our

redemption is about to go out? Dost thou wish to restrain the fount, which descends to cleanse the stains of our depravity? Behold now thou knowest him without any doubt to be God, yet thou persuadest him not to undergo death. For unless thou believedst him to be God, "Be propitious to thyself, Lord," thou wouldst not have said.

Finally, the faith of the disciple agrees with the assertion of the Master. "I have power," he said, "to lay down my life, and I have power to take it up again (John X)." But thou who standest by faith, liest down by weakness; him whom faith raises up, fear prostrates. Thou, therefore, who hadst feared the death of the cross for the Master, and for thyself the depth of the sea, dost not then hesitate to send the beloved disciple into the midst of the madness of raging persecutors. Why is this, unless because that is fulfilled in thee which is said by thy fellow apostle, that "fear is not in charity, but perfect charity casteth out fear?" (I John IV.) For now thou hadst heard again from the Lord (John XXI): "Simon, lovest thou me?" And answering: "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee," thou heardest immediately: "Feed my sheep." The Lord had said again: "As the Father hath loved me, I also love you (John XV)." Therefore, as the Lord loved thee when he sent thee among the scandals of persecutors to feed his sheep; so also thou lovest the disciple when thou directest him to martyrdom for the sake of the same sheep.

But it is pleasing, my brothers, to discuss these apostolic words with subtle investigation,

and to foresee how the canonical authority of ecclesiastical censure holds one rule everywhere in choosing leaders. For it is said to blessed Apollinaris: "Why sittest thou with us? Behold, thou art instructed concerning all things which Jesus did." Again, when the same prince of the apostles wished to substitute another apostle in the place of Judas, so that he might repress the depravity of the neophytes, he said: "It behooveth, therefore, of these men who have been assembled with us all the time that the Lord Jesus came in and went out among us, that one of these should become a witness with us of his resurrection (Acts I)." Hence the same man, evangelizing Christ to the Gentiles, said: "Him God raised up the third day, and gave him to be made manifest, not to all the people, but to witnesses preordained by God, to us who did eat and drink with him after he rose again from the dead (Acts X)." Hence the Lord himself says in the Gospel, when speaking to the apostles about sending the Holy Spirit. "He," he said, "shall give testimony of me, and you shall give testimony, because you are with me from the beginning (John XVI);" as if he were saying: For this reason you shall give fitting testimony of me, because whatever you shall teach others, you yourselves first learned by the assiduity of long conversation.

Let the neophytes hear, let the proud hear, and those inflated as if by bellows with the wind of arrogance and the fire of greed, who wish to teach before they know; and in the school of Christ they pant to preside in the chair before they feel the

rod. And while they burst forth into the rights of government by a disordered order, not through the door but from elsewhere, they openly show that they are not pastors, but thieves and mercenaries, who care nothing to be of service, but pant to be in command with the most pernicious flame of greed. These surely are not preferred so that they may guard the sheepfold of Christ, nor that they may feed the Lord's flock, but that they may softly nourish their wretched flesh in lasciviousness and pleasures; and while they consider themselves set over their neighbors, they exalt their blind mind on the horns of pride. Let those, therefore, who are of this sort hear, and either let them take care to restrain themselves from this presumption, or let them know that they already lie cut off from the body of the holy Church, if not openly, yet truly from the roots. Behold, the blessed apostles, upon whom the holy Church is founded as upon most solid bases, do not ordain a novice, nor an unlearned man, but him whom they have seen to be mature in doctrine and in the study of holy conduct. This Peter seeks in Matthias when he chooses him for the apostolate; this in Apollinaris when he promotes him to the episcopate. What, therefore, the Lord had provided in the apostles, this the apostles consider in apostolic men.

That also must not be passed over, that the blessed apostle, kissing the disciple, sent him out from him. Here the custom of the ancient Fathers is recalled, and in a new age the antiquity of the ancient patriarchs is repaired. Behold,

Isaac again kisses his son. Behold, Jacob again is blessed, and a patriarch is consecrated by a patriarch according to the order of authentic tradition. To the one it was said: "Come near to me, my son, that my soul may bless thee (Gen. XXVII)." To the other it was said: "Rise, receive the Holy Spirit." To the one it was said: "May God give thee of the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth, abundance of corn, wine and oil (Ibid.);" but to this one it is said: "May our Lord Jesus Christ send his angel, who may prepare thy way, and grant thee what thou hast asked." So also Jacob himself gave a kiss to Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph, when, establishing them among the other patriarchs, he blessed them (Gen. XLVIII). Hence also the ecclesiastical custom has grown, that pontiffs give a kiss to those whom they consecrate. From here, brothers, from here I ask you to gather, how great is the loftiness of blessed Apollinaris, who as an apostle is chosen for the height of the pontificate, and as a patriarch is solemnly ordained. Who is promoted both by that one, and in no different manner, as that by which the apostles are promoted.

There is seen in him, therefore, both apostolic dignity and patriarchal sublimity; because he is promoted by an apostolic mouth and consecrated by patriarchal solemnity. Whence it happens that while others, who have suffered punishments for the testimony of the truth, are called martyrs; this one, who not only suffered, but was also so nobly chosen for martyrdom by the apostle, is rightly called an apostolic martyr.

Among these things, most dear brothers, return to yourselves, discuss your acts with a solicitous examination; and you who gladly hear the praises of the martyr, take care to have a laudable life. For praise is not beautiful in the mouth of a sinner (Ecclus. XV). For they worthily extol with holy praises, who live laudably. And these hear the virtues of the strong with profit, whom the heard praises kindle to the love of imitation. Otherwise, what does it profit if thou seest others placed in high places, while thou thyself descendest headlong to the depths? What does it profit to extol the triumphs of strong warriors, if thou thyself art not ashamed to turn thy back to the enemies every day? Whosoever, therefore, rejoicest that the martyrs of Christ have acted strongly, seize also thyself the arms among the soldiers of Christ. Are enemies lacking on the outside? Turn thy hands upon thyself, and thou wilt find many seditious citizens. Tame pride, slay wrath, extinguish lust, restrain greed, kill envy; and, to embrace all things briefly with the Apostle: "Crucify thy flesh with its vices (Gal. V)." This is to act strongly, this is to fight manfully. For what does it help if the ranks of persecutors do not besiege thee around the rampart, and the barbarity of vices rages within the walls of the city? But dost thou wish to learn yet more clearly how thou mayest find martyrdom in the peace of the holy Church? Listen attentively, understand diligently. Let the heart keep watch, let the eye not slumber. For what I say is very brief. Ascend therefore the tribunal of the mind, and drag thy-

self to the judgment of the question. Let thought accuse, let the soul judge, let the penitent conscience strike like an executioner, let the stream of tears break out like a wound. So, so through the likeness of martyrdom, thou shalt arrive at the true dignity of martyrs, by the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and is glorified for infinite ages of ages. Amen.

SERMON XXXI.

II. ON SAINT APOLLINARIS, BISHOP AND MARTYR. (JULY 23)

The glorious solemnity of the apostolic martyr, most dear brothers, has made the assembly of your devotion be present with alacrity. Whence it is worthy that we should likewise exult with a common joy with you, and spend this whole day in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Meritedly today the whole world everywhere exults with profuse joys. Meritedly the holy Church, with the choirs of the faithful arranged, alternates the sweet-sounding voices of melodies. Let Antioch rejoice, which merited to beget such a son; let Rome exult, which was able to have such a disciple; but especially let the city of Ravenna jubilate, which merited to bring back such a patron. For that which was before a shrine of demons, has been made through him a capitol of the heavenly senators. For there now the bodies of the martyrs rest, there the patronages of many saints are hidden. She, therefore, who before was evilly fruitful

in her children and germinated much straw for hell, now through the grace of God brings forth many citizens for heaven; so that it is not undeservedly said to her people: "Now you are not strangers and foreigners; but you are citizens of the saints, and the domestics of God!" (Ephes. II.) And through Peter: "You are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people (I Pet. II)." For we are kings because we bear the banner of the cross on our forehead. But we are rightly called priests because we are anointed with the unction of the chrism.

Justly, therefore, that distinguished metropolis specially rejoices in the feast of blessed Apollinaris, through whom, once profane and rustic, she has now been made sacerdotal and royal. Whose dignity is so common with the Roman heights that the one may be called the mother and the other fittingly the daughter. For all that the former possesses in the heavenly key-bearer, the latter possesses in the disciple; and what the apostle grants to the former, the apostolic martyr adds to the latter. For if the city of Constantinople, because she transferred Roman citizens into herself, has been called a second Rome; how much more should this city, which received such a prince from Rome, be called a second Rome! Is it indeed more glorious to receive Quirites from the Roman curia than to have a martyr from the Roman Church? From that part, therefore, by which Rome is carnal, she begot carnal ones; but from that by which she is spiritual, she procreated a spiritual son from herself. "For that which is born

of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit (John III)." But that we attribute so much to that city, as to say it is like Rome, we refer to the praise of God, not seeking the favors of men. For the ornament of a dwelling is the honor of the inhabitant; and the honor of a soldier is the glory of the commander.

It is pleasing, most beloved, to consider studiously the beautiful order of the divine dispensation; and to investigate how wonderfully almighty God decreed to illustrate the darkness of that region. For just as the morning Lucifer rising from the east precedes the sun, so the most blessed martyr, proceeding from the eastern region, first introduced the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is truly the sun of Justice, into the borders of Ravenna. And how well the name of Lucifer fits him, who performed the first miracle of his arrival concerning light! For as soon as he was received into a suburban lodging, he restored light to the blind son of the soldier Irenaeus, and thus drove away the darkness of infidelity from the hearts of the parents; and while he restored the eyes of the forehead to the former, he much more happily opened the light of the heart to the latter.

Rightly, therefore, is it said, that as Lucifer is brought into the world, so the most blessed man was brought into his city. But how many punishments he sustained there, how many torments of deaths he ran through, he indeed was able to endure wonderfully, but we are not able to relate with whatever eloquence of our tongue. He is

beaten, he is burned, he is wounded, tortured on the rack he is torn apart through all his members; but the more the flesh is shaken by torments, the more firmly is the mind fixed in God strengthened; and like material kindled by fire, the more it is driven by the winds of adversities, the more ardently is it inflamed in the love of God. The holy man, indeed, while he tolerates the whirlwind of persecution without, recurs within to the height of the mind; and from there he despises all things going under him, among which he perceives even himself to pass corporally. He does not fear threats, he despises torments by suffering them alacritely. For hence it is said through Solomon: "The just as a confident lion, shall be without terror (Prov. XXVIII)." Hence again it was written by him: "Whatsoever shall befall the just man, it shall not make him sad (Prov. XII)." For now the Spirit suspended to high things rejoices ineffably in this, while it sees joys being accumulated for itself through torments. He is cherished by punishments, he is refreshed by fire, he is restored by hunger, he is dilated by want; and he accounts it the greatest gain if he bears a heavy burden from the passion of the Lord, and he fears that as much should be diminished from his reward as he perceives to be subtracted from his torment.

What more? Again he is beaten, again he is tortured, at the last also he is compelled to stand with bare soles upon burning coals; but while each foot is consumed by the fire placed beneath, the tongue is more freely relaxed in the confession of Christ. Surely the fire which was kindling

from without was slower than that which was inflaming from within; as if the one were being cooked, and the other were speaking; one were giving out words, another were sustaining blows. And in truth it was another, Truth attesting, who says: "It is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you (Matth. X)." And, so that the contrary elements themselves may concordantly serve the triumph of the most blessed martyr, while the fire is despised by a more powerful fire, the flesh, which had been scorched, is boiled in bubbling waters; and so two sacrifices are made from one victim in an odor of sweetness to the Lord.

Come, come, answer me, phrenetic crowd, and deservedly to be derided by those very furies. Why dost thou rage? Why dost thou rave? Why dost thou revel with bloody teeth and lupine madness? Dost thou expect the soldier of Christ to yield to punishments, and to be able to change his mind from his holy purpose? A mind fixed in God is not of this sort; the Christian warfare knows not how to lose in war. Our fighter knows not how to soften from rigor, he knows not how to dread swords; nay rather, the more he is attacked, the more robust is he found. Ho! strike, kindle, cook, turn, turn again, tear away viscera from viscera, print wounds upon wounds. Our Apollinaris, if he is discussed, is found the same as he had been; the tongue cannot now deny Christ in speaking, whom the other members have confessed by suffering. For if he permitted the clay vessel of his body to be lacerated for

preserving the treasure of faith while it was yet sound, how much more will he then fear to lose so precious a treasure for one already shaken and broken! Thou therefore, thou miserable crowd, while thou strivest to cast down the prize-master of Christ, thou liftest him up; while thou attemptest to overcome him, thou renderest him insuperable. Thou makest him despise his own body, and strive to go out from it with all alacrity of soul; and while thou torturest him wonderfully with new and exquisite punishments so that thou mayest make a wonderful martyr, thou laborest. For thy foolish wisdom has made that today the name of blessed Apollinaris runs so clear and celebrated through the mouths of the faithful. Thou hast served indeed while thou hast raged; and thou hast increased the palm while thou exaggeratest the punishment. For what did thy foolish genius not find for the glory of the victor, when even the instruments of punishment themselves passed into the honor of the triumph?

But still examine more diligently the lacerated body, still retract those very members which have been pierced, cook them, tear them apart with blows, beat them, strike them; now from the whole body of the most invincible martyr, what else couldst thou wound but wounds? Let the gold boil, it is not diminished; let the adamant be beaten, it is not cut. Now finally he pants for the height of heaven, now in mind he dwells in high places; he feels no pain, he fears nothing, unless, O persecutors, your piety alone, which if it is granted to him, is by him accounted the most

cruel impiety; and if you wish your weapons to reach to his interior parts, strike him with piety alone. For then you are heavily indignant, if you have mercy; then you lacerate him immensely, if you spare him; and, so to speak, then you punish him, if then you do not punish him.

O most robust breast, which no weapons can pierce through, no darts can penetrate! O most fortified rampart of Christ, which no driven rams demolish, no equipment of machines pulls down! How great a glory of retribution now exalts him in the highest, whom so great an adversity of tribulation pressed in the lowest! On the contrary, now he shines with the ignited companies of the blessed spirits, he exults with the robed senators of the heavenly court, inthroned loftily on a golden throne with the patriarchs, wonderfully crowned with the purple-robed martyrs. With all these, clothed in the stole of glory, he shines ineffably, and before his Emperor he perennially jubilates the melodious alleluia. Wherefore we pray thee, most blessed martyr, that the hand of thy prayer may lift us up, whom the weight of our guilt presses down below; so that we who here rejoice to relate the heraldry of thy virtue, may there perceive some part of thy blessedness. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns through all ages of ages. Amen.

SERMON XXXII.

III. ON SAINT APOLLINARIS, BISHOP OF RAVENNA AND MARTYR. (JULY 23)

We have heard today, most dear brothers, the insuperable fortitude of the soldier of Christ, we have heard the triumphal passion of the apostolic martyr. A wonderful fight in the persecutors, a wonderful victory in the persecuted. For those, to storm the strenuous warrior of the Christian warfare, not only seize iron weapons, but they make fires, waters, woods, stones, and plainly all the elements the material of arms, and convert them into the arguments of fighting. But this one, the more sharply he is attacked, the more robust is he found; and the more the body is distended by torments, the more is faith increased. He is finally an insuperable soldier, whose virtue grows from wounds, and whose animosity rises from the terrors of threats. It is a new and unheard-of fight, where a stranger storms the city, an inhabitant the state, one man a people, one weak man a battalion, one unarmed man a battle line, one person casts down a legion. It is a wonderful and stupendous victory, where he lives who is killed; he rises who is cast down; he conquers who is overcome; and after he shall have died, he converts the whole battle line of the adverse party to the banners of his Emperor. Where death is evaded when it is undergone; life begins when it is finished. A new litigation, where the people preside at the judgment, and one man is led out to be judged; where one innocent man is accused, and the censure of many damnable ones is brought forth; where the just man is beaten, and the guilty one condemns.

But among all the, I will not say judges, but executioners of blessed Apollinaris, not governors but torturers, thy cruelty, Messalinus, exceeds the madness of wolves, overcomes the ferocity of lions. For after the slaughter of bloody blows, after the multitude of open wounds, after the hanging on the rack, after the burning of boiling waters, thou commandest his mouth to be crushed with a stone and by a new kind of torment thou punishest words with blows. Behold, thy crafty cruelty through the poured-out bitterness of gall has made thee the author of a new punishment. And the eye of thy mind, blinded by the wrath of the soul, by excogitating that, foresees with a new punishment what it could scarcely see with sound counsel. And indeed, what had the remaining members done to thee, when thou didst laniate, when thou didst torture, when thou didst rack, when thou didst immanely feed upon all with lupine bites? With his mouth he had offended thee, with his mouth he had upbraided thee, with his mouth he confuted the shamelessness of thy face. The silent members had done nothing.

Why then does that which has admitted no fault sustain punishment? Why is that which has not harmed being harmed? Why is that which has not transgressed being avenged? If thou wishest therefore to bring forth the vigor of thy strict sentence against the guilty one, let the word be examined, let the word be judged, let the word be tortured with blows. And what more shall I say? Let the soul of the tongue, which shall

have sinned, itself die. But what does it profit, if thou exercisest vengeance upon him in whom thou canst not restrain the cause of vengeance? For if thou crushest the fleshy mouth, there is one who inwardly fashions another, which indeed thou mayest hear, but canst punish with no animadversion; namely, he who says to his disciples: "I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to resist and contradict (Luke XXI)." He, I say, who says: "It is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you (Matth. X)."

But again he is shut in a horrific prison, he is hindered by a very heavy weight of chains, he is stretched on the wood, he is deprived of all sustenance of food. Indeed, for binding him the prison would altogether suffice, even if the chain were lacking; but for punishing him the punishment of fire would suffice, even if the want of hunger ceased. But he from whom earthly food is withdrawn is nourished by heavenly feasts. And the sustenance which the impiety of the judge denies, the bounty of God administers. And what the jailer does not grant, an angel, having become a servant of man, exhibits. For the angel of the Lord, coming to him by night, fed and comforted him while the guards were watching. With what delicious hunger is he afflicted, who is satiated with the dainties of the heavenly storehouse, for whom heaven becomes a cellar, and the heavenly steward exhibits his service. How happily miserable is he, who while he lacks earthly expenses, is supported by angelic obsequies; to whom a gift

is sent from heaven, and an angelic one is ministered.

But oh, what a beautiful spectacle, and how worthy of the greatest admiration of those watching! when the leader follows the Emperor so strenuously, the martyr imitates the King. For who could depart from the vision of that spectacle satisfied, if he could have had a clear eye of the mind to see what was not seen, when he perceived the most invincible warrior of Christ shut in the horror of the prison, whom the most splendid hall of the kingdom of heaven was so eagerly expecting? When he saw a citizen of heaven being recalled with such great triumph from exile to his fatherland? When he saw the soldier of Christ, having so powerfully conquered the world, penetrating the starry realms? Nevertheless, he is still delayed, he is still retained in exile; so that the desire of returning to the fatherland may be increased more and more. For the devil does not yet cease to rage immanely through his little vessel, the bloody beast does not yet cease to rave with all the strength of his malice around the martyr of Christ. For behold, again chained, as he is dragged from the prison, he is placed in a ship, sent into exile; then a storm arises, the ship is broken, all the sailors die in the shipwreck: the blessed martyr with three of his clerics and two soldiers is delivered.

What is this, Messalinus? Why dost thou again rave? Why dost thou again lose thy senses? And having lost the counsel of reason, dost thou not attend to what thou doest irrationally? Come,

I pray, tell me, who can send an exile into exile, who can destine a pilgrim to a foreign land? Can one from Antioch be directed from Ravenna into exile? Can an Oriental be deported from the western borders? But while thou makest him an exile, thou signifiest him a citizen. And when he shall have returned by the right of postliminium, he will return by the laws to the titles of urban condition from which he had been deported. And certainly, if the holy man had feared exile, he would not have come from Antioch as far as Ravenna. Finally, why dost thou not absolve from the bonds of chains him whom thou compellest to go further? If thou wishest to hold him, why is he sent? If thou wishest to send him, why is he bound? especially since thy chains do not bind with bonds more than they weigh down with weights. On the contrary, where the sea subsides, thou art inflated; where the wind tempers its force, thou breathest; where the East wind ceases, thou blowest; him whom the storm feared to submerge, thou dost not hesitate to lift up on the rack; him whom the cold wave scarcely dares to drench, thou dost not fear to boil in glowing waters. Thy fury exceeds the cruelty of all beasts. Thy stolidity surpasses the very ignorance of insensible things. Question thy sailors, learn thy furies.

Behold, where they themselves scarcely at last by laboring with loosened arms perish, ours, bound by lying still and without any molestation of their labor, escape. But the soldiers, even if they do not perish, yet to thee they perish utterly.

For being by right called faithful converts, as those coming to the faith, having abjured the arms of the governor, they follow the warfare of the exile. For the soldiers say to him: Lord Father, whither shall we go? What shall we do? To whom he said: Be baptized in the name of Jesus, and you shall live. Who immediately renouncing idols, were baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

But we, most beloved brothers, who have again known the truth, God being the author; who have so many marks of virtues set before our eyes as an example of imitation, let us study to tend with all desire toward that beatitude in which we already know the triumphers of the world to rejoice in the remuneration of their labors. Let us keep their footsteps in the way, whose society we desire to have in the fatherland. Truly we shall be there what they are, if here we shall have been what they were. For if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him; if we die with him, we shall also live with him (II Tim. II). "And if we have been planted together in the likeness of the death of the Lord, we shall be also together in the likeness of his resurrection (Rom. VI)."

Let us not therefore be divided in the journey, if we wish to be joined in the arrival. Let him not abhor to drink the bitterness of the momentary potion, who desires to arrive at the sweetness of perpetual health. He who wishes to be enrolled among the soldiers of Christ, let him now gird himself manfully for the conflict, so that after the

completed warfare he may receive the citizenship of blessed rest; let him now prepare himself to engage, so that he may deservedly be able to be crowned after the victory: "For he shall not be crowned, unless he shall have striven lawfully (II Tim. II)." For he is a delicate soldier who wishes to conquer before he begins to fight; who wishes for victory without a fight, or without victory pants for the palm. Foolish is the farmer who wishes to pluck the swelling clusters of grapes sweetly from the vine, and neglects to plant the shoots of the layers with labor; he desires to fill the granary with fruits, not caring to cultivate the field bristling with briars. So, my most beloved brothers, it behooves us to take the narrow way and the way of sharp labor with the saints in this world, if afterwards we wish to arrive at the latitude of their joy. For he who says he abides in Christ ought himself also to walk even as he walked (I John II). But without doubt he wanders from the footsteps of Christ who, fleeing the narrow way, treads the way of latitude: "For through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God (Acts XIV)." Behold, blessed Apollinaris, whose festive day has dawned for us today, did not wish for earthly honors, did not congregate fallacious riches, did not seek the glory of the world, did not dilate the estates of transitory possession; he despised relatives, he left his fatherland, he also utterly denied himself; at the end also through iron, through swords, through weapons, through fires, through lingering and innumerable deaths, he penetrated the

starry realms. Thus in the saints it is manifested more clearly than light, what is said by the Truth in the Gospel: "That the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force (Matth. XI)."

Neither yet do we say this, that those only should be held worthy of heavenly rewards who are struck by the swords of persecutors. For often many men of a perfect and laudable life have wished with all the desire of the mind to reach the summit of martyrdom; but because divine providence felt otherwise, they were compelled to remain in their own rank; who, even if they were by no means consummated by martyrdom, are yet least of all strangers to the glory of martyrdom. For the holy disciples of blessed Apollinaris also, namely Adheritus and Calocerus, Marcianus and Eleuchadius, although they were by no means struck by the sword of executioners, are yet believed to have been in no way strangers to the desire of martyrdom, but almighty God, who mercifully chose them before the ages, established them in what order he wished, by the profound dispensation of his counsel; which although it is hidden from us, yet ought in no way to be believed unjust; although it is incomprehensible, yet is in no way to be judged reprehensible. So an architect, when he builds the wall of a house, constructs some stones equally in the lowest parts, others he composes in the highest parts with crafty sublimity. But while those project above, these lie below, and by a harmonious diversity they complete one wall to-

gether. So the skilled artisan, when he composes golden or silver vessels, impresses various sculptures and images on some, but leaves others only polished out of study; so that while in these, that is the simple ones, the natural color shines more brightly; in those, however, that is the embossed ones, studious art commends the genius of the sculptor of the embossed work, and the beautiful variety of things draws the eyes of the onlookers to itself. Of royal garments also, some are seen suffused with the blood-red redness of shell-fish or murex, but others are shining with the brightness of a snowy color.

But while they differ much among themselves from their own quality, yet they draw one dignity from the body of the king, which they commonly cover. So indeed, so almighty God, while he promotes his elect to the degree of one happiness, distinguishes the body of his Church through various lineaments of members. For hence it is that it is said by the Apostle: "He gave some indeed apostles, and some prophets, and others evangelists, and others pastors and teachers, for the consummation of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edification of the body of Christ (Ephes. IV)." But although the diversity of those passing through is various, yet there is one way through which they pass: that indeed which Truth was spreading for those following him, when he said: "Narrow is the way which leads to life; and few there are who enter through it (Matth. VII)." This way the Lord himself held; through this he commanded whosoever should

wish to follow him to walk. This way the holy martyrs held with all study, before they had merited to reach martyrdom. For to hold the narrow way perfectly is to break one's own wills in all things, and to obey the command of a superior humbly. But whosoever flows down through the latitude of his own judgment has turned the foot of the mind away from the path of the narrow way. But he directs his journey the more fully through this, the more closely he crucifies himself on the wood of the heart with the nails of obedience.

But because for our edification, most beloved, we wish to set an example of this so excellent virtue, because it occurs from no one more quickly, let us bring forth to the middle blessed Apollinaris, of whom we are treating. For as you have already heard, in the very beginning of his deeds it is related that blessed Peter the apostle said to Apollinaris his disciple: Why sittest thou with us? Behold, thou art instructed concerning all the things which Jesus did. Arise, receive the Holy Spirit, and at the same time the pontificate, and go to the city which is called Ravenna. For a multitude of people dwells there; preach to them of the name of Jesus, and be not afraid. And a little after it is subjoined: And kissing him, he sent him forth from himself. Consider, my brothers, how free the authority of commanding in the master, how devoted the humility of obeying in the disciple: how prompt was he to impose the yoke of command, how prepared did this one stand to submit the neck of obedience. That one does not

temper the severity of his command by flattering; this one does not refuse to undergo the burden of so great labor.

Those erudite in worldly eloquence are accustomed to compose their speech with the sweetness of rhetorical color, and to demonstrate whatever difficult things, when they wish, as light with flattering and exquisite words, so that if ever they command anything heavy, they may convert the listener to their desires. But the blessed apostle did not compose flattering words, he did not promise a prosperous outcome of the matter, but simply commanded a difficult thing. Among these things that also returns to the mind, which the Lord commanded to Abraham indeed dissimilarly, but not dissimilarly: "Take," he said, "thy son, whom thou lovest, Isaac, and offer him to me for a holocaust (Gen. XXI)." For it would suffice for the Lord to say, take thy son; but he adds, whom thou lovest, Isaac, so that the love of the son having been brought back to the ears of the father, it might be proved in the soul how great a love of God lived there; so that the heard love of the son might kindle the paternal breast; but again the flame of divine love surpassing it, slaying himself with the sword of obedience, he might more truly immolate him on the altar of the heart. In this way also the blessed apostle, when he said to his disciple: Go to Ravenna, as if he wished to strike terror into him, immediately added: For a multitude of people dwells there.

But blessed Apollinaris could have responded to his master with a word of this kind: Thou

speakest of a multitude of people, and thou directest one man against a multitude. Thou thyself dost not deny that the companies of enemies are many; and art thou not afraid to send one unarmed man against them? How shall the naked tongue of one man fight against the armed hands of an opposing multitude? What shall the person of a weak stranger be able to do against so many companies of raging citizens? The fight is not well matched, where words are cast from one tongue, and blows are struck from innumerable hands: where from here sermons are sent forth, from there bars fly out. At least thou mightest give me one companion, a solace for so irremediable a pilgrimage, or even spend an assistant for that same preaching. For thy master himself, the Lord Jesus Christ, when he sent you to preach, always, as there was need, provided solace for you. The Evangelist also, who relates that he destined seventy-two to preach, pronounces that he sent them not by ones, but by twos before his face (Luke X).

These, and many words of excuse of this kind, the blessed martyr could have held out, if with an untamed neck of the mind he had wished to refuse the yoke of obedience. Nevertheless he did not resist, he did not contradict; but as soon as he received the command of the one ordering, he believed it altogether necessary, which he knew was enjoined upon him through the mouth of the master by the Lord himself. And so that in all things in the virtue of obedience blessed Apollinaris might seem like Abraham, just as God

commanded him, saying: "Go out from thy land, and from thy kindred, and from the house of thy father, and come into the land which I shall show thee (Gen. XII)," who without anything hesitating obeyed; so also this one, as soon as he received the words of the apostolic command, immediately strengthened his mind with certain hope for obeying. And what he was about to teach by word, he demonstrated beforehand by the example of deed. This finally he studied to exhibit humbly to his subjects, which he himself as a prelate was justly about to receive. And, as it is read of the Lord "he began first to do and afterwards to teach (Acts I);" so that having experienced it in himself, he might learn how, the authority of power having been received, he should command others.

But how beautiful an order of divine dispensation is recognized, if the dignity of this thing is studiously weighed according to its merit. For we, who being ill-instructed learned from Adam the first vice of disobedience, have been taught the first virtue of obedience by this most blessed martyr. And just as that one, among the other seeds of vices, taught his carnal offspring the first disobedience, not by speaking but by prevaricating; so this one, among other documents of virtues, instructed his spiritual sons in obedience first of all, not by speaking but by doing. We therefore who by disobeying fell from the sublimity of the supernal fatherland, return to it with turned footsteps through obedience from the dejection of exile. For hence it is that it is said by the

Truth: "All that the Father gives me shall come to me; and him that comes to me, I will not cast out (John VI)." For those who come to the first Adam learn to go out from the innermost parts through disobedience. But the second Adam, "having become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Philip. II)," in that he grants an example of obedience to those coming to him, does not expel them from the joys of paradise.

To these joys, most beloved, let us hasten to return, not with the steps of the feet, but with the progress of good works. Perhaps we have not yet left the world, we have not yet chosen, after the manner of those who have renounced it, one before all others whom we ought to obey: yet this virtue, through which especially one returns to heaven, I mean obedience, we can have with the help of God. For Saul had not been among those who had renounced it, who heard from Samuel angry against him: "Does the Lord wish holocausts and victims, and not rather that the voice of the Lord be obeyed? For better is obedience than victims (I Kings XV)."

Whosoever therefore thou art who wishest to have this virtue perfectly, be obedient to God, yet be not disobedient to thy neighbor. Wishest thou to hear how thou mayest obey God? Beware of what he prohibits; fulfill what he commands. For neither one without the other is able to be perfect. Wishest thou also to hear how thou mayest obey thy neighbor? When thy brother sees thee sliding into some vice, and rebukes thee as tepid in a good work, and kindles thee to fervor with

words of charitable exhortation, if thou dost not resist, if thou dost not contradict, but humbly hearest, and girdest thyself for that to which thou art called, thou shalt soon reform thy return to the fatherland, whence as disobedient thou hadst been cast down, through the virtue of obedience. In this way therefore, even if thou art not able to undergo death for God, thou art yet able to lead a life pleasing to God. For it is a great thing to die for Christ, but it is not inferior to live for Christ. For both these Paul weighed with an equal balance of the scale when he said: "For whether we live, we live to the Lord; or whether we die, we die to the Lord. Whether therefore we live, or whether we die, we are the Lord's (Rom. XIV)." Thou sayest to me: because I cannot find martyrdom; exhibit thyself worthy of martyrdom, and thou shalt without doubt obtain the reward of martyrdom. Thou canst not pour out blood, thou canst strike thyself with the weapon of penance, and immolate thyself in contrition of heart. Let the throat be prepared for striking, the remunerator will not be lacking, even if the sword should be lacking. The executioner is lacking who may strike the neck outwardly; the Judge is present who may render the reward to a good will. "For glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will (Luke II)." Amen.

SERMON XXXIII.

ON ST. CHRISTOPHER, MARTYR (JULY 25).

While we desire, most beloved, to dispute concerning the triumphal victory of the blessed martyr Christopher, first his name occurs to us: which if we discuss with solicitous investigation, as is worthy, we find it was not given to him at the end without the dispensation of a divine presage. For Christopher is derived from Christ. Wherefore the bride says to her beloved in the Canticles. "Thy name is as oil poured out (Cant. I);" namely Chrism, from which Christ is called unction. For by oil the Holy Spirit is mystically designated. With this oil our Savior was principally anointed, when he received the sacraments of baptism, and soon the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the figure of a dove (Matth. III). Wherefore it is said by the Prophet: "God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness (Psal. XLIV)." This oil was poured out with the grace of the Holy Spirit, which Christ received singularly, and granted to all the elect by a dispensative participation of himself. Wherefore the Apostle says: "To every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ (Ephes. IV)." Whence also we are called Christians from Christ, because we are anointed with the same oil, he himself bestowing it. This ointment David also promised, when he said: "As the ointment on the head, which descended into the beard, the beard of Aaron; which descended into the hem of his garment (Psal. CXXXII)." Namely, the ointment on the head is the Holy Spirit in the Savior, who indeed is mystically designated by Aaron, who is called the mountain of strength. Since therefore Aaron

is the mountain of strength, the beard also is a sign of virility. The beard of this Aaron, therefore, are the holy apostles, who by the strength of their virility, which they had conceived from the unction of the Holy Spirit, conquered all the wars of the raging persecutors, and triumphed with glory over the prince of the world as over a lion raging immanely against the sheep of Christ. Wherefore Peter says: "Whom resist ye, strong in faith (I Pet. V)." Paul also says: "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but powerful to God for the destruction of fortifications, destroying the counsels of the body, and every height exalting itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ (II Cor. X)."

From this beard, therefore, of the high priest Aaron, the ointment drips into the hem of his garment; because after the blessed apostles, consequently he waters both the holy martyrs, and thereafter the whole Church at once, with the flow of the Holy Spirit. In which hem indeed of the mystical and priestly garment blessed Christopher, that is, bearing Christ, merited to be named. For he bore Christ in his heart, he brought forth Christ in his voice. Anointed indeed with the oil of heavenly grace, and stripped of the burdensome garment of earthly concupiscence, like a wonderful wrestler he leaps forth into the arena, and seizes the struggle of the contest. Still a new soldier, he seizes the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God (Ephes. VI), and immediately engages in wars, and thus struggles

against the enemy of the human race in an unleagueable contest. He vibrates the two-edged sword which proceeds from the mouth of the Savior, and the fervent warrior joins battle with the enemy, fights at close quarters with joined arms, and every mind cuts off the proud necks of the opposing enemies. Fortified indeed with the breastplate of faith, and supported by the high fortress not of a mountain but of the mind, although the battle line of the enemies rages and gnashes on every side, the most courageous athlete knows not how to fear the onset of wars; and indeed he exposes the body to external punishments, but the man who lies hidden within does not admit the dart of the inflicted persecution. He hastens to enter the land of promise, but the phalanxes of the ancient enemy occur to him in the madness of the persecutors, who yet, while they strive to impede his journey, expedite it. For, while they prepare to overwhelm him, they fall; while they attempt to kill him, they perish; while they hurl darts, they are transfixed by sharper darts.

Of these, therefore, who speak or bring into bitterness, Sihon is the king, who is asserted to be 'elated,' because the devil, the author of pride, rules over the vain-speaking and bitter lovers of this world. Whence also he himself is called the prince of the world, namely of that of which John says: 'The world is seated in wickedness' (John 12, 14). And the Lord promises that the Spirit is to be sent to the disciples (1 John 5), whom this world cannot receive (John 14). Israel therefore

says to Sihon: 'Let us pass through your land, we will not turn aside into the fields and vineyards' (Num. 21). We clearly, we are the ones who desire to pass through this world to the land of the living. We, I say, wish to walk humbly through the borders of the proud king to the homeland of divine promise. And since 'Hebrew' is interpreted as 'passing through,' we who are disciples of Him who did not dwell, but passed through doing good and healing all oppressed by the devil (Acts 10), because God was with Him; we promise that we will never dwell with King Sihon, but we pledge that we will proceed only by the royal road. But when did we promise these things to King Sihon? When we gave a repudiation to his cohabitation, when we struck a covenant of eternal division with him.

Let us recall, therefore, the day of holy baptism, let us bring back to memory the very beginning of the new regeneration; and there we shall undoubtedly find that we renounced the devil and all his pomps and works. Let each of the faithful commemorate when he first approached the font of the salutary laver, when he first received the signs of faith. Did he not, through the catechism of the priestly office, use these words by which he signified that he cast away the deadly desires of this world, and professed that he utterly abdicated the companionship of the diabolical society? And this is what is foreshadowed in the words of the history, because Israel does not turn aside either into the field of King Sihon, nor into the vineyard, nor does he promise

to drink in any way from his cistern. By the field, indeed, is understood the exercise of work; by the vineyard and the cistern, the cup of vain arts; namely, of astrology, magic, necromancy, and whatever it is that dogmatizes anything vain or sacrilegious against the piety of the Catholic faith. Concerning which pestilential cups against the perverse people the Lord complains through Jeremiah, saying: 'My people have done two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and have dug for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water' (Jer. 2). Concerning which it is also said through Solomon: 'Stolen waters are sweeter' (Prov. 8). But Israel has his own fountains. 'In the churches,' he says, 'bless God the Lord from the fountains of Israel' (Ps. 67). Let him, therefore, reject the waters of the proud King Sihon, let him despise the streams of heretical dogmas; and let him draw waters in joy from the fountains of the Savior (Isa. 12). For He who broke open the fountains and torrents (Ps. 73), says here in the Gospel: 'He who drinks the water that I give, rivers of living water shall flow from his belly' (John 7). But let him also walk by the royal road, as he has promised. 'By the royal road,' he says, 'let us walk.' But what is the royal road, except He who says: 'I am the way' (John 14)? Who also in the very moment of His passion shows Himself as king, when He says: 'You say that I am a king' (John 18). We have promised, therefore, to the proud King Sihon not to drink his streams, not to turn aside into fields or vineyards, that we would walk by the

royal road, that is, hastening to Christ through Himself, to abstain from all the pomps and works of the devil. But that elated Sihon gathers an army, and does not permit Israel to have passage through his borders.

But who is that people whom Sihon gathers against Israel, except all the reprobates who persecute the Church? From these are the tyrants, leaders, and princes of the world, who either oppose obstacles of contradiction to Catholic men through heretical depravity, or strive to inflict torments upon the holy martyrs. But what does Israel do in response to these things? Let us ask history. 'He came,' it says, 'to Jasa (Issaar), and fought against him. By whom Sihon was struck in the edge of the sword: and his land was possessed from Arnon even to Jabbok (Num. 21).' Behold the proud, behold the elated one has joined battle, but being crushed, he engaged and lost; he leaped forward into arms and succumbed. He who was unwilling to give a way, lost his life; and while he despised to grant passage to the public road, he lost his own sovereignty of royal glory. But Israel, who did not obtain passage, came to the rights of hereditary possession; and for him to whom it was not permitted to pass through, he made a homeland out of the way.

But where, I ask, my brothers, where was this victory achieved? Happy indeed is the place that deserved to see the triumph of such great glory! Where, I say, did Israel overcome the proud king? In Jasa. But Jasa (Issaar) is interpreted as 'fulfillment of the command.' And if we reach this

place with God as our leader, we undoubtedly overcome the devil, who is the head and origin of pride. For we then conquer the devil when we fulfill the commands of our Redeemer. Although, that which is to conquer the devil, this itself is to fulfill the divine commands. For, while we break the allurements of the flesh; while we resist the perverse passions of the bowels, while we are subjected to the empire of the divine bidding, and we keep not our own vows, but His commands, then without doubt we war down the prince of the world and the author of all iniquity. Then that apostolic prayer is fulfilled in us, by which it is said: 'But may the God of peace crush Satan under your feet' (Rom. 16). And the Lord imparts to us that which He promised: 'Behold, I have given you power to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and upon all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you' (Luke 10). But since Sihon expresses the ancient enemy, and his people all the reprobates or persecutors of the Church, who were prostrated by arms by Israel, that is, by the holy preachers, by what blade were they pierced, by what sword, finally, were they slain? 'The word of God is living,' he says, 'and effective, and more piercing than any two-edged sword, reaching even to the division of soul and spirit, of joints also and marrows, and a discerner of the thoughts and intentions of the heart' (Heb. 4). This sword of division that leader and author of contests, and lord of warriors, unsheathed when he said: 'Do not think that I came to send peace

upon the earth. For I came not to send peace, but a sword' (Matt. 10).

You have heard of the dividing sword, hear consequently also of the division itself: 'I came,' he says, 'to separate a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's enemies shall be those of his own household' (Matt. 10). By this sword, therefore, both Sihon was slain, and all his army prostrated in a common slaughter. Because, of course, by the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God (Eph. 6), both the devil fell, and the people subject to him failed from the life of their infidelity. Since, therefore, Scripture asserts that they were slain in the edge of the sword; it can be said of these not incongruously that they were killed by the sword of the mouth. And when the Lord says: 'Because the prince of the world shall be cast out' (John 12), as soon as Sihon is cast out, immediately through the whole breadth of the world Israel, that is, the holy Church, is propagated. For as soon as infidelity falls extinguished with its prince, the faith of the triumphant Church is dilated. And those who had been hitherto exiles, after the victory become possessors. Whence also it is said to the same Church through Isaiah: 'But your people, all the just, shall inherit the land forever' (Isa. 65). Of which people he also says afterwards: 'And they shall inhabit, and they shall plant vineyards, and they shall eat the fruits of them' (Ibid.). Still also the same prophet clearly announces that the holy Church must be dilated through the ends of the

nations: 'Enlarge,' he says, 'the place of your tent, and stretch out the skins of your tabernacles; do not spare; make your cords long and consolidate your stakes' (Isa. 54). But why she ought to do these things, he opens, when he adds: 'For you shall penetrate to the right and to the left, and your seed shall inherit the nations' (Ibid.). All the land of Sihon, therefore, fell into the inheritance of Israel; because, while the prince of this world goes out pierced by the sword of the divine word, the holy universal Church is dilated through the borders of the same world.

Nor do I think it should be passed over what is said: That his land was possessed from Arnon even to Jabbok (Laboch). Arnon, indeed, which is the beginning of the kingdom of Sihon, is interpreted as 'their curses.' For the whole world, which before the advent of the Savior was pressed under the empire of the devil, had the origin of a curse, because it was ignorant of the author of blessing; of whom indeed it is said through the Prophet: 'He who gave the law shall give a blessing' (Ps. 83). Whence also the Apostle says: 'For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse.' Or did we not have the beginning of a curse, of whom it is said: 'We were,' he says, 'by nature children of wrath, even as the rest' (Eph. 2)? But the end of that kingdom is Jabbok, which is interpreted as 'struggle.' For it is necessary for all who wish to go out from the kingdom of the devil and escape his borders, to tolerate the contests of rushing temptations. Which if anyone shall have fought lawfully, and

being manfully struggled against shall have overcome, now Jabbok will not be the city of Sihon, but the city of Israel; not indeed he who is Israel in the flesh; nor in manifest a Jew; but he who is Israel in Christ, circumcised in heart, not in flesh.

These things we have said to you, dearest brothers, as if by way of digression, so that we might teach the spiritual contest in which the Blessed Christopher shone forth as a distinguished triumpher, even through the mystery of sacred history. Nor ought it to seem strange if we describe the order of the sacred fight, we who desire to praise a strenuous fighter. He indeed, as a true and strong Israelite, despised Egypt and the laws of iron servitude; and through wars, through fires, through iron, arrows and swords, he entered the land of promise. Who indeed, like a purple rose, blossomed from the thorns of the Canaanites, and as a fat olive proceeded from wild olives, sought the novitiate of the Christian militia, and receiving the rudiments of the new faith, as a fervent warrior immersed himself in the midst of the heats of the contests. At one time indeed he strives to bend the soldier of God through the enticing allurements of harlots, at another to terrify him by the harshness of thundering threats, now he prepares to pierce him with arrows, now to melt him with the flows of boiling oil. But the most invincible soldier of Christ and undaunted warrior could neither be seduced by allurements, nor broken by exquisite punishments of torments, nor be recalled from

his holy purpose by the raging madness of the executioners.

The tyrant exaggerates various kinds of torments around the soldier of Christ, but the immobile foundation of invincible faith perseveres. The swollen rivers roar around, the foamy heaps of storms rush headlong, the raging winds strike from every side, but the high fabric of the house, which rises from the solidity of the firm rock, knows not how to totter at the onset of any violence. The column of God stood immobile among the whirlwinds of the persecutors raging on every side, it persisted among the tempests of hails rushing monstrously. For the soldier of Christ, caught among the hostile battle lines, not only could not be bent by striking, but also strongly hurled the darts of holy preaching; and, like an instructed warrior, he turned the foreign weapons to his own uses. For the persecutor served by raging, and, while he wished to harm, he ministered unknowingly; because the more he found him patiently enduring the insanity of his fury, the more he rendered the appearance of refined gold clearer.

When the tyrant beheld him as a girded soldier of God, he growled, and attempted to attack him with various modes of weapons, with many machines of war.

Therefore, my brothers, let us imitate the example of so distinguished a warrior, let us hold his form, let us keep his guardianship in our temptation. Against him the tyrant moved almost all the elements, and could not overcome

him. Let us at least resist the allurements of our flesh, let us repress anger, let us study to tame pride, and let us trample the monsters of all vices by the virtue of faith; and we who know that this glorious man did not yield to the torments of the executioners, let us at least not acquiesce to the titillating allurements of pleasures, although we are not yet able to love God perfectly according to the example of this blessed martyr, let us study meanwhile to fear Him by loving, by fearing to insist on His commands, and so gradually we shall be able to ascend to the summit of His love. For if we diligently attend, we find this order of disposition even in the words of the Lord Himself. For in Deuteronomy it is read: 'And now Israel, what does the Lord your God seek from you, except that you fear the Lord your God, and walk in His ways, and love Him? (Deut. 10).' Namely, so that the human mind may first begin to fear its Creator, then exercise itself in His commands, and so finally grow strong to conceive the sweetness of divine love. The bride in the Canticles seeks this order indeed of inward affection: 'Order,' she says, 'charity in me (Cant. 2).' Therefore, most beloved, let the fervor of our mind be kindled toward charity, through which it may both reject the machines of hostile craftiness, and despise the slippery delights of this world. Let us give a repudiation to the world, let us provide a dwelling place for God in our bowels; so that if, according to the name of the Blessed martyr, we now bear Christ in our breast, we may afterwards be carried to Him by the rowing of angels. For it is

He who both provides glory to the holy martyrs, and grants forgiveness for offenses to converted sinners. It is He who both overcomes in the victory of those who struggle, and triumphs over the conversion of the penitent, Jesus Christ our Lord, who with God the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and is glorified forever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XXXIV.

I. ON SAINTS FLORA AND LUCILLA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR (JULY 29).

We rejoice, dearest brothers, to celebrate the triumph of virgins, we who do not doubt that the virginal birth is the beginning of our redemption. Indeed, the Author of virginity, who deigned to enter the field of this world through a virgin to fight, wished also to repair the insignia of His victory through many virgins. From among whom indeed these virgins shone forth like twin lamps, who, according to the presage of each name, one indeed smells of a flower, the other gleams with light. These, therefore, as is found in the history of ancient deeds, being captured by a certain barbarian king, were detained under honest custody through doubled cycles of a decade. But the king at first indeed seethed, being kindled with the fire of lust, but being vehemently broken by their constancy, at length he healthfully acquiesced to the counsel of chastity. Finally also, he who had led them captive, being made a fellow captive, laid down the royal scepters, and with them together through the palm of martyrdom

exchanged the earthly kingdom for the glory of the heavenly empire. He laid down the fleeting purple, and attained the robe of immortality. For the dining rooms of a ruinous palace he merited a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. And how beautiful a sight of things, that he who had before been like a gnashing Lion among the dens of beasts, now within the folds of the Church, being made a gentle little lamb, should suck the udders of the sheep.

Therefore, we consider that it was clearly granted to these two holy virgins what the bridegroom mystically promises to the bride in the Canticles: 'You shall be crowned,' he says, 'from the top of Sanir, from the head of Amana and Hermon, from the dens of lions, from the mountains of leopards (Cant. 4).' Indeed, Amana is said to be a mountain of Cilicia, which is also called Taurus by many. But Sanir and Hermon are mountains of the land of Judea, in which lions and leopards are believed to dwell. By these mountains, therefore, are to be understood the kings and princes and various powers of this world, which lift themselves up like mountains into the peak of pride, and provide a dwelling place for malignant spirits as if for leopards and lions. For perverse spirits are called lions because of their cruelty; and leopards, because this animal is of varied color, because of the manifold variety of deception and fraud.

From these mountains, therefore, either every faithful soul or the holy Church is crowned, when she converts the princes of the age to the faith, or

directs them toward the rectitude of holy conversation. But she is crowned, because she is either remunerated by Christ for the profit brought from them, or she is honored in the world by those very ones by whom she was previously pressed. She is crowned, I say, from the dens of lions and the mountains of leopards, when she converts all the proud and deceitful from their depravity, and receives eternal rewards for their corrected morals. Which indeed is proved to have happened to these holy virgins, if indeed faith is to be applied to the matter which is told, who obtained both the palm of victory over the previously iniquitous king, and afterwards the glory of him converted and happily consummated. Let the blessed virgins say therefore to the heavenly Bridegroom what is said in the same canticles: 'We will exult, and we will rejoice in you (Cant. 1).' Not in ourselves, but in you; because you who have recently led us out of darkness to the light of your truth, have also provoked others through us from the fog of ignorance to the knowledge of your name, so that there may be done what is said: 'He who glories, let him glory in the Lord (1 Cor. 1).' But already, what the style of history hands down, namely that the Lord had spoken to them in the silence of the night, and had provoked them to consummate their martyrdom in Rome. Does it not seem to agree clearly to this what is joined between the same bridegroom and bride through the sacrament of typical colloquy? 'I sleep, and my heart watches. The voice of my beloved knocking: Open to me, my sister, my

friend, my dove, my immaculate one; because my head is full of dew, and my locks with the drops of the nights (Cant. 5).' Each blessed virgin says therefore, of whom indeed there was one heart and one soul: 'I sleep, and my heart watches;' namely because the more the holy mind compresses itself from the noise of temporal concupiscence, the more truly it knows internal things; and it watches so much to the inward things, as much as it skillfully hides itself from external disquietude.

These holy virgins therefore were sleeping from the businesses and concupiscence of the age, but they were holding eyes open and very watchful in the heat of the love of God. But because this is not the time of full rest, but rather of labor and of contest, suddenly the beloved knocks at the door, and excites them to the girding for joining battle by his exhortations: 'The voice,' he says, 'of my beloved knocking (Cant. 5).' The beloved knocks when Christ provokes his faithful either to the increments of their virtues, or certainly to winning the souls of their neighbors. 'Open to me, my sister.' My sister indeed, because you have been made a co-heir with me of my kingdom, and assumed into the kinship of fraternal adoption. 'My friend,' because snatched from the yoke of servitude, you have known the secrets of my truth. 'My dove,' because void of the bitterness of gall, and enriched with the gift of my spirit who descended in a dove. 'My immaculate one,' because by the effusion of my blood you have been purged from every stain of your sins.

Open therefore to me, that is, go out from the rest and leisure of the contemplation beloved to you, and spend yourself most fervently and constantly for bearing testimony to my truth: 'Because my head is full of dew, and my locks with the drops of the nights (Cant. 5).'

THE HEAD OF CHRIST IS GOD, AS THE APOSTLE SAYS (1 COR. 11).

But the locks are the intimate thoughts of the saints, which do not flow loose and dissolved, but are bound together by the bond of the fear and love of God. Truly, what do we receive through the dew and the drops of the nights, except the dark and cold minds of certain reprobates?

Therefore, the head of the bridegroom among the reprobate is full of dew, since worldly people indeed grow numb from the love of God, and flow away through the lasciviousness of their pleasures. According to what the Lord says: 'Iniquity will abound, and the charity of many will grow cold (Matt. 24).' Plainly, when such people persecute and hate the saints of God, in their hearts the locks of the bridegroom are, as it were, full of the drops of the nights. And when such people multiply and burden the Church with persecutions, then the bridegroom exhorts the bride to rise and strongly persist in the zeal of preaching. Hence it is that the most blessed virgins Flora and Lucilla are divinely admonished during the night to return to Rome, and by no means to fear approaching the contest of martyrdom. For where almighty God saw the heat of persecution

boil more fervently, there he decreed to triumph more gloriously through the fragile sex.

But to return to the Song [of Songs], each of these venerable virgins brings forth as if with the unique eloquence of a single mouth: 'I have put off, she says, my coat; how shall I put it on?' (Cant. 5.) As if she were saying: I have stripped myself of the cares and occupations of the world, and have constrained myself in the love of your contemplation alone. How, then, shall I now take up the journey of wandering? How shall I bear the noise and struggle of those who speak against me? Moreover, the Lord shows that he signifies cares and anxieties by coats, when he says: 'He who is on the housetop, let him not come down to take his coat (Matt. 24).' Which is to say openly, he who relies on the sublime citadel of contemplation, let him by no means descend so as to be again entangled in the occupations of worldly business. 'I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them? (Cant. 5),' that is, I have washed the steps of my work from the sprinkling of earthly dust with worthy tears of repentance; by what means can I now do anything except meditate on heavenly things, to which I am accustomed? Nevertheless, these blessed virgins, namely Flora and Lucilla, set aside the rest of contemplation, with which they had lived until then in the court of the kingdom as if in a desert; and, proceeding at the command of the Savior, they compensate the loss of lost rest with the glory of undergoing martyrdom. For he who gave them words from without, also himself enkindled their minds from

within to the fervor of obedience. Whence both most blessed virgins testify as if with a single voice, saying: 'My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my belly trembled at his touch (Ibid).' The beloved plainly puts his hand through the hole and touches the belly, when the Creator visits the heart with hidden inspiration and inflames it to the agony of the contest and holy labor. For, that the belly signifies the heart, the prophet shows when he says: 'My belly is in pain.' He opens what that indeed was when he adds: 'The senses of my heart are dissipated (Jer. 4).' Therefore, the belly of the blessed virgins, namely Flora and Lucilla, trembled when the beloved sent his hand and touched it. Because soon their heart also conceived the mandates of the divine command, denying itself to itself, it reserved nothing thereafter for its own judgment. Whence each still says as if singularly: 'I rose up to open to my beloved (Cant. 5).' The holy virgins rose up to open soon to the beloved; because they decreed with a most prompt mind to obey humbly. They indeed opened to the beloved when, inclining the neck of the heart to his command, they trampled upon their own [will], and fulfilled the divine will with all their strength.

But perhaps someone may argue against us why, having left the open fields of the Scriptures, we pluck the fragrances of flowers from only the corner of the Song of Songs, so that we may fashion a garland of glory for the holy virgins. Which indeed, my brothers, I confess, we do on purpose, because we think that a nuptial song fits

no one better than these holy virgins, who have ascended to the bridal chambers of the heavenly bridegroom through the distinguished victory of martyrdom; they now rest in the embraces of that bridegroom, for whose love they toiled under the hard weight of labors and pressures; in whose nuptial covenant indeed corruption found no place, but virginal integrity grew.

Let us follow therefore, most beloved, the most holy virgins in the way of labors and contests; so that we may deserve to be joined to them at least as the last and the latest in the retributions of merits. Let men be ashamed to serve carnal allurements, we who see the fragile sex penetrate the heavenly kingdoms through various torments, through iron, through swords. Let a man blush to grow numb under the shadow of degenerate leisure, who sees young girls fight manfully in the heat of persecution in the arena of the contest (*agonis stadio*). Thus therefore let us now imitate the example of the holy virgins, as much as we can, so that with them we may one day be brought to the author of virginity, the Son of the Virgin; who with God the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XXXV.

II. ON SAINTS FLORA AND LUCILLA, VIRGINS AND MARTYRS. (JULY 31).

Still, most beloved, the virginal offspring germinates; still that virginal fecundity accumu-

lates the fruits of the heavenly harvests, when feminine weakness not only overcomes the sex, but also triumphs over the prince of this world with insuperable magnanimity of mind. For this purpose indeed the Son of God was conceived from the flower of the vernal womb, so that he might turn the old leaven into unleavened bread (*azymam*), and through the flesh, which had been conquered, might bring back victory to the human race. He indeed composed for himself a breastplate from our fragility, in which exulting as a giant (Ps. 18), and powerful and strong in battle, he vanquished the aerial powers.

Thus therefore from infirmity constancy, from captivity victory, from ruin ascension was procured. Hence indeed it came to pass that the ancient enemy, who was applauding himself that victory had come to him through the folly of one woman, now blushes that he is conquered and confounded through many women. Hence it is also what is now at hand, because namely these most holy virgins, Flora and Lucilla, first contemned the allurements of pleasures, and afterwards the swords of the torturers. And those who for a very long time before had been martyrs in secret, afterwards shone as victors in public. To whom indeed that fits most aptly which the bride says in the Song of Songs: 'A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me, he shall abide between my breasts (Cant. 1).' Myrrh is plainly an aromatic species of excessive bitterness, with which the corpses of the dead are seasoned, lest they easily putrefy. Hence it is that the body of the bride-

groom himself also, taken down from the cross by Nicodemus and Joseph, is seasoned with myrrh and aloes, and committed to burial wrapped in linen cloths (John 19).

What therefore is designated by the bundle of myrrh, except multiple mortification? For she does not say, a sprig of myrrh, or a little branch of myrrh, but she says, a bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me. As if she were saying that because in all my conduct I mortify myself, and I live now by no works of my own will, my beloved has become for me not a simple branch, but a bundle of myrrh. Whence also the distinguished preacher says: 'I bear the marks (*stigmata*) of Jesus in my body (Gal. 6).' To which multiple mortification indeed he also exhorts us with himself, saying: 'Always bearing about the mortification of Jesus in our body, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh (2 Cor. 4).' For from that which we bear about in our body, we reserve no part of the body empty. He therefore bears about the mortification of Jesus in his body, who leaves nothing of himself to himself, who lives not for himself but for Christ in all things; who certainly crucifies himself from his own wills on all sides. Here therefore the beloved becomes a bundle of myrrh, because in all his actions showing himself as if extinct, he collects in a certain way a multiple handful of the mortification of Christ. Let therefore the most blessed virgins sing together, who, having one bridegroom, have not known jealousy, and just as through the glue of charity they fuse one soul out of two, so

as if with one mouth let them say singularly: 'A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me.' Where it is also aptly added: 'He shall abide between my breasts.' No one doubts that the place of the heart is between the breasts of the chest.

The beloved therefore abides between the breasts of each virgin, because his unfailing love and desire is not deleted from their memory. 'He shall abide between my breasts,' as if she were saying: He who became for me a bundle of myrrh through the bitterness of the passion, abides continually between my breasts through the sweetness of the heart; and he who from without exasperates me through the example of the death he underwent, from within sweetens me through infused grace of intimate sweetness; as the bride says again of the same: 'My beloved is white and ruddy, chosen out of thousands (Cant. 5).' White indeed from the glory of divinity, but ruddy through the blood of the passion. But he is called chosen out of thousands, because from all the multitude of the saints he alone is the one who was worthy to hear: 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (Matt. 3, 17).'

Unless these venerable virgins gazed incessantly at this beauty of the beloved with the eyes of faith, they would by no means have endured so many hardships and pressures as if a bitter and multiple bundle of myrrh. Plainly, unless they were enkindled to the embraces of that highest beauty, they would by no means have made a desert of the court of the king, and, among carnal and slippery men, have cut off all the allurements

of the flesh through almost three weeks of years with the sword of continual continence. For for them there was, as it is said: 'the throat of the bridegroom most sweet, and he is altogether desirable (Cant. 5).' The most sweet throat of the bridegroom is the interior sweetness of his words. For in the words of Christ very many easily understand the surface, but to few is it given to penetrate the interior sweetness, of which it is said through the Prophet: 'Taste and see that the Lord is sweet (Ps. 33).' But he who is sweet in the throat, tastes bitter in the mouth. Whence it is written: 'His lips are lips distilling the first myrrh (Cant. 5).'

The lips of the bridegroom, therefore, are the words of the Redeemer. Which indeed distill myrrh, because they teach that through the mortification and bitterness of the flesh one must arrive at the sweetness of internal delight.

Through this way of bitterness, most dear brothers, let us now strive to walk with the blessed virgins, so that with them afterwards we may deserve to enter into the royal nuptials of the eternal bridegroom with the blessing of sweetness. From the greed for this eternal banquet let no false sweetness of the flesh entice us, let no harshness of encroaching labors break us, let no burden of temporal things weigh us down, let no affection for children, or the necessity of any dear ones retain us, let no implacable anger toward a neighbor impede us, let no anxiety for a thing to be acquired or acquired restrain us. Let us cut off from us all the thorns of vices budding evilly, let

us drive away from the eyes of the heart the darkness of earthly concupiscence, so that with the blessed virgins, namely Flora and Lucilla, we may labor to flourish in virtues, and live in the light of good works, so that walking through their footsteps, while we do not cling to transitory things, we may be carried into eternal ones: and while we contemn the world, we may arrive at Christ. Who with God the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XXXVI.

ON SAINT RUFFINUS, MARTYR. (JUNE 30.)

You know, most dear brothers, as you have learned from the mastery of the Catholic faith, that in the examination of the final discussion, all together, both sinners and the just, must be presented before the tribunal of the eternal Judge with their bodies, the Apostle testifying, who says: 'We must all be manifested before the tribunal of Christ, so that each one may receive the proper things of the body, according as he has done, whether good or evil (2 Cor. 5).' And the reprobate indeed for this purpose, that because here with flesh and soul together they trampled upon the precepts of their Creator, there with the same both substances they may receive the sentence of just damnation, and thereafter feel the bitterness of punishments on both sides, who, while they lived, served their depraved delights from both. But the elect that, because they do not cease now to crucify their flesh with its vices and

concupiscences (Gal. 5), with those very bodies of theirs, which namely they used as it were tabernacles in the divine warfare, they may be promoted to the glory of supernal clarity; so that, the belt of warfare being loosened, the interior and exterior man may then obtain one citizenship (*municipium*) of perpetual rest, who arrived at one triumph through common wars. And to whom there was one battle, let there be nonetheless one and the same crown. That plainly will be our Sabbath, that seventh year of the law, that truly the Jubilee (Deut. 15; Lev. 25). For the Sabbath is commanded to be kept holy (*feriatum*), so that eternal rest may be figured through it. Also under the mystery of designating that same eternal rest or resurrection, in the seventh year liberty is restored. But in the Jubilee the trumpets are sounded so that each one may return to his own possession. 'For the trumpet shall sound,' as the Apostle says, 'and the dead who are in Christ shall rise (1 Cor. 15).' To their own possessions, therefore, all then return, because on that day of the final resurrection each one receives his own body, in which he dwelt while he led this present life.

To their own possessions, therefore, all then return, because on that day of the final resurrection each one receives his own body, in which he dwelt while he led this present life. Then Adam, then Noah, then all the ancient Fathers, indeed all the souls of mortals return to the lost land of their flesh, who will possess their received bodies forever, and led into the liberty of the sons of

God, all will now securely rejoice, loosed from the servile bond of human corruption.

Since therefore the bodies of the saints are going to be of such great dignity that they are to receive commonly with their souls both the crown of perpetual life and the stole of immortality; what wonder if almighty God now provides suitable places for them, and disposes that their tombs be made not everywhere or by chance, but from the election of his own will? For indeed that also is often asked not idly, why Abraham, who confesses himself as to the part of the body to be dust and ashes (Gen. 18), had such ambitious providence for his burial, that out of all the latitude of his pilgrimage he should choose only Hebron, namely of the Canaanite region, in which also for a not small sum he should purchase for himself a double cave? (Gen. 23.) Jacob also adjures his sons, and Joseph his brothers, calling them to witness, that they transfer their bones to the same cave after death (Gen. 49). What is it therefore that holy men, who had despised both the present life and all the glory of the world from the sublime citadel of the mind, were litigating so greedily, so anxiously, so studiously about the place where their ashes should be stored, except because through the spirit of the prophet they knew that the Savior of the world would be born there from their seed, and the blood which would wash away the sins of the world was to be shed specifically in that region? As it is said through the Psalmist: 'Because our God before the ages worked salvation in the midst of the

earth (Ps. 73).' Which indeed although it can be understood specifically of the Lord's body itself, yet of that region also where he deigned to suffer, which is certainly the center (*meditullium*) of the world, it seems to be said not incongruously.

In the land of Canaan, therefore, our holy Fathers chose tombs, so that they might deserve to rise from there one day, where the author of the resurrection himself, namely the Firstborn of the living and the dead, deigned to declare in himself the glory of the resurrection. And what more shall I say about the honor which God, the remunerator of the good, exhibits to the bodies of his saints? Since almighty God himself deigned to bury the body of Moses (Deut. 34), and it is read that the corpse of Elisha raised a dead man (4 Kings 13). Indeed, to confess the truth, that which he by no means conferred on the saints living in the flesh, this divine dispensation often bestowed on the dead. Which is clearly weighed in Abdo, the man of God indeed, whom while living a lion could invade to kill him, but his corpse was by no means permitted to be violated in any way (3 Kings 13). 'Precious indeed in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints (Ps. 115).' It is not wonder therefore if divine dispensation distributes suitable places for the bodies of the saints, and now commits them to the earth as if a certain deposit, which it may thereafter restore to be transferred to the heavenly kingdoms. But now, for the sake of which we have premised these things, let us briefly touch upon some of the miracles of the Blessed Ruffinus.

Therefore, the body of this blessed martyr was afterwards translated from the Suburb of the town of Assisi, where it had been placed anciently, within the walls because of the terror of a pagan (*gentilis*) attack. But the stone basin (*labrum*), in which the aforesaid body had lain before, had been left outside the walls for a long time. Concerning which indeed a grave sedition arose between the people and Hugo, then bishop of the same see. For the bishop was of the opinion that it should be brought to the church of the Blessed Mary ever virgin, which is the first see in that place, certainly with that counsel so that because the mother church did not have the body of the martyr, it might be compensated with at least some solace of an empty sepulcher. On the contrary, the people asserted that a division should not be made between the sacred relics and the proper tomb, nor should what seemed divinely instituted from the consummated triumph of the glorious martyr himself be changed now by human inventions. Thus therefore with those on this side and that side contending, the basin is brought within the walls of the city, and from both parts together they arrive at the crossing of a certain fork in the road.

There, therefore, when the supporters of the bishop were striving to pull the sacred vessel to St. Mary's, but the rest of the part of the people to the basilica of St. Ruffinus; with these and those striving in different directions, the quarrel increasing, it proceeded to such a point that they caught up arms in a fury, and mixed

mutual blows among themselves, the reason of their confused minds being lost. Therefore, with swords brandished, they clash at close quarters on both sides, and sharp with burning minds they rave to inflict wounds on one another. But, O divine clemency to be proclaimed, which has mercy on human errors, and often meets our depraved wills, so that it may lead even things evilly begun to good exits! Why should I delay with many things? No one is wounded there, finally not even a thin drop of blood is shed, and, so that more wonderful things may succeed to wonderful ones, about sixty men on the part of the bishop were trying to drag the aforesaid vessel to the church of St. Mary, but by no efforts were they able to move it from the fixed station of its place. Those therefore when they were now failing altogether, broken by weariness, and were utterly despairing of the vehicle of the stone, then from the other part scarcely seven men catching up the urn, were permitted to convey it to the basilica of St. Ruffinus with such speed, as if they seemed to have brought not a stone, but rather a bundle of straw. Immediately the shout of the exulting people is raised, happy thanksgiving is paid to God the supporter, and because pious God felt one with his people it is eagerly broadcast by all. Then finally it was proven to be true what is said: The voice of the people, the voice of God.

Moreover, there was added to the certainty of the matter also a certain priest, sent namely by the Blessed Ruffinus himself to the bishop. For when the aforesaid bishop was not lightly moved

against those who had resisted him, and they were preparing to satisfy him worthily, and to placate him with devoted humility, the blessed martyr appeared in a vision to the priest whom we mentioned, and said to him: Go, and tell the bishop, if he does not wish to offend me, let him not receive any satisfaction from the people, but let him freely return to them the pure grace of his love and blessing. For this was done by my will, that that vessel should be brought to my church; so that my little body (*corpusculum*) may be hidden in it again. Let him also know that, unless I had been present among those rioting and had opposed myself to their weapons, a great slaughter of men would lie shed abroad. But when the bishop, still hesitating, was not disposed to accommodate faith even to these words of the priest, behold a certain man, who had been crippled (*contractus*), confessed that he had been raised up on that same day by the blessed Ruffinus, rejoicing and exulting, and he asserted that this mandate had been enjoined on him by the same blessed martyr, that he too should nonetheless announce to the bishop these same things in order which the priest was asserting. At length the bishop, all scruple of doubt having been removed, follows what was commanded him without delay, and is allied in grace to his people, their offenses having been forgiven.

But, lest perhaps the bishop incur the blemish of reprehension with anyone because, dissenting from his church for an hour, he was feeling against the judgment of God, Isaac is to be

called to memory, who blessed not Esau, chosen namely by himself, but Jacob rather substituted by his wife (Gen. 27). And there therefore the carnal wife, and here the spiritual bride prevailed over their husbands in the diversity of their proper opinion, because God, who chose the weak things of the world to confound the strong (1 Cor. 1), consented to both. The prophet David also wished to build a temple (2 Kings 7), but the supernal disposition did not permit him this. Between Paul also and Barnabas we read that a certain dissension intervened concerning John (Acts 15), because of which however not only was the merit of both apostles not diminished, but the disciple himself also did not err from the line of apostolic discipline. It is not wonder therefore if a man now sometimes unknowingly dissents from the truth, since the authority of the Scriptures proves that something of humanity happened to the apostles themselves and the prophets. But these things elsewhere, now let us return to the proposed things.

Furthermore on the same day two blind men were illuminated at the altar of the blessed martyr. But also another, weakened in his limbs and hunchbacked, was raised up and restored to health in all things. Concerning which miracles furthermore let it suffice for us to report only what was done; lest if we strive to report each fact through the order of the thing done, we should perhaps—which far be it!—burden the listeners with the prolixity of a verbose style. In enumerating the miracles themselves also, we neglect

to pursue everything, but drawing as if from a certain great river we pull a cupful, which we may healthfully offer to those feasting at the table of Christ, lest the stomach of the mind be burdened by gorging, but thirst may be taken away only by a sober drink. Let us proceed therefore to still other miracles to be related, which were divinely shown through the same most blessed martyr.

After these things were thus transacted, a no small inquiry began to be made on which day the martyrdom of the most unconquered victor of Christ, Ruffinus, ought to be celebrated. For since no monuments of history were extant among them, they were hitherto content only with the annual solemnity of the dedication. At length, by the authorship of God, the history of the passion having been found, the venerable pontiff established, namely according to the tenor which the letters testified, that the festival of the same glorious martyr should be cultivated on the third Kalends of August. But some, kindled against the bishop with the torches of envy, and inextricably incited by a spirit of madness, were rioting, saying that it was burdensome for the people to have a holiday for the doubled solemnities of one saint, and that it was superstitious for festivities newly introduced to be invented by domestic studies; in short, that this was not fabricated out of love of religion, but out of the heat for money. But especially certain forward men, who from the name of the place which they inhabit are called Insulani, irreverently abusing the very day of the illustrious festival, began not only to insist boldly

on the works of the loom, but even to sweat more freely in rural exercises. But immediately the sentence of divine animadversion avenged itself upon them, and having been instructed by scourges, they return to the heart, who refused to have a heart in prosperity. So that what is said through the prophet seems most aptly to agree with them: "Return, ye transgressors, to the heart (Isa. 46)." Also that: "And now the fire consumes the adversary." For flame suddenly seized their houses, and not only all domestic things, but everything that was in the fields, it burned with unquenchable conflagration; so much so that those unhappy ones, already placed in extreme dangers, flocked together to the river on this side and that, and cast into the very channel of the abyss everything that was set on fire. But so that it might be clearly proved that this was not chance, but an indication of divine fury, whatever was submerged could not be extinguished.

Thus in a wonderful way that element both held the powers of its own right in part and had lost them in part. For the water was both liquid, so that it might receive everything immersed in its gaping wave, and in a certain way it was not moist, so that it might be able to extinguish the burning things. But why do I linger on the smallest things, since the leaping flame also occupied the very members of the men, and they were not able to find the remedy of extinction, wherever they turned themselves? At length, scorched, smoked, and burned in the manner of a firebrand, they flee with great gnashing of wailings to the

altar of Blessed Ruffinus, they seek indulgence, and they promise for the rest the emendation of the committed crime through penance. Therefore, having been freed from the pains of the fire by the prayers of the most blessed martyr, they returned unharmed to their own places. Therefore from that time the martyrdom of Blessed Ruffinus is cultivated without any obstacle of hesitation, and on the day which we predicted, the people from everywhere come together to his church with the persistence of great devotion.

I also do not think that that ought to be passed over, that certain men were striving to carry a beam from the forest, smoothed by laborious exercises, to the church of Blessed Ruffinus; from whom namely certain of the Perusians, bringing violence, hostiley extorted the wood. But when the robbers were dragging the tree with the anxiety of most persistent effort, and were just now approaching the walls of Perugia with scarcely one mile interjacent, suddenly the vehicle stuck, and could be impelled no further by any efforts of strength. Meanwhile, all the neighboring men flock together for help, and not a few yoked oxen are added. They arrange the machine more diligently, they exhort each other in turn, they collect themselves in strength, they throw their shoulders against it, they push vociferously, yet the wood remains immobile, as if it were held fixed by roots. At last mistress necessity taught what the blind depravity of men was ignorant of. For their mind, conscious of the perpetrated crime, although late, clearly recognized that di-

vine virtue was deservedly standing in their way, who had made a robbery from the substance of the blessed martyr. Therefore, the counsel having been suddenly changed, they direct the vehicle immediately toward Assisi, and, the faculty of accelerating having been perceived, they humbly return to the most blessed martyr what they had proudly snatched.

Let us therefore give thanks to Christ our Savior, and let us report worthy heraldries of praise, who, while he provides such benefits to us through the citizens of the supernal Jerusalem, invites us as if through small and thin crumbs to the full banquet of the heavenly table; and while he abundantly satisfies those now resting in the fatherland after labor, he also sustains us in the journey of this pilgrimage in some way as if by certain remains of food; yea, he who refreshes them with the solid food of his vision, feeds us with a certain milk of his signs as if little ones, until we all meet into a perfect man, into the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4), who with God the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns as God forever and ever. Amen.

AUGUST.

II. Sermon on St. Stephen, Pope and Martyr.

VI. Sermon on SS. Donatus and Hilarianus, Martyrs.

XIII. Sermon on St. Cassian, Martyr.

XV. Sermon on the Assumption of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary.

XXIV. Sermon I on St. Bartholomew the Apostle. Sermon II on the same.

SERMON XXXVII.

ON SAINT STEPHEN, POPE AND MARTYR (AUG. 2)

You have heard today, dearest brothers, the soldier of Christ manfully fighting against the members of the devil; you have heard the excellent leader of the Christian people constantly and faithfully exhorting his fellow soldiers to the preparation of the glorious contest. For by a tyrannical law it had then been decreed that whoever should betray any hidden Christian, should not only receive all his resources, but sacrilegious remuneration should also sublime him to the honor of the military service which he should choose. Then Blessed Stephen, as the captain (*primipilus*) of the Christian military and the standard-bearer of the eternal Emperor, gathered the troops of warriors and began to arm them with weapons, exhorting and persuading virtue so that they might both despise the perishing gains of earthly resources, and not fear the infinite madness of the persecutors. He was driving away dread from the minds of the fearful, and was kindling the raw souls of the recruits to the struggle (*agon*) of the divine contest. Which was also commanded through Moses in the law: "When the battle is now approaching," he says, "the priest shall stand before the battle line, and shall speak thus to the people: Hear, O Israel, you today commit battle against your en-

emies, let not your heart be afraid, do not fear, do not yield, nor dread them, because the Lord your God is in the midst of you, and will fight for you against the adversaries, so that he may rescue you from danger (Deut. 20)."

And it is to be noted that the priest, who when war is already imminent, harangues, is commanded to stand not elsewhere but before the battle line, so that namely he may himself also go before as a leader those whom he provokes to battle by exhortations, lest while he strives to impel others to war, he himself be dissolved through negligence in the degenerate leisure of the body, as it is said through the Prophet concerning certain ones preaching great things, but living sluggishly: "The sons of Ephraim, bending the bow and sending their arrows, were turned back in the day of battle (Psalm 77)." For those who provoke others to the conflict against the temptations of vices, but themselves refuse to conflict under the ignoble languor of sloth, these namely indeed direct arrows, but having been turned back behind their backs they do not deserve the titles of consummated victory: Nor does it profit them that they had begun well, because they do not magnanimously persevere even to the end. Whence also concerning them it follows immediately: "They did not keep the testament of God, and in his law they would not walk (Ibid.)." As if he said: They indeed received the testament, but they did not keep it: They placed a foot in the law through the beginning, but they did not hold the step of perseverance.

Whoever therefore provokes others to the spiritual contest, whoever instigates the minds of neighbors to acting strongly, ought by all means to harmonize his life with his tongue, lest, while he proposes lofty things to others, he himself, content with the lowest things, be pressed down by inertia. Hence it is that it is commanded in the law: "Thou shalt not have," it says, "in thy bag diverse weights, a greater and a lesser, nor shall there be in thy house a greater and a lesser bushel (*modius*). Thou shalt have a just weight, and the bushel shall be equal and true for thee (Deut. 25)." Indeed then we do not have diverse weights in our bag, if within the secret of our conscience, judging not otherwise for ourselves and not otherwise for others, we apprehend namely the same measures of legal precepts, so as not to indicate a rule of strict severity to others, and study to treat ourselves by a law of more remiss indulgence. Concerning which fraud namely Solomon also says: "A double weight and a deceitful scale (*statera*) is an abomination to the Lord (Prov. 20)." It is necessary therefore to measure the fruits of the word by no means with diverse, but with the same weights; so that, what we command to others to be done, we ourselves also may effectively fulfill by living works. Which indeed Blessed martyr Stephen did laudably, because while he exhorts others to the fight, he himself first snatched up arms, and immersed himself, fortified by the breastplate of faith, into the very battle line of the crowded legion; and while he offers an example of engaging to others,

he obtains the triumph from the conquered enemy; and, that I may so speak, while he levels the way to the fight for those following, he himself soon, the victory having been completed, is led to the crown. And because Stephen is expressed as "crowned," but the Pontiff is so called as "making a bridge" (*pontem faciens*), and by this the "way of those following," he well exhibited both at the same time, the etymology of his name and fulfilled the office of the pontificate, because namely while he opens the way to those following to the stadium of the holy struggle, the happy victor received the crown of glory from God the just remunerator.

Nevertheless, who this Blessed Stephen was by race, or how many-eth, or for how many years in the succession of the apostolic regime, we do not think it superfluous if, as it is found in the Catalog of the Supreme Pontiffs, we briefly set forth to your charity. This Blessed Stephen therefore, a Roman by nation, from his father Jobius [Julius], succeeded the blessed prince of the apostles, Peter, as twenty-fourth in the dignity of the Roman see. Moreover, he sat for seven years, five months, two days. He established that priests and levites should by no means use sacred vestments for daily use, but only in the church. Moreover, he ordained three bishops, six priests, five deacons. Whom Blessed Sixtus succeeded in the pontificate, equally to be crowned afterwards with the glory of happy martyrdom.

O blessed mother Church, for whom death militates unto life, the ignorant cruelty of perse-

cutors ministers, for whom namely both death brings forth those who will live in eternity, and penal oppression generates those who will reign perpetually! Blessed, I say, and truly happy Church, for whom both the confusion of ignominy brings forth glory, and torments victory, and chains or prisons eternal liberty! This is indeed that field of the Lord, in which the grains of wheat fall indeed to die, but are born reborn with fruits afterwards multiplied (John 12). This is that threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, in which namely David offered peaceful hosts, and placated the fury of the Lord, the carnage of the avenging sword having been repressed from Israel (2 Kings 24). In this threshing floor or winepress Gideon was purging the grains by shaking them out, when he deserved to see the angel, and by his oracle he recognized that he himself was about to deliver Israel from the hand of Midian (Judges 6). In this threshing floor Abel offered from the firstborn of his flock and their fat, which indeed divine grace, because it received them gratefully, immediately, as the old edition witnesses, inflamed from heaven (Gen. 4). In this also Cain offered gifts from the fruits of the earth, which the Lord despised, and therefore did not look upon (Ibid.). In this indeed threshing floor, just as there are some from the threshing which are owed to the fires, so also there are some of the threshers themselves, who tend at the same time to the fire. For whether concerning the just, or concerning sinners, true is the sentence of John

which says: "For their works follow them (Apoc. 14)."

Attend, my most beloved brothers, consider, weigh that the whole universal Church diffused in all the world is one threshing floor so full of good and bad, just and perverse, as of weeds (*zizania*) and wheat, as of chaff and fruits. But until the cultivator of the earth begins to thresh, the threshing floor contains everything indifferently, both what is to be stored in barns, and what is to be handed over to the flames. But what in the threshing floor is liable to the flames, what is to be reserved for the barns, unless what John the Baptist clearly discerns in the Gospel when speaking of the Lord, he says: "Whose winnowing fan (*ventilabrum*) is in his hand, and he will purge his threshing floor, and he will gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire (Matt. 3)?" But whence do we discern whether we are chaff or wheat? From the gravity namely of morals or inconstancy, from weight or levity. For whoever is snatched away by the breeze of pleasures, whoever is impelled by the whirlwind of fury, whom now the spirit of pride vainly lifts up, now sorrow or an injury inflicted precipitates, he indeed is to be called chaff or a reed. Which namely John is denied to be, when it is said of him from the mouth of Truth: "What went you out into the desert to see? a reed shaken by the wind (Matt. 11)?" Which on the contrary is written concerning the reprobate: "Not so the impious, not so, but as the dust, which the wind casts away from our

face (Psalm 1)." Let us not be, my brothers, let us not be chaff, let us not be weeds, which the winnowing fan of the final discussion may shake out, and soon the fire of eternal combustion may burn up. Let us always dread that sentence of the evangelical commination, by which it is said: "Suffer," he says, "both to grow until the harvest, and in the time of the harvest say to the reapers: Gather first the weeds, and bind bundles for burning, but the wheat gather into my barn (Matt. 13)." Weigh diligently the words of Truth, weigh with fear what is said: bind bundles for burning; the weeds namely are bound in bundles, because in that fire of perpetual damnation murderers with murderers, adulterers with adulterers, perjurers with perjurers, the incestuous with the incestuous, are constrained by no diverse kind of penal torments. There the open abyss of Gehenna of infinite punishment devours them, who here arrogantly extolled themselves in the horns of pride; there the crackling flame will feed on their flesh and marrows watered with fatness, who here burned with delights, and fulfilled the allurements of boiling pleasure.

Well therefore they are said to be bound in bundles, because diversity of vengeance by no means then separates them, whom similarity of wickedness had here associated, and those who are now liable to the same crimes, are afterwards held constrained by the animadversion of the same punishment. Concerning all of whom elsewhere it is said under the species of one person: "With hands and feet bound, cast him into exte-

rior darkness (Matt. 22)." There the members are bound for punishment, which here were carried loose and free for fault. Or then they are worthily to be constrained in supplications, which now are evilly bound from performing the works of piety. There the souls of the reprobate are tortured together with their bodies in unquenchable fire, just as here they were joined in the execution of a wicked work. Whence also it is said through the Prophet: "They descended to hell with their arms (Ezek. 32)." The arms namely of those sinning are the members of the body, with which reprobate men militate for the devil, and minister to his command by living perversely. At the same time therefore with the souls also the bodies are damned in eternal death, which lived at the same time in the perpetration of a wicked work. Concerning which the Prophet says: "There is Assur, and its sepulchres (Ibid.)." For what is understood through Assur, namely the proud king, unless the devil, who according to what is written: "He is king over all the sons of pride (Job 41)?" What the sepulchres, unless they are the habitations of the dead? but then the devil fell into death when he departed from the author of life by being proud. Whoever therefore permits the spirit of wickedness, who is truly dead, to inhabit in the hospice of his heart through a perverse will, without doubt makes a sepulchre of himself. And it is necessary that he should at the same time endure there the supplications of torments with him, to whom he was here exhibiting himself as a

habitation through the wickedness of a perverse work.

Since therefore in the threshing floor the weeds are contained together with the wheat, let us see, brothers, if we are wheat; let us see if we are reserved for the Lord's barn. But because the Apostle says: "For what things a man shall sow, these also he shall reap (Gal. 6);" let us intently consider what we sow daily, and thus we can already conjecture what we must afterwards necessarily reap. And that what we say may be able to shine forth more easily by an example, do you think, my brothers, that he who had this year sown oats or darnel (*lolium*), hopes to fill his storehouse now with wheat? Do you think he whom it pleased to sow a sterile vine, will be able to abound with a crop of legumes from it? And indeed these refuse things which we have placed, in a certain way lie about the species of food. For they have after a fashion the likeness of refreshing harvests. So plainly there are some, who simulate the image of religion on the surface, while they despise having true religion within by living. These namely in stalks and leaves pretend the schema of crops, but in the dryness of the marrow they cover refuse.

It is necessary therefore, brothers, to sow now the true seeds of virtues, whence afterwards we may be able to gather the eternal joys of heavenly fruits. Let us consider what the Apostle says: "He who sows sparingly, shall also reap sparingly (2 Cor. 9)." He namely sows sparingly who does few good things, who thinks little of abounding

in virtues, who neglects to profit in the study of bestowing mercy and humanity, who does not extend himself in exhibiting the offices of fraternal charity. Furthermore, however, he sows not sparingly but abundantly, who keeps the sentence of the same distinguished preacher: "Doing good," he says, "let us not fail: For in its time we shall reap, not failing (Gal. 6)." He sows not sparingly who strives to fulfill what he himself says elsewhere: "Whatever you do, brothers, whether in word or in deed, do all for the glory of the Lord (1 Cor. 10)." Plainly he who receives eternal life, reaps not sparingly, but much. What is it therefore that he says, he who sows sparingly, shall also reap sparingly; unless as if he manifestly denounces that he who is content to sow sparingly in good works, by no means deserves to receive the reward of eternal life? Just as therefore, my brothers, whoever wishes to live aptly according to the order of this transitory life, is not content with one kind of any harvest, but busies himself to abound in kinds of diverse fruits; so indeed whoever hastens to the land of the living, whoever to that heavenly storehouse, it is necessary that he exercise himself through many labors of good works, and strive to gather the seeds of all virtues within the storehouse of his conscience.

Strive therefore, brothers, that you may have true humility, charity not feigned, longanimity of patience, chastity of flesh and heart, true obedience, bowels of piety, and gifts of sincere mercy and of other virtues, in as much as it is possible for you, God granting it, and so that you may store

away as it were a rich and manifold abundance of spiritual crops in the storehouse of your breast.

Nor think that one virtue is sufficient for anyone for perfect salvation, if it happens that the others are lacking. For neither is it each one a virtue, if it is not mixed with other virtues. Let the breastplate of patience always fortify your breast, and against all the darts of adversities, against the scourges of tribulations, against injuries inflicted, let it render you insuperable. For thus the wheat is first threshed in the threshing floor, trodden, worn down, so that with the chaff cast away, it may afterwards be stored away clean in the storehouse.

So indeed it is necessary that our souls sustain many scourges of beatings and lashes, so that, with the straws of iniquities laid aside, they may reach the heavenly barn purged.

For hence it is what Blessed James says: "Be patient until the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth, patiently bearing, until he receives the early and the late (James 5)."

Finally, do not hope in the profit of temporal things. And that I may speak with the Prophet: "If riches abound, do not set your heart upon them (Psalm 61)."

In these successes, therefore, let him return to your memory who was saying: "I will destroy my barns, and make greater ones, and there I will gather all things that are born to me and my goods, and I will say to my soul: Soul, thou hast many goods laid up for very many years, rest, eat,

drink, feast (Luke 12)." To whom immediately it was answered by the divine voice: "Thou fool, this night they shall require thy soul from thee: but the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be? (Ibid.)"

Oh, how many today threshing the fruits of the fields gather in storehouses, who will not see the crops of another year in this world! To whom namely the world now smiles, but nearby death lies in wait in ambushes. Who indeed, if they recognized so near a limit of their calling, would transfer their appetite elsewhere from earthly substances.

Therefore, my brothers, as much more as you are uncertain about the end of your life, so much more fearfully be always on your guard. Do not retain among you the tithes of your things, lest there the terrible judge should require them from you by an accounting, where no one will be able to have what he may return. Weigh what the Lord says through Malachi. For when the divine voice was disputing about the return of Israel, it immediately added: "And you said: In what do we pierce Thee? In tithes, and in firstfruits: and in penury you are cursed, and you pierce me, the whole nation, to bring in every tithe into the barn, that there may be food in my house (Malachi 3)." The Apostle says: "Render to all their dues." And a little after: "Owe no man anything," he says, "but to love one another (Rom. 13)." If therefore we are prohibited from retaining human debts, consider how dangerous it is not to render to God what are God's (Luke

20). Exhibit reverence to the Priests, and humbly obey their commands. "Obey," says the Apostle, "your superiors, and be subject to them; for they watch as if to render an account for your souls, that they may do this with joy, and not groaning; for this is not expedient for you (Hebr. 13)." For if our Redeemer, on account of the merit of the Canaanite woman, expelled the demon from her daughter (Matt. 15), if on account of the faith of those offering he commanded the paralytic to carry his bed (Mark 2), if by the prayers of the centurion he returned the boy, who was badly tortured, unharmed (Matt. 8); how necessarily do we need the prayers of the priests, who offer us to God sick with various languors of vices, and incessantly insist with daily prayers before the divine clemency for us? By whose merits without doubt we are lifted up, even if we are still depressed from the languor of our negligence.

Meanwhile plainly also that returns to the mind which happened to this blessed martyr Stephen, whom the present sermon has served. For, as it is narrated in the authentic history of his passion, as soon as he baptized Nemesius, who had asked him on account of the blindness of his daughter, the same Lucilla, although she had not yet been washed by the bath of the sacred font, received light. And when, he says, Nemesius was raised from the water, his daughter began to cry out saying: Behold I see a man who touched my eyes, and a splendid light around him, and immediately it is added: Then he baptized her daughter. O laudable divine virtue! O to be preached

clemency of our redemption! One is baptized for light, and to the other light is restored. The father received that of the heart, and the daughter immediately opened the eyes of the face. Both however reach to the one and true light, while they reject all blindness of their former error. So namely Blessed Stephen, who, according to the voice of Truth, was the light of this world (John 1), was infusing light into hearts, and was offering the sacrifice of souls to the divine gazes. This sacrifice, my brothers, with Blessed Stephen let us also always strive to offer to God according to our small measure, so that we may be solicitous not only about our own salvation, but also intently alert to gain the souls of our neighbors; so that while the host of charity is burned on the altar of our breast, our sacrifice may deserve to be received in an odor of sweetness by Him, who on the altar of the cross deigned to be immolated for our salvation, Jesus Christ our Lord, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns for ages of ages. Amen.

SERMON XXXVIII.

ON THE HOLY MARTYRS DONATUS AND HILARIANUS. (AUGUST 7)

The distinguished solemnity of the blessed martyrs Donatus and Hilarianus is present, most beloved, which, while it convokes the frequency of your devotion from diverse parts into one, also invites us not to be silent about their distinguished praise according to our small measure.

For this is the day in which, deserting this sad world, they laid down the burden of the flesh, and obtained the robe of angelic clarity. Today, the devil having been triumphed over, they carried back the palm of the glorious contest to the emperor of the heavenly militia. Today, purpled with their own blood, with groups of hymn-singing angels alternating on every side, they brought the banner of the finished victory into the heavenly kingdoms. Proceeding step by step, consequently through the fight to the palm, through the palm they were promoted to the crown. Indeed they seemed to conflict with a visible enemy, but in him they deserved to overcome an invisible adversary. They were opposing the barrier of their bodies to the hostile darts, but their faith, supported by the most fortified citadel of the mind, stood forth inexpugnable.

But when we run through the common deeds of both martyrs, we find that there was some distance of conduct between them. And indeed one could not absurdly conjecture that Hilarianus was that Hilarion whose life is described by Blessed Jerome, unless the disparate end of each prohibited it. For he who runs through with a vigilant eye the series of their lives, the miracles also with which they shone forth, and likewise the places which they illustrated with their habitations, as the monuments declare, finds no small similarity in the collations of the things themselves. But since the one reached the palm of martyrdom, the other rested in peace from this life, it is established without doubt that they are

diverse in person, whom certainly we know to have been consummated by a diverse kind of migration. Who namely, according to the similarity of their names, although they agree in the former parts, disagree in the end.

Blessed Donatus however, whom the present sermon is especially about to serve, as his truthful history testifies, was a companion to Julian Caesar not only in the studies of the liberal arts, but also together with him received the first rudiments of the ecclesiastical grade. Where it is to be noted and more fearfully thought how many a deep are the divine judgments (Psalm 35), and how terrible is God in counsels over the sons of men (Psalm 65). For behold in the field of the Lord two saplings grow up together, of which one through occult grace is a cedar of paradise, the other as fuel is prepared for fires never to be finished. That one from the schools to the kingdom, from the kingdom is thrust naked into hell; this one having been made a priest, is snatched from the chair to punishment, from punishment purpled and crowned is elevated into heaven. To that one the world smiled, the heavenly hall did not open; this one after he endured the shipwreck of the worldly tempest, reached the port of eternal rest with happy security.

For in these is proved that true evangelical sentence, in which it is said: "Because there shall be two in the field; one shall be taken, and the other shall be left (Luke 17)." Each however, just as the angel and the devil, served God with an intuition of diverse intention. That one coerced,

this one undoubtedly voluntary. For is not Julian the Apostate also convicted of having obeyed the divine laws, when his bloody rage was bubbling up against the martyrs of Christ, and he brought in so many as it were mature crops of the elect into the Lord's barn, cut down by the sickle of his persecution? For to this the tyrannical power was applied to a reprobate will, and the horns were divinely exalted for the fat bull, so that he might winnow the threshing floor of the highest father of the family, and might discern the clean grains from the chaff which are liable to the fires. Hence it is that Histories hand down that to this Julian, stationed within a certain basilica of the Gauls, the crown which was hanging over him suddenly fell upon his vertex, and thus portended the sign that he ought to become emperor in the opinion of the people. But better we leave the burning firebrand in its fire, so that we may pluck the sweetly smelling fruits of the budding tree.

The blessed priest and martyr Donatus therefore offered this fine flour to God, and burned it as a memorial of most sweet odor, when he converted the people of the gentiles in the unity of the spirit to the sacraments of the faith. For the fruit of souls smells more fragrantly in the sight of God than any sweetness of sacrifices. This sacrifice, my brothers, let us also always strive to offer to God according to our small measure with blessed Donatus, so that we may be not only solicitous for our own salvation, but also skillfully intent upon gaining the souls of our neighbors; so that, while the victim of charity is burned on

the altar of our heart, our sacrifice may merit to be accepted by him as an odor of sweetness, who deigned to be immolated on the altar of the cross for our salvation.

Furthermore, the holy man burned with such zeal for the faith toward his own, that his gentile parents still cast him off, and completely renounced the sweet pledge from their affections; but afterwards he both led them to the sacraments of the Christian faith, and moreover sent them before himself to martyrdom by a fitting ordination. Whence that famous man is rightly to be reckoned among the blessed martyrs, who is at once the son and the father of martyrs. The son indeed by nature; the father by the grace of the bestowed faith, and he begot for God by a grateful vicissitude those by whom he had been begotten for the world. Blessed are the parents who begot such a one in the earthly inheritance, through whom namely they become co-heirs of the supernal citizens in the land of the living. Rejoice also you, happy Arezzo, who merited such a patron from the divine liberality. Rejoice, I say, and congratulate with all your bowels in the Lord; because, while you cherish the remains of the sacred body in your bosom, you contain the pearl to be solemnly impressed of the crown of the supernal king. You keep a treasure to which gold cannot worthily be compared, nor any sum of any riches whatsoever be equaled. Whence you should no longer be called Arezzo (Aritium) according to custom, which name is established for you from the aridity of the earth, but rather

you [should be called] Auritium from the most precious gold (auro) namely of the sacred corpse, which is proved hidden in your bowels.

Blessed therefore and rich is the vein of the earth, which as if made a depositary for the supernal king, hides that talent entrusted to its borders, which on the day of restitution is to be brought into the heavenly treasuries, where living and ignited stones glow perpetually, where dining rooms radiating with gold blooming pearls clearly adorn. Which undoubtedly will then be fulfilled without hesitation, when our jubilee shall arrive, when that final trumpet, no longer of the law but of judgment, shall begin to sound. For just as the seventh day, so also the jubilee year is commanded to be a holiday, through which namely the rest of eternal life is figured.

When the Jubilee arrives therefore, the trumpet sounds, and soon each one returns to his ancient possessions; because, as judgment approaches: In the voice of the Archangel, in the last trumpet (I Thess. 5), the possession of their own bodies is restored to all mortals. For Paul testifies: "The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise incorrupt (I Cor. 15)." Blessed are those souls, my brothers, which then, while they clothe themselves with their own bodies, obtain a participation with the holy martyrs. Blessed are they who so now keep watch at the memories of the saints, that they always propose their examples to themselves for imitation; who so frequent their solemnities by praising, that they nevertheless do not recede from their path by living.

For we follow the holy martyrs if, while they contemned the sufferings of their own bodies, we also strive to break the wills of our own flesh.

We venerate therefore, brothers, and with vows and worthy services let us honor these blessed martyrs, Donatus namely and Hilarianus: through whom, as if two eyes of supernal light, almighty God willed to illustrate the body of all Tuscany; so that, while we follow the glorious martyrs now by loving and imitating, we may merit to reach the emperor of martyrs, they interceding, our Lord Jesus Christ, who with God the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XXXIX.

ON SAINT CASSIAN THE MARTYR (AUGUST 13).

The admirable and glorious dispensation of our Creator, most dear brothers, so instituted the course of our mortality, that through the successions of following times, diverse festivities of the victorious soldiers of Christ occur to us, which kindle our minds to the love of that highest and continuous solemnity. Plainly, when almighty God varies the circle of the whole year by the triumphal titles now of martyrs, now of confessors, what else does he do but as if construct a garland of glory, which namely is depicted with the beautiful variety of lilies and roses. Among which festivities, certainly, today's is not ignoble, namely that of the martyrs Hippolytus and Cassian, which shines as if the twin light of two

stars. These most strenuous warriors of the eternal king surely lay under diverse punishments in diverse places; but for both there was one cause of contest, because a non-dissimilar profession of truth had animated both. For indeed Cassian, whom the present sermon is especially about to serve, lay hidden for a long time, but when he came to the contest, he opened what of bitterness, what of flavor, what of strength the grain of mustard might hide. Nay, according to the presage of his name, when in the mortar of the passion he began to be pounded and worn by the hands of the persecutors, he soon sprinkled the fragrance of odoriferous sweetness which lay hidden in him. For Cassia is an aromatic species, which whole indeed seems to be of no odor; but when crushed it emits the force of natural sweetness.

Blessed Cassian therefore, as the history of his deeds testifies, while he was a teacher of schools, and was instructing boys to comprehend words by short notes, was led to questioning for the faith of Christ. And when, kindled with zeal for the faith, he contemned the decrees of the judges and trampled upon the profane sacrifices, he was delivered to the hands of his disciples to be tortured; so that by a reverse turn he might pay the penalties to those whom he himself had recently terrified under the rod of discipline. Soon therefore, stripped of his garments, his hands are bound behind his back, and he is surrounded by a troop of furious boys armed with styli and tablets; who, pricked and torn asunder on all

sides, is lacerated in his whole body. Plainly a new and unusual kind of martyrdom consecrated the distinguished martyr to God. Moreover, this species of martyrdom seems able to agree with no one better, for comparing a similitude, than with the king of martyrs himself, the Lord Savior. For he also was killed by his own faithful, namely the Jews, to whom he had delivered the precepts of the Decalogue described with his own finger, whom he had instructed by his ceremonies and rites of sacrifices; whom surely he had informed to every rectitude of living, as if tender boys under discipline. As he himself says through Isaiah: "I have nourished and exalted sons, but they have despised me (Isaiah 1)." For those carnal Israelites also had been worthy of the name of boys, who did not weigh the commands of the law and the mysteries of the prophets with senile gravity, but understood all things superficially and childishly; which since it can be established by diverse authority of the Scriptures, let it suffice to set down here only that which is read to have happened to the prophet Elisha. For when he was ascending by the way which leads to Bethel, small boys coming out of the city mocked him, saying: "Ascend, baldy; ascend, baldy." Who when he had looked back, saw them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord. And soon the Scripture subjoins: "Because two bears came out of the forest, and lacerated forty-two boys from among them (IV Kings 2)." Surely who is to be understood by Elisha, unless the Mediator of God and men? And what is expressed by Bethel,

which is interpreted house of God, unless heavenly beatitude? By the way therefore which leads to Bethel, our Redeemer was ascending when he was approaching his passion; just as already in that sacrosanct and mystical supper he says to his disciples: "I go to him who sent me (John 16)." But while he ascends to Bethel, that is, while through the mystery of his most sacred Passion he contends to return to the Father, small boys coming out of the city mock him, saying: "Ascend baldy, ascend baldy." Because the Jews, void of all weight of gravity and wisdom, and small in that childhood of which it is said: "The boy of a hundred years shall be cursed (Isaiah 65)," drag him to the place which is called Calvary, and burn against him with the viperous furies of derisions and reproaches; moreover, that place was called Calvary from the cut-off baldnesses, because there the condemned were accustomed to be beheaded.

And it is to be noted that the boys are said to have come out of the city: because, as the Apostle says: "That he might sanctify the people through his own blood, the Lord suffered outside the gate (Hebrews 13)." Furthermore, what follows, since "two bears coming out of the forest lacerated forty-two boys from among them," the number of years is signified by the number of boys. For in the forty-second year after the Lord's passion, as histories hand down, Titus and Vespasian, two kings from the forests of the nations, like two fierce bears, lacerated the boys from the forest; because coming to the destruction of Jerusalem,

they fought against the Jews in fury. By the boys therefore were signified those who crucified the Lord; boys also are they who killed the blessed martyr Cassian. Both surely not an innocent childhood, but a skilled and poisonous malice. Christ was killed for Cassian, Cassian was killed for Christ: the Lord for the servant, and the servant for the Lord; for he said: "What shall I render to the Lord for all things which he has rendered to me? I will take the cup of salvation, and I will invoke the name of the Lord (Psalm 115)." But he deigned to die, so that he might lead this one out from under the yoke of iron servitude; to this one it was granted to die, so that he might arrive with glory at the inheritance of the sons, to which he had been ascribed. He undertook death, so that he might destroy death in his own flesh; this one did not fear to die, so that he might bring back the victor's insignia of his triumph to the author of life. That one had persecutors whom he had created; this one endured those executioners whom he was teaching. But Christ was fighting in his martyr, who was administering the strengths of fighting; in him he alone himself was conquering, who was strengthening him during the contests. For even the whole universal Church, girded with the arms of virtues, fights against the devil through the whole course of this mortal life in Christ, and in Christ always triumphs not by her own, but by his virtue. This victory plainly from the ancient enemy, because the Synagogue would not, the Church undertook.

Which we show better to you, most dear brothers, if we recall to memory the victory of the old testament which was made through a woman. For, so that the sacred history may be comprehended in a few words, Deborah the prophetess, wife of Lapidoth, was judging the people at that time, and she sat under a palm tree between Ramah and Bethel, on mount Ephraim, and the sons of Israel ascended to her for every judgment (Judges 4). But thus one arrives at the end more quickly, if, while the history is woven, it is explained by parts in the meantime. By Deborah surely, which is interpreted speech or bee, prophecy is not inconveniently accepted. For a bee makes honey, and of prophecy it is said by the Psalmist: "How sweet are your speeches to my jaws, O Lord, above honey and the honeycomb to my mouth!" (Psalm 118.) In the meantime I do not wish it to be hidden from you, most beloved, that this history, which we undertook to treat on occasion, needs more words, because it is filled with many mysteries: but for that reason we contract it under brevity, so that we may not burden your love with the weariness of prolixity. Let us consider therefore where the prophecy is described to have its seat, namely under a palm tree, because those whom prophetic doctrine instructs by its institutions, it leads to the palm of supernal vocation, and while through it men learn the order of living, they become victors of the rebelling vices. Nor is it to be passed over that she is said to have sat between Ramah and Bethel. Ramah indeed is interpreted lofty, Bethel house

of God, as we have already said. Rightly therefore prophecy is described to dwell between Ramah and Bethel; because whoever strives to keep watch for prophetic doctrines, whoever sincerely has leisure for the speeches of the sacred Scriptures, so dwells in the house of God through the desire of the mind, that he may always inquire after not weak and momentary things, but rather lofty and heavenly ones.

This [prophecy] called Barak to itself. Moreover, Barak is interpreted flashing (coruscatio). Now flashing indeed has light, but not for very long. For as soon as it begins to shine, it immediately fails. This Barak therefore holds the figure of the Israelite people, which first of all instructed by prophetic oracles, shone for a little while in the received law, but flashed for a brief time. In the law, indeed, of which it was said: "Your word is a lamp to my feet, O Lord, and a light to my paths (Psalm 118)," that ancient people began to shine, but ceased. It brought forth as if the lightning of a clear life, but did not remain in lucid works. For while they were saying: "All things which the Lord has commanded us, we will both hear and do," behold as if the light of flashing arose; but while they suddenly bent their knees before Baal, behold the flashing was seen extinguished. Deborah said therefore to Barak: "The Lord God of Israel has commanded you: Take with you ten thousand fighters, and go into mount Tabor. Moreover, I will lead to you in the place of the torrent Kishon, Sisera the prince of the army of Jabin, and his chariots and all his multitude, and

I will deliver them into your hand (Judges 4)." As if through prophetic doctrine almighty God says to the former people: Assume the ten precepts of the law, and ascend the summit of virtues, and thus prostrate the prince of the reprobate and the author of all iniquity, with me administering strength to you.

Nor is it to be passed over that that prince of the warfare, Sisera, who was liable to proximate perdition, was promised beforehand to be led to the torrent Kishon. For what is to be understood by the torrent Kishon, unless baptism? For when the catechumen is immersed in the washing of the sacred font, just as Sisera with his army, so the most wicked spirit with those vices which fight for it must necessarily be destroyed. Barak however replied to Deborah: If you come with me, I will go; if you will not come, I will not go. As if that carnal Israel should reply to prophecy: Unless I have you always with me according to the letters, and as if according to a womanly understanding, I do not presume to enter upon the spiritual contest. To whom Deborah [replies]: I will indeed go with you, but the victory will not be reputed to you, because Sisera shall be delivered into the hand of a woman. As if that old people hears: The exterior prophecy, as you ask, will indeed be with you; but the spiritual triumph over the ancient enemy, not you, but rather the holy Church shall obtain. To her surely, to her shall the victory arrive by right, who in the mysteries of Scripture, while she seeks the marrow of spiritual intelligence, does not greatly attend

to the chaff of the killing letter. A battle having been joined therefore, at length Sisera fled into the house of Jael, namely of a foreign woman. Who surely opened a skin of milk for the thirsty one and gave him a drink; then she fixed a nail into his brain through both temples, and thus in the species of a man killed the devil, the head of all the perverse. For what does Jael, which is interpreted ascension, signify unless the holy Church, through which namely alone heavenly beatitude is shown? Whence also the Synagogue says of the same Church in the Canticles: "Who is she who ascends from the desert flowing with delights, leaning upon her beloved?" (Cant. 8.) This woman was foreign, because the holy Church proceeded from gentility. This one first gave the enemy of the Israelites milk to drink, afterwards she fixed a stake into his head; because the enemy of the human race, whom the holy Church first nourished by living carnally, afterwards by conversing spiritually, she extinguished by a certain sharpness and virtue of the cross. For unless the insatiable murderer thirsted for the perdition of the human race with an altogether unquenchable greed, the Scripture surely would not say of him: "He will absorb a river, and will not wonder, and has confidence that the Jordan may flow into his mouth (Job 40)." Milk however is the fruit of the flesh, and signifies the allurements of carnal pleasure.

As long, therefore, as the gentile people lived voluptuously according to the law of the flesh, they offered our death to the devil as if milk,

thus the softness of their life to the thirsty one. But after they constrained themselves under the discipline of the spirit, they soon seized the arms of the invincible cross, and the enemy of human salvation, whom they had recently given to drink with the milk of pleasure, they now transfixed with the wood, fortified by the protection of penance. Thus, therefore, whom the Israelite people could not overcome, a foreign woman, that is the gentile Church, prostrated by the wood of the cross alone.

Hence it is that also here the most invincible soldier of Christ, Blessed Cassian, could not be overcome among the most grave torments of his punishments, because an iron breastplate did not surround him, a crested helmet did not protect him, but only the wood of the cross armed him. For he who is fortified by the banner of this wood, securely enters the conflict of spiritual wickedness. The sacrilegious Philistine was ignorant of this sign when he came together for war against David, and therefore soon died, struck in the forehead (1 Kings 17), where namely he did not imprint the seal of life upon himself. This sign of salvation is painted on the forehead, where namely the high priest in the law was commanded to place a gold plate for glory and beauty (Exodus 28), in which plate namely that glorious and ineffable four-letter name (tetragrammaton) of the Lord was seen engraved. Which surely, what else did it seem to express than the cross of the Savior? For just as the cross has four points, so that name consists of four letters.

The cross, therefore, the beauty and glory of the sacerdotal office, is placed on the forehead, so that, the lintel of the house having been sprinkled with the blood of the lamb, the sword of the passing angel may be evaded (Exodus 12). On the contrary, in this part of the body that king Uzziah was struck with leprosy (2 Chronicles 26), according to the voice of the Prophet saying: "Fill their faces with ignominy (Psalm 82)," who, while he arrogantly swelled at the royal height, usurped for himself the license of sacrificing, which was due to priests alone.

Foreseeing this sign in the spirit, David said rejoicing: "The light of your countenance is sealed upon us, O Lord"; and therefore he subjoins: "You have given gladness in my heart (Psalm 4)." How precious and how wonderful the sign of the cross is, my brothers, which both destroyed every proud one with the author of pride himself, and raises those struggling for Christ into the advancement of triumphal glory! "Behold," says Simeon, "this one is placed for the ruin and for the resurrection of many in Israel (Luke 2)." A precious sign, I say, is the cross, but as we bear it on the forehead, would that we might carry it in the heart. For he truly has the sign of the cross imprinted on his heart who loves Christ, who was suspended on the cross, who embraces him with the whole love of the heart, who surely delights in him with all his bowels, who rejects whatever things are prohibited by him, and guards with love those which are commanded. For they are enemies of the cross of Christ whose

end, as the Apostle says, "is destruction, and glory is in their confusion, who savor earthly things (Philippians 3)." There are also friends of the cross of Christ, whose conversation namely is in heaven. Surely in the tremendous judgment, whoever will not have the character of this vital sign will be among those on the left. Nor will he receive a reward from him who is the Judge, who was crucified, who will not show the ensign of the cross imprinted on himself. Indeed, in the book of Ezekiel the Lord commands this sign to be imprinted on the foreheads of those groaning and grieving; then he commands all the others who are found without this sign to be killed (Ezekiel 9).

For if we look diligently, we perceive that the commands of the old instrument themselves also smell of the sacrament of the cross. For when the law given by God is delivered under the number ten, which number namely is designated by the letter X, what else is expressed in this than the figure of the cross? For this letter has the appearance of a cross, which, while it comprehends the number ten in itself, evidently shows that all the mandates of the law military for the cross.

Let us love, therefore, most beloved, Christ, let us love the cross, and let each of us watchfully be vigilant to repress the perverse will in himself. Let us not only express this sign of life on the forehead of the flesh, but let us moreover hide it in the innermost bowels of a chaste and sober will, fulfilling that which the bridegroom commands the bride in the Canticles: "Place me," he says, "as

a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm (Song of Songs 8)." It is clear that what the heart thinks, the arm performs. He therefore places Christ upon his heart as a seal who loves him from the marrow, who fervently pants after him, who anxiously entreats him, who continually perseveres in his desire. But he places Christ upon his arm who, also insisting upon his mandates outwardly, demonstrates even in operation him whom he hides in the bowels of the heart. For we also place a sign on any member of ours so that we may not lose the memory of a thing which is dear to us. Let Christ therefore be had in the heart, and let him be had as a seal in operation, so that his memory, always living in us, may both restrain the perverse subreptitious thoughts, and evidently exhibit the character of the Crucified in those things which we do outwardly. Indeed, if Christ shall be a seal to us, he also places us as a seal to himself in a grateful vicissitude. According to what is promised to Zerubbabel the leader of Judea, saying: "In that day I will take you, Zerubbabel my servant, and I will place you as a seal in my sight (Haggai 2)." For in the sight of God the just is placed as a seal, because through the grace of continual love he is always had in his memory. But on the contrary, of the impious king Jeconiah, who, because he was unmindful of almighty God, did not deserve to be in his memory himself: "If," he says, "Jeconiah were the right ring on my hand, from there I will pluck him (Jeremiah 22)."

How inviolable and firm a seal Blessed martyr Cassian had placed Christ in his breast, who

remained immobile in the constancy of such great faith! The blows of lashes are struck, the wounds of piercings are inflicted, the darts of derisions are twisted, chains are fastened to his hands. Body nakedness also approaches, and also the spectacle of deriders barking on every side. Among these whirlwinds of raging storms, among those tempests of frequent hailstorms, the firm column of God stands altogether immobile. It is not shaken, it is not shattered; but it always leans straight and firmly constant upon the stone upon which it is founded. For he was saying: "Who shall separate me from the charity of Christ? tribulation? or distress? or persecution? or hunger? or nakedness? or danger? or the sword?" (Romans 8.) They were gnashing with their teeth; he was thinking of the patience of the mild Lamb taking away the sins of the world. The executioners by bringing in supplications were satisfying the bloody rage of their breast; he, already secure in mind, was turning over the dignity of heavenly glory.

And, if I may say so, that cautious and prudent negotiator, my brothers, what happy markets he contracted with Christ the remunerator of those struggling! He was laying down the burden of the flesh, and was hastening to the robe of angelic brightness. He was carrying the rod of the cruel boys, so that he might become a companion of the holy angels. He was postponing the mastery of teaching letters, and was hastening alacritously to that one Word, for whom all the volumes of letters throughout the world military,

Christ our Lord, who with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns for ages of ages. Amen.

* SERMON XL. ON THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY. (AUGUST 15)

Here let all genius run its course, and let the golden speech shine with all majesty. May the mother of God, the mistress of the world, the queen of heaven, make the voluntary good-pleasures of our mouth (Psalm 118) for herself. May she sharpen the sense, direct the stylus, and sprinkle the tongue of the poor one with a more beautiful eloquence. May she illustrate this light with a clearer light, and may she deign to give her presence to her assembly. Sublime is this day, and refulgent with a more splendid sun, in which the royal Virgin is carried up to the throne of God the Father, and placed in the seat of the Trinity itself, she solicits even the angelic nature to see. The whole crowd of angels is gathered together so that it may see the queen sitting at the right hand of the Lord of virtues, in gilded clothing (Psalm 44), in a body always immaculate, surrounded by variety, distinguished by a multiplicity of virtues.

This is that day which has crowned the workshops of the heavens with a more sublime joy, annual to the world, continual to the angels, continuing men to angels, and joining angels to men in a happy federation. Behold with mental eyes the Son ascending and the Mother assumed, and you will see something more excellent exhibited in the Ascension of the Son, and something more

glorious demonstrated in the Assumption of the Virgin. For the Savior ascended into heaven by the command of potestative virtue, as Lord and Creator, accompanied by the service of angels, not supported by help. Mary was assumed into heaven, but by the judgment of lifting grace, with angels accompanying and helping, whom grace, not nature, was lifting up. Therefore this day is called the Assumption, that the Ascension; since power is one thing, mercy another, and it is the privilege of the Creator alone to transcend the nature of things by his own power. This is that more excellent thing which the Creator claims for himself over the creature, where even superabundant and singular grace may not dare to aspire.

But if we carefully attend to the Ascension of the Son and the Assumption of the Mother, we will surely find something which we will rejoice to have found. Indeed, all that glorious society of blessed spirits went out to meet the ascending Lord, when he preferred the lower nature to the superior, and enclosed the assumed man in the very identity of divinity by an inconvertible sacrament. Moreover, to the meeting angels, he joined the souls of the elect, whom he was leading out with him, and thus led to the Father by the triumphal pomp of both, he sits at the right hand of majesty. Lift up now your eyes to the Assumption of the Virgin, and, saving the majesty of the Son, you will find the meeting of this pomp not moderately more worthy. For only the angels were able to meet the Redeemer,

but to the Mother penetrating the palaces of the heavens, the Son himself, solemnly meeting with the whole court as well of angels as of the just, carried her up to the consistory of the blessed session, and says: "You are all beautiful, my friend, and there is no spot in you (Song of Songs 4)." All beautiful, because all deified; there is no spot in you, because the Holy Spirit has come upon you, who has cleansed you. But the Virgin also, crowded with gracious gifts, responds with such great benignity in Davidic speech, admiring the clarity of the highest dignity: "You have held my right hand, and in your will you have led me, and with glory you have received me (Psalm 72)." Note the position of the words marked by a different distinction of grades. She says, "You have held my right hand," because even if your left is under my head, your right now embraces me. And in your will you have led me, not in my sublimity, because the whole is a work of grace, not of nature. And with glory you have received me; a glory surely glorious, which no one knows except him who gave it, and to whom he has deigned to give it.

Note, moreover, the diligence and consequence of the Scriptures. For the Holy Spirit, in whose workshop the structure of both the Old and New Testament was fabricated, traversing the Ascension of the Son and the Assumption of the Mother with a similar style, asks three times: "Who is this?" (Psalm 23.) And three times repeats: "Who is she?" (Song of Songs 3.) First let us see concerning the Son, afterwards concerning

the Mother. In the spirit of fortitude the Savior descending to the lower regions, crushed the brazen gates and broke the iron bars, and the fragments of the hellish pot having been dissipated, he shook that whole unhappy habitation with a ruinous concussion, with the angels crying out: "Lift up your gates, you princes (Psalm 23)"; those who fell by an irremediable lapse of pride, retort with disdainful ignorance: "Who is this king of glory?" (Ibid.) This is that foolish one who said in his heart: "There is no God (Psalm 13)." And: "I do not know the Lord, and I will not let Israel go (Exodus 5)." The angels of peace confidently redouble: "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle (Psalm 23)"; strong to weaken your strength; mighty to empty your power; in that surely salutary battle, by which he singularly warred down the powers of the air. Rising from the lower regions, and bringing back the banners of solemn victory, he resuscitated the man united to himself, whom he never dismissed, and carried into the heavens with a triumphant palm, representing to the Father the hundredth sheep which he had lost (Luke 15), he hears from the angels: "Who is this king of glory?" but also with the same crying out: "The Lord of virtues, he is the king of glory (Psalm 23)"; they sounded in the palace of the heavens, and the whole house above the heavens overflowed with more profuse joys. Truly the Lord of virtues making virtue in the Resurrection, which he had not made before, redeeming the servant, and making a son instead of a servant. On the most

clear day of the Ascension, when, with the disciples seeing, he was lifted into heaven (Mark 16), that highest and reverend assembly came to meet the Redeemer, and all that authority of angels both assisting and ministering ran to the Son, and admiring him ascending says: "Who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" (Isaiah 63.) For seeing him drenched with a wave of bloody redness, they admire his patience and the ferocity of the Jews, who were not afraid to condemn the Son of God with the ignominy of the cross. "Walking," they say, "in the multitude of his strength (Ibid.)": not only in strength, but also in the multitude of strength; because no strength was stronger than to redeem the servant and place him perpetually at the right hand of divinity.

These are those voices which follow him descending to the lower regions, rising from the lower regions, ascending to the heavens, with a multiform praise. But now the stylus must be turned to the holy of holies, and the property of those words must be unfolded which are specially dedicated to the Virgin mother. But that we may propose the lintel title on the front of the future building, let us say briefly that the first interrogation corresponds to her Nativity, the second to her conversation, the third to the Assumption. "Who is she," says the Holy Spirit concerning her Nativity, "who goes forth like the rising dawn, fair as the moon, chosen as the sun, terrible as an army set in order?" (Song of Songs 6.) This is she "who did not know the bed in sin

(Wisdom 3)." The Virgin singularly consecrated to the Son of God, specially joined to the Holy Spirit. "Who goes forth," he says, "like the rising dawn." How elegant and clear a similitude, and descending from the discipline of him who affluently enclosed the highest fountain of wisdom in the Canticles!

In meridian light that first parent was created, made to the image and likeness of the Founder. For what is clearer than for the created not to be dissimilar to the Creator? "Let us make," he says, "man to our image and likeness (Genesis 1)." He gave him the image in eternity, the likeness in morals; so that he might be similar to the Creator, if not in identity, yet in likeness. But he, the dignity of such great privilege being rejected, beguiled by the false promise of the apostate spirit, adhered to it, and destined himself with his posterity to perpetual death and to darkness. From that hour darkness was made over the whole earth even to the Virgin; nor was anyone found who either might go out from the darkness or dissipate the darkness; but as the world grew, the dark abyss also grew, until, gathered into the densest blackness, it buried the human race in a terrible night. This is that solitary night, nor worthy of praise, of which it is written: "You have placed darkness, and night was made (Psalm 103)." In it all the beasts of the forest had remained, because the cruel and untamed spirits, the bars having been moved away, crushed the human race with all their strength. But with the Virgin born, the dawn arose; because Mary, the

precursor of the true light, by her nativity cleared the most bright morning. This is the morning star in the midst of the mist, which, flashing with the highest splendor in the hinge of heaven, colors the subject world with more splendid rays. This is the dawn, which the Sun of justice follows, nay, from which he is born, succumbing to the clarity of him alone. This is the dawn, which he did not see who saw every sublime thing; and blessed Job prays that it may be closed to him with much suppression, saying: "Let it not see the rising of the surging dawn (Job 3)." Yours is the day, O Lord, in which Adam was founded; yours is the night, in which Adam was cast out from the day; you have fabricated the dawn, that is the Virgin mother: and the sun, namely the Sun of justice, who arose from the virginal chamber. For just as the dawn testifies that the end of night and the beginning of day is present, so also the Virgin expelled the everlasting night, and poured from day the day, arisen from the earth of her virginity, upon the lands.

"She goes forth," he says, as if she steps out from afar, because "from afar, and from the ultimate ends is her price (Proverbs 31)." The Dawn, because she is the end of night and the beginning of light; surging, because rising above falling matter. Fair as the moon. What is fairer than the moon, when with flashing stars in the zodiacal limit it exceeds the splendor of the rest of the stars? Consider how both the serene vibration of the stars and the luminous brightness overpour the circular orb of such a great star,

so that it obfuscates the clarity of other lights not moderately? So also the Virgin, supereminent and carried up among the souls of the saints and the choirs of angels, precedes the merits of individuals and the titles of all. However much other stars may shine, yet the moon excels both in magnitude and in splendor. Thus the singular Virgin surpasses both natures both by the immensity of grace and by the brightness of virtues. Chosen as the sun. Attend to this similitude, than which none in the things of the world can be more sublime. For the Spirit had nothing more excellent in visible creatures to which he might compare the excellence of the Virgin. For the clarity of the sun has something much higher than that of the moon; because even if she obscures the smaller stars, she does not yet completely hide them; but this one, more lucidly glowing, so snatches to himself the position of the stars and the moon, that they are as if they were not, and cannot be seen.

Similarly also the rod of Jesse, precursor of the true light, shining in that inaccessible light, so dims the dignity of both spirits, that in comparison with the Virgin they neither can nor ought to appear. Or do you think that the whole rational creature does not tremble at the contemplation of such great dignity? Consider both the things in the heavens and those on the earth refabricated in the Virgin. God, who measures the heaven with a palm, enclosed in the brevity of a virginal womb, the redemption of men, the restoration of angels, finally whatever is, was, and will be

renewed through the Virgin's womb, and then thought will suggest to you what speech cannot demonstrate. "Chosen," he says, but also "preelected." "As the sun," because just as the sun alone illuminates the world, so she alone illustrates both angels and men with a more solid light. "Terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata," terrible to demons, set in order with virtues, singular fear of malignant spirits, special love of the blessed citizens.

It follows concerning her conversation: "Who is she who ascends through the desert, like a rod of smoke from the aromatics of myrrh and frankincense and all the powder of the apothecary? She is beautiful among the daughters of Jerusalem (Song of Songs 3)." The desert is the vastness of this world, in which the beasts of the field play more frequently, where that most wicked prince rules with all fortitude. Moreover, it is called a desert, as if derelict by the administration of virtues, when their assembly, iniquity abounding, has flown back to their own origins. "Who ascends," he says. Into the vanities of this age all are known either to descend or to fall, and rare is he who does not either descend or fall into the ocean of this most turbulent depth. She alone, that mother and daughter of the Creator, neither descended nor fell, but ascending from virtue into virtue she was clothed with the consummation of virtues. Moreover, how did she ascend? "Like a rod," he says, "of smoke." But recollect with how significant a similitude this operation is marked. A rod of smoke is straight, subtle,

odoriferous, and the more it is extended into the air, the more it is dilated. So also the queen of angels is straight in the sublimity of her conversation, because the rod of direction, the rod of the kingdom of the Lord (Psalm 44). Subtle in the contemplation of the deity, because she is the one who "kept all these words, conferring them in her heart (Luke 2)." Odoriferous in the opinion of virtues, because "we run into the odor of her ointments (Song of Songs 1)." Narrow in temporal things, because "there was no place for her in the inn (Luke 2)." Dilated in spiritual things, because "the queen stood at the right hand of the Lord (Psalm 44)." This is that rod by which the impetus of the opposing demons is beaten back: the rod of Aaron, through which signs and wonders are made. But understand the staff of the cross, by which was not only beaten, but also killed that incurable [or insatiable] murderer, who is fed and nourished by the deaths of men. In the Virgin rod and the staff cross, the hope and consolation of the miserable is contained. Just as the sublime Prophet declares with a clear voice: "Thy rod," he says, "and thy staff, they have comforted me (Psalm 22)."

It follows: "From the aromatics of myrrh and frankincense." The species from which the aromatic rod is raised are named: myrrh and frankincense. Myrrh consolidates dissolved bodies and claims for itself the lifeless cadaver lest it putrefy. But frankincense is burned to God in prayer, as we are taught by multiple testimonies of the Scriptures. Understand continence in the

myrrh, devotion in the frankincense. For the flesh of the Virgin assumed from Adam did not admit the stains of Adam, but the purity of singular continence was converted into the brightness of eternal light. Moreover, who will be able to equal her devotion with votive praises, when he remembers the archangel sent, the Spirit coming upon her, the Son conceived, God born, the new star, the glory of the magi, the grace of the gifts, and above all these things the testimony of her conscience? These are the two things which surrounded the virginal substance with all virtue, namely continence and devotion, of which the one so possessed the flesh, the other the mind, that the most pure flesh and most pure mind singularly consecrated the mother of the Lord.

But lest you should think the mistress of the world and queen of the heavens was distinguished by these two virtues alone, the authority of the Scriptures follows: "And all the powder of the apothecary." Here is expressed whatever could be expressed. Indeed, whole species yield an odor, but not as much as when broken. For when crushed by frequent poundings, they pour out an odoriferous scattering even to a more remote place. So also virtues indeed smell strongly in peace, but more strongly in tribulation, because virtue is acquired in peace, proved in persecution, approved in victory. All the powder of the apothecary, therefore, was cast into the Virgin, because in her the assembly of virtues consecrated a reverend chamber for itself, and if to others the Spirit flows in parts. Yet upon Mary

the whole fullness of grace came. Nor were the species whole in her, but broken into the most subtle [powder], because she is the one who, overcome by the stronger hammers of tribulations, saw her own and God's Son affixed to the cross, wounded by the military lance, and expire placed between two thieves (John 19).

It follows concerning her Assumption: "Who is she who ascends from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning upon her beloved?" This is that queen whom the daughters of Zion seeing, "proclaimed most blessed, and queens praised her (Song of Songs 6)." Moreover, she ascends today from the desert, that is from the world, sublimated to the height of the royal throne. "Flowing," he says, "with delights." Truly flowing, because "many daughters have gathered riches, this one has surpassed them all (Proverbs 31 [cited as XXIX])." Moreover, of her delights there is no number, because, while she receives the Holy Spirit, she conceives the Son of God, she generates the King of glory, she penetrates the heavens, crowded with riches, and flowing with delights she flies away to her eternal kingdom. "Leaning upon her beloved." The King of virtues is the Father of the beloved, in whom he was well pleased (Matthew 3, 17). Upon him that happier Mother leans, and reclining upon the golden couch of divine majesty, she rests within the arms of her spouse, nay of her Son. O how great dignity, how special power, to lean upon him whom the angelic powers reverence to behold!

These are therefore the things which deign to allude to the present festivity under shadows and images, and veiled with a more sacred covering they shine more graciously when they could be revealed. Amen.

SERMON XLI.

I. ON ST. BARTHOLOMEW THE APOSTLE. (AUGUST 24)

Today's festivity, most beloved, in which we recall the triumphal deeds of Blessed Bartholomew, is not proper to any one city or country, but is common to the entire Catholic Church. Nor is he worshipped and venerated by all without merit, who, as a noble architect, with his blessed fellow apostles, laid the foundation of faith, upon which the structure of the nascent Church arose. To this is added that, since the apostolic senate claims for itself the throne of judgment and holds the primacy of outstanding dignity among all the orders of the blessed, he, in their catalogue not moderately distinguished and conspicuous, holds the sixth place. For the evangelist Matthew says: "Now these are the names of the twelve apostles: first Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him (Matthew 10)." Therefore, having called these together, as the evangelist premised, the Lord gave them power over un-

clean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every infirmity (Ibid.). Mark also established him in the same sixth place (Mark 3). From this we can gather how great a prerogative of merits shone forth in blessed Bartholomew, who in apostolic dignity excels such sublime men of so great glory. For he is preferred to Matthew, who in the mystical chariot of the evangelists holds the principal place, and like the Pishon among the other rivers first gushes out from the fount of paradise (Genesis 2), and inundates all the breadth of the world with the flows of evangelical doctrine. He is nonetheless also placed before blessed Thomas, whose finger became the teacher of the world, who by a certain principal dignity is truly to be called the index, because he indicated the truth of the Lord's flesh to those who were ignorant. For this blessed apostle provided certainty for us by his doubt, and while he scrutinized the wounds of the Savior, he overturned the errors and subtleties of heretical depravity. For he touched the truth of the flesh, and understood the omnipotence of the deity. "My Lord," he said, "and my God (John 20)."

Although, therefore, nothing proper or singular is read concerning Blessed Bartholomew in the authentic books beyond the common history, nevertheless whatever is found digested by the style of the Scriptures from those over whom he is placed, is not doubted to redound to his praise; although all the holy apostles are proved to have the dignity of one privilege, the height of one summit, nor a disparate virtue of heavenly grace.

For the fact that the Lord wished to commit the keys of the kingdom of heaven to blessed Peter by a certain special tradition (Matthew 18), was done for this reason: that he might commend the unity of the Church. Moreover, whatever he gave to one specifically, he conferred upon all in common. For he says to all: "Receive the Holy Spirit; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained (John 20)." And Luke says: that having called the twelve apostles together, he gave them virtue and power over all demons, and to heal diseases (Luke 10). Whence also the Lord himself says: "Behold, I have given you power to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you (Ibid.)." And a little above: "He who hears you, hears me, and he who despises you, despises me (Ibid.)." That also he said to all: "He who believes in me, the works that I do, he also shall do; and greater than these shall he do, because I go to the Father (John 14)."

Furthermore, as for the fact that our Savior, to complete the apostolic order, wished to choose the quantity of the number twelve, this is the reason: Since three times four make twelve, and the order of reason demanded that twelve apostles be chosen, who would spread the faith of the Holy Trinity through the four parts of the world. This clearly mystical number is then recognized to belong undoubtedly to the holy apostles, when the Israelite people is narrated to have pitched camp in Elim; where namely there were twelve

springs and seventy palm trees (Exodus 15). For what is designated by the twelve springs, if not the holy apostles, who do not cease to irrigate the aridity of the human heart with the flows of holy preaching? What indeed by the seventy palms, if not the priests of a lower degree must be understood, who were established through the world to narrate the victories of Christ? For the palm is wont to honor the victorious hand. The name Elim itself also seems most aptly to fit the apostles. For Elim is translated as rams. They are indeed the leaders of the flock, the shepherds of the sheep, the teachers of the nations, the princes of the peoples. They themselves, supported by the authority of the two Testaments as if armed with two horns, drive away the lupine madness of heretics and those resisting God, that they may lead the following troops of sheep to the pastures of eternal greenness without injury.

And it is to be noted that just as Blessed Bartholomew is the sixth within the apostolic order, so also Elim holds the sixth place within the mansions of the Israelite people, so that the name of spiritual ram most aptly fits him, from whom that very place, which has apostolic springs, does not disagree through the mystery of name and order. Nevertheless Issachar held the sixth place among the brothers, when the patriarch Jacob blessed him with the other brothers. Whose blessing also clearly fits blessed Bartholomew, who namely received India, a gentile people indeed, as the lot of his preaching. For when, with various blessings distributed through five sons,

it had come to Issachar, Jacob said: "Issachar, a strong ass couching in the borders, saw rest, that it was good, and the land, that it was best, and he bowed his shoulder to carry (Genesis 49)." To couch in the borders is, having waited for the end of the world, to rest, and to seek nothing of those things which are now in the midst, but to desire the last things. And the strong ass saw the best rest, when simple gentility therefore raises itself to the strength of good work, because it tends toward the fatherland of eternal life. Which also bows its shoulder to carry, because having beheld the supernal rest, it subjects itself also to heavy precepts in operation, and whatever pusillanimity asserts to be intolerable, the hope of remuneration shows this to be light and easy to it.

The blessing of Issachar therefore fits blessed Bartholomew through the gentile people, whom while he associated with the Christian faith from the worship of demons, he made in a certain way his own body in the unity of the spirit. We also are one with the holy apostles, if we imitate not only the merit of faith, but also the example of their conduct, as it is said through Paul: "For in one spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or gentiles, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one spirit (1 Corinthians 12)." Wherefore it is necessary for us always to set forth their examples, so that we, by whom we are recognized to have been begotten in the faith, may not seem separated by a dissonant quality of life. Whence it is that after the crossing of the Jordan the Lord said to Joshua:

"Choose twelve men, one from each tribe, and command them to take from the midst of the bed of the Jordan, where the feet of the priests stood, twelve very hard stones, which you shall place in the site of the camp where you shall pitch your tents this night (Joshua 4)." What therefore is hinted at by the crossing of the Jordan, if not the sacrament of baptism? Why is it said that they placed twelve very hard stones as a testimony, if not that they might instruct us that, as soon as we rise from the fount of the sacred washing, we should set before ourselves the strongest examples of apostolic virtue? That those stones may be for us as a testimony while we strive for the increases of virtues. Whence immediately Joshua is commanded to cross with the people into Gilgal, and there to circumcise them with stone knives. The Rock, as the Apostle says, was Christ (1 Corinthians 10). By the stone knives, therefore, we are circumcised when through Christ we cut off from ourselves all the allurements of the flesh and the spirit. And by this circumcision, as is said there, we drive back the reproach of the Egyptians, because we crush the petulance of the vices that delude us: "Today," said the Lord to Joshua, "I have taken away the reproach of Egypt from you (Joshua 5)." Nor should it be passed over that Gilgal is interpreted as revelation. For the carnal life blinds the eyes of the mind, the spiritual life illuminates them. "Open," he says, "my eyes, and I will consider the wonders of your law (Psalm 118)." For when a man is circumcised from his vices, the sharp edge of the mind is raised to

consider the mysteries of the divine law, in which place namely the Passover is celebrated by the Israelite people, and that Lamb is typically eaten who takes away the sins of the world (John 1).

And note the order of things, and weigh the mystery of human salvation. After we go out from baptism as if from the whirlpool of the Jordan, we establish for ourselves the stones of apostolic virtue and constancy as a testimony of example, which, contemplating with the zeal of emulation, we are circumcised from the foreskin of our depravity; and thus, with the darkness of vices removed far off and wiped away, with the face of spiritual joy revealed, we celebrate the Passover in the light of virtues. There first the people ate unleavened bread from the fruits of the earth; and the manna, with which they had been accustomed to be nourished until then, appeared no further. Because after that living bread, which descended from heaven (John 6), came forth from the field of the virginal womb; after the grain of wheat falling into the earth died and brought forth very much fruit (John 12), immediately the manna of the typical law failed. For the land of promise is the womb of the Virgin. Concerning which land it is said through Isaiah: "Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the Just One; let the earth be opened and bud forth the Savior (Isaiah 45)." When, therefore, one comes to this bread, the manna of the old law is no longer sought. Then Jericho, besieged for seven days, is destroyed (Joshua 6), by which namely this world is desig-

nated. For just as that city is not overturned by weapons or by the attacking wedges of warriors, but only by the sounding trumpets of the priests; so this world was not overcome by earthly arms, but by certain trumpets and soundings of apostolic preaching. The priests sound the trumpets, and the walls of Jericho fall; because, with the apostles preaching, the lovers of this world humbly bend themselves from the rigor of swollen pride.

And let us, most dear brothers, always be humbled by apostolic commands, so that we may strive to subjugate the rigid neck of our heart to their doctrines. Certainly they are our judges, by them we are to be discussed in the tremendous examination of the supreme Judge. Behold, through the whole world they thunder with the soundings of trumpets; behold, their doctrine surrounds Jericho, still rebellious, as if with the ark of the covenant. Let us be excited to the thunder of such great preaching, nor let the sleep of death oppress us while the shadow of carnal life delights us. Let us hear Paul thundering terribly like a vehement trumpet-call: "Awake," he says, "thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light (Ephesians 5)." Furthermore, since the stones of Jericho obeyed the priestly trumpets, and that insensible matter, with the city utterly demolished and overturned, fell down; how shall we sleep as if insensible to the command of apostolic preaching, we who through the grace of Christ, who is the cornerstone, are ourselves living stones? Let us hear

what Peter the apostle says: "To whom coming," he says, "as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and honored; ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house (1 Peter 2)." Now therefore let proud Jericho, the habitation not of Canaanites but of vices, fall within us; and let the new Jerusalem, built with the stones of virtues, arise, so that according to the Apostle: "Being dead to sin, we may live unto justice; and: Since we are dead with Christ, we shall also live with him (2 Timothy 2)." Who with God the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns for ages of ages. Amen.

SERMON XLII.

II. ON ST. BARTHOLOMEW THE APOSTLE. (AUGUST 24)

We rejoice and glory in the Lord, most beloved, concerning the holy affection of your devotion, because the more abundantly you drink the cup of the divine word, the more you burn with the jaws of a more fervent desire for that same thing. Nor without merit: for thus is all the blessedness of the apostolic height conjoined, and proved to be united by such a framework or glue of graces, that when the festivity of one of them is celebrated, immediately the not diverse sublimity of all the apostles is thrust upon our interior gazes. Namely, there is one excellence of judicial power among them, the same dignity of order, nor is a diverse authority of virtue held in binding or in loosing. For these are those pre-

cious pearls, which Blessed John pronounces that he beheld in the Apocalypse, from which also he asserts the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem to be constructed: "Every several gate," he says, "was of one several pearl (Apocalypse 21)." They indeed are the gates, they likewise are the pearls, because, while they send out certain rays of divine splendor by signs and wonders, they open the approach to the glory of the supernal Jerusalem to the nations converted to the faith. And whoever is saved through them, enters as a traveler through the gates to life. Whose mystical figure those stones also held, which, at God's command to Moses, are held impressed upon the breastplate of the high priest (Exodus 28). This breastplate therefore the priest bore on his breast when he entered the Holy of Holies. It was commanded, therefore, that twelve stones be placed in it, three by four corners, enclosed in gold; because namely the holy apostles preached the truth of the Catholic faith through the fourfold world concerning the Trinity, which is God. Which stones also are reported to be enclosed in gold, because the blessed apostles also persevere inviolably confirmed in the secret of heavenly wisdom.

It is therefore legitimate that the priest, when he enters the sanctuary, should bear twelve precious stones in the breastplate of his heart; so that whoever approaches the sacred altars may set before himself the examples of apostolic rectitude; so that he may imitate, as much as he is able, the life of those whose ministry he

performs; and whose office he bears, upon them he may fix the gaze of his mind with the zeal of holy emulation. And what wonder if we, weak and little ones, are commanded to imitate the norm and hold the holy doctrine of the blessed apostles, who are the bases and columns of the holy Church, when the apostles themselves were confirmed by the authority of those before them, namely of the ancient Fathers? Whence also in the construction of the tabernacle, that the silver columns might stand within, bronze pegs were commanded to be fixed around the outside (Exodus 38), in which the bound tabernacle might be held. Silver columns therefore within, but bronze pegs are fixed around the outside, and cords are tied in them, so that the tabernacle might remain fixed; because namely that the holy apostles might stand solid in the light of their speech, and that the whole tabernacle, that is, the holy Church, might consist in the integrity of faith, as bronze pegs around the outside the fathers of the Old Testament and the prophets were fixed; who by the cords of their words might constrain the minds of the preachers in solidity, and bind this dwelling of God with the stability of faith.

Outside therefore are the pegs, which were before the time of this holy Church. But nevertheless they bind those who are in it; because while they preach the heavenly mysteries about to come, they made all these things, after they were shown, believable. That therefore the columns may stand immobile within, the pegs outside contain the cords; because that the holy apostles

might believe the mystery of the perfect incarnation of the Lord, their preaching obtained it; who could both see and preach this before it happened. Whence also correctly that first of the apostles, namely the great column of the true tabernacle, speaks, saying: "We have a firmer prophetic word, to which you do well to attend, as to a lamp shining in a dark place (2 Peter 1)." In which words he indicates (although he rose to high things) from the summit, where he might persist bound in faith. Which lamp of prophetic speech now indeed shines for those who understand, but remains covered with the obscurities of allegories for those who do not yet understand. Whence also through the Psalmist it is said concerning the same sayings of the prophets: "Dark water in the clouds of the air (Psalm 17)," because namely wisdom is hidden in the prophets.

And not without merit were silver columns and bronze pegs made; because what the apostles now clearly preach, the prophets spoke obscurely under a mystical understanding. Rightly indeed were they signified by the metal of bronze who were not bright in their preachings; but the holy apostles, because they had the light of preaching concerning the mystery of our Redeemer, were expressed by silver columns. And it is to be noted that silver sounds and shines; but bronze sounds and does not shine; because the preachers of the New Testament spoke openly those things which they were also able to show. But the preachers of the Old Testament, because through the shadows of allegories they brought

forth obscure sayings concerning the heavenly mystery, gave a sound as if without light; although bronze is sometimes found to fit even the holy apostles. Concerning whom it is said under the figure of Asher through Moses in Deuteronomy: "Iron and bronze his shoe (Deuteronomy 33)." A shoe indeed is taken in Holy Scripture as the protection of preaching, as it is written: "Feet shod in the preaching of the Gospel of peace (Ephesians 6)." Because therefore through iron virtue is expressed, but through bronze the perseverance of longanimity; iron and bronze are said to be the shoe of the apostles, and also of any holy preachers. Namely, through iron they patiently tolerate opposing evils; but through bronze they longanimously keep good purposes. Concerning which apostles, or apostolic men, namely holy preachers, when he had premised to that same Asher: "The ascender of heaven is thy helper;" he immediately added: "By his magnificence the clouds run about." For who is the ascender of heaven, if not our Savior, who, after dying he destroyed the empire of death, penetrated heaven with angels accompanying and disciples looking up? By his magnificence the clouds run about, because by his authority holy teachers rain the shower of salutary preaching through the world. Concerning whom also the prophet says: "Who are these," he says, "that fly like clouds?" (Isaiah 60). These clouds are resolved into water when they inebriate the earth of our heart with the flows of their doctrine, so that they may render

it fertile for bringing forth the germs of a pious work.

Whence also Bartholomew (which is certainly a Syrian name, not Hebrew) is interpreted son of him who suspends the waters: Namely the Son of God, who suspends the minds of his preachers to contemplate heavenly things; so that the more freely they balance themselves on the wings of virtues to understand their Creator, the more fruitfully and abundantly they may be able to pour the shower of heavenly eloquence into our hearts, and drink suspended from that fountain what they may afterwards pour out for us to drink. Whence well Moses says mystically concerning the holy Church: "It is not," he says, "the land which you enter to possess, like the land of Egypt from which you come out, where seed having been cast, irrigating waters are led in the manner of gardens;" but: "expecting rains from heaven, which its God visits at all times (Deuteronomy 11)." For secular prudence creeps along the ground like a serpent, and turns aside here and there with slippery variety; but divine wisdom thunders from the heavens. This garden also has a sinister signification. For it seems to designate the lasciviousness of carnal knowledge. Just as there, where Ahab sought the vineyard of Naboth: "Give me," he says, "thy vineyard, that I may make me a garden of herbs (1 Kings 21)." For he strives to turn a vineyard into a garden, who wishes to change the rigor of virtue for the pleasant amenity of carnal allurement. And the Psalmist compares the reprobate to herbs,

saying: "As grass they shall quickly wither, and as the green herbs they shall quickly fall (Psalm 36)."

The land of promise, therefore, that is, the holy Church, also waits for the rains from heaven, because it is drenched by the shower of heavenly wisdom, and its clouds, namely the holy teachers, invisibly draw from the one heavenly fount what they afterwards pour out sweetly eructating into us. Whence the Prophet says: "They shall eructate the memory of the abundance of thy sweetness, and shall exult in thy justice (Psalm 144)." Did not Paul, namely a great cloud, return to that fountain when, snatched up above the third heaven, he heard words which it was not permitted to speak (2 Corinthians 12)? Did not Peter return to the same fountain when he was suddenly snatched into ecstasy, and was commanded not only to slay and eat various kinds of living things, but also creeping things (Acts 10)? And this cloud indeed was not then fully heavy with the water of wisdom, because it was ignorant of the common vocation of all nations. But he approached the fountain, and drew the most limpid and clear purity concerning the salvation of the nations. Did not also this blessed Bartholomew perceive a draught of heavenly grace from the fullness of this fountain, when the Holy Spirit came upon him with all his fellow apostles in the diversity of fiery tongues (Acts 2)? But you who hear of fire, perhaps you do not understand water? Hear how the Lord called the same Holy Spirit, who came upon the apostles in fire, water. "If any man

thirst," he said, "let him come to me and drink." And immediately he added: "He who believes in me," as the Scripture says, "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." But this, the evangelist says, he said of the Spirit which those believing in him were about to receive (John 7)." Concerning which believers it is said through the Prophet: "They shall be inebriated from the richness of thy house, and thou shalt give them to drink of the torrent of thy pleasure, for with thee is the fount of life (Psalm 35)." Philosophers say that the space of aerial thickness is extended no more than ten stadia from the earth, which sometimes subtracts from us the splendor of the sun and pours out rains. But these clouds of which we now speak transcend the heights of the heavens, and do not take away the light of the true Sun, but show it. Concerning whom also it is said under the name of rivers through Solomon: "All the rivers enter into the sea, and the sea does not overflow; to the place whence they go out, the rivers return, that they may flow again (Ecclesiastes 1)."

Among which rivers certainly blessed Bartholomew is distinguished and conspicuous, who by a certain presage of future things is seen distinguished by the title of this mystical name. For when he is called son of him who suspends the waters, he is called without doubt the Son of God, not indeed by the origin of natural generation, but by the dignity of more propense grace. For he was truly the temple of God, the sanctuary of heavenly grace, the ark of the covenant, the

tabernacle of testimony. For just as that legal ark had been composed of incorruptible Shittim wood by mystical art, and also shone with the purest gold, gilded within and without (Exodus 25); so this wonderful man, who had placed his hope in eternity, both radiated without with the splendor of a life to be imitated, and shone forth within with the clarity of divine wisdom. In that ark also was the golden urn, in which the manna was kept, likewise the tables of the Testament, and the rod of Aaron, which had blossomed. But what is the golden urn, if not the flesh of Christ, clean, bright, sincere, and most pure from every contagion of guilt? Which has the hidden manna, namely the angelic bread, that is, the sweetness of eternal divinity. But the two stone tables signify the inviolable firmness of both Testaments. But what does the rod of Aaron express, if not the salutary banner of our supreme and true Pontiff, and the sacrament of the life-giving cross? Which also in that it is reported to have budded, prefigured the blessed cross blossoming with the greenness of immortal memory.

These are the sacraments of the universal Church, this is also the salutary instruction of any faithful Christian soul. For what the ark portended through a shadowed image, this the Church now, or any mind of a just man, possesses through a most effective and open truth. These foods of mystical refreshment the blessed apostles bore, these they broke by setting them forth like bread to the little ones. For after that evangelical word broke forth, since he opened their sense

that they might understand the Scriptures (Luke 24), the prophetic complaint ceased, by which it is said: "The little ones asked for bread, and there was no one who would break it for them (Lamentations 4)." This is that daily bread, my brothers, which Truth taught us to seek gapingly; this the food of heavenly wisdom, for which we ought to hunger continually.

Let us hear therefore through the mouth of Solomon Wisdom inviting us to the table of spiritual nourishment with clear voices: "Wisdom," he says, "has immolated her victims, mixed her wine, and set forth her table; she has sent her handmaids to call to the citadel, and to the walls of the city: if anyone is a little one, let him come to me; come, eat my bread, and drink the wine which I have mixed for you (Proverbs 9)." For Christ, who is the wisdom of the Father, immolated victims when he permitted the blessed martyrs to be slain for the example of our imitation. He mixed wine, because he gave the Holy Spirit to the believers to drink. He set forth a table, because he prepared heavenly glory for men. He sent his handmaids, that is, the holy ministers of the Word, who assert themselves to be weak and fragile. What therefore now remains, except that, having left behind the hunger of the world, we hasten to the table of God? But we cannot find the entrance for entering this, except through the holy apostles, to whom the keys of the kingdom of heaven were committed (John 20). Whence it is written: "Wisdom preaches without, in the streets she gives her voice, in the

head of the crowds she cries out, in the entrances of the gates (Proverbs 1)." For they indeed are the head of the crowds and the entrances of the gates, because they are the princes of the peoples, and the janitors of the supernal Jerusalem through the privilege of more sublime excellence. They are those royal seats of which it is said in the book of Wisdom: "While all things held a middle silence, and the night in its course had a middle journey, thy almighty word, O Lord, came from heaven from the royal seats (Wisdom 18)." For at the coming of the Lord all things contained a middle silence, because both the prophets had already ceased, and the apostles had not yet come to preach the grace of the new faith. The world stood clearly in a certain midpoint, while both the oracles of the prophets by no means survived, and the apostolic preaching did not yet shine forth. But what is understood here by night, if not the devil, who is the author of darkness? who indeed in a certain way walks then, when he cannot easily fulfill what he desires; but then he runs, when he accomplishes the vows of his malice without any obstacle of contradiction; and he no longer holds the margin of life, but the middle journey, while he sees nothing occur to himself that might be able to retard the impetus of his course.

Therefore, when the world was silent under such harmful silence, and this occasion provoked the devil to destroy men, he not only had a middle journey, but he also ran, because whatever of iniquity he had conceived in his mind, he

effectively fulfilled. For the Roman Empire was already occupying everything, and it was necessary for those who had at least held the law of God in any way up to that point to be subject now to the laws of the pagans. Therefore, under the silence of the perishing world, the word of the Lord came from the royal seats, because from the apostolic hearts, which are truly the seats of the eternal King, the word of evangelical preaching broke forth. For they indeed are the royal seats which God inhabits, they themselves kings, and Fathers of the Church, as it is said: "All the glory of that daughter of kings is from within (Psalm 44)." These kings indeed, armed with the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God (Ephesians 6), defeated the prince of the world. Concerning which sword of the apostles certainly it is read: "A fierce warrior leaped forth into the midst of the land of extermination, a sharp sword carrying thy unfeigned command, and standing he filled all things with death, and he reached even unto heaven standing on the earth (Wisdom 18)."

Therefore, most beloved, let us be subject to the empires of these kings, let us labor to be instructed by their teachings, to be absolved by their patronages; so that, absolved through the authority granted to the blessed apostles, we may be introduced to the author of apostolic dignity himself, our Lord Jesus Christ, who with God the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns for ages of ages. Amen.

SEPTEMBER.

I. Sermon on St. Victor the confessor.

VIII. Sermon I on the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Sermon II on the same. Homily on the same.

XIV. Sermon I on the exaltation of the Holy Cross. Sermon II on the same.

XXI. Sermon on St. Matthew, apostle and evangelist. Sermon II on the same. Homily on the same.

XXIX. Sermon on St. Michael the archangel.

* SERMON XLIII. ON SAINT VICTOR THE CONFESSOR. (SEPTEMBER 1.)

Here that great eye of Providence afflicted and transfixed with a sweeter lash the flesh walking carnally. For I who with an irreverent and unbridled mind had contemned the patience of God, the punishment of hell, the glory of the kingdom, am ready, and have not been troubled, that I may keep the commands of the Lord (Psalm 118). Within was a burning conscience enveloped in many crimes, and a detestable silence loving an artificial veil had chosen rather to die than to speak, to perish than to return. Thus pressed by the laws of its own obduracy, it had determined to decline its eyes toward the earth. But he who neither sleeps nor slumbers, having remembered the poor soul, approached to conquer by lashes whom he was not able to conquer by benefits. That greatest fever is present, which physicians name acute, and having been poured forth more profusely over all the members, it settled in the miserable body. Heat is exaggerated, and a furi-

ous fire breaks into the very seat of the soul. Now the substance of the sinner is burned by avenging flames, and feels the preludes of eternal torments. Understanding therefore that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10)," I recollect the multiplicity of my deeds, having confessed to him whom choice made a father, friendship a faithful one, familiarity a companion. Whether he responded in such a way as I cried out, I decided to leave to his discretion. It is in my purpose both to bewail my past things and to beware of future ones. May he give perseverance who excited negligence. In his mercy, and not in his justice, does his servant trust, that he may be mindful of his commands not only for writing, but for doing them. This, therefore, was the cause of the interrupted work. This the occasion of such great silence; now therefore we shall write the more joyfully as we do so the more securely, since it is the greatest danger to teach and not to do; nor let the excursion of an enticing style be attended to here, since it is of true religion to have been without winnowed speeches, nor to redol the glory of words.

The solemnity of our father Victor is at hand, at whose most sacred body, if the faith of antiquity is true, we reside daily. This is the man who in the strength of the Lord shone forth glorious with signs and wonders of virtues, to be compared in the glory of miracles to the apostles and apostolic men. Which and how great they are, and with what sublimity they shine, the booklet about his life and origin written at greater length

suffices to indicate. To him can be significantly assigned that which is written in that solemn vision to the angel of the Church of Ephesus: "To him who overcomes I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of my God (Revelation 2)." For he himself, having obtained his name from his work, overcame before he knew how to overcome; nor any host whatever, but him concerning whom victory is rare and never secure. The tree of life is wisdom, of whose fruit he eats both here in hope, and there in reality, a fruit certainly beautiful and precious; beautiful on account of its appearance, precious on account of its utility. This is that sublime tree, whose shadow covered the mountains, and its shrubs the cedars of God (Psalm 79). The cedar of Lebanon, which with its branched density overshadows the angelic stations. Under the shadow of this tree the bride sits, and its fruit is sweet to her throat (Canticles 2). To this we say: In thy shadow we shall live among the nations. The shade of this tree protects from the heat of the day into security, and is a hiding place from the whirlwind, and from the rain (Isaiah 4). This is that grain of mustard which, sown by the hands of God the Father in the womb of the Virgin, was smaller than all the herbs of the earth, but rose up into such great height that the birds of heaven come and dwell in its branches (Matthew 13); the tree which is planted beside the runnings of waters (Psalm 1), the tree of life in the midst of paradise (Genesis 3).

And attend to the great sacrament. The Son of God, whole and entire, was brought forth from the heart of the Father into the womb of Mary, from the womb of the Mother into the bosom of the Church. As great in the Father, so great in the Virgin; as great in the Virgin, so great in the unity of the Church. In the Father ineffably, in the Mother wonderfully, singularly in the Church. With the Father of the same and equal substance; with the Mother of the same, and divided; with the Church of the same, but hidden. Thus the heavens distilled mercy, thus the Word of God was transfused, and poured out everywhere whole, without which nothing is whole. A happy effusion, which invites the running young maidens to the odor of sweetness, recreates by sight, satiates by taste, but is everywhere in the middle. For also in that essence of the deity, the person is the middle one between the Father and the Spirit by a kindness familiar to the human race, more familiar by identity, since he alone has taken up the poverty of our flesh. Whence also David, immersed into the abyss of that divinity itself, says: "May God bless us, our God, may God bless us (Psalm 66);" both protesting that he is in the middle of majesty, and asserting him specifically as ours, who put on the garment of our mortality. For the Father and the Spirit indeed filled the Virgin, but by majesty, not by taking up. And he is substantially glided into the middle of the womb of that Virgin, he who comprehended the middle of the human balance. For our God the King before the ages worked salvation in

the midst of the earth (Psalm 73). Of that earth certainly, concerning which it is written: "There was no man who would work the earth (Genesis 2)." He is also in the midst of the Church, as the Psalmist says: "The Most High has sanctified his tabernacle: God in the midst of it shall not be moved (Psalm 43)."

Let us collect a few things from many, how the Savior is middle, and is always seen in the middle. "Foxes have holes, and the birds of heaven nests (Luke 9);" he himself has no nest, he is ignorant of the hole, he knows no corner; he chose that place from which he might be open to all, the acceptance of persons being excluded. Finally, also when born, he was placed in the middle of two animals, and having been sought he is found in the middle of the doctors (Luke 2); and he stands middle of the Jews, whom they themselves do not know. He speaks also to the disciples: "Where two or three shall be gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them (Matthew 18)." And: "I am in the midst of you, as he who ministers (Luke 22)." He was crucified also in the middle of two thieves: rising he stood in the midst of his disciples (John 19, 20); and he was seen by John in the midst of seven golden candlesticks (Revelation 1). Therefore, follow the middle, O middle one, and be delighted neither with the filth of corners, nor with the darkness of holes; but say with the just man: "In the midst of the Church I will praise thee (Psalm 21)." This therefore is the tree of life planted in the midst of paradise (Genesis 2), an aromatic tree, most pure, distilling the honeys of

balsams. From the substance of this tree a crown of sevenfold branches buds forth, on whose summit those fruits hang, which that heavenly pipe, the apostle Paul, explained with elegant words.

The first branch is the incarnation of the Son of God. This one indeed is subtle and necessary; since it both instills heavenly things, restores earthly things, and vivifies each nature by its own greenness. "If in the green wood," he says, "they do this, in the dry what shall be done? (Luke 23.)" Calling himself the green wood, sprouted from virginal greenness; since it is true that we lost both the cleanness of birth and the greenness of faith in our first parent. This greenness was so wisely thought out by Wisdom herself, that it transcends the faculty of both heart and mouth. For it was fitting for the redemption of man, that man having been conquered should conquer the conquering devil. But from whence this might be done, he did not have. For we were all proscribed in him, and depressed through him by the weight of original sin. But God ought not, since it would rather seem power, if he should unknot the servant receding from himself, who had subjugated him. What therefore man through himself was not able, God through himself ought not, artisan Wisdom placed God and man, so that on the part of man he might satisfy for men, and on the part of God he might humble the proud one like a wounded one. This so glorious conjunction was closed to the prince of darkness, nor was a crafty shrewdness able to conjecture the counsel of God. A pure seed is taken from virginal purity, and

the Wisdom of God cleanses that fount of propitiation with a more secret novelty. Therefore the first branch is his incarnation; its fruit, the Spirit of wisdom.

The second branch is the baptism of Christ. Intuit that the Son of the Virgin was baptized not for the washing of his members, which had come out from virginal members, but so that the privilege of such great cleansing might be sanctioned in the substance of the waters. Hold in understanding what you cannot by sight, that a son of the devil descends into the water when someone is baptized, and a son of God ascends, vessels of wrath are converted into vessels of mercy (Romans 9), original sin is overturned, the building of the thief is subverted, a domicile of divinity is prepared. The Holy Spirit is present, and descending from the highest citadel of the heavens, he sanctifies the element, deifies the baptized one, clarifies the dignity of the ministry. Angelic virtues are crowded together alluding to the sacramental institutes, and the purifying wave is crowned by heavenly creatures. The transcendence of the sacrament desires the eyes of the heart, not of the flesh, because it is intelligible. Therefore the second branch is the baptism of Christ; its fruit, the Spirit of understanding.

The third is the passion of the Redeemer. See the counsel of God which had been closed from eternity in the abyss of his judgments. Let thy ancient counsel, O Lord, be made true, says one of those who had been admitted to the secret of divine Providence. Did he not consult for thee,

who had no helper, when he added that most holy flesh to reproaches, exposed it to torments, and "having bowed his head gave up the ghost?" (John 19.) O how unmerited a commiseration, how gratuitous: and thus a proven love, how unexpected a condescension, how stupendous a sweetness, for the Son of God to be so afflicted, the King of glory to be crucified in the lake of misery! Finally, he had nothing better for redeeming thee than that he emptied himself, nor did the wisdom of God find a more excellent way in all its wisdom. That passion is the counsel of thy redemption. A necessary and wonderful branch, whose fruit is the Spirit of counsel.

The fourth is his descent into hell. In singular strength he descended into hell, like a powerful man drunk with wine, and he troubled the man who troubled the earth, who made the world a desert, breaking the hammer of the whole earth, and shaking that horrendous palace with a most strong subversion. Strong indeed was that one, but a stronger one came upon him, who would plunder his vessels, take away his arms, bind the enemy (Luke 12). And this branch indeed is straight and subtle, whose fruit is the Spirit of fortitude.

The fifth is the resurrection of Christ. Here he showed to us by example what he had promised in reward, and made us know that by his flesh rising we would rise: which although of dissimilar glory, yet had been fashioned of the same nature in the womb of the Virgin. The offense of all ambiguity is excluded. The apostles saw the hands,

held the feet, felt the side (John 20), and looked upon all the signs of death with blessed eyes. And this branch therefore is great and sublime; but its fruit, the Spirit of knowledge.

The sixth is the ascension into heaven. O singular piety, special sweetness, when he brought the light of our flesh into the sublime workshops, and placed it at the right hand of the Father in glory! The crowds of heavenly legions see and admire, and they are unceasingly stupified at the largess of such great grace. For the intuition of such great condescension exceeds all sense, being open only to the Trinity itself. But also this branch is remarkable and to be wondered at; but its fruit, the Spirit of piety.

The seventh is the day of judgment, when he shall come with great power and majesty (Luke 21) to render vengeance in wrath, and devastation in a flame of fire. Then shall be that fear to be feared, when, the heavens burning, the elements fighting, the earth set on fire, consciences enveloped, demons accusing, angels trembling, with a furious judge and one not knowing mercy, that discussion shall be made, which would that it find us prepared (2 Thessalonians 1). That branch is great and to be dreaded; its fruit, the Spirit of the fear of the Lord. Let us love therefore the tree of life, and let us eat assiduously of its fruit, because this fruit is the Son of Mary, who is blessed for ages of ages. Amen.

* SERMON XLIV. I. ON THE NATIVITY OF THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN MARY. (SEPTEMBER 8.)

We hasten from joys to joys, and the glorious matter makes the fervent style more fervent. From a Virgin we come to a Virgin, and from Mary we run back to Mary. It is good for us to be here, better to tarry, best to remain. Happy are the angelic spirits, who have the presence of the blessed Virgin! We meanwhile belch forth the memory of the abundance of thy sweetness. They have the presence, we the memory. If the memory is so sweet, what is the presence? And they indeed, infused with a more abundant dew of divinity, behold the Begotten and the Mother with a wonderful vision, heaped with the glory of the king and queen. But we, whom the hardship of a prison-like mortality twists, are fed by memory, relieved by the Scriptures: and what they see, we read. Would that it may come, he who may restore us into the light, the day where it may not be permitted to read, but to see. Meanwhile let us console ourselves with the sweetness of memory, until we are satiated with the sweetness of presence. Today she is born, through whom we all are reborn, whose beauty the Almighty desired, and in whom God placed his throne (Psalm 44). She herself is that wonderful throne, of which one reads in the history of the Kings in these words: "King Solomon made a great throne of ivory, and clothed it with very yellow gold. It was ascended to by six steps. It was round in the back parts. Twelve little lions stood upon the steps, looking

toward the throne. Furthermore, two hands held the seat on this side and on that. Two lions stood near the armrests. A similar work was not made in all the kingdoms (1 Kings 10)."

But now let us bring the proposed words into the light and draw water from the rock, she herself speaking in us, of whom we propose to speak to you. "King Solomon," says the Scripture, "made a great throne of ivory." We read that Solomon was called by three names in the Scriptures, and everywhere titled with a royal name, namely Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Jedidiah. Son of a king, nay even a king, and not only Son of God, but also God, Solomon, that is, peaceful, is for us in this exile: Ecclesiastes, that is, preacher, he will be in the judgment; Jedidiah, that is, glorious, he will be in the kingdom; in exile lovable, in judgment terrible, in kingdom admirable; in exile pious, in judgment just, in kingdom glorious. But see if he is not everywhere a king. In exile the ruler of morals, in judgment the discerner of merits, in the kingdom the distributor of rewards; and at the same time consider that not Ecclesiastes, not Jedidiah, but Solomon is noted as making so glorious a work. Turn away your eyes from the delights of that earthly king, who, although he was of singular wisdom, sublime glory, affluent in things, secure in peace, yet could not make such a work as was not made in all the kingdoms. Had the writer of the sacred history looked upon all the works of the world and their glory with a diligent gaze, so that he would prefer this immediately with total deliberation, not to one, but

to all? These things are empty, if we do not run back to the innermost recesses of heavenly discipline, if we do not deviate from the path of literal quality. Our Solomon, not only wise, but also the wisdom of the Father; not only peaceful, but also our peace, who made both one, made a throne, namely the womb of the undefiled Virgin, in which sat that majesty, which shakes the world with a nod.

This session of the Son the Father both approved and knew, he himself saying: "Thou hast known my sitting down (Psalm 138);" and: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever (Psalm 44);" and: "This throne is like the sun in thy sight (Psalm 88)." "Thou sittest," says the Scripture, "upon the throne, who judgest equity (Psalm 9)." For what is more just than to assign to perpetual fires a vile and fugitive servant, and a sedulous deceiver of his fellow-servant, and to resign him, whom he had deceived, to his own principle? That other son of the Virgin says: "And a voice came out of the throne, saying: Give praise to our God, all ye his saints (Revelation 5)." From this throne the praise of angels breaks forth, and of men, because while this one is restored, and that one is repaired, both owe the devotion of thanks. Do you know what he says who sits on the throne? "Behold," he says, "I make all things new (Revelation 21)." Happy throne, in which sits the Ruler, the Lord; in which, and through which not only all persons, but all things are renewed! I spare words, because I feel some of you are flying ahead, and anticipating the poverty of the

running style. Deservedly therefore such a work is written as assigned not to the eloquent, not to the glorious, but to the peaceful one; because Jesus came to restore both the things that are in the heavens and the things that are on the earth; and to reform peace and concord between men and angels, through the mediation of the Virgin.

"Of ivory," he says. What is it that the glory of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and finally of all more precious matter is passed over? Only the substance of ivory is capable of such a composition, and there is fabricated in it what is preferred to all works. For ivory both shines with a wonderful whiteness, and excels in much strength, and obtains the auspice of a colder nature. And what is whiter than that virginity, which by the grace of its singular aspect allures the heavenly court to see? What is stronger than that fortitude through which the strength of the Lord plundered the vessels of the stronger one? What is colder than that substance which the power of the Most High overshadowed, and the fullness of the coming Spirit defended from the heat of sin? From this ivory, unless I am mistaken, are made those ivory houses, of which the Psalmist says: "Myrrh, and stacte, and cassia from thy garments, from the ivory houses (Psalm 44)."

It follows: "Great." What is greater than the Virgin Mary, who concludes the greatness of the supreme divinity within the secret of her womb? Consider the Seraphim, and fly over the dignity of that superior nature, and you will see that what-

ever is greater is less than the Virgin, and only the Maker surpasses this work. "And he clothed it with very yellow gold." Gold, more precious than all metals, understand as the divinity of God, preeminent over all the world, governing all things. With this the Mother of the Most High was clothed, nay overclothed, and all that indivisible nature poured over the whole Virgin with a more bountiful grace. But what is it that he says: very yellow? Here that manifold Spirit left something for us to seek, and would that I might be able to explain what I feel. In four ways God is in all creatures. In the first way, essentially to the good as well as to the evil, and nothing shuts out the essence of the deity, through which all things have received to be. Thence it is that he is read to be nowhere and in every place, since he assists all things presentially, and is comprehended by none. Even the evil have the presence of God, but they do not rejoice, since any inanimate thing can boast of this privilege. In the second way he is in the good by operation, for an operative power acts in them, so that they work the works of God; nor were they created idly among creatures, like the evil, who chose to wither, so that they might minister fuel to sempiternal fires. He is in many of the good also by illumination, whom he ennobles with the cognition of future things and makes participants of his secrets. In the fourth way he is in one creature, namely the Virgin Mary, by identity, because he is the same as she.

Here let every creature be silent and tremble, and scarcely dare to behold the immensity of

such great dignity and condescension. "The Lord is with thee (Luke 1)," says the archangel. God dwells in the angels, but not with the angels, because he is not of the same essence with them. God dwells in the Virgin, he dwells with her, with whom he has the identity of one nature. This is therefore the very yellow gold with which the throne is clothed, because in such a way God clothed the Virgin and was clothed in the Virgin, that he could not in a better way.

It follows: "It was ascended to by six steps." Choose to meditate on what is holy, because "perverse thoughts separate from God (Wisdom 1);" and you have ascended the first step. Accustom your tongue to speak well, and you have jumped up to the second. Work justly what is just, and you have deserved to ascend the third. Teach the wicked the ways of the Lord and console all who mourn, and you have been snatched to the sublimity of the fourth. Leave the world and those things that are in the world, and you have flown to the summit of the fifth. Let perseverance hold you in motion, do not leave perseverance, and you have manfully reached the sixth step. From here one may jump up into heaven, to aspire to that glory, in which the more glorious Queen reflects the angelic dignity.

It follows: "It was round in the back parts." Understand the back parts of the Virgin as her assumption, in which she received the end of mortal life, who gave back life to the world. And note with how great a sacrament the Scripture compares the passing of the Virgin to roundness.

In a round thing you can find neither beginning nor end; so also the glory, which received her passing from this world, ignores a beginning, knows no end; of which we can say nothing else, except that glorious things are said of thee (Psalm 86), glory of God.

It follows: "Twelve little lions stood upon the steps." The twelve little lions are the twelve apostles, who, standing more strongly upon the fixed steps, admire the Queen of heaven not without the greatest stupor, and say: "Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array (Song of Songs 6)?" Furthermore, the two hands, which held the seat on this side and on that, signify the active and contemplative life, which surrounded the Virgin mother with a more prone diligence, so that neither did action diminish contemplation, and contemplation did not desert action. Remember, because there was no room for him in the inn (Luke 2), how she nursed her son with her own breasts, and finally sustained all the actions of the crying little one, and then you will understand that she ministered very much. Consider because she herself is the one who, carried up into the sweetness of contemplative dignity, fixed clearer gazes into the substance of God himself. "His left hand," she says, "is under my head, and his right hand shall embrace me (Song of Songs 2)."

"Two lions stood near the armrests." The two lions are Gabriel the archangel and John the evangelist, of whom one was deputed as

guardian of the Virgin's right hand, the other of her left. For Gabriel kept her mind, John her flesh, with ever-wakeful solicitude. Who are well called lions, on account of the roaring of their high-sounding voice; for they announced to the world two such words as have not been said nor will be said, and in comparison with which all things ought to appear mute. "Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee (Luke 1)," says the archangel. Do you hear in this word the incarnation of God, the redemption of men, the renovation of the world? "In the beginning was the Word (John 1)," said the evangelist. Do you perceive here the divinity of the Word, the faith of the Church, the silence of heretics, the place of rest, the secret of solitude, the mystery of light, the dwelling of peace? For this cause perhaps he called James and John Boanerges, that is, sons of thunder (Mark 1).

"A similar work was not made in all the kingdoms." Nothing is truer, nothing more sublime, nothing sweeter to wretched mortality and mortal wretchedness. For even if many great things have been made in the creatures of the world, yet the works of the fingers of God have made nothing so excellent, so magnificent. Virgin Mother of God, whose beauty the sun and moon admire, come to the aid, O Lady, of those crying out to thee continually: "Return, return, O Shulamite, return, return, that we may behold thee (Song of Songs 6)." Thou blessed, and over-blessed, return, first through nature. Because thou art thus deified, art thou therefore forgetful of our

humanity? By no means, O Lady. Thou knowest in what danger thou hast left us, where thy servants lie, how much they offend; for it is not fitting for such great mercy to forget such great misery, because, even if glory withdraws thee, nature recalls thee: for thou art not so mindful of the justice of God alone, that thou shouldst not have mercy; nor art thou so impassible, as to be incompassionate. Thou hast our nature, not another; and it is just that we be more diffusely infused by the dew of such great piety.

"Return," second through power. He who is powerful has done great things in thee, and all power has been given to thee in heaven and on earth. What will be denied to thee, to whom it was not denied to recall Theophilus from the very jaws of perdition? An unhappy little soul, denying with its own character all that was made in thee, thou hast lifted up from the mud of dregs and misery. Nothing is impossible for thee, for whom it is possible to relieve the desperate into the hope of beatitude. For how will that power be able to oppose thy potency, which received from thy flesh the origin of its flesh? For thou approachest before that golden altar of human reconciliation, not only asking, but commanding, a lady, not a handmaid. Let nature move thee, let power advise thee, because as much as thou art more powerful, so much more merciful thou oughtest to be. For it yields to the glory of power, to be unwilling to avenge injuries when it can.

"Return," third through love. I know, O Lady, because thou art most kind, and thou lovest

us with an invincible love, whom in thee and through thee thy Son and thy God loved with supreme affection. Who knows how many times thou refreshest the wrath of the Judge, when the power of justice goes forth from the presence of the deity?

"Return," fourth through singularity. In thy hands are the treasures of the mercies of the Lord, and thou alone art chosen, to whom such great grace is granted. Let it be far from thy hand to cease, since thou seekest an occasion of saving the wretched and pouring out mercy! for neither is thy glory diminished, but increased, when the penitent are assumed to pardon, the justified to glory. Return therefore, O Shulamite, that is, despised one, whose soul a sword pierced (Luke 2), who wast called the wife of a carpenter. To what end? That we may behold thee. It is the supreme glory after God to see thee, to adhere to thee, and to tarry in the protection of thy defense. Hear us. For also the Son, denying nothing, honors thee, who is God blessed for ages of ages. Amen. SERMON XLV. II. ON THE NATIVITY OF THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN MARY. (SEPTEMBER 8.)

The nativity of the most blessed and undefiled Mother of God, most dear brothers, deservedly offers a special and singular joy to men, she who was the beginning of the whole of human salvation. For just as almighty God, by the ineffable intuition of his providence, before man was made, foresaw that man would perish by a diabolical machination, so also he had the counsel of human redemption before the ages in the bowels

of his immense piety. And not only did he establish the mode and order in the most profound reason of his wisdom how he would redeem, but he also predefined a certain point of time when he would redeem. As therefore it was impossible that the redemption of the human race should take place, unless the Son of God were born of a Virgin; so also it had been necessary that the Virgin, from whom the Word would become flesh, should be born. For it was fitting that a house should first be built, in which the heavenly King, descending, would deign to have a lodging. Namely, that house of which it is said through Solomon: "Wisdom built for itself a house, it cut out seven columns (Proverbs 9)." For this virginal house was supported by seven columns, because the venerable Mother of the Lord was endowed with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, that is, of wisdom and understanding; of counsel and fortitude; of knowledge and piety, and the fear of God (Isaiah 11). Which surely eternal Wisdom, which reaches from end even to end strongly, and disposes all things sweetly (Wisdom 8), constructed such as would be worthy to receive him, and to procreate from the bowels of her undefiled flesh. It was necessary that a bridal chamber should first be erected, which would receive the Spouse coming to the nuptials of the holy Church, to whom David, exulting in spirit, sings a nuptial song, saying: "As a bridegroom the Lord proceeding from his chamber (Psalm 18)."

Deservedly therefore today with profuse joys the whole world everywhere exults, deservedly

the whole holy Church, at the birth of the Mother of its Spouse, that I may speak thus for joy, alternates the praises of a nuptial song. Let us exult therefore on this day, most dear ones, in which while we venerate the birth of the most blessed Virgin, we also celebrate the beginning of all the festivities of the New Testament. Let us exult, I say, on this special day, and let us be delighted with our whole bowels in the Lord: in which while we recall the Mother of our Redeemer, we celebrate the origin of the remaining festivities. For she who is older in time than all solemnities, ought by no means to be inferior in dignity. For if Solomon with the Israelite people, in the dedication of the temple made of stones, solemnly celebrated so copious and magnificent a sacrifice (1 Kings 8); what and how great a joy ought the nativity of blessed Mary to bring to the Christian people, into whose womb, as into a truly most sacred temple, God himself descending, deigned both to receive human nature from her, and to dwell visibly with men? For although God is to be believed to have descended into that temple of Solomon also, yet in this rational sanctuary, that is, in the womb of the most blessed Virgin, he deigned to remain much more wonderfully and much more happily for us, in whom the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (John 1). For of that ancient temple indeed, it is written: "It came to pass, when the priests had gone out of the sanctuary, a cloud filled the house of the Lord, and the priests could not stand near on account

of the cloud. For the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord (1 Kings 8)."

All these things, as the egregious preacher says, happened to them in figure (1 Corinthians 10). For the glory of the Lord is understood to be Christ, with whose faith the world is filled. Of which glory, when Moses was entreating the Lord for the people who had sinned by worshipping the golden calf, that he would spare the sinful people, the Lord answered: "I will be propitious to them (Numbers 14)." Nevertheless I live, and my name lives, because "all the earth shall be filled with my glory (Ibid.)." And the Psalmist: "All the earth," he says, "shall be filled with his glory (Psalm 71)." But that a cloud filled the house of God, and the priests could not minister on account of the cloud; that sentence suggests the proud pontiffs and doctors of the Jews, who, while they despise investigating the sacraments of the Incarnation of Christ, lose the due ministry of their faith through the cloud of error. For the darkness of infidelity so filled their minds, that, their own merits requiring it, they do not recognize the worship of credulity. Therefore the Lord descended into that temple in a cloud, that he might designate the blind darkness of Jewish infidelity; in this one, as it is written, he placed his tabernacle in the sun (Psalm 18), that he might illuminate those sitting in darkness and the shadow of death. Finally, almighty God indeed conferred the glory of his coming upon that temple, but received nothing from it in his nature; but into the womb of the most blessed

Virgin he not only deigned to descend, but also to unite from it to himself the perfect substance of our mortality. Therefore, as much as the dignity of our temple is greater, so much more glorious ought its solemnity to be.

But in what way is the infirmity of men able to celebrate worthily her festivity, who deserved to bring forth the joy of angels? In what way will the transitory word of a mortal man be able to praise her, who brought forth from herself that Word which remains forever? What tongue is found suitable for her praise, who bore him whom all things bless, and whom the elements obey with trembling? For when we desire to extol the strong deeds of any martyr, while we preach the marks of his virtues to the glory of our Redeemer; even if a sense too slow for thinking hinders, or a stammering tongue is not sufficient for speaking; yet the matter of the thing itself supplies a copiousness of words. But when we wish to write the praises of the most blessed Mother of God, because the things we undertake to treat are new and unheard of, we find no words by which we may be sufficient to express these things worthily. For the singular matter takes away the faculty of speech. For what tongue may suffice to explain, or what human reason would not be stupified, when it begins to think that the Creator arises from a creature, the Maker becomes from a thing made? That he is conceived in the virginal womb of a girl, who is not held by the most vast amplitude of the whole world? A little one lies within the maternal bowels, who with the co-

eternal Father governs the laws of all things, immense? O blessed breasts, which while they pour thin milk into boyish lips, feed the food of angels and of men! They express a meager liquid, and they refresh the Creator of the world. He who by the command of his power mitigates the storms of the seas, who supplies the unailing impetus of waters to the rivers, who irrigates the arid earth everywhere with innumerable fountains, expects rare drops of milk from the virginal breast. The liquid flows from the breasts of the Virgin, and is turned into the flesh of the Savior.

Here, my most beloved brothers, here I ask, consider how great debtors we are to this most blessed Mother of God, and how many thanks we ought to give to her after God for our redemption. For that body of Christ, which the most blessed Virgin bore, which she cherished in her bosom, which she bound in swaddling clothes, which she nourished with maternal care: that, I say, without any doubt, not another, we now receive from the sacred altar, and we drink his blood in the sacrament of our redemption. This the catholic faith holds, this the holy Church faithfully teaches.

No human word of mine is found suitable in her praise, of whom the mediator of God and men is known to have been incarnate. Every proclamation of human tongue is unequal to her, who from the bowels of her undefiled flesh brought forth for us the food of souls: namely, him who asserts concerning himself, saying: "I am the living bread, who came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever (John

6)." For through food we were cast down from the pleasantness of paradise, through food also we were restored to the joys of paradise. Eve ate food, through which she punished us with the hunger of an eternal fast; Mary brought forth food, which opened for us the entrance to the heavenly banquet. Here also, I beseech, most beloved brothers, here consider diligently the line of our redemption, and how much the bowels of divine piety have been intent toward us, weigh with the ear of the heart. God made man, that I may speak thus, mortally immortal, namely that if he wished to keep the precept of obedience, he would live forever; but if he should despise it, he would soon be subject to the rule of death. What more? Man sinned, the devil persuading (Genesis 3), and the whole tree of the human race was poisoned in its root. The unhappy father fell through gluttony, and his whole progeny was made guilty through nature, as the Apostle says: "We were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest (Ephesians 2)."

Adam was thus made leaven, and he corrupted the whole multitude of sons; because while he is vitiated by the pestiferous poison of the serpent, the whole mass of the human race is corrupted in him. Whence, the splendor of new grace already shining, it is said to us by an egregious preacher: "Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new paste (1 Corinthians 5)." But the pious and merciful God did not wish his creature, whom he had formed to his own image and likeness, to perish entirely. Therefore from all the multitude of nations he chose one for

himself, namely the Israelite people, to whom he both gave a law, and commanded them to offer to him sacrifices of various animals. But that law, so that man might be perfectly saved through it, was by no means suitable. For as it is said through Paul: "The law brought nothing to perfection (Hebrews 7)." For because that people was still rude, proud, and rigid, it could not humble the neck of the heart to bear the yoke of the perfect law. Concerning which people, to be sure, the Lord says to Moses: "I see that this people is stiff-necked (Exodus 32)." Therefore a law of this kind was to be given to it, which would neither permit it to go entirely free from divine services, nor yet deter it by commanding supreme and heavy things. But the sacrifices which were then offered could profit to some extent for the cleansing of the flesh, but they were not able to suffice for conferring salvation on souls, as the Apostle says: "For if the blood of bulls, or of goats, or the sprinkled ashes of a heifer, sanctifies the defiled to the cleansing of the flesh; how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the Holy Spirit offered himself unspotted to God, cleanse our conscience to serve the living God? (Hebrews 9.)" For when he announces that those sacrifices profit for the cleansing of the flesh, he designates that they could by no means have conferred purgation on souls. For neither could an irrational creature be valid for sanctifying a rational one. But nor could the priests themselves sanctify the people, because they themselves also needed to offer hosts for their own guilts. Nor, being liable

to sins, were they able to loose the bonds of sins, or sinners to justify a sinner.

It was necessary therefore that such a priest should be found, who, while he washed away the filth of sins in others, should not feel anything in himself to be washed away; and while he wiped away the contagions of another's guilt, should not have any spot of leprosy in himself. But a man of this kind could not be found in the human race, because each one with the Prophet was truly chanting this little verse: "For behold I was conceived in iniquities, and in sins did my mother conceive me (Psalm 50);" and, as it is said through the Apostle: "All have sinned, and need the glory of God (Romans 3)."

I beseech, my most beloved brothers, attend diligently to this history of your, or rather our salvation, and order the order of human restoration also in your hearts. Let the hearts watch, let the eyes not sleep. Since therefore a man of this kind could not be found in the human race, lest man should perish in his sin, the Creator of men, taking flesh from the most blessed Virgin, was made man without sin, conceived without sin in the Virgin's womb, lived without sin in the world. Eia, brothers, attend, attend, I say, and listen watchfully to the ineffable mystery of our redemption. Behold already a priest, brothers, having no sins himself, and therefore worthy and powerful so that, offering a sacrifice, he might cleanse the sins of others. He namely, to whom it is said through the Prophet: "You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek

(Psalm 109)." But as it is said through Paul: "It is necessary for a priest to have something that he may offer (Hebrews 8)." However, as was said above, it was impossible that the flesh of brute animals should sanctify the souls of men, and an irrational host should suffice to abolish the sins of those using reason. Whence from the person of the Son to the Father it is said through the Psalmist: "Sacrifice and oblation you did not want, holocausts also for sin you did not require; then I said: Behold I come (Psalm 39)." It was necessary therefore that a rational host should be made, which would expiate the rational creature. But some sinful man, just as he was unworthy to offer sacrifice, so also nonetheless was he unworthy to become the sacrifice himself. What therefore would our priest do? Whither would he turn? What counsel of our redemption would he find? Whence would the mediator of God and men take a host of appeasement, by which he would reform peace between God and man? Indeed every earthly creature, if it was rational, had contracted the virus of sin from the root of the first parent; if irrational, it could not justify a rational one.

What therefore would the mediator of peace, and peace himself, do? For he himself is our peace, who made both one, and dissolving the middle wall of partition, the enmities in his flesh: evacuating the law of commandments in decrees, that he might create two in himself into one new man, making peace; that he might reconcile both in one body to God through the cross, slaying the

enmities in himself: and coming he evangelized peace to those who were far off, and peace to those who were near (Ephesians 2). What, I say, would he do? Consider, my brothers, diligently consider the bowels of ineffable piety, weigh the immense and inestimable weight of divine charity. Because indeed the price of our redemption could not be found in things, our Redeemer offered himself to the Father for us as a host in an odor of sweetness. Thus he himself was made priest and sacrifice, himself redeemer and price. Whence it is rightly said through Paul: "For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and made higher than the heavens; who has not daily necessity, like the priests, first to offer hosts for their own sins, then for the people: for this he did once, by offering himself (Hebrews 7)." Our Lord Jesus Christ.

You have heard therefore now, most beloved, briefly the wonderful sacrament of our reparation, hear also the very opportune counsel of our salvation. Christ handed himself over to death for us, let us also mortify for his love every pleasure of earthly concupiscence in us. For that he wished to undergo the gibbet of the cross, he laid for us the way by which we may be able to return to the fatherland; so that we who departed delighted by pleasures, may return embittered by weepings; and we who fell by flowing through illicit things, may rise by restricting ourselves even from licit things; and those whom the elation of pride had cast down, the dejection of a humble life may

raise up. Whence also the pastor of the Church cries out, saying: "Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example, that you should follow his footsteps (1 Peter 2);" and Paul: "Be, he says, imitators of God, and walk in love, as Christ also loved us, and handed himself over for us as an oblation, and a host to God in an odor of sweetness (Ephesians 5)."

Therefore, most beloved, let us now taste with Christ the temporal bitterness of momentary death, that we may afterwards deserve to arrive at the eternal sweetness of his resurrection. For what he did for us, this he also seeks to be done by us, the Prophet testifying, who says: "What, he says, shall I render to the Lord for all that he has rendered to me? I will take the cup of salvation, and will call upon the name of the Lord (Psalm 115)." For for our redemption he did not give gold, he did not weigh out silver, he did not count money; but he handed himself over, he poured out the precious blood of his body, he laid down his own life for us. Whence Peter also says: "You were redeemed from your vain conversation of paternal tradition, not with corruptible gold or silver; but with the precious blood, as of an unspotted and uncontaminated Lamb, Christ (1 Peter 1)."

It is expedient therefore, that whoever hastens to arrive at his fellowship, should offer himself to his Redeemer. Let him imitate his footsteps in the way, who pants to rejoice with him in the fatherland. Let him make him his leader on the journey, who desires to be a partaker with him

in the arrival. "For if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him; if we die with him, we shall also live with him (Romans 8)." And again the same Apostle says: "If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection (Romans 6)." Let no one, my brothers, uselessly seduce himself, let no one deceive himself with the security of vain hope. For we cannot rejoice here in the world, and there reign with Christ. Behold the undefiled and glorious Virgin Mary, by whose most splendid nativity today the whole holy Church throughout the world is illustrated, prefigured in the law, foretold in the oracles of the patriarchs and prophets, saluted by the angel with a singular privilege of honor, the throne of God, the seat of divinity, the palace of the eternal king, the treasury of the treasure by which we were purchased from the service of the bloody robber, is proposed to us as an example. This so singular, so incomparable Virgin, if she did not follow the humility of Christ, would never reach the height of Christ: if she should despise the enjoined commands, she would by no means arrive at the promised rewards. For while he was preaching, when a certain woman lifted up her voice from the crowd, saying: "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the paps that you have sucked." He answered: "Yea rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it (Luke 11)." Elsewhere also, when someone announced to him in the temple that his kinsmen according to the flesh were present, saying: "Behold your

mother and your brothers stand without, seeking you." He answered: "Who is my mother and who are my brothers?" And stretching out his hands toward his disciples he said: "Behold my mother and my brothers. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father, who is in heaven, the same is my brother, sister and mother (Matthew 12)."

Note, brothers, note your dignity, if by fulfilling the will of God you break your own will. Behold, the blessed and venerable Virgin Mary was indeed the mother of Christ according to the flesh, she was not a brother, she was not a sister. And whoever shall be any of these to anyone according to the laws of carnal kinship, will not be able to be anything else to him at all, so that surely if she were a mother, she could not be a brother or a sister; but if she were a brother or a sister, she would not be a mother. We, however, are all these things together to Christ through the Spirit, if we strive to fulfill the will of Christ, which is always common to him with the Father. But what is born of the flesh is flesh; and what is born of the Spirit is spirit (John 3), because God is a Spirit. From that part, therefore, in which our Redeemer is God, we are so manifoldly kin to him as the blessed Virgin, from whom he deigned to be born, could not be according to the flesh. It was proper and singular to that most blessed Virgin to conceive Christ in the womb; but it is common and universal to all the elect to carry him in the devotion of the heart. Happy is she, and a too blessed woman, who carried him for nine months in her belly; happy also are we, if we

study to carry him assiduously in the mind. It was indeed more wonderful for Christ to be conceived in the womb of the flesh; but it is not inferior if he be carried in the prison of the breast. Whence he also testifies through John, saying: "I stand at the door and knock; if any man shall open to me, I will enter in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me (Revelation 3)."

It is to be noted indeed that he first relates that he will sup, then he pronounces that he will give a supper in grateful turn. Because he is now fed by whose good works he is fed, with him together afterwards he feasts on the banquets of the eternal convivium. Hence also, most beloved, it is to be considered how great is our dignity, and how great is our proportion with Mary. Mary conceived Christ in the womb of the flesh, we also carry him in the bowels of the mind. Mary refreshed Christ, when with tender lips he pressed out the milk of the breasts; we also refresh him with the various delicacies of good works.

It is pleasant now, most beloved, for our edification to fix for a little the rays of the mind on the rule of divine justice, and to investigate how the almighty God allows his elect to be depressed temporally, whom he has decreed to extol forever. For to be silent now about the rest, this same most blessed Virgin, whose nativity today we venerate with due services, chosen and pre-elected before the constitution of the world in the counsel of eternal wisdom, although she was begotten of a royal stock, yet she flourished with no height of human dignity, she abounded

with no riches of temporal things. Indeed the manger of her bringing forth indicates it, because she did not have an inn in which she might bring forth (Luke 2). But men are accustomed, when children are born, to promise joyful future successes, and from their auspices to announce prosperous things to mothers. But blessed Mary, when she brought the son to the temple and Simeon received him in his arms, heard: "And a sword shall pierce your own soul (Ibid.)." As if he should say openly: While your son feels the passion of the cross in his body, a sword of compassion will also transfix you in the mind.

Let us also study, most beloved, to despise the allurements of this world, to avoid the affluence of earthly things, to repress the incentives of the flesh, to carry the cross of Christ assiduously in the mind; so that while now our soul is transfixed by the sword of Mary, with her afterwards it may be satiated by the sweetness of eternal happiness. Which may he deign to grant, who begotten from the Father before the ages deigned to be born of her at the end of the ages. Amen.

XLVI. HOMILY ON THE NATIVITY OF THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN MARY. (SEPTEMBER 8TH) The beginning of the holy Gospel according to Matthew: The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac, and Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob begat Judah and his brothers. And the rest (Matthew 1).

You have heard, most dear brothers, the ineffable sacrament of the Lord's incarnation: you

have heard in the genealogy of the most blessed mother of God the mystery of reparation; you have heard that the Creator of angels deigned to be propagated from the stock of mortals; you have heard that he deigned to have ancestors on earth, who as the source and origin of all things governs the laws in the heavens. For the blessed evangelist says: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham (Matthew 1)."

But it seems to be asked here why the numerous series of so many fathers is intermitted, so that our Redeemer is said to be the son of only these two, namely David and Abraham? For why the son of David, and soon the son of Abraham, and not rather the son of Jesse, or the son of Obed, or of the others thereafter placed in the middle?

But this question is easily solved, if the promise made divinely to both is reviewed. For to Abraham it was said by the divine voice: "In your seed shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed (Genesis 22)." Explaining which the Apostle says: "He did not say in seeds, as in many; but in your seed as one, which is Christ (Galatians 3)." For because Abraham believed while still placed in uncircumcision, he is the father of the nations; but because he afterwards received the sign of circumcision, he deserved to be the father of the Jews; and because from his stock he came forth, through whom blessing is restored to the earth formerly cursed; therefore in his seed are blessed all the tribes of the earth. But to David it was said: "Of the fruit of your womb I will set upon my seat

(Psalm 131)." Because therefore he was specially promised to these two, not undeservedly is Christ said to be especially the son of both.

But that also is to be inquired, why David is preferred to Abraham in the generation of Christ, when it is not doubted that Abraham was much before him in time?

But, if we studiously weigh the manner of the promise made to both, we find that not without cause was David preferred. For what is read to have been promised once to Abraham, this was confirmed to David by frequent promise. For to Abraham it was only said: "In your seed shall all nations be blessed." But David deserved to be called the father of Christ by a certain special privilege, who received more promises concerning him; such as is that in the psalm: "Of the fruit of your womb I will set upon my seat." And again: "Once have I sworn in my holy one, if I lie to David, his seed shall remain forever (Psalm 88)." And in the book of Kings, Nathan the prophet speaks in the Holy Spirit to David, saying: "When you shall sleep with your fathers, I will raise up your seed, which shall go out from your loins, and he shall be to me as a son, and I will be to him as a father (2 Kings 7)." Rightly therefore is David preferred to Abraham in the generation of Christ, to whom a more manifold and for this reason entirely immovable promise is granted as a prerogative.

That indeed can move some not irrationally, why the holy evangelist studied to interpose only reprehensible women in the genealogy of Christ;

but passed over in silence the holy and without any contradiction laudable ones?

But congruously through the number seventy the remission of sins is designated, which is born from eleven and seven.

But this was done for this reason so that, while our Redeemer is described as born of sinners, he may be believed to have descended from heaven to earth for sinners. For he descended that he might carry our sins himself; but he ascended that he might make us partakers of his divinity, as it is said through the Apostle: "Who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification (Romans 4)." For hence it is that Matthew, descending through Solomon, in desiring whose mother David sinned, enumerates forty generations, while Luke, ascending through Nathan, through the prophet of whose name the Lord expiated the sin of David, describes seventy and seven generations. For through Matthew it is signified that for this reason the Son of God descended to us sinners, that he might become a partaker of our mortality; but through Luke it is hinted that for this reason after the resurrection he ascended to the Father, that he might make us consorts of his divinity. As it is said through the egregious preacher: "Now that he ascended, what is it, but because he first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same, and he who ascended above all the heavens, that he might fill all things (Ephesians 4)." For through the number which Matthew orders, the taking up of our mortality; but through

that which Luke placed, the abolition of human depravity is expressed. For the number forty is born from four and ten; the ten itself also is derived from four. For one, and two, and three, and four, always increased by monads, grow into ten.

Therefore through the number forty this present world is designated, because both this year, which we lead temporally, is revolved through four seasons, and the world in which we live is terminated by four parts here and there. Finally Moses foresaw this, Elijah understood this: both fasted for forty continuous days (Exodus 34; 1 Kings 19). Our Redeemer also consecrated this same fast for as many days (Matthew 4). Hence it is that the children of Israel, who through the desert bore the labor of so great a journey, after forty years entered the land of promise (Deuteronomy 1; Joshua 11). Finally we, brothers, we are the children of Israel, who first bear the labor of this calamitous life, and thus at last enter the land of promise, that is, the stability of the heavenly kingdom. Hence it is also that Jonah, who by divine command is sent to Nineveh, threatens that destruction is imminent for them after forty days. "Yet forty days," he says, "and Nineveh shall be subverted (Jonah 3)." Which, because it is not read then historically done, is still expected spiritually to be fulfilled. For through Nineveh this world is designated; therefore through forty days, every state of the present life is hinted. Therefore after forty days Nineveh shall be subverted, because after the course of

this mortal life, namely the number of the elect being completed, this world shall be destroyed.

But through the number seventy, which Luke placed, the remission of sins is expressed. As the Lord himself testifies in the Gospel. For when Peter asked, saying: "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times?" He answered: "I say not to you until seven times, but until seventy times seven (Matthew 18)." For eleven if multiplied seven times, make the number seventy and seven. But the number ten is known to be perfect, through which also the Decalogue is designated. But if ten is perfect, it remains necessarily that eleven is imperfect.

What moreover is sin, but a transgression of the law? If therefore through ten the law is understood, rightly through eleven the transgression of the law is figured. But in the number seven the whole universality of this world is contained, because in seven days every course of the present life is evolved. Therefore through eleven multiplied seven times all our sins are led to the seventy-seventh number, in which truly the remission of all sins is made. Whence elegantly this series according to Luke is begun from the baptism of Christ, and is finished in the person of God the Father (Luke 3). For in the baptism of Christ the remission of all our sins comes through the Holy Spirit, who descended upon the baptized Lord in the form of a dove (Matthew 3). Thus, thus redeemed through Christ, and washed through the grace of the Holy Spirit, we

are reconciled to God the Father. Which senses of both evangelists St. Paul comprehends in one sentence, saying: "God sent his Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin, and of sin condemned sin in the flesh (Romans 8:3)." For when he says: "God sent his Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin," he manifestly declares the taking up of our sins; which Matthew shows, when descending he enumerates forty generations. When he follows: "And of sin condemned sin in the flesh," he indicates the expiation of all our crimes; which Luke expresses, when ascending he describes seventy-seven generations.

We could indeed set forth many things to your charity, most dear brothers, concerning the evangelical reading, which is pregnant with many sacraments of mysteries; but we therefore run through it succinctly, lest we should seem redundantly to repeat those things which have been said more broadly by our elders concerning it. But that one thing in it it is pleasant not so much to set forth as to admire, because the person of our Redeemer is thus placed at the end of this propagation, as if a hook were subjoined at the extremity of a line: thus orderly is he added to the genealogy, as a hook is inserted into a lengthened line. For when it is said: "Abraham begat Isaac, and Isaac begat Jacob," and the rest of the progenitors are numbered twice, as if lily were inserted into lily, so that one line may be produced at length from many. But when it is subjoined: "And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ

(Matthew 1);" not now directly, but as if from an oblique angle a hook is applied, which may be fixed in the jaws of that ancient Leviathan. Hence it is that the Lord speaks to blessed Job, saying: "Will you catch Leviathan with a hook?" (Job 40.) For through Leviathan, who is called "their addition," that cetus, the devourer of the human race, is designated, who while he promised to add divinity to man, took away immortality (Genesis 3); who also the fault of prevarication, which he gave to the first man to drink, while he multiplies it in those following by his most evil persuasion, heaps up punishments for them without ceasing. In a hook the bait is shown, the barb is hidden.

Therefore the almighty Father caught him with a hook, because he sent his incarnate only-begotten Son to his death, in whom both passible flesh could be seen, and impassible divinity could not be seen. And when in him that serpent through the hands of the persecutors bit the bait of the body, the barb of divinity perforated him. But previously he had known him as God in miracles, but from knowledge he fell into doubt, when he saw him passible. As if a hook therefore held the jaws of the swallowing one, while the bait of the flesh appeared in him, which the devourer might seek, and the divinity lay hidden at the time of the passion, which might kill. In the hook of his incarnation he was caught, because, while in him he sought the bait of the body, he was transfixed by the barb of divinity. For there was present the humanity, which would draw the devourer to itself; there the divinity, which would

perforate; there open infirmity, which would provoke; there hidden virtue, which would transfix the jaws of the robber. Therefore in the hook he was caught, because he perished from where he bit, and he lost those mortals whom he held by right, because he presumed to seek in death those over whom he had not the right of death.

Hence, brothers, hence, I ask, consider with what praises the blessed and glorious Virgin Mary is worthy, she who bore for us from her most chaste womb him who snatched us from so deep a throat of the most greedy dragon. For the purpose of worthily extolling her praises, the eloquent eloquence of rhetoricians is not found fit, nor the subtle arguments of dialecticians, nor the most acute geniuses of philosophers. And what wonder if this ineffable Virgin in her praises exceeds the measure of the human voice, since she transcends even the nature itself of the human race by the dignity of her excellent merits? Finally, neither that most excellent choir of patriarchs, nor the provident number of prophets, nor the judge-senate of apostles, nor the victorious army of martyrs, nor any of the ancients, nor any of the following Fathers will be able to be compared to this most blessed Virgin. For what of holiness, what of justice, what of religion, what of perfection could be lacking to this singular Virgin, who was full of the charism of all divine grace? For thus she heard from the angel, while she was being saluted: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee (Luke 1)." What vice, I ask, could claim a place for itself in her mind or body, she

who, like heaven, merited to be the sanctuary of the fullness of the whole divinity? For "in Christ," as it is said through Paul, "dwells all the fullness of the divinity bodily (Colossians 2:9)." Nor is it a wonder if she transcends the merits of all mortals, she who herself exceeds the loftiness of the angels.

For through this most blessed Virgin, not only is the life once lost restored to men, but even the blessedness of angelic sublimity is increased, because, while a home is led back to the supernal things, the number of those who had been diminished is repaired. This indeed that multitude of angels had signified which cried out to the hearing shepherds in the nativity of our Redeemer: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will (Luke 2)." For when it is first said that there is glory to God in the highest, and then it is added "and on earth peace," it is clearly shown that the ineffable birth of the undefiled Virgin was generating joy not only for the lands, but no less even for the heavens themselves. This also that nature of the blessed boys asserted, who, as the Lord was coming to his passion, sang with concordant voice: "Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord (Matthew 21)."

O wonderfully fruitful virginity, which by a new and unheard-of miracle can be called both mother and virgin! He who is not contained by the whole world is infused into the members of an unwed girl. She felt indeed the weights of the womb, she who had not lost the shame

of chastity. She wondered at the signs of birth, she who had known no contagions of a man. There was hope in the birth, since there had been no pleasure in the coitus. She conceived the immense, she bore the eternal, she brought forth the one begotten before the ages. The conception brought her the gift of fecundity, and the birth did not take away the glory of virginity. He who, before he was born, created her such that he himself could worthily have been born from her, concerning whom the prophet David had predicted long before: "Mother Zion shall say: A man, and he was made man in her, and the Most High himself has founded her (Psalm 86)." He was created from her whom he created, he was carried by the hands which he formed, he sucked the breasts which he filled, he was cherished in the lap of a girl whom the vastest breadth of heaven does not receive, he was girded with childish swaddling clothes who embraces the immensity of the orb of the earth in his fist, he obeyed the will of a mother who governed the laws of all things by his own empire, he wailed in the cradle who was the joy of angels in the heavens, he was covered with cheap rattles who clothes his elect with the stole of immortality, a girl commanded him whom all elements obey and serve. For thus it is written in the Gospel: "That he came with his parents to Nazareth, and was subject to them (Luke 2)."

Worthily, therefore, is blessed Mary called the parent of the one bringing forth, the rising of the one rising, the fountain of the living fountain, the origin of the principle, because he came forth

from her through the matter of the flesh who is the head and beginning of all things through the essence of the deity. Finally, this is that gate concerning which Ezekiel testifies, saying: "He turned me," he said, "to the way of the gate of the outer sanctuary, which looked toward the east, and this was closed. And the Lord said to me: This gate, which you see, shall be closed, and it shall not be opened, and a man shall not pass through it, and it shall always be closed (Ezekiel 44:1-2)." Truly always closed, because always incorrupt. Incorrupt before birth, incorrupt after birth, conceiving a man, not knowing a man, as it is said through Jeremiah: "The Lord will do a new thing upon the earth, and behold a woman shall encompass a man (Jeremiah 31:22)."

Therefore, most beloved, let us rejoice and let us exult in the nativity of the most blessed mother of God, Mary, who announced a new joy to the world, and stood forth as the beginning of all human salvation. Let us exult, I say, and just as we are accustomed to rejoice in the nativity of Christ, so even no less let us rejoice in the nativity of the mother of Christ. Today is born the queen of the world, the window of heaven, the gate of paradise, the tabernacle of God, the star of the sea, the heavenly ladder, through which the supernal King, being humbled, descended to the depths; and man, who lay prostrate, ascended being exalted to the supernal things. Today the star appeared to the world, through which the Sun of justice shone upon the world. That one, namely, concerning whom it is said through the

prophet: "A star shall rise out of Jacob, and a man shall arise from Israel (Numbers 24:17)." Today is born that most splendid Virgin, from whom proceeded he who is beautiful in form before the sons of men like a bridegroom from his chamber (Psalm 44:3). Today she came forth from the womb of her mother, she who merited to become the temple of divinity. Today that prophecy was fulfilled, which the most excellent of the prophets, Isaiah, as if having become a herald for the arrival of the queen of the world, cried out with a loud voice, saying: "A rod shall go forth from the root of Jesse, and a flower shall ascend from his root (Isaiah 11:1)." And well is this incomparable Virgin called a rod, who both through the intention of desire flashed forth to the supernal things, and through the sincerity of a good work did not incur the vice of distorted knottedness. From which rod our Redeemer like a flower ascended, who decorated the fields of the whole world for his martyrs and confessors as if with roses and lilies. For he himself is the singular flower of the holy Church, as he speaks of himself in the Canticle of Canticles, saying: "I am the flower of the field, and the lily of the valleys (Song of Solomon 2:1)." This lily is born not on the mountains, but in the valleys, because God, resisting the proud, is found in the hearts of the humble. Christ is called a lily, and the mother of Christ is called a lily, as it is subjoined in the same Canticle: "As the lily among the thorns, so is my love among the daughters (Song of Solomon 2:2)." As the lily among the thorns, so the most

blessed Virgin Mary shone among the daughters; who, being born from the thorny propagation of the Jews, shone with the whiteness of virginal chastity in the body, but flamed with the heat of twofold charity in the mind, burned everywhere with the odor of a good work, and reached toward the sublime things with a continuous intention of the heart.

But some, while they desire to know more than it is proper to know, inquire with the study of superfluous curiosity who the father or who the mother of blessed Mary was. But some reader seeks too uselessly what the evangelist thought it superfluous to narrate. For if he knew that utility was present in this knowledge, the noble historian would by no means pass over a necessary thing in silence. For it must be known that this is the custom for the writers of sacred eloquence that, just as they always study to be silent about what is harmful, so also they despise to report what it is not profitable to know. But sometimes in sacred Scripture something is omitted for the sake of a certain mystery, so that by its silence, as if crying out, something great may be sensed. Just as it is that Melchizedek, in the narration of ancient history, is introduced through Moses without father, without mother, without genealogy (Genesis 14; Hebrews 7), so that namely Christ, who is a priest according to the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 109), may be signified through him, of whom the prophet says: "For who shall declare his generation?" (Isaiah 53:8.) But in the generation of Christ those per-

sons ought rightly to have been ordered through whom the descent to Joseph might be made, and not turn aside to Mary, who was from one and the same tribe with him. For it had been the custom of the ancients that in the genealogy of men they scarcely ever placed the names of women. But if they had wished to describe the lineage of women, they took care sometimes to propagate it through women. The evangelist Luke testifies to our assertion, who took care to show Zechariah the father of John through the male lineage, but to designate Elizabeth through the female sex. "There was," he said, "in the days of Herod the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zechariah, of the course of Abijah, and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron (Luke 1:5)." So that indeed appropriately a man might be seen to be propagated from men, a woman from women.

Matthew therefore, who had proposed to describe the lineage of the man, namely of him of whom it is said through the prophet: "Behold the man whose name is the Orient (Zechariah 6:12)," wished learnedly to descend through Joseph; but he judged it superfluous to place the parents of Mary.

He therefore who desires to have knowledge of the parents of Mary, let him know that she descended from the seed of Abraham, from the tribe of Judah, from the royal stock of David. Let him know also that she had a proximity of kinship with the priestly race of Aaron. Whence it is said to her through the angel: "And behold Elizabeth your kinswoman, and she herself has conceived

a son in her old age (Luke 1:36)." And rightly our Redeemer wished to take up flesh from the priestly and at the same time royal generation, who, existing as King before the ages, as the true priest, sacrificed himself to the Father for us as a victim of sweetness. For also king David, when he ate the loaves of proposition, which it was not lawful for any but the priests alone to eat (1 Samuel 21), figured that both things would be in the one and the same person of Jesus Christ our Lord, that is, the kingdom and the priesthood. And not only is the Mediator of God and men, the man Christ, appropriately called King and Priest, but also whoever is joined to him with perfect love deserves the title of both dignities. Whence also it is said through Peter: "You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people (1 Peter 2:9)." And in the Apocalypse of John: "You are worthy, Lord God, to take the book and to open its seals; since you were slain, and have redeemed us to God in your blood out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and have made us a kingdom and priests to our God, and we shall reign upon the earth (Revelation 5:9-10)." For we are kings through the grace of Christ, because we carry the standard of the cross on our forehead. But we are rightly called priests, because we are anointed with the oil of the Holy Spirit and with the unction of chrism.

But among all the marks of this venerable solemnity, most dear brothers, that also is believed to have happened not without the cause

of a profound mystery: that the Mother of the Lord should be born almost at the very time of the vintage. For now indeed the branches of the vines, burdened with the yield of fruits, flow down to the depths; now the clusters of grapes swell with a heavy maturity; now the hope of the farmers, which had been suspended through the whole circle of the year, exults that it plucks the rich fruits of past labor; now the trees are fragrant with the savory sweetness of fruits, so that the apples, which by their bitterness had exasperated the taste of men, soothe them with a pleasing maturity. But through these things which we discern outwardly, we ought to reflect our eyes to the interior things. For the vineyard was the synagogue, which had received the sayings of the law and the prophets like plantings for the purpose of bringing forth fruits. Whence also it is said through the prophet: "For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel (Isaiah 5:7)." And the Psalmist: "A vine," he said, "thou hast brought out of Egypt (Psalm 79:9)." But just as the fruit of the vineyards is expected through the whole year, but is gathered in autumn alone; so indeed, so our Redeemer, whom the law had prefigured, whom the prophets had predicted, whom all the saints from Adam until the past fifth age had expected with the highest desire, came in the time of Mary alone; and then as if he expressed wine from spiritual grapes, because he opened the mystical understandings latent in the pressed skins of the letter. Whence also it is said through the Apostle: "But when the fullness

of the time was come, God sent his Son, made of a woman, made under the law (Galatians 4:4)."

O how many thirsted for this vintage with the dry throats of their minds, how many flagged with unutterable desire to reach the must of evangelical grace. Whence also the Truth says to the disciples: "Amen I say to you that many prophets and kings have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them, and to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them (Luke 10:24)." Concerning this vineyard the bridegroom speaks in the Canticle of Canticles, saying: "I went down into the garden of nuts, to see the fruits of the valleys, and to look if the vineyard had flourished, and the pomegranates had budded (Song of Solomon 6:10)." For the pomegranate is indeed covered with a bitter rind, but a sweet sweetness is hidden in its grains. But there are some who, while they assiduously suffer the cross of Christ in the body through the bitterness of affliction, are refreshed in the mind with the sweetness of inward contemplation through the desire of love. Therefore the vineyard of the bridegroom buds pomegranates, because the holy Church never ceases to bring forth such as these. Concerning this same vineyard, in the same Canticle, the bride speaks to the bridegroom, saying: "Let us go up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth (Song of Solomon 7:12)." Of this vineyard he stood forth as the vintager, who, pressed in the winepress of his passion, opened to us the mystical senses of the

divine eloquence, and gave us to drink the wine of evangelical grace. Concerning which wine, namely, it is said again in the voice of the bride to the bridegroom in the same Canticle: "Thy throat is like the best wine, worthy for my beloved to drink (Song of Solomon 7:9)."

Isaiah had long before foreseen this bloody vintager through the blood of the passion on the cross, when, full of the prophetic spirit, he cried out under a question: "Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" And a little after: "Why then is your apparel red, and your garments like theirs that tread in the winepress?" (Isaiah 63:1-2.) For the apparel of Christ is nothing else but the body which he took from the lady and virgin Mary. Nor yet is his garment anything else but that very same thing. For our flesh also is called a garment, but yet we ourselves are the flesh with which we are clothed. Concerning this garment it is said through John: "He had written on his garment and on his thigh, King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16)." For through the thigh the propagation of the flesh is made. He therefore who through the propagation of the human race came into this world from the Virgin, and through the mystery of his Incarnation indicated to all nations that he was King and Lord, had written on his garment and on his thigh: King of kings and Lord of lords. For from where he became known to the world, there he inscribed the knowledge of his majesty. Moreover, this apparel appeared red to the prophet because our Redeemer shed his own

blood for our redemption. To whom he himself replied: "I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the nations there is not a man with me (Isaiah 63:3)." For alone he trod the winepress in which he was trodden, because by his own power he conquered the passion which he sustained. For he who endured the gibbet of the cross even unto death, rose again with glory from death itself. But well is it said, "and of the nations there is not a man with me;" because those for whom he had come to suffer ought to have been participants of his passion. Concerning those who had not yet believed, he complains in the resurrection, those whose life was sought in his death. He himself is also called the vine, as he testifies of himself in the Gospel: "I," he said, "am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman (John 15:1)."

Finally, this most sacred vine extended its branches through the whole world, because everywhere dilated and bearing fruit, it sent out as many branches as it chose saints within the holy Church through the grace of its vocation. Whence he also subjoins the same thing by inculcating it: "I am," he said, "the vine, and you are the branches; he who abides in me, and I in him, the same bears much fruit (John 15:5)." That same cluster of grapes had signified this mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus, which the scouts brought on a pole to the sons of Israel from the land of promise (Numbers 13:24). But with two porters placed under it on this side and that, with one indeed preceding and the other following, the cluster was carried in the middle,

because our Redeemer, while he is predicted by the fathers of the Old Testament as being about to come, but is announced by the preachers of the New as having already come, is carried like a cluster on a pole, so that the mind of the faithful may be kindled to take possession of the land of supernal promise. The pole indeed, carried on the shoulders of the porters, is the divine law imposed on the necks of men. Whose parts that cluster in the middle continued, because our Savior, who made both one, joined the mandates of the law and the prophets with the evangelical doctrine. But he who preceded did not see with his eyes what he carried on his shoulders; but he who followed always gazed upon his burden. By him therefore who preceded, the people of the Jews is designated; but by him who followed, the multitude of the nations is not inappropriately designated. For the former carried Christ through the pages of sacred Scripture as if on his shoulders; but because he did not know him present in the flesh, with the darkness of his infidelity hindering him, he in a certain way turned his back to his face. But the latter, who follows, beholds; because the Gentile people manifestly knows its Redeemer, in whom it faithfully believes.

The land of promise can also not inappropriately be understood as the very body of the most blessed Mother of God, from which our Redeemer willed to be germinated humanly like a singular cluster of grapes. According to that which is written: "Truth is sprung out of the

earth (Psalm 84:12)." And well is the flesh of the most blessed Virgin called the land of promise, which long before, being about to bring forth the Savior of the world, was promised in many ways by the prophets. Which truly flowed with milk and honey; while it brought forth God and man in unsullied virginity. Whence also it is said through Isaiah: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive in her womb, and shall bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel; butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil and choose the good (Isaiah 7:14-15)." Deservedly therefore the blessed virgin Mary is born under the very time of the vintages, so that now the must of new grace may be expressed thus from the various sentences of sacred Scripture, as if from the different husks of the grapes. Deservedly she is born in the autumnal time, so that now, as if in the autumn of the whole age, the fruit of spiritual trees may be eaten. In the fullness of time she came, who was full of grace: "Hail," said the angel, "full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women (Luke 1:28)."

O sweet, O admirable news, O new and unheard-of service of the angelic salutation! He calls her full of grace, because he was descending into her through whom grace was bestowed upon all the world. "The Lord," he says, "is with thee;" because he is in thee, who made thee such, that he himself might be made from thee. "Blessed art thou among women." Through a woman a curse was infused into the earth, through a woman a blessing is returned to the

earth. Through whose hand the drink of bitter death is offered, through her also the cup of sweet life is exhibited. The most bountiful flow of the new blessing has wiped away all the contagion of the ancient curse. But what did Mary say to these things? Did she, at the news brought to her from heaven, break into the laughter of immoderate joy? Did she raise the neck of her mind in the pride of arrogance? Did she not, before she answered, weigh the very weight of the angelic salutation in the balanced scale of her mind? For the evangelist says: "Who, when she had heard, was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be (Luke 1:29)." Where are those who say, I am a virgin, I am a virgin? Verbose, contentious, suspicious, superfluous, composed in dress, dissipated in manners? I am a virgin; for I know not a man, I am ignorant of marriage. O virgin, how happy you would be if what you have in the flesh, you would preserve in the mind, you would guard in action! For what does it profit to preserve the integrity of the flesh alone, and to corrupt the interior of the mind with the defilements of evil spirits? What does it help to be a virgin, and by the demanding merits of actions by no means to arrive at the virginal reward? A virgin in flesh, not in mind, does not possess the reward of virginity. For it is one thing to firmly resist the allurements of temptations, another thing to yield to them as they creep in blandly, and if not in body, yet weakly in mind.

Therefore, virginal modesty alone is not sufficient for anyone to take the rewards, unless it be also enriched with other virtues. For it is said to John in the Apocalypse through the angel: "These are they who were not defiled with women. For they are virgins, and they follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth (Revelation 14:4)." For our Lamb, namely, he who taketh away the sins of the world, had charity, because he shed his own blood for the salvation of men. The grace of humility shone forth, because he humbled himself even unto death, even the death of the cross. He preserved patience, because when he was reviled, he reviled not; when he suffered, he threatened not. He despised the height of worldly dignity, because, as is said through John, when they would have made him king, he sought the hiding place of a mountain (John 6:15). He loved his enemies, for whom also, being placed on the cross, he prayed, saying: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do (Luke 23:34)." He, therefore, follows the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, who imitates his footsteps not by virginity alone, but through all the paths of virtues, as far as he prevails. He follows the Lamb in the rest of arrival, who studied to imitate him in the adversity of the journey.

But for the most part, the life of virgins is confounded by the conduct of the married, when both the latter take up works beyond their state, and the former do not stir up their hearts according to their own order. Whence it is also said through the prophet: "Be ashamed, O Sidon, says

the sea (Isaiah 23:4)." For as if through the voice of the sea, Sidon is brought to shame, when by a comparison of the life of seculars, and of those fluctuating in this world, the life of him who is seen fortified and as it were stable, is reproved. For often some returning to the Lord after sins of the flesh, exhibit themselves so much more ardently in good works as they see themselves more damnable from evil ones. And often some persisting in the integrity of the flesh, while they see themselves to have less which they may bewail, think the innocence of their life fully sufficient for them, and they inflame themselves with no stings of fervor to the fervor of the spirit. And there often becomes more pleasing to God a life burning with love after a fault, than the innocence of a virgin torpid with security. Whence also it is said by the voice of the Judge: "Many sins are forgiven her, because she loved much (Luke 7:47)." And again: "There is joy to the angels of God over one sinner doing penance, more than over ninety-nine just persons who need not penance (Luke 15:7)."

That virginity, therefore, is perfect, which is girded with the remaining virtues, which is seasoned with true humility of mind. Which not only preserves itself unspotted in the flesh, but also keeps itself chaste in the mouth. Whence also the blessed virgin Mary, having heard the mystery of the angelic legation, held the usual rigor of modest silence; and if she indeed could not discuss within herself what manner of salutation this was, yet she thought it superfluous

to inquire by words. But soon by being silent she deserved to hear what she did not presume to inquire by questioning. For the angel said to her: "Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found grace with the Lord; behold, thou shalt conceive in the womb, and shalt bear a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus (Luke 1:30-31)." What the prophet predicted long before as being about to come, this the angel announced in the same words as being present. For Isaiah, as was premissed, says: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive in the womb; and shall bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel (Isaiah 7:14)." There Jesus, who is called Savior; here Emmanuel, which is interpreted God with us.

With what joy, with what exultation, my brothers, could the mind of Mary have been filled, when she compared these prophetic and evangelical words between themselves: "For Mary," says the evangelist, "kept all these words, conferring them in her heart (Luke 2:19)." In what excellence did she behold herself sublimated above all the human race, who heard that she was becoming the mother of her Creator? But she who deserved to grow with such height before God, with how great a dejection of humility did she prostrate herself before herself? For she said: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word (Luke 1:38)." She was called the mother of God by the angel, and she herself confessed that she was the handmaid of the Lord. And truly mother, at once and handmaid. Handmaid indeed through

the common nature of the human condition, but mother through the ineffable grace of the divine gift. Mother in that which she brought forth; handmaid in that which she was brought forth. Not yet was the Gospel written, and already she kept the evangelical precepts. For the Lord commands: "The greater thou art, humble thyself in all things (Matthew 23:12; Ecclesiasticus 3:20)." For what is greater than the mother of the Lord? What humbler than the handmaid of the Lord? "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word." Whence well in the Canticle of Canticles this spouse, and mother of the Lord, is praised by the voice of her spouse, when it is said: "Who is she that goeth up by the desert as a rod of smoke, of the aromatical spices of myrrh, and frankincense, and of all the powders of the perfumer? (Canticles 3:6)." For the blessed Mary like a rod of smoke went up from aromatical spices, because from the virtues of her life she studied to profit always in the rectitude of internal incense; nor did she flow down scattered through thoughts, but she constrained herself within the secrets of the heart in the rod of rigor. Since she did not cease always to rethink and retract those things which she did, she had indeed myrrh and frankincense in work, but powder in thought. And well is she called a rod of smoke who is also mystically figured by the rod of Aaron. For the former brought forth almond nuts without any moisture of the earthly clod; but the latter generated the Son of God without any male seed. Also the fruit of that rod itself, if it is

studiedly discussed, is found to have some similitude with Christ. For as an almond nut consists of a kernel, a bone, and a shell; so our Redeemer consists of divinity, and at once a soul and flesh.

Because he was about to be born of the Virgin without any male seed, he himself had said long before through the Prophet: "But I am a worm and no man (Psalm 21:7)." For as a worm is born from wood without any other seed; so also Christ was born of the blessed Virgin without any concupiscence of the flesh. Hence it is that it is said through another prophet: "Behold, the Lord shall ascend upon a light cloud (Isaiah 19:1)." For when the sun is covered with a cloud, it is hidden from human sight. So surely, so our Savior, having taken flesh from the Virgin, clothed himself, in which his divinity lying hidden could not be seen by human intuition. Which cloud is therefore called light because the most blessed Virgin, pregnant by no seed of man, is fecundated by the grace of the Holy Spirit alone. Who both obtained the dignity of a Mother and did not lose virginal modesty. Who conceived without contamination and brought forth a son without pain. Pain did not follow the birth because lust did not precede the conception. For it had been said to Eve: "In pain thou shalt bring forth a son (Genesis 3:16)." Which sentence flourished in other mothers, but in Mary it lost the measure of its own right. In women it persisted fixed, in the Virgin it could not prevail. For she who remained a Virgin in conceiving, could not feel pain in suffering. For he who ineffably proceeded from her did not corrupt

the cloister of virginal modesty. Finally, coming, he entered a Virgin; going out, he nonetheless left her a Virgin. For she is the garden enclosed, the fountain sealed (Canticles 4:12), who both brought forth the fruit of fecundity and did not diminish the merit of virginity.

O wonderful, O singularly noble flesh of the most blessed Virgin, in which female nature is changed, human condition is not held! It was indeed generated through intercourse, but it did not bring forth through the efficacy of intercourse. Brought forth by the common right of those being born, it brought forth by the novelty of singular grace. Finally, in the human race, he is called noble who is distinguished by the clear titles of his ancestors; but the blessed Mary, although she was begotten from the generous stock of the fathers, yet draws her most excellent kind of nobility from him who was procreated from her by a new kind of being born, and through her most clear offspring exceeds all nobility of the human lineage. Clear by the titles of her ancestors, but incomparably clearer by the generosity of her offspring. Daughter indeed of kings; but Mother of the King of kings: "Glorious things are said of thee, O city of God (Psalm 86:3)." But whatever is said of thee by a mortal man is not equal to the merits of thy loftiness. For how excellent grace elevates thee above the angels, human fragility does not aspire worthily to utter thy praises. We beseech thee, most clement, mother of piety and mercy itself, that we who rejoice to frequent the insignias of thy praise on

earth, may deserve to have the help of thy intercession in the heavens; so that as through thee the Son of God deigned to descend to ours, so also we through thee may be able to arrive at his fellowship. Who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and is glorified through infinite ages of ages. Amen.

SERMON XLVII.

I. ON THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS. (SEPTEMBER 14)

From the rod of Jesse we have come to the rod of the cross, and we conclude the beginning of redemption with the end. From the former Jesus Christ the Virgin was wonderfully generated from the virgin rod; on the latter the head of the martyrs and the form of martyrdom was basely hung. That rod of direction, the rod of thy kingdom (Psalm 44:7), says that familiar organ of the Holy Spirit, because nothing is more upright than the Virgin, nothing more subtle. Hear also of the other: "The Lord will send out the rod of thy strength from Zion (Psalm 109:2)." Truly the cross was the rod of strength, on which the Lord of virtues fought manfully and conquered. "I took unto me two rods," says the prophet; "one I called beauty, and the other a cord (Zechariah 11:7)." The rod of beauty, the womb of the Virgin. "Fair," he says, "as the moon (Canticles 6:9);" the rod of the cord, the wood of the gibbet, each determining the kingdom of God and the devil, imposing a bridle on his malice, and restraining

his wide wandering with the strongest power. In this the harmless side was pierced, and for an hour the innocent in hands and pure in heart was crucified. That terrible thief, whose hands are full of blood, was likewise pierced and finished on this. But Christ in one way, he in another. Christ to the tomb, he to eternity. He defeated the aerial powers, says the Apostle (Colossians 2:15), and fixed them to his cross. On the one side our Redeemer was crucified, on the other that highest prevaricator.

The king of Ai, as the history relates (Joshua 8:29 according to LXX), was hung on a double gibbet; so the king of death is hung on a twofold gibbet, because while he kills Christ, he is crucified on that very cross, which he found to be the great sacrament of the cross, nor is there anything more sacred than this sacrament. Behold the cross standing, and see with how upright an ascent it is raised from the earth to heaven, and protests the truth of the matter by its very image. Does not its figure seem to you to join heaven and earth in a sublime continuation? This is the firmest and indissoluble glue, by which rational creatures are glued together, so that from both may be made that city, whose participation is in the same thing (Psalm 121:3). See also how in a fourfold manner it comprehends the four quarters of the world, and draws every creature to itself. Jesus stands in the middle, stretched out in a fourfold part of his body, and with expanded hands shows to all coming to him from every part the widest bosom of mercy. For "with the Lord

there is mercy, and with him plentiful redemption (Psalm 129:7)." Truly plentiful, not narrow; because the wave of blood flowed bountifully from the body of Christ through five parts. One drop of most precious blood would suffice for the redemption of the world; but plenty was given, so that the power of the one who loves may shine forth in the redundancy of the benefit.

But lest perhaps it should occur to you, that running everywhere on earth, you could not find your Redeemer, from whatever part of the world you proceed, whether from the East, or from the West, or from the South, or from the North, he himself is ready to receive the one coming, and to cherish him with bland sweetness. But attend to what is expressed to you from the heart of the Most High. Do you come to a crucified man? You should come crucified, or about to be crucified. For they who are Christ's have crucified their flesh with its vices and concupiscences (Galatians 5:24). So the wood is necessary to you as to Christ. But now ascend to the higher summits of this word, and see what it is that goes forth. It is written in the history of Kings, that that blessed mother said to Elijah: "Behold, I gather two sticks (3 Kings 17:10)." Two sticks, two arms of the cross they are. In these two understand the human and angelic nature. And that stick indeed, which with upright sublimity tends to the heavens, take as the superior nature, which stood in rectitude, and adhered to the will of the Ruler with the most dutiful devotion. But that which is transverse designates the human nature, which transverse,

nay, that we may speak more truly, overturned, lost the equity of its state. Intuit with how great a sacrament they are joined. In both sticks a cleavage is made, and from the occasion of the wounds the joining of the juncture is composed. The supercelestial spirits received no mediocre wound, when God found wickedness in his angels (Job 4:18); nor is it a contemptible plague, since it behooves it to be repaired, because if the social number is not restored, the falling numerosity seems to have been made in vain. But the inferior nature from the sole of the foot even unto the top is so infected with poisonous fermentation, that it knows not whence it comes, or whither it goes.

Therefore, the wounds of both kinds of spirits being widely gaping, a junctional impression was made, which by Christ joining it was so repaired that nothing wounding seems to be in it. For Christ being fixed in both and for both, joins both with the strong bolt of his body, and opposes his own body to the junctures, lest they be able to spring back. The cross therefore joins heaven and earth; Christ on the cross draws all things; the roaring lion is bound there; the angel is federated and man; and the whole is restored through it, whatever the hand of the Most High made.

Exceed therefore for a little while the senses of the flesh, and the rushing phantasms of corporeal pleasures, and behold the goodness, sweetness, and deigning of the divine nature. Meditate on the position of the crucified body. See if there is anything in it which does not plead for you before the Father. That divine head, thickened with a

manifold density of thorns, was pierced even to the tenderness of the brain while the thorn was fixed. "With the thorns of their sins," says the Lord through the Prophet, "this people has surrounded me (Psalm 21:7)." For what is this? Lest thy head should ache, lest thy intention should be wounded. His eyes grew dark unto death, and those luminaries which illuminate the world were for an hour extinguished. Did not, with those darkening, darkness fall over the universal earth, and those two great luminaries were withdrawn with those luminaries? But all this was done that thy eyes might be turned away lest they should see vanity, and if they did see, they should not adhere to it. Those ears, which in heaven hear: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth (Isaiah 6:3);" heard on earth: "Thou hast a devil (John 7:20)," and: "Crucify, crucify him (Luke 23:21)." Why this? Lest thy ears should grow deaf to the cry of the poor, lest they should receive a vain hearing, lest they should receive the virus of detraction with open and favorable ears. That beautiful face, beautiful in form above the sons of men, was smeared with spittle, afflicted with blows, addicted to delusions; for so it is written: "They began to spit upon him, and to strike his face and to mock him saying: Prophesy who is it that struck thee? (Matthew 26:67-68)." Why this? That thy face might be illuminated, being illuminated it might be confirmed, and it might be said of thee: "His countenances are no longer changed into different things (1 Kings 1:18)." That mouth which teaches the angels, instructs men,

which said, and it was done, was silent for a little while, that thy mouth might speak truth and judgment and might confess the Lord its God. Those hands, which founded the heavens, were stretched out on the cross and transfixed with the hardest nails, that thy hands might be stretched out to the needy and thou couldst say: "My soul is in my hands always (Psalm 118:109)." What we hold in our hands, we do not easily forget, so also he who imprints his soul on good work does not deliver it to oblivion. That breast, in which are hidden all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God (Colossians 2:3), was pierced by a military lance, that thy breast might be cleansed from perverse thoughts, being cleansed it might be sanctified, being sanctified it might be preserved. Those feet, the footstool of which we ought to adore because it is holy (Psalm 98:5), were fixed with a hard transfixing, lest thy feet should hasten to evil, but should run the way of the mandates of the Lord. Why more? "They dug his hands and feet, and numbered all his bones (Psalm 21:17-18)." He placed his flesh and his soul for thee, that he might claim thy body and spirit for himself. All he compared himself to all of thee. What more ought he to have done and did not do? He loosed the bound, he illuminated the blind, because "the Lord looseth the fettered, the Lord illuminateth the blind (Psalm 145:7-8)." He brought back the wandering, he reconciled the guilty, who carried thee on his shoulders, who for thee satisfied his Father with his own blood.

Attend therefore to the counsel of thy God, not only reigning with the Father, but also of thy most sweet friend hanging on the cross; for he cannot be deceived, because he is wisdom, nor does he want to deceive thee, for whom he sustains an ignominious penalty: "If any man," he says, "will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me (Luke 9:23)." Hear the counsel, not a precept. For if it were a precept, whoever did not commit it to effect, could expect perpetual tortures; but when he says: "If any man will," he has placed it in our will, whether we hasten to run equally with him. A great labor indeed, but an incomparable reward. "After me," he says. He is to be gone after, because he is the truth, lest we be deceived; through him, because he is the way, lest we wander; to him, because he is the life, lest we die: "I am," he said, "the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6)." It follows: "let him deny himself." That first parent, constrained by prefixed laws of obedience, went out into the field of evil liberty. He had received in a precept that he should prefer the will of the Creator to his own, but using, nay, abusing his own will, when he wanted to bless himself, he lost himself. Driven out therefore from that happy inheritance, he was allotted exile for a fatherland, death for life, ignominy for glory. If you want therefore to return to your inheritance, deny your own will.

In this abnegation there are only two things against which it is necessary to fight and to conquer; pride in the mind, pleasure in the body.

Flee the king and the king's army, pride and the offspring of pride, and having followed him, you have attained him who said: "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart (Matthew 11:29)." Let a precious garment, more sumptous feasts, and more secret pleasure be far from thee, and thou hast fixed thy flesh with the fear of the Lord. The abnegation therefore of the will, is the recovery of the inheritance.

It follows: "Let him take up his cross." If Adam had not fallen and had remained in that dignity of his state, he would nevertheless have had to be called elsewhere and promoted into the angelic order; for he was made for a twofold cause, both to repair the diminished number, and to fulfill that which was lacking, if the angel had not fallen.

Moses, therefore, having the rod in his hand, added this besides, that he should expand his arms in the manner of a cross, and so it was already done, that he might overcome the battle lines of the opposing crowds by the wood and by this sign full of the mystery of the cross. For sacred history testifies to this when it says: "When Moses lifted up his hands, Israel prevailed; but if he had let them down a little, Amalek overcame (Exod. XVII)." This deed plainly, my brothers, conveys to us not only a sacrament of spiritual understanding, but also a most salutary example of virtue. For while we bear the cross after the Lord, while we lift up our hearts with our hands to God, the rulers of darkness immediately fall, and being prostrated into the depths, they are

crushed with broken strength. But if we let down our hands, and forgetting heavenly things, we follow earthly ones, immediately the enemy follows as victor, and we, having lost the victory, are cut down by the swords of those pursuing us. In every spiritual struggle, indeed, we ought to hold forth the banner of the cross, which certainly if we raise it acting manfully, we undoubtedly stand as victors; otherwise, if by living sluggishly we lay it down, it is necessary that we fall feebly at the first onset of the pursuers. Whence also that distinguished instructor of the spiritual warfare, Paul, says: "Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way (Hebr. XII)."

This banner indeed Gideon also typically set before himself and his fellow soldiers, who against arms, deserted arms, and being unarmed invaded the armed, and for the purpose of defeating the multitude of the Midianites, having dismissed the multitude, he came with a few (Jud. VII). For it was commanded to him by divine admonition that coming to the river, he should remove from the engagements of wars all whom he should see drawing water with bent knees. And it was done, and three hundred men only, who standing had drawn water with their hands, remained. But why is it that Gideon proceeds to the wars content with three hundred soldiers, except because this number is contained in the letter Tau, which clearly expresses the form of the cross? To which letter indeed, if that were

added above the transverse line which stands out higher in the cross, it would no longer be the appearance of the cross, but rather the cross itself. Since therefore the letter Tau contains the number three hundred, which exhibits the figure of the cross, not undeservedly in these three hundred following Gideon, all those were designated to whom it is said: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me (Luc. IX)." Who indeed, following the Lord, take up the cross so much more truly, as they themselves are more sharply afflicted, and are burned with the fire of pious compassion toward their delinquent neighbors or those in need. Whence it is said through Ezekiel: "Mark Tau upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that mourn for all the abominations that are done in the midst of Jerusalem (Ezech. IX)." Or certainly in these three hundred, who are contained in the letter Tau, this is expressed, that the iron of the enemies is overcome by the wood of the cross. In the same mystery of the cross, Abraham also as victor obtained a triumph, who defeated five kings with three hundred and eighteen household servants (Gen. XIV). This mystery of the cross that ark of the deluge also contained in itself, the length of which the Scripture defines to have been three hundred cubits (Gen. VI).

Furthermore, just as Noah with his own is saved through water and wood, so also the family of Christ is saved by water and wood, while it is washed by the baptism of salvation, and is signed by the impression of the life-giving cross. Which

ark indeed, that it may be seen to equal the measure in the sacrament of Christ's human body, is said to have had three hundred cubits in length, fifty in breadth, and thirty in height. For three hundred includes the number fifty six times, and the number thirty ten times. And the length of the human body, clearly from the crown of the head to the feet, is six times as much as the breadth, which is from the right to the left, and ten times as much as the height, which is from front to back. Thus indeed the ark, both in the number three hundred of its length, holds the appearance of the cross, and in the proportion of its whole dimension, it holds the figure of the Lord's body. And just as seven souls are given to Noah, that they may be saved through wood in the waves, so seven Churches filled with the sevenfold Spirit are saved in Christ through the wood of the cross and the water of baptism. By wood indeed the prince of pride subjected us to servitude, by wood the author of humility recalled us to the titles of liberty. By wood the tyrant banished us into perpetual exile, by wood the most mild King decreed us heirs in the kingdom. By wood we were devolved to the keeping of swine and the lack of husks; by wood also we were returned to the paternal embraces, and having received the robe with the ring, we were admitted into the fellowship of the pristine inheritance. Wood made us subject to the wicked exactor, wood paid all at once the tributes of our inexhaustible debt. By wood furthermore we withered from the draft of

the perennial fountain, by wood we are more copiously inundated by the dew of heavenly grace.

This inundation indeed of heavenly charisms Moses typically figured, when in Kadesh, which is in the desert of Zin, doubting the divine promise, he produced most abundant waters by striking the rock (Num. XX). Namely, on account of the sins of the people, because he had already done it, he mistrusted that he could do it again, and therefore he by no means introduced that same people into the land of promise, the Lord prohibiting it. Which doubt indeed even the words of Moses himself testify, when he says: "Hear, ye rebels and incredulous, can we elicit water for you out of this rock?" (Ibid.) As if he were saying, we cannot do what is above the powers of humanity, because you do not acquiesce to fulfill what is human; nor can we show a sign from the power of divinity, because you never cease to go against God through the contumacy of rebellion. But that rock, according to the Apostle, was Christ (I Cor. X).

The rod therefore approaches the flint, and water to be drawn by the people is produced; the cross is applied to Christ, and the hearts of all believers are irrigated by the grace of the Holy Spirit. For this is the stone of which it is said through Zechariah: "Upon one stone," he says, "are seven eyes (Zach. III)." Which sacrament indeed Moses himself is known not to have been ignorant of through the spirit, if his words are subtly weighed: "Open, O Lord," he says, "Thy treasure, the fountain of living water, that being

satisfied, their murmuring may cease (Num. XX).” For he would not describe with such magnificent and divine words an element flowing from the caverns of the earth, and thereafter to be cast out into the channels of outcomes. For was it worthy to call vile waters the treasure of God? But he undoubtedly names that treasure of God of which the Apostle says: That in the breast of Jesus are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. II). He also shows that fountain of living water of which it is said: “He that shall drink of the water that I shall give him, there shall become in him a fountain of water springing up into life everlasting (Joan. IV).” Otherwise, by what consequence of reason would he say: “that being satisfied, 252 their murmuring may cease?” when afterwards the same people, murmuring, say: Why didst thou bring us out of Egypt, that we might die in the wilderness? (Num. XXI) There is no bread, there are no waters, and many other things which the tumultuous crowd vomited out in prodigious madness. But Moses, affected by weariness of such a hard and seditious multitude, anxiously implores the coming of the Savior. Just as he had also then petitioned, when he said: “I beseech Thee, O Lord, send whom Thou wilt send (Exod. IV).” But that he struck the rock by not believing, and therefore did not arrive at the promised land with the people, signifies the people of the Jews, who indeed not believing Christ to be the power of God, suspended Him on the wood, and therefore did not deserve to enter into the land of the living.

But in what way do we attempt to collect into one the examples of the cross which are contained in the divine letters, when we see the whole series of the sacred eloquence serve this terrible sign with a certain intention of the spirit? For this is the propitiatory, which the two cherubim behold with their faces turned toward each other, because toward Him who was suspended on the cross, the two Testaments, namely the New and the Old, concordantly and indifferenter look. For John says: That "He is the propitiation for our sins (I Joan. II)." And Peter, speaking of the Fathers, says: "We believe that we are saved through the grace of Christ, even as they (Act. XV)." The cross therefore is the concord of the Scriptures, and a certain boundary and confluence of the old and the new things. The cross joins together heavenly and earthly things; the cross reforms men and angels together in the unanimity of the ancient concord. Finally, the cross is the death of vices, and the fountain and life of all virtues. The cross is the path for the foolish, the way for those running, and secure rest for those arriving. The cross is a donative for recruits, strength for those serving, and citizenship for the emeriti. The cross is the virtue of those acting bravely, the recovery of those falling, the crown of the victors. The cross inflicts momentary death, and compensates with eternal life. The cross despoils us of earthly things, that it may enrich us with heavenly ones; it teaches us to hunger, that it may satisfy; it commands humility, that it may exalt; it applies patience, that it may crown. The

cross is the rule for those living in Christ, the express norm of justice, and the discipline for all honest morals. The cross terrifies the devil, so that he may flee; it invites the angels, that they may enter in to us; it represses the phantasms of thoughts, and introduces the Holy Spirit into chaste and clean breasts. Finally, the cross recreates the weary, strengthens the weak, and comforts the wavering secrets of a desperate mind.

And what more shall I say? Since through the cross the King of glory both snatched us from the chain of the bloody predator, and as a violent invader burst through the Tartarean enclosures. Moreover, He absolved all the elect from the bonds of the ancient damnation, whom He also raised with Himself through the glory of the resurrection. What, I say, shall I relate concerning the praise of the blessed cross? when it even brought the thief into heaven, as indeed the first-fruits of its fruit, and through him opened the gates of paradise, which thereafter all the elect should ascend? For indeed that cherub, who had received the sword of exclusion, beheld in him the sign of the cross, to which he by no means opposed himself as a contradicter; not indeed of that cross which he bore, but rather of that whose mystery he believed, in whose power he hoped, saying: 253 "Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom (Luc. XXIII)." And oh, such wondrous liberty of one condemned! oh, immense power of Him who justifies thee! Being judged, He judges, and being assigned to a crime, He releases the crime by His power. Furthermore,

the cross itself on which He hangs, He makes as it were the throne of His dictating censure, and between thief and thief, as if already between lambs and goats, He discerns the laws of equity. The Lord had said: "If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all things to myself (Joan. XII)."

Of those, therefore, who were to be drawn, the thief was the forerunner, to whom He soon says: "This day thou shalt be with me in paradise (Luc. XXIII)." Him therefore whom He first drew from the snare of perpetual death, he first introduced to life. Through the cross therefore, or rather through Him who deigned to be suspended on the cross, all things are restored, all things blessed, all things suffused with the dew of heavenly grace. Especially the human mind, which was sterile, bitter, and insipid, at the coming of the Savior was made fertile and sweet, and was moreover seasoned with the salt of divine wisdom. Which thing indeed that miracle of Elisha the prophet figured quite expressly. For when the men of Jericho complained to him that the waters were very bad and the land sterile: "Bring me," he said, "a new vessel, and put salt into it (IV Reg. II)." Then he immersed that salt into the fountain of the waters, and so healed the waters from all death and sterility. Which thing indeed, that I may conclude the whole in a brief discourse, suggests nothing else than that the Word should become flesh and dwell among us. For what are the waters, but the worldly peoples? What is the new vessel, but the Lord's body, blackened by no stain of the ancient prevarication, worn by no

misuse of the old man? What furthermore is the salt, but heavenly wisdom?

The wisdom of the Father therefore descended into a human body, and thus converted the minds of all the faithful to fertility and the sweetness of vital intelligence. Which sweetness indeed lay hidden so long, until the salt was merged into the water, that is, until He hung on the cross, who said: "Save me, O God, for the waters are come in even unto my soul (Psal. LXVIII)." For from then on man learned what he ought to seek, what to avoid.

Meanwhile, my brothers, let it not weary you to know something subtle concerning the sacrament of the Lord's passion or incarnation, and to commend what is briefly said more closely to memory. In six days indeed Almighty God founded all His works, and on the sixth day He formed man according to His image and likeness (Gen. I, II). In the sixth age of the world also the Son of God was made the Son of man, that He might reform us to the image of God. On the sixth day furthermore the Lord Himself suffered, so that on that very day man might be made redeemed by His death, on which he had long ago been fashioned by His operation. On the same day also from the rib of the man was Eva formed, on which from the side of Christ through water and blood went forth the Church.

Let us see, therefore, how by the same sixfold number the temple of the Lord's body was constructed by the art of divine providence. That temple of Jerusalem, indeed, had been fabricated

through the courses of forty-six years; whence also it is said to the Lord by the Jews: "Forty and 254 six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?" (Joan. VIII.) Which number indeed, if it be multiplied by six, the whole time in which the Lord remained in His mother's womb is fulfilled. For forty-six times six becomes two hundred and seventy-six days. Which number of days completes nine months and six days, which indeed are imputed as ten months to women bringing forth. Not because all women arrive at the sixth day after the ninth month to bring forth, but because in so many days the very perfection of the Lord's body is found to have been brought to birth, as is handed down from the ancestors, and is guarded by the firm authority of the Church. For He is believed to have been conceived on the eighth of the Kalends of April, on which day He also suffered. On that day indeed He was buried in a new monument, where neither before nor after was any of the dead placed, on which He was conceived in the womb of the Virgin, where it is certain that no seed of mortals was sown. But He is handed down as born on the eighth of the Kalends of January.

From the very day of conception, therefore, up to the day of Nativity, two hundred and seventy-six days are found, which contain the sixfold number forty-six times. By which number therefore that stone temple was built of old, by that same number also the temple of the Lord's body was perfected by the six. This distinction only being observed, that in the construction of the

temple the number of years is placed, but in the building of the Lord's body the calculus of days is computed.

If the number of years, therefore, of that ancient temple be multiplied by six, all the days in which the Lord remained in the virginal womb are completed. The number, therefore, by which God made His works being joined with that by which the temple was built, the Lord's body is effected, so that it may be given us to understand that through that temple of divinity, which was constructed in the Virgin's womb, all the works of God are restored. As the Apostle says: "Because God purposed in the dispensation of the fullness of times to restore all things in Christ, which are in heaven and on earth in Him (Ephes. I)." But this temple of the body, which divine providence willed to be made by the sixfold number, being dissolved in three hours by Judaic impiety, He rebuilt in three days, as He Himself says: "Destroy this temple, and after three days I will rebuild it. But this, says the evangelist, he spoke of the temple of his body (Joan. II)." Nor is it a wonder if what was made by the six was dissolved by the three, and also built again by the three, since the six itself, as it grows from the three, so nonetheless it is resolved into the three. For one, and two, and three, make six: and conversely half of six is three, the third part two, the sixth part one. Which number indeed is called perfect for this reason, because it so consists of its parts. One whole day, plainly, and two nights the Lord lay in the sepulcher; because by one death of His body

He liberated us from two deaths, namely of the soul and of the body. And rightly the death of the Lord is designated by the day, by which we are led back to the light. But our death, both of them, by the night, which indeed is owed to us from sin. But this whole three-day period is expended most evidently in the sacrament of human salvation. For on the sixth day 255 He suffered, on the Sabbath He rested in the sepulcher, on the Lord's day He rose again. But this whole life is the sixth day to us; because indeed we are commanded to carry the cross after the Lord. But from the day of our departure up to the judgment it is led as a sort of Sabbath, because in the meantime the holy souls enjoy blessed rest. But in the resurrection of bodies the paschal day arises for us, which is concluded by no end, but is celebrated with the delight of perpetual joy.

That we may be able, therefore, to reach this Lord's day congruously through the Sabbath, it is necessary that we, now carrying the cross after Jesus, should continually celebrate the sixth day. Otherwise, if in a reverse order, living now under the law of the flesh, we lead as it were a Lord's day, without a doubt we shall afterwards exchange not joy for joy, but for tribulation. For hence it is that the Lord, just as He lived forty days in the desert, and was with the disciples for the same number after the resurrection; so also from the very moment of His death up to the dawn of the resurrection, He had forty hours. As therefore by the number of those days, so nonetheless also by the number of hours which we have men-

tioned, the time of our whole life is expressed, so that as He remained dead for the forty-fold number of hours, so also we, dying with Him as long as we live here, may live always in the mortification of the flesh.

To overcome the devil, therefore, our Emperor exhibited to us the ensign of the cross; and lest it should seem heavy to us, He Himself bore it first. Finally, this seal of our salvation we imprint not only on sacred things, or things to be consecrated, but we apply it also to foods, or to any domestic things whatever; so that it may evidently appear that both man, and whatever things are necessary for human use, are by the power of this sign absolved from the right of demons. For also on the very gibbet of our Redeemer, the blessed cross was balanced with such great mastery not of human but of divine art; that the head of the Lord tended toward the east, His feet toward the west, His right hand toward the north, and His left toward the south; so that it might exclude the prince of the world from all regions on every side, while it occupied the climates of the fourfold world through the squared form of the cross. Whence also He Himself says: "Now is the judgment of the world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out (John XII)." Thus, thus indeed it was fitting for the invader of all to be cast out by all at once; such a victim ought to have been immolated for the salvation of the whole world, which both through the sacrament might regard all things, and from its power might liberate all.

Then plainly was the cross humbled with the Lord; behold, it shall come exalted with the Lord.

I do not wish it to be hidden from you, my brothers, that on the day of the tremendous examination the blessed cross is brought on the arms of angels, and is placed before the faces of all mortals. Not adorned now with gold or gems, but it will be more radiant than the sun or stars from divine power. It will certainly then be set forth for the glory of those who, loving it, have embraced it out of charity, and on the other hand for the reproach of those who were unwilling to carry it after their Redeemer. For, to be silent for the time about those who pierced Him, and because all the tribes of the earth shall wail over themselves, everyone in whom the figure of this salutary sign is not then seen, as a stranger and unknown among the reprobate, justice dictating, is repelled: but those who are found marked with the impression of this divine title, because they have become imitators of their Redeemer in punishment, shall then be made participants with the same Judge in glory.

Then therefore shall come to pass what the Apostle says: "Because when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God the Father, when he shall have brought to nought all principality, and all authority, and power, the most cruel death shall be destroyed (I Cor. XV)." Now, to deliver up the kingdom to the Father is surely nothing else than to lead those believing in Him to the secrets of divine contemplation. Then is fulfilled that vision of the prophet Zechariah (Zach. III), in which

indeed he contemplated Jesus, the high priest in filthy garments; and the devil, who stood for his accusation, having been conquered and rebuked, Jesus is soon stripped of the filthy garment, and is clothed with the raiment of honor and glory. For the body of Jesus is called the Church, which indeed is now defiled in the hardship of this pilgrimage as if by a filthy garment of tribulations and pressures. But then, the devil having been condemned and reprobated, the holy Church, stripped of foul things, is clothed with the robe of blessed immortality, and is transferred from the mourning of pilgrimage to the fatherland of eternal rest. As is clearly sung in the psalm of dedication: "Thou hast turned," it says, "my mourning into joy for me; thou hast cut off my sackcloth, and hast girded me with gladness (Psal. XXIX)." Concerning the reprobate also, that which is said through Ezekiel is then fulfilled: "Pass through the city, and strike; let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity; slay old and young, and maiden, and little children and women even to utter destruction; but kill not any man upon whom ye see the Tau (Ezek. IX)." The judgment having been completed, therefore, with the cross itself all the just are advanced together to the kingdom, whose punishment they once bore whether in peace or in persecution. In that glory of immortality, therefore, they always behold the most splendid cross, and they ineffably rejoice to have before their eyes the sign of victory, by which they were redeemed and overcame the world. Therefore also they continually alternate the praises of their

Savior, and always returning thanks to Him, they exult in that pleasantness of perpetual delight.

And so it pleases us also to exclaim in praise of the blessed cross: O blessed cross, which hast merited to suspend in a new balance Him whom heaven and earth cannot sustain! O cross purer than glass, more ruddy than gold, which as if with budding gems and pearls, art adorned with the members of the Savior! O cross brighter than the moon, more splendid than the sun, which before the magnitude of divine light, precedest the radiance of the stars and all the constellations of heaven! Thou alone among all the trees of the forests wast chosen for the office of human redemption. Thou hast merited to sustain that weight, by whose power the heaven is rolled, the earth is suspended, and the whole machine of the world is balanced, never to fall. Thee the infernal regions fear, the angels venerate, and every creature of things admires.

O truly noble tree, which indeed proceedest having risen from the earthly turf, but expandest thy happy branches above the stars of heaven! Once indeed thy fruit was subject to Gehenna, then thou germinatest cedars for paradise; and living stones come forth from thee, by which the buildings of the supernal Jerusalem are constructed. O blessed cross, because when the sun hid its rays, lest it should see the sacrilege; when the earth trembled, when the tottering elements throbbed with dread; thou didst merit to stand as an inseparable companion to the dying Lord, to spread thy devoted arms beneath Him, and

moreover to cherish Him in thy mild bosom! O blessed cross, which art conspicuous by the fastening of the Redeemer of the world, and art empurpled, reddening with the precious blood of the immaculate Lamb! Thou art the salvation of the lost world, thou the light of those set in darkness, thou the medicine of the sick, thou the strength of the convalescing, thou the harbor for those in danger, thou the refuge for those escaping from the jaw of death. Through thee strangers pass into members of the household, and those who had long been guests, thou renderest to be fellow-citizens of the apostles. In thee, while bloody death kills, it is killed, the author of death himself is extinguished, and the lost life is repaired for men. Thou didst arm the hand of Jael with a nail, with which indeed she might pierce Sisera through both temples of his head (Judic. IV), and in a type of the Church might slay the devil. Thou didst fill the sling of David with a stone, with which he might strike Goliath the Philistine, marked on his forehead, where indeed the profane man did not have thy seal (I Reg. XVII). O blessed cross, the faith of the patriarchs, the prophecies of the prophets, the judging senate of the apostles, the victorious army of the martyrs, and the ranks of all the saints venerate, preach, and honor thee! The odor of thy fragrance overcomes all spices, thy nectar precedes all species of pigments and all honeys. O blessed cross, title of glory, ensign of victory, seal of eternal redemption! To thee earthly things owe that they live; and moreover heavenly things

that they return to the fullness of their integrity. For through thee the exiled man returns to his fatherland, and the number of angels, which had been diminished, is restored. Thou makest it so that the servants of demons become sons of God through adoption, and those who were once worshippers of idols are now co-heirs of Christ. O glorious cross, O admirable cross, to which the empires of the whole world fall down, to which all the scepters of principality obey, and to which the laws of all kingdoms are subjected!

But why do we strive to apply outward ornaments of pure gold or carbuncle, to which certainly whatever is added is found to be inferior and paler? For indeed, O blessed cross, no human tongue prevails to equal thy praises, on which indeed eternal life hung, which the salvation of the world drenched with its own blood, and which the Word of the most high Father decorated with the singular companionship of His body. He alone, therefore, is thy praise, who hung on thee. For thou didst deceive the devil with a new art, and didst render him a captive from a victor. For thou wast accustomed to offer him chosen baits, and to destine for his insatiable throat whatever things became subject to thee. But most recently, O blessed cross, thou didst offer such food to the one gaping and desiring to devour, as might both transfix his jaws with the hook of hidden power, and empty the belly of ancient malice of those who had already been swallowed up. O glorious cross, which blessest all things! O blessed cross, which art blessed by all! For thy blessing sancti-

fies all things, and the blessing of all things redounds copiously in thee. O venerable cross, O adorable cross, admirable form, terrible figure! For as wax melts before the face of fire, so do sinners perish before thy face; nor do phantasms find a place of tarrying or yielding, where they have seen thy seal. O amiable and beloved cross, sweet indeed and decorous; with the flame of thy love every sound and wise heart seethes, and after the faithful mind is kindled by the fire of thy charity, it is soon ineffably inflamed to the love of heavenly things. Who therefore, O blessed cross, could extol thee with worthy praises, on which indeed the Author of life, dying, destroyed death, and swallowing it up, raised us dead ones to the glory of His immortality? Save, I beseech thee, bless and protect, O blessed figure, the suppliant people exulting today together in thy praises; that He who willed thee to become the instrument of our redemption, may also deign to transfer us through thee to the fellowship of His glory: and those whom He snatched through thee from the bond of servitude, may He also, according to the holy promise, establish as heirs in the kingdom through thee. Salvation to Him and thanksgiving, praise, honor, power, and empire, with the Father and the Holy Spirit through all ages of ages. Amen.

SERMON XLIX.

I. ON SAINT MATTHEW, APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST. (SEPTEMBER 21)

The joy of today's solemnity, most beloved, cuts away every sting of despair from our minds, confirms wavering hearts to presume upon divine mercy, and invites us to approach with confidence the throne of grace, even as the Apostle exhorts (Hebr. IV). For who, hearing that a publican was not only chosen by the Lord into the company of discipleship, but moreover ascended to the height of the apostolic senate, would not be immediately encouraged to obtain the pardon of his sins? For from the tax office of accumulating money he is transferred to the chair of the Church, and he who before performed the office of exacting tribute, was appointed to minister the treasures of faith and of heavenly riches (Luke V; Mark II): for then he was busy in filling his purse with the gain of base lucre, now through the breadth of the world he scatters the sacrament of heavenly eloquence.

Among all the saints, plainly, who have brought titles of victory over the triumphed world to heavenly glory, blessed Matthew seems to me distinguished and conspicuous, and to obtain a certain primacy of dignity among them; and, that I may say it boldly, there is no one after Christ to whom the holy universal Church owes more. For the reason that the world lives is this: because the evangelical light has flashed upon us. It is certain that Matthew was the first of all to write the Gospel in the Hebrew style; and thus he provided a certain mirror, as it were, of the new faith for those faithful who were of the circumcision. Since therefore he was the first to burst forth

to describe the holy Gospel, as a predecessor he opened the way of writing to the other evangelists, and as a leader he held out the banner to those following, and by his example incited them to write. To him, therefore, we owe the Gospel, whom it is certain introduced the beginning of the evangelical narrative; and whom we know as first among the others, we do not doubt to hold a primacy of a certain privilege among them. Each of the three evangelists, of course, knew the book of blessed Matthew before he began his own; and as it was divinely inspired in them, he added a not superfluous cooperation of his labor. For it had been theirs to prepare their minds faithfully for writing; but it was God's part to direct the pen into that which He willed.

Plainly, just as Moses is not absurdly preferred even to the prophets, and to all whoever wrote anything in the Old Testament; so the blessed evangelist Matthew by right excels all who are found to have written in the New. For just as that one wove the origin of the nascent world, so this one describes the rising novelty of the Church, as if of a certain spiritual world. Whence, the Holy Spirit tempering the pen, it was provided that each should prefix not a different but one and the same beginning to his books, saying: "The book of the generation (Matth. I)." But that generation brought forth sons of wrath, this one brings forth sons of grace. That generation was allotted the paradise of the earth, blooming indeed with the beauty of fertile trees and herbs; but this one has merited the heavenly paradise, abounding

with stores of incomparable delights. From that paradise, however, the first man through a tree expelled the posterity of his race; the second man through the cross introduced us into heavenly pastures. While that one narrates that God said, Let there be light (Gen. I), he shows the light created; this one, presenting Christ born of the Virgin, suggests the Creator of light arisen. Moses, therefore, arranges the old Adam, and the earthly, the old world, the old Testament: but Matthew introduces new things for the old, spiritual for the earthly or carnal, eternal for the temporal. For Adam indeed he describes Christ, for the old law the Gospel, for the world or the earth flourishing with herbs and trees he describes the holy Church, germinating diverse provisions of spiritual fruits. "For the first man, as the Apostle says, was of the earth, earthly; the second man from heaven, heavenly (I Cor. XV);" such as the earthly is, such also are the earthly; such as the heavenly is, such also are the heavenly. The first Adam was made into a living soul, the last Adam into a quickening spirit. But not first that which is spiritual, but that which is animal, then that which is spiritual.

Moses therefore describes how all visible things were originally founded; but Matthew teaches that not only earthly, but also heavenly things were newly restored through the grace of the Mediator of God and men; just as the same Apostle says: "To make known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in him, in the dispensation of the

fullness of times, to restore all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, in him (Ephes. I)."

David foresaw this renewal of the world, when once established before the Lord he prayed. For when through Nathan the prophet divine clemency promised him that from his seed should be born one who would build a temple to His holy name, and clearly announcing Christ, had added: "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son (II Reg. VII);" and soon brought forth what the Church, which is the body of Christ, would be in the future, saying: "And thy house and thy kingdom shall be faithful for ever before my face, and thy throne shall be firm continually." He, giving thanks, among the other words of his prayer spoke thus: "But even this has seemed little in thy sight, O Lord my God," because thou hast loved me, "unless thou shouldst speak also of the house of thy servant for a long time to come;" and soon added: "For this is the law of Adam, O Lord God." As if he should say perpetually: Just as in the beginning of this earthly world thou didst appoint Adam the parent of the posterity to follow, and from this root thou didst decree the offspring of the whole human race to sprout; so now when thou disposest to renew the world, thou makest me a sort of new Adam, while thou promisest Christ to be born of my seed, who is the author and head of the Church. "This is," he said, "the law of Adam," because just as he was to possess this visible world in his sons; so also I am made the father of

a spiritual people in Christ, to reign perpetually with Him who is in heaven. For just as from his rib Eve the mother of the living was formed (Gen. II); so from the side of Christ who is to be born of me, the Church shall go forth to live perennially. Of this new and spiritual world it is written: "The hinges of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them (I Reg. II)." For the world is placed upon the hinges of the earth, when the holy Church is solidified upon the evangelical doctrines as if upon bases. Of which also it is said elsewhere: "Its foundations are in the holy mountains (Psal. LXXXVI)." For those which were hinges there, are called mountains here.

The layout of the world and the course of the seasons plainly agree with the number of the evangelists; because there are both four parts of the world, and just as many diversities of the seasons. It is no wonder, therefore, if the spiritual world be compared to this visible one, since both are discerned to have several similarities to each other.

And it should be noted that the supreme Architect, namely almighty God, while He builds the fabric of this spiritual world, that is, of the holy universal Church, upon the four evangelists as upon as many columns, ordains two more powerful and excellent ones on either side, upon which indeed the whole weight of the rising machine rests; but He set two smaller ones in the middle, and thus distinguishes the beauty of the heavenly fabric by alternating variety, so that plurality pertains to the foundation, diversity to

the ornament, and the divine work remains so unshaken in strength that it is also conspicuous in variety. These, finally, are the four columns of which it is said to Moses, when the tabernacle was being fixed in a type of the Church: "Thou shalt make four columns, and their bases overlaid with silver (Exod. XXVII)." For in silver, what else is understood than the clarity of divine speech? As it is written: "The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried by fire, proved from the earth (Psal. XI)." Therefore the bases overlaid with silver sustain the four columns of the tabernacle, because the preachers of the Church, decorated with divine eloquence, that they may present themselves as an example in all things, carry the sayings of the four evangelists both in mouth and in works.

From these sentences, and others of this kind shining forth in the evangelical description, it is clear that Blessed Matthew was more tenaciously occupied than the others in following the royal lineage of the Lord. For each of the holy evangelists keeps his own special order, and perseveres in the custody of the intention with which he began. For John is more fully occupied in declaring the essence of the divinity in Christ. Matthew, however, as has been said, shows the royal dignity. Mark indeed seems to be his attendant or abridger, while he walks following through his footsteps, and thus agrees with him almost in all things, whether in the same words or in the same sense, so that he does not depart from the path of the one preceding him. Luke also holds his own

manner and order, while he describes the priestly (sacerdotalem) lineage and person of the Lord; and thus through the whole series of his style he persists in this intention, so that he does not omit to be occupied about the temple or the priests until the end of the Gospel. For what else does the very beginning of his narration gather together than the names of various priests? "There was," he says, "in the days of Herod the king of Judea, a certain priest, by name Zechariah, of the course of Abijah, and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron (Luke 1)." Afterward he places the same Zechariah in the temple before the altar, and brings the Virgin Mary into the house of the priest. On the fortieth day of the Nativity he carries the boy to the temple with gifts (Luke 1), and also enthrones him at twelve years old in the temple hearing and questioning among the teachers. Then he relates that the parents of the Lord ascended every year to Jerusalem to the temple on the day of the solemnity of the Passover.

Finally he concluded his Gospel with this end, saying: "They, worshipping, returned to Jerusalem, and were daily in the temple praising God and blessing the Lord (Luke 24)." For the mediator of God and men according to his human nature wished to be one and the same king and priest, that he might rule us through the powers of the royal summit, and expiate us through the office of the priest. These two persons, indeed, were specially commended by the Fathers under the figure of Christ, to whom God gave, by a prin-

cipal and singular prerogative, the seat of David his father, so that there should be no end to his kingdom, and that he should be a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek (Psal. 109).

Matthew and Luke therefore divide the dignity of each ministry between themselves in such a way that one indicates the kingdom of Christ, the other the priesthood. For the Holy Spirit so dispenses the rights of his own power through his instruments that while one speaks through two, the same diversity of words is expressed by those who feel the same. Hence when Matthew, who had undertaken to describe the royal person of the Lord, enumerates kings in the context of the genealogy; Luke ascended to David himself not having followed the royal scheme, but through those who had not been kings, he went out to Nathan the son of David, who was not a king himself. Whence it was divinely brought about that he does not have a subsequent companion who holds the series of his style, since the priest entered alone into the Holy of Holies, and therefore he is here without a companion, because he occupies himself specially about the priesthood of the Lord; Matthew, however, as was said before, had Mark as an abridger and a follower, because he described the royal dignity of Christ by enumerating kings. For it is of royal sublimity that it should not walk without the service of companions.

Let us also follow this leader, my most beloved brothers, not by abridging the Gospel, but by keeping the evangelical precepts. Let us follow

him as the guide of the journey toward life. Let us imitate his salutary example, who as soon as he heard the command of the Savior calling him (Matt. 9), did not hesitate, did not seek delays for disposing of his affairs, nor the shared counsels of friends, but immediately spurned riches, renounced his relatives, broke the bonds of carnal affections, and thus loosed he hastened joyful and diligent after the footsteps of Christ, as if brought into port after a shipwreck, he sang that divine refrain: "Thou hast broken my bonds, O Lord, I will sacrifice to thee the host of praise (Psal. 115)." Or that which the bride modulates in the Canticle of Canticles: "When I had a little passed by them, I found him whom my soul loveth, I held him, and I will not let him go (Cant. 3)," who is blessed for ever. Amen.

SERMON L.

ON SAINT MATTHEW THE APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST. (SEPTEMBER 21)

O how sweet, how pleasant, how delectable is this festivity, my brothers, in which surely the sinner is kindled to the love of God; faith is increased; the mind, which was despairing, is raised up; the grace of certain hope is heaped up. For what we are instructed elsewhere in words, here we experience in living works. For we read: "Do penance (poenitentiam); for the kingdom of heaven will draw near (Matt. 3)." Between penance, surely, and the kingdom of heaven there is nothing in the middle. This distinguished fes-

tivity not only gives the hope of the kingdom of heaven to those doing penance, but also tells of the established primacy of heavenly excellence to the one doing penance. For who does not know that Blessed Matthew was a tax collector (telonarium), and therefore a sinner? (Matt. 9, 10; Mark 1). Which certainly he himself does not keep silent, while he declares himself a publican (publicanum) in the very catalogue of the apostles: "Thomas," he says, "and Matthew the publican (Luke 5);" while the other evangelists call him Levi rather, lest they make their companion, or rather the primate of the evangelical work, notable. But he himself asserts that he is a publican for this reason, that he may both hold the rule of humility in himself, and kindle our minds to hope for the pardon of sins. As if with his co-apostle he himself also says: "Christ came into this world to save sinners, of whom I am the first; but for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Christ Jesus might show all patience for an example of those who are to believe in him unto life eternal (1 Tim. 1)."

He therefore now provokes us to hope for pardon by word, just as of old he incited those who were present by example. For he himself says: "Because it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold many publicans and sinners coming sat down with Jesus and his disciples (Matt. 9);" where surely Matthew also was. For unless he were present with the disciples of the Lord, sinners would not dare to approach the Lord so familiarly. Unless they saw a sinner cling-

ing to the companionship (contubernio) of the Savior, those whom the enormity of their crimes accused, whom conscience remorsefully pricked, would in no way have presumed to draw near.

But since he is occupied in diligent service to the Lord, and moreover participates in the table, made a colleague in the feast, he exhorts sinners to the fountain of piety by his example. How much more trustfully are we now provoked by him to hope for mercy, whom we see indeed raised up to the summit of such great sublimity? Who was at once both called into the apostolic order, and obtained the angelic dignity. For who does not know that the word evangelist is derived from the angelic name? Not only, therefore, is he an apostle, but also an evangelist. And, if I may so speak, he is not undeservedly called the evangelist of evangelists, who is found as the leader, and predecessor, and first of all. Whence also of that heavenly chariot (quadrigae), which either John declared himself to have seen in the Apocalypse (Apoc. 4), or Ezekiel beheld in prophetic vision (Ezek. 10), he can fittingly be called not only a part, but even the driver (auriga). Who, while he first broke forth to write the Gospel, as it were stretched a certain line by preceding; and he designated the path of rectitude whence the others might run; so that as it is said of Elijah (2 Kings 2), he also may be worthily named the chariot and the driver of that mystic sacrament.

To none of mortals plainly has Almighty God granted this, that these two summits of preeminent dignities should concur at the same time in

one person, namely that anyone should be both an apostle and an evangelist, except for Matthew and John; of whom surely one was a publican, the other is a virgin. And this by the profound dispensation of divine counsel. Namely, that the former might show himself as a guide for sinners to the fountain of mercy, and the latter might be an example for those who are guarded and innocent; so that the magnitude of a past crime might not be an obstacle to any who have fallen, and the open gate of heavenly grace might invite the clean and those overwhelmed by no crimes.

Furthermore, just as Pison (Phison) is read as the first among the rivers of paradise (Gen. 2), so he is found first among the holy evangelists. And this comparison fits itself well; for Pison is interpreted as "change of mouth" (oris mutatio). For he himself changed his mouth, which surely he transferred from secular words to preaching the Gospel; and what had previously been his carnally, he made to be God's. As the Lord said through the prophet: "If thou shalt separate the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth (Jer. 15)." There was done therefore in Blessed Matthew what is written: "That where sin abounded, grace did superabound (Rom. 5)." For just as that sentence of Scripture is true, by which it is said: "That there is no difference for divine power, whether to overcome in many or in few (1 Kings 25);" so also for divine piety it differs nothing whether to indulge in the smallest sins or in the most grave. In this distinguished man, therefore, divine grace wonderfully abounded, to

whom surely a twofold prerogative granted, not only to preach the Gospel with the apostles, but also to write it with the evangelists: and so that he might yet more excellently stand out, he obtains the first place in their order, who among the other saints are distinguished and wonderful.

Truly these are those holy animals, which on every side are reported full of eyes (Ezek. 1), in which indeed, just as truly in the Cherubim (Cherubin), the fullness of knowledge overflows; their appearance is like coals of burning fire, and they represent the likeness of lamps as if radiating. They always go before their face, whither surely they are driven by the impulse of the spirit. These furthermore are those chariots (quadrigae) which the prophet Zechariah designates when he says: "And I turned, and saw, and behold four chariots coming out from the midst of two mountains, and they were mountains of bronze (Zech. 6)." Of which it is also said a little after: "These are the four winds of heaven, which go out to stand before the ruler of all the earth (dominatore omnis terrae) (Ibid.)." And it is to be noted because not one chariot of the four evangelists is spoken of, but each one of them is called a chariot, because both one is in four, and four are in one, while through the intention of the same faith what is written by each is found in all, and what is said by all is found in each.

But the two mountains of bronze, from the midst of which they are said to have gone out, are the two Testaments, which after the manner of bronze are durable and sonorous. Because even

until the end of the age they do not find a term, and through all the spaces of the world they give a tinkling sound. "For their sound has gone out into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world (Psal. 18)." Who are also reported to be winds; because of these it is written: "Whither the impulse of the spirit was, thither they went (Ezek. 1)." Who also go out, that they may stand before the ruler of all the earth, because what the holy preachers profit from the fructification of the faithful, they do not attribute to themselves, but to the author from whom all their gains proceed. Of whom it is said to Blessed Job: "Shalt thou send out lightnings, and will they go, and returning will they say to thee, We are present? (Job 38)." These are those four water jars (hydriae), which Elijah about to sacrifice ordered to be filled, and to be poured over the holocaust (holocaustum) three times (3 Kings 17). This is that fourfold course of rivers, which from Christ as from the fountain of paradise (paradisi fonte) proceeds and pours over the parched fields of the four-cornered world (Gen. 2). Of which that wise man says: "Moses commanded a law in the precepts of justices, and an inheritance of the house of Jacob, and promises to Israel (Ecclus. 34)."

But so that we may not dwell longer on these words, that law, which is called the inheritance of promise, is the holy Gospel, which indeed was promised to the ancient Fathers, but was conferred upon us by hereditary right, Christ having come, where it is immediately subjoined: "He set David his servant to raise up from him

a most strong king, to sit upon the throne of honors forever. Who fills wisdom like Pison (Phison), and like Tigris in the days of new things. Who fills up sense like Euphrates, who multiplies like Jordan (Jordanis) in the time of harvest. Who sends discipline like light, and assisting like Gihon (Gehon) in the day of vintage (vindemiae) (Ibid.)."

These things, therefore, my brothers, were said so clearly, so openly of Christ and the holy evangelists, that they do not need to be explained to suggest this. But while in the holy and mystic words you hear the name of vintage (vindemiae), you who from the occasion of the time have the earthly vintages in hand, you ought to run back from the circumstances to the interior things, and by your holy prudence think upon the spiritual vintage. For it says at the end of the sentence: "Who sends discipline like light, and assisting like Gihon in the day of vintage." Who is he who sends discipline like light, except he who after the veiled face of Moses, when the world was possessed by darkness, brings in the radiating clarity of his Gospel? He assists, therefore, like Gihon, of whom it is also said by the prophet: "Our Lord God is a glorious river leaping forth into a thirsty land." But what is the vineyard (vinea), which he assists like Gihon, and does not cease to water with the moisture of his preaching, except that of which it is said by the prophet: "But the vineyard of the Lord of Sabaoth (vinea Domini Sabaoth) is the house of Israel? (Isa. 5)." The Lord transferred this vineyard from the Egypt (Aegypto) of the old

law, and led it into the land of the Gospel (terram Evangelii), which flows with milk and honey.

But of this vineyard that cluster (botrus) brought the firstfruits, which two men placed on a pole (vecte) and brought to the Israelite people (Num. 13). Surely the two men are the two peoples, the Jewish and the Gentile. These placed the cluster on a pole, because they suspended the Savior on the cross. But the one who went before did not see what he carried; the one who followed gazed upon it. And the people of the Jews, who preceded us in time, while they always turned away the face of obedience, could not see the Lord whom they had carried in the prophets and the law; but the Gentile who follows contemplates him as if placed before his eyes. Gideon figured this cluster when he answered the Ephraimites (Ephrataeis) calumniating him under an excuse: "Is not the cluster (racemus) of Ephraim better than the vintages of Abiezer? (Jud. 8)." For because Ephraim, which sounds as "fecundity," expresses the Church, what is understood by the cluster of Ephraim, except Christ? What by the vintages of Abiezer, except the multitude of the Jewish priests? Or also by the cluster is to be understood the small number of the faithful of the primitive Church, but by the vintage the multitude of the Synagogue (Synagogae).

The cluster of Ephraim is better, therefore, than the vintages of Abiezer, because more blessed was the primitive Church, which until the end of the age is made fruitful by the offspring of those being reborn, than the Synagogue, which

daily diminishing is about to fail little by little; whence also it is said through Isaiah: "Praise, thou barren, that bearest not; sing forth praise, and hymns, thou that didst not travail, for many are the children of the desolate more than of her that hath a husband; enlarge the place of thy tent, and stretch out the skins of thy tabernacles, spare not, make thy cords long and strengthen thy nails; for thou shalt penetrate to the right and to the left, and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles (Isa. 54)."

HOMILY LI.

ON SAINT MATTHEW THE APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST. (SEPTEMBER 21)

At that time: "When Jesus passed through his city, he saw a man sitting at the tax office (telonio), Matthew (Matthaeum) by name (Matt. 9)." And the rest.

Truly this is she whose seed inherits the Gentiles, the Church, which daily calls the human race through her children to the unity of the faith. This is she of whom it is said in the Psalms, "for her who follows the inheritance (Psal. 3, in tit.)." This is the vineyard, which is commanded to sing praise: as is also found elsewhere in the same prophet: "In that day the vineyard of pure wine shall sing to him; I the Lord, who keep it (Isa. 27)."

Of this vineyard Blessed Matthew also commemorates the Lord to have said: "Because there was a man, a householder, who planted a vineyard, and put a hedge (sepem) around it, and dug

a winepress (torcular) in it, and built a tower, and let it out to farmers, and went into a far country (Matt. 21)." This vineyard came forth from that cluster (botro), which was trodden in the winepress of the cross by the feet of the Jews and Gentiles, from which the wave of precious blood flowed forth, which healthfully inebriated the ill-sober minds of men with the wine of spiritual grace. Of which wine surely when the apostles spoke in different tongues through the Holy Spirit, it was said: "These are full of must (musto) (Acts 2)." Woe to him who is altogether fasting from this must, and eructates the hangover (crapulam) of earthly wine, with which he seethes, having been engorged. "Woe to you," says the prophet, "who are mighty to drink wine, and stout men at drunkenness (ebrietatem) (Isa. 5)." Unhappy plainly is he who keeps himself abstemious from the wine of the Holy Spirit, and carries a lung seething with the sours of carnal wine, whose belly swells with feasts and drinkings, and does not store up the wine of spiritual grace in the cellar of his heart.

But you, most beloved, so insist upon collecting the fruits of the earth, that you may remember also to store up (convasare) the wine of divine charisma in the vessels (tunnulis) of your minds. But whoever divides himself from his neighbor through the fuel of discord (discordiae fomitem), is not a bird of the Lord, but an earthly animal ignorant of the wine of heavenly grace. Whence it is that Abraham, when he was sacrificing, dividing the other animals through the middle,

placed both parts over against each other, but the birds he did not divide (Gen. 15): suggesting this, that whoever is divided from a brother through the scission of hatred, walks on the earth as an earthly thing, and does not fly to heaven as a bird; but he who raises himself on high with the wings of virtues, knows no division. But if you fear to be harmed by your enemies, unless you take up arms against them, settle with God, and without doubt, being made quiet, you will not be harmed by your neighbor: "For the Lord," he says, "is my helper, I will not fear what man may do to me (Psal. 117)." Which also the patriarch Jacob taught, when he buried the foreign gods. For, as Scripture (Scriptura) testifies (Gen. 35), all his household gave him the foreign gods which they had, and the earrings which were in their ears. And he buried them under the terebinth tree, which is behind the city of Shechem (Sichem). Where immediately it is subjoined: "And when they had set out, the terror of the Lord invaded all the cities round about, and they did not dare to pursue those receding (Ibid.)." It is clear therefore that as soon as he appeased the Lord, he did not fear the arms of earthly fury. Peace having been settled therefore between the house of Jacob and God, every controversy on every side is pressed down, being settled by divine terror.

Therefore, most beloved, cast out from the vessels of your minds all the plagues of grudge and hatred; tame like the impulse of raging beasts those allurements of the flesh, extinguish the flames of earthly concupiscence, and prepare

your thirsting souls to draw from the flows of the Holy Spirit. Each one saying: “My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready (Psal. 56).”

May Almighty God, who through Blessed Matthew invites sinners to himself, mercifully open to you the gate of his mercy, and pour into your minds the gifts of heavenly grace. Who lives and reigns in perfect Trinity, one and true God forever and ever. Amen.

The Gospel reading that has just sounded in your ears, most beloved, like a distinguished oracle among the other teachings of the Lord, refreshes the mourning conscience of sinners, lifts up fainting souls, excludes the cold of faint-heartedness and distrust, and suspends the dejected heart on high to conceive the hope of pardon. For who should despair of the enormity of his crimes, however immense, when he hears that Blessed Matthew, gasping after the gains of venal profit, was not only suddenly called, but admitted to obtain the two chief ministries of the heavenly court? Namely, that he might ascend the summit of the apostolic senate and receive the dignity among the holy evangelists in that privilege which is first. Both of these gifts were granted to absolutely no one else, except to Matthew alone and to John. And because John is said to be "the grace of God" (Dei gratia), and Matthew is also interpreted as "given" (donatus), while both merited the gifts of a double dignity, the grace of the heavenly gift surely shone upon both. But, so that the sentence might be fulfilled which says: “Where iniquity abounded, grace

superabounded (Rom. 5)"; Matthew, because he made the beginning of writing in evangelical truth, possesses the brightness of a leader and teacher among the other evangelists. To him surely most aptly fits that sentence which says: "A faithful word, and worthy of all acceptance, because Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners, of whom I am the first; that in me first he might show all patience for the information of those who are to believe in him unto eternal life (1 Tim. 1)."

Whence it happened, as the Gospel history has now narrated, that while he was reclining at table in the house of the same Matthew, many publicans and sinners coming sat down with Jesus and his disciples (Matt. 9). For those whom the biting conscience of their crimes could restrain from approaching the Redeemer, the familiar companionship of Matthew with the Lord provoked to approach; and while they see the publican drawing near to the fountain of piety, with a happy audacity already presuming, they do not hesitate to go to the fountain itself, now made public with the rest of the sinners. Concerning which publication of the eternal fountain it is said through the prophet: "In that day there shall be a fountain open to the house of David for the inhabitants of Jerusalem for the washing of the sinner and the unclean (Zech. 13)." For the hidden fountain is the only-begotten of the Father, the invisible God; but the open fountain is the same God incarnate. Which open fountain is rightly called the house of David, because it will

not be doubted that our Redeemer came to us from the lineage of David.

This fountain of mercy, O Pharisaic pride, you strive to obstruct, while you attempt with a haughty brow to prohibit the thirsty and the dry from access to it. This draught was promised to you through the mouth of Isaiah, when he said: "For I will pour out water upon the thirsty, and streams upon the dry land; I will pour out my spirit upon your seed, and my blessing upon your stock, and they shall spring up among the herbs like willows by the running waters (Isa. 44)." This was again promised to you, when he said elsewhere: "And you shall be like a watered garden, and like a fountain of waters, whose waters do not fail (Isa. 58)." But you, impudently erect in the haughtiness of tumid elation, and alluringly inflated with the singularity of a false justice, contumaciously despise the freely offered fountain of eternal salvation and loathe the life-giving streams of the supernal fountain. For approaching the disciples of the Lord, swollen and arrogant, O Pharisee, you pour out the pestiferous virus of pride that was raging in your breast; and the wind of elation, which you had conceived in your tumid mind, you blow out through the breath of a livid and ill-foaming mouth, saying: "Why does your master eat with publicans and sinners? (Matt. 9)." He eats with such people plainly for this reason: that from publicans he may make just men, from sinners holy men, and from criminals apostles. For he calls sinners, that by justifying them by his own power, he

may make them innocent. Thus indeed, thus elsewhere while you, O Pharisee, standing in the temple, arrogantly enumerate your good deeds, and condemn the other publican by preferring yourself, he ascended justified from the abyss of his guilt to merit pardon, and you unhappily fell from the height of your false justice before the eyes of Almighty God.

In this way, therefore, while you presume upon the feigned brightness of your empty justice, and backbite others as judgeable for their excesses, both your justice is turned into sin through elation, and their perpetrated wickedness is repaired to obtain pardon through the grace of humility. Whence it is also said through the prophet: “And the desert shall be in Carmel (Charmel), and Carmel shall be reputed as a forest (Isa. 29).” What is to be understood by the desert, if not those who live in the laws of their flesh, who serve the allurements of their pleasures, and while no ploughshares of the divine word furrow their heart, as a rational field, they germinate no harvests of good works; whence, that is, should they store up grain in the heavenly barns? What indeed by Carmel, which is called "knowledge of true circumcision," if not those should be understood who, through the brightness of external justice, seem circumcised from carnal works, and do not cease to glory in the same circumcision as if it were a singular knowledge, and while they arrogate the knowledge of not just any, but of their true circumcision, they

somehow condemn others for the falsity of a non-true circumcision?

The desert therefore is turned into Carmel, and Carmel on the contrary is reputed as a forest, when both sinners ascend to participate in the merits of the just, and those who seemed just fall headlong to the works of a wild and unfruitful growth. Similar to this is what the Apostle says: "Circumcision indeed profits, if you observe the law; but if you be a transgressor of the law, your circumcision is made uncircumcision (Rom. 2)." What therefore, O Pharisee, does it profit that you boast through arrogance, that you usurp for yourself the knowledge of true circumcision, while an evidently reprobate life convicts you as a transgressor of the law? Whence the Lord, the inspector of minds, spurned you glorying in the singularity of a false justice, and thereby tolerating a white spot (albuginem) in the eye, and chose this publican, whom you despise and by despising contemn, into the companionship of his own company: "Follow, he said, me; and rising, he followed him (Matt. 9)."

How strong and valid is the hand of this heavenly farmer! Namely, the tree clinging by its roots to the earth, and tenaciously brooding over mundane concupiscence, as soon as he shook it, he uprooted it, carried it away, and transplanted it into the land of the living. Where indeed "the just shall flourish like the palm tree and shall be multiplied like the cedar of Libanus (Ps. 91)." To whom surely, through the change of the right hand of the Most High, it was granted by a fitting

disposition, that he should obtain the office not only of preaching, but also of writing, and thus merit to minister the heavenly treasure to the human race. Inasmuch as he who had despised the gains of earthly profit, should exist as a dispenser of heavenly talents, and faithfully bestow the treasures of heavenly eloquence which he had received to be imparted. That just as our Redeemer had already said to his fishermen: "Come after me, and I will make you become fishermen of men (Matt. 4)," so he might say in a way to this man: You who gasp after temporal gains, you who certainly pant impatiently that you may be enriched with gold or silver, follow me immediately, and soon I will make you dispense the immortal riches of the supernal kingdom through the breadth of the world. You indeed seek gold that will pass away with the world, and I will give you the treasure of the Gospel that will undoubtedly remain through all ages.

Hence perhaps it is that concerning that river of paradise, which in Genesis is called Phison, it is thus read: "Because it encompasses all the land of Havilah (Evilath), where gold is born; and the gold of that land is the best (Gen. 2)." For as Phison is the first of the rivers proceeding from the fountain of paradise, so Blessed Matthew holds the first place among the other evangelists. It is therefore quite fitting, and most aptly agrees with intimate reason, that just as the best gold is found near Phison, so also in this most blessed first-leader (primicerium) of the evangelical order we should understand that there

is the incomprehensible sacrament of the heavenly treasure. To whom surely fits what is said through Solomon: "A desirable treasure rests in the mouth of the wise (Prov. 14)." Where, namely, no yellow vein of vibrating metal radiates to carnal eyes, but a mystic understanding flashes with the splendor of the life-giving spirit. Nor does a buyer weigh this gold with nodding scales, but the hearer rather finely balances it stored in the chest of his own heart.

Moses also clearly designated this gold, when he said of himself as of another in Deuteronomy: "These are the words which he spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan, in the desert plain, over against the Red Sea, between Paran (Pharan), and Tophel (Thophel), and Laban, and Hazeroth (Aseroth), where there is very much gold (Deut. 1)." In the place, surely, where the divine law had been promulgated, as it is said, there was very much gold, because under that heap of dust of the superinduced speech, many and heavy treasures of heavenly wisdom lay hidden and were kept concealed like grains under the wheaten stalk of the letter. And well does gold equally fit the holy doctors, namely Moses and Matthew, of whom one made the beginning of writing in the old law, the other in the Gospel, so that through these princes of both Testaments there might be shown to be in those things which they wrote, spiritual riches. Although this gold also, which is spoken of in Deuteronomy, seems specially to fit Blessed Matthew. For Deuteronomy is called the second law, by which surely the Gospel is desig-

nated. The gold, therefore, which is spoken of in Deuteronomy, not undeservedly fits the evangelist Matthew, who was the first of all to write the second law, that is, the Gospel.

Nor should it be ignored that by those four places, that is, Paran (Pharan), and Tophel (Thophel), Laban, and Hazeroth (Aseroth), among which namely the divine law is given, and very much gold is said to be present, the number of the four evangelists is designated. Among whom surely, as if among four spiritual places, the treasure of heavenly wisdom is centered in the middle; while through them the evangelical law is promulgated. Whose etymologies of names we touch upon with speed, that we may express how each one specially fits any of the Evangelists. Paran plainly is called "their wild one" (ferus eorum), or "ferocity," or also "fruitful." Which surely is not doubted to fit Blessed Matthew, who, while he received the fierce peoples of the Ethiopians to preach to in his own lot, like a preceding shepherd led them as most mild sheep to the grain of the heavenly pasture. Tophel, however, or Thobel, is interpreted "to offer," or "led to mourning." Which surely by manifest reason agrees with St. Luke, who signifies the victim under the appearance of a calf. Because surely while through the whole series of his Gospel he is more often engaged in the temple, he demonstrates both the mourning of the apostles concerning the passion of the Lord, and the Lord Savior himself now in the temple, now on the wood, offered as a sacrifice.

Hazeroth, however, sounds like "vestibules," or "atria," or "blessedness." Which surely does not differ from Blessed Mark, because for that reason he thunders in the desert like the voice of a lion crying, that he may prepare for us the vestibules, or atria, or also, which is to be desired above all, blessedness in heaven.

And the order is to be noted, because first we are led to the vestibule of the Christian faith, then to the atrium of supernal glory, that we may soon enjoy eternal blessedness. Laban, finally, which is called "whitening" (candidatio), fits no one better than John, who certainly despising all the obscurities of mundane darkness, while he fixed the rays of his heart on him who is the "brightness of eternal light (Wisd. 7)," opened to us the riches of the unfailing treasure. And these places are said to be over against the Red Sea, because the whole four-horse chariot (quadriga) of the holy Gospel fights against the bloody world.

But having heard these things which had broken forth from the phrenetic mouth of the Pharisees, let us hear what heavenly Wisdom answered them: “It is not the healthy, he said, who need a doctor, but the sick (Matt. 9).” And the Pharisees plainly were the ones who were sick, but because of too much infirmity and the weight of their languor, they were ignorant that they were languid, and because they thought themselves entirely sound, and to be depressed by no troubles of languors, they did not merit to be cured by the offered power of the heavenly doctor. Since indeed, as they assert who after they

have experienced it were able to revive from that danger, those who are struck by lightning feel nothing at all, while those who are wounded, or even more lightly afflicted, do not lack the sense of bitterness and trouble; so these, depressed by a most immense sleep of lethargy, were ignorant of the sickness by which they were depressed. Those plainly the doctor of souls deemed worthy of his cure, who see themselves weak and sick, who truly groan that they are depressed and languid with certain calamity. And O doctor of singular and incomparable clemency, who heaps upon himself the infirmities and sicknesses of all, that from his infirmity the languid might grow well! "Truly" for "he has borne our griefs; he was wounded indeed for our sins, he was bruised for our crimes (Isa. 53)." Who surely, so that the scars of the wounded man's wounds might be able to be closed, spontaneously permitted grave wounds to be inflicted upon himself; nay, he not only exhibited the care of healing to us, but he himself was made medicine for us. Within the mortar of the cross was ground the heavenly pigment, from which surely he produced the antidote of eternal salvation, through which the human race vomited out the virus of the ancient serpent. There are surely five wounds of the Lord's body, and through the five senses of the body, as through as many windows, death had pestilentially entered into man. Whence it is also said through the prophet: "Death has entered through our windows (Jer. 9)." Those five wounds therefore were made the medicine of our

fivefold senses. Concerning which wounds the bridegroom says under a changed name in the Canticles: "Arise, my love, my bride, and come, my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the hollows of the wall (Cant. 2)."

The bridegroom calls his love, that is, the beloved soul of each faithful person, to whom Christ says these things: "Arise, my love, my bride, and come." Do not, he says, my bride, grow slow with idle torpor, but "arise, and come," that is, provide examples of virtues to those near you outwardly. What indeed he subjoins, "my dove in the clefts of the rock."

The rock, as the Apostle says, is Christ (1 Cor. 10).

And the clefts of the rock, therefore, are the wounds of the Redeemer. In these clefts therefore each faithful soul dwells, because it has placed the whole sum of its salvation in the passion of its Savior, and placing its hope in it, it confides with faithful security in eternal glory.

And in this way it can perhaps be understood what the Apostle says: "I wish," he says, "to speak five words in the Church with my mind, so that I may also instruct others, rather than ten thousand in a tongue (1 Cor. 14)." That is, I judge it more useful to know with the heart and to teach others the passion of the Lord, which was surely brought about with five wounds, than to preach the old law, which was given through the Decalogue, with manifold words for vain ostentation. These are surely the five words he had spoken to those to whom he afterwards said: "I judged

myself to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified (1 Cor. 2)." Furthermore, just as in paradise there are four rivers proceeding from one fountain, so there are five streams which irrigate the breadth of the whole world; thus from the paradise of the Lord's body the fivefold blood shone forth, which surely purged the defilements of the human race. Although through those whirlpools of paradise, which come forth from the origin of a single fountain, the blessed evangelists are signaled more clearly than light, who surely flowed forth from the fullness of Christ. In that fountain furthermore were washed all whoever have attained the pardon of their committed sins. He indeed, as John says, is the propitiation for our sins; where it also follows: "Not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world (1 John 2)." Hence it is that he says to the Pharisees, who did not know the bowels of mercy: "Go and learn what this means: I desire mercy, and not sacrifice (Matt. 9)."

Behold, most beloved brothers, behold the high priest of human redemption, behold the author of our salvation standing for us, and fighting strongly against the members of the devil. Concerning him the Apostle plainly says: "Since he assists at the face of the Father and intercedes for us (Rom. 8)." There certainly, through the mystery of the assumed humanity, he intervenes for us; here by his mercy he closes the mouths of those accusing and barking immensely. And because, as the same John says: "We have an advocate, Jesus Christ the just (1 John 2)," he

pleads for us in the trial as an advocate, and by his own allegations he condemns the arguments of those speaking against us. Whence, after he had destined those ignorant of mercy to learn mercy, saying: "Go and learn what this means: I desire mercy, and not sacrifice (Matt. 9)"; soon for the defense of justice and the aid of our side, he also brought in another argument of invincible reason. For he said: "For I have not come to call the just, but sinners (Ibid.)." As if he were to say: I have not come to call the just who surely are not in our number, but sinners who are all in common. "For all," as the Apostle says, "have sinned, and lack the glory of God (Rom. 2)."

Furthermore, so that he might give firm hope to sinners, he did not choose to the height of the apostolate those who were believed just among men and seemed distinguished by some sanctity, but either those ignorant of justice, or even sinners. Hence it is that he did not elevate to the height of apostolic dignity Zacharias, who walked in all the commandments and justifications of the Lord without complaint (Luke 1); nor finally Nathanael, in whom there was no guile and to whom he showed himself a true Israelite (John 1); nor certainly Simeon, in whom was the Holy Spirit, to whom he had even promised that he would see Christ the Lord before he died (Luke 2); he did not elevate anyone from these or such as these to the height of apostolic dignity, but rather judged that simple men and sinners were to be sublimated by this eminence; so that each one of them may truly say: "By the grace of God

I am what I am (1 Cor. 15)," so that what they are promoted to by the highest, they may not ascribe to their own merits, but rather depute to the grace of the most clement giver; to whom be glory, honor, and empire for all ages of ages. Amen.

SERMON LII.

ON SAINT MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL. (SEPT. 29)

We are turning around the hinge of things, and we pursue the magnificence of the works of the Lord with an unpolished style; nor is it presumption, but devotion, because we approach not as rash scrutinizers, but as pious knockers. The majesty of the Virgin and the dignity of the cross have indeed honored our style, and we have presumed both, having been saved by both. Now we turn our speech to the angels, and we contemplate the origin of that purer nature, and this indeed appropriately. For in the first places we have put those two first things which claim primacy for themselves among the creatures of things. But the angels obtain the third place, as in heaven, so in writing, and the soul feels what the page contains, and authority is fortified by reason. Blessed is that region of supernal virtues, in which the happy spirits fly around the Lord of Sabaoth, and with a sublime applause of wings in the streets of the supernal Jerusalem, they chant with a clear voice: Holy, holy, holy. "I saw," says the prophet, "the Lord sitting upon a throne high and elevated, and all the earth

was full of his majesty, and those things which were under him filled the temple. Seraphim stood above it, six wings to one, and six wings to the other (Isa. 6)." Each of those words is weighed with its own weight, and they seek the most diligent exposition, from which our foolishness and ineloquence has made us immune; nevertheless we shall attempt to carve out something, if not so solemnly, yet truly.

This vision is not corporeal, or wrapped in phantastic deceits, but spiritual and pure, desiring the sanctity of a purer intelligence. Do any see this except those seeing, and those who, having overstepped the darkness of the world, receive the splendor of the divinity with a most lucid mind? And, to define it briefly, the Spirit of God sweetly applied to our spirit effects this vision, when he heaps us with the foreknowledge of future things. In this way therefore that glory of all prophetic eloquence saw the Lord, and him sitting. The Son of God was a servant for thirty and three years, not Lord; a minister, not a master; vile, not glorious; and although he said to the disciples: "You call me Master and Lord, and you say well; for so I am (John 13)": And: "I am the light of the world (John 8)": yet few noted the height of the words, while the Pharisees were envying and the Jews were not believing, and were arguing him of presumption. But after he rose from the dead, and was received into the triumphal seat, imperial decrees were published to the city, and the Crucified fixed the ensign of his domination in the whole breadth of the world. Now that poor

and unique one is surrounded by majestic names, and the vileness of servile names having been moved away, the King of kings and Lord of lords shines forth with much light. The son of Amoz saw him therefore, not humble, but sublime; not judged, but judge; not the reproach of men, but the glory of angels.

"Sitting," he says. We read of a threefold session of the Creator: one after the creation of the world, when he rested from all the work which he had performed (Gen. 2); another after the ascension, when he was taken up into heaven and sits at the right hand of God (Mark 16); the third after the resurrection, when he shall sit on the seat of his majesty, and we shall sit with him (Matt. 19). Labor is wont to precede rest, standing to precede sitting. But when did that majesty labor, which is neither affected by passion, nor distracted by labor? Hear how a very great labor lay upon him, when he thrust down that worst presumptuous one from the heavens to the hells, and sent man, caught in a nearly similar sin, from the paradise of pleasure into a troublesome exile. How much tumult do you think boiled forth in the heavenly palaces, when that death-bearing vastator fabricated an irreparable dissension in that heavenly court, rent the angelic assembly, and drew the starry names with him into death? Then the indignation of the Omnipotent raged, and the enemy was struck by the whole right hand of the divinity, and was rolled down into the abyss of perdition.

To this so grave a loss, so gravely vindicated, another also succeeded. For he sinned who had been substituted to repair this ruin, for whose sake all things under the heavens had been established. But when he sinned, much of splendor was taken away from the starry lights, and a deplorable infection confounded the whole matter of the elements. Not yet was the fury of the Lord turned away, but his hand was still extended, and a fragile and muddy substance provoked against itself his right hand fatigued by a singular wound, and miserable little man felt the remains of the lightning-like fury, and personal fault proscribed everyone. Therefore the Lord of majesty, being disturbed by the frequent tumults of rational creatures, and having been vindicated over his enemies, damned the falling angels with desperation, and chastised man in hope, foreseeing how much good he was going to make out of his sin. And for this reason perhaps the angelic sin is not found expressed in the Scriptures, lest there be committed to Scripture what could not be amended. God rested therefore, a rational end having been imposed upon such great evils; but again touched by grief of heart within, and weighted by the enormity of sinning men, he destroyed the man whom he had created, and made a deluge to inhabit (Gen. 7); nor content with this, he rained fire and sulfur upon Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19); he submerged the Egyptians in the waves (Exod. 14), he prostrated the carcasses of the Israelites in the desert, everywhere representing the image of a more turbulent Lord;

at the end he came himself, abject in the cloud of our flesh (Luke 2), and a sharer of sorrows and labors, he learned obedience from the things which he suffered (Heb. 5).

But the assumption of the flesh having been consummated, he was elevated into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God (Mark 16); yet he does not sit to the full, because he still assists at the face of God for us. But there will be for him a third glorious session, when he shall have enclosed the good and the bad with a different end and in different enclosures (Matt. 25). He shall sit on the seat of his majesty, when he shall have drawn us to himself, "and God shall be all in all (1 Cor. 15)." The first session is of grace, by which he made all things freely; the second of mercy, by which he mercifully redeemed us; the third of glory, when he shall glorify us. But attend to the glory of the one sitting and the excellence of the session, where no creature presumes to sit together. "Seraphim," he says, "stood (Isa. 6)," they did not sit. "I saw the Lord, and all the host of heaven assisting him (Ibid.)," says the prophet: he says assisting, not sitting. "Thousands of thousands ministered to him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand assisted him (Dan. 7)," Daniel testifying. "All the angels stood in the circuit of the throne (Apoc. 7)," says the evangelist. And elsewhere: "I saw a great multitude, which no one could number, from all peoples and tongues, standing before the throne (Ibid.)." But also the unique Virgin stands at the right hand in gilded clothing (Psalm 45). Moses, that he might

see the Lord passing by, stands on the rock (Exod. 33), and Elijah stands in the sight of the Lord, and every creature assists the imperial majesty. Only that fugitive spirit, the principle of dissension, the prince of malice, the sum of evils, wished to sit together. I will sit, he says, on the mount of the testament (Isa. 14). All stand, all minister, and you, enemy of peace, presume to sit? The Son himself, the same as the Father, knows not how to sit, until the Father says to him: "Sit at my right hand (Psalm 110)." Such Isaiah saw him, both the Ruler of the whole earth and sitting on the golden throne of his divinity, in that second session, by which he brought our flesh into the heavens.

It follows: "Above a high throne." Understand the high throne as the angelic nature, the first creation of the Omnipotent, and a power endowed with primary dignity. Above this sits, and is carried above, the Son of the Virgin; he promotes the assumed man to the orders of the angels, because although nature is better, grace is stronger; if the dignity is great, the will of God is greater, which that greatest of philosophers asserts to be higher than every bond of nature. The magnificence of God was elevated therefore not only above the heavens (Psalm 8), but also above the angels, because he was made so much better than the angels, as he has inherited a more different name than they (Heb. 1). And all the earth was full of his majesty. The Lord our God himself, his judgments are in all the earth (Psalm 105), says the Psalmista. And how now after this his elevation does the Prophet assert all the earth to be filled

with his majesty? (Psalm 72.) But when he says full of majesty, he intends to say with the knowledge of majesty which before his incarnation either none merited, or few. But now from the rising of the sun even to its setting the name of God is preached great among the nations (Psalm 113), and all are teachable by God (John 6), whom his unction teaches concerning all things (1 John 2). For although in Israel his name was great, the notice of the divinity has infused itself not only into one corner now, but into the whole world.

It follows: "And those things which were under him filled the temple." Take the temple as the city of the living God, his bride, which has neither spot nor wrinkle (Ephes. 5). Under him are the incarnation, passion, death, and all that trouble of the hourly dispensation, because rising from the dead he now dies no more (Rom. 6). These are the things which fill the Church, the record of which produces annual solemnities for us. Your house shall be filled with the good things (Psalm 65), your temple is holy, which then surely is wonderful in equity, when the Church does not accept persons, rejects gifts, chooses truth, loves reason.

It follows: "Seraphim stood above it, six wings to one and six wings to the other." Take the two Seraphim as the angel and the man: who are called inflaming or burning, since the former burns by presence, the latter by memory.

First let us see concerning the wings of the angels, and with what sort of flight they are carried; and because that sentence is known, how they

veil the head and feet, and only the middle things are seen, that is, what was before the world and what shall be after it, with those things which are in the present appearing somewhat, let us bring Ezekiel into the midst who distinguishes the wings of the animals in this way, saying: "With two wings they flew, and two wings of each were joined, and two covered their bodies (Ezek. 1)." Their first wing is the dignity of their production. Pass for a little while into the secret of this intelligence and consider the dignity of this creature. It is the beginning of the ways of God, says the Scripture (Job 40). How great a privilege that that thought of the Most High broke forth into this first work. It was surely fitting that it should shine forth with singular glory, which proceeded from the hands of the Ruler in the primitive creation. "You were the seal of likeness, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty, you were in the delights of the paradise of God, says the prophet (Ezek. 28)." Not only likeness, but also the seal of likeness, so that the image of God may be insinuated as expressed so much more subtly as a seal more differently precedes the likeness. But where fullness of wisdom, perfection of beauty, and the delights of paradise are named, the whole beatitude is joined together at once. But the Scripture subjoins what excels even this and what surpasses the faculty of all eloquence. Whom God made more precious. Here was said whatever could be said.

The second wing is the grace of confirmation. This wing, by a more happy covering, knows not

weariness, in all things similar to the preceding one, nor inferior. For when the presumptuous ones fell, and these endured in humility, that uncircumscribed Spirit pursued those remaining with the highest largesse, giving to them as a gift that they could no longer be corrupted by any slipping. Confirmed therefore, and secure concerning the stability of their status, they underwent the height of a more lucid grace. They serve him therefore, to serve whom is to reign, both with happy security and secure happiness. With these two wings the angels fly with a truly unwearied flight, both created worthily and strongly confirmed.

The third wing is a singular love of their Creator; and this indeed most happy and interwoven with subtle feathers. For they love, and burn, and desire to look into him, with whose love they are happily inflamed. For the nearer they are, the more fervent they are; and absorbed into the light of majesty in an unspeakable way, they both always burn and are always satisfied.

The fourth is the assiduous vision of the divinity. But this also is interwoven with more flowery feathers. Of how great dignity is it to see God assiduously? And those spirits indeed, even when they are sent, are not defrauded of the glory of the vision, because everywhere the essence of the divinity occurs, which is within, containing all things, and governing them outwardly. Concerning these two it is written: "Two wings of each were joined (Ezek. 1)"; since singular love is born

from assiduous vision, and singular love effects assiduous vision.

The fifth is the joy of our Redemption, and it is pictured with multiple variety. Who with a copy of words may comprehend how much joy God-man generated in the angelic virtues, when he both broke their colleague, who had gone out from them but was not of them, with the standard of the cross rushing in, and recalled lost man to the heavenly kingdoms? Nor is it a wonder, because they saw the matter purged, from which that supernal city is rebuilt, the participation of which is in itself (Psalm 122).

The sixth is the restitution of the supernal city. But this also is colored with more beautiful pictures. For what will it be, when, that terrible judgment having been performed, the Lord of virtues shall associate men with angels, repairing the loss, reintegrating the number, and shall bring back each order from the merits of men to the numerical sum? Then as it were, the habitation of all rejoicing shall be in the city of God (Psalm 87), because with the variety of parts ordained, there was nothing further which might repugn, or which might be able to be moved from the established places. Concerning these two it is said: "Two covered their bodies"; because the joy of our redemption and the restitution of the supernal city cover and repair the bodies of the blessed spirits, lest so ruinous a diminution be known in that superior glory. And it is to be attended how great a benignity of grace heaps up the human race in these administrative spirits,

because they fight for us, as that: "There was made a great battle in heaven (Apoc. 12)." They win for us, as is subjoined in the same place: "Now is victory made (Ibid.)." They rejoice for us, because there is "joy to the angels of God over one sinner doing penance (Luke 15)"; They weep for us, as it is written: "The angels of peace wept bitterly (Isa. 33)." These are the happy feathers with which that numerous order flies over, standing unirritably, flying eagerly, and into eternity.

But now we must return to ourselves, and the stylus must be turned back to our humanity, whom corporeal pleasures and iniquitous wills divide and separate from the angelic fellowship. And although we have degenerated into this vanity, we nevertheless carry the image of the Creator, which, although it can be obscured, cannot however be deleted. "Every living man is universal vanity" (Psalm 39), says the just man, but also "man passes in an image."

Let us therefore assign six wings to man, and if not such [as the angels'], nevertheless of whatever sort. The first wing of man returning to God is bitterness of heart. "In many things we all offend" (James 3), and there is no number to our offenses. But when, with the grace of God approaching and inflaming our heart, we think back on all our years in the bitterness of our soul, we declare the image obscured, and we are reformed into our principle.

But because "with the heart it is believed unto justice, but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10), the second

feather follows, namely, confession of the mouth. "Before all things, confession," says the Scripture, and nothing is more pleasing to God than to confess and accuse what you have done. All sacred Scripture is full of the testimony of such great virtue, to which the whole authority of both the Old and New Testament serves; for these are the two virtues which hide the manifold heap of our crimes before the eyes of God. Concerning these it is said: "Two covered their bodies." For "blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord has not imputed sin" (Psalm 32). He said "imputed," not "committed." For he who has not committed sin does not exist, except one, and this is the Son of God. But everything which he himself shall have decreed not to impute to us, is so as if it had not been.

The third wing is hope. This is what raises fragile souls to supernal things, which lightens the tedium of expectation, which presumes upon the mercy of the judge, and dwells in the palace of divine piety. The fourth is fear. This is what succors our fleshly garment, penetrating the bones and infusing itself into the very marrow. Offer for a little while to the eyes of the heart the image of the Lord, and of that Lord who made heaven and earth, who has power to cast body and soul into hell (Matthew 10); whose patience you have provoked, treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the just judgment of God (Romans 2).

When you have looked upon these things with a more diligent gaze, fear and trembling shall come upon you, and the dread of death shall more strongly overturn the interior man (Psalm 55). Therefore, because hope presumes much and fear distrusts too much, do not delay to join both, so that in common they may do what divided they cannot. Learn to hope so that you may fear; to fear so that you may hope. Concerning these it is written: "Two wings of each were joined."

The fifth is humility. "The Lord is near to those who have obtained the heart," says the Scripture. Humility is the mother of virtues, pride the queen of vices; this alone is the nurse of virtues, which alone the Most High respected in the Virgin Mother; of which as long as the Son of God conversed on earth, he stood forth as both executor and master: "Learn from me," he said, "because I am meek and humble of heart" (Matthew 11).

The sixth is charity. This is the beginning and the end, the closure of good things, the unique daughter of the highest King. It is superfluous to commend her with more prolix words, to which the whole eloquence of both secular and divine letters alludes. Concerning these it is said: "With two wings they flew." With these twin wings those feathered ones fly out to supernal things, concerning whom it is said: "In vain is the net cast before the eyes of the feathered ones" (Proverbs 1). But if we fly with these, and do not fail, we shall at some time also fly with the wings of angels and shall see him in his beauty, who is God blessed forever and ever. Amen.

OCTOBER. XVIII. Sermon on St. Luke the Evangelist. XXVIII. Sermon on St. Fidelis the martyr.

SERMON LIII.

ON ST. LUKE THE EVANGELIST. (OCTOBER 28)

Because through the Gospel, most beloved, the world has been led back from darkness to light, the Christian people deservedly celebrate the glory of the evangelists. But among the others, the Blessed Luke, whom the present sermon is about to serve, while a twin kind of style weaves together both the evangelical and apostolic history, enriches as it were the field of the Church with diverse fruits, from which namely the hungry people may live, from which the flock of Christ may gather the greening nourishments of salvation. These clearly are the fruits which Joseph brought to his brothers (Genesis 42); this is the money which he commanded to be placed in the mouth of the sack (Genesis 44). This money is now proposed on the table of the Church, so that usury may afterwards be required from the negotiators. But to Benjamin this also is added above the others, that in his sack the cup also with the money be placed (Genesis 44). For whom does Joseph indicate through a mystery, except our Redeemer, whom he already then prefigured by his own mystery? For the Scripture says: "Because Pharaoh changed his name, and called him in the Egyptian tongue the Savior of the world" (Genesis 41). What is meant by

the brothers, except the holy apostles are designated? What by Benjamin, except Paul, who drew his origin from the tribe of Benjamin?

Therefore all the brothers receive the fruits of preaching, which they ought to sow throughout the world, and the money, which they may propose at the table of faith for the gain of usury. But to Benjamin alone the cup is also added, so that through Paul, whom he signified, not the small cup of the tabernacle might be offered to the nations, but an ample and open cup of the word might be propounded. For this is why he says: "Our mouth is open to you, O Corinthians, our heart is dilated, you are not straitened in us" (2 Corinthians 6). As if he were to say: Because you see me pouring in to you the drink of the word largely through an abundant cup, you also loosen your mouths of a thirsty heart for drinking, so that the down-running wave may not flow in vain, but may find capacious vessels into which it may be transfused. Concerning which drink namely, through Isaiah the Lord says: "The beast of the field shall glorify me, the dragons and the ostriches, because I have given waters in the desert, rivers in the pathless place, to give drink to my people, to my chosen one" (Isaiah 43). For what does the beast of the field designate, except gentility surely devoid of reason? What by the dragons, except the malicious? What indeed by the ostriches, who are feathered but unable to fly, except hypocrites are figured? These beasts therefore glorify God, while Christ propounds

the words of the exuberant Gospel to the gentile people, who were deserted and pathless.

And so the cup of evangelical preaching was given in Benjamin to Paul, so that he himself might specially cultivate the desert of gentility, and pour over its aridity a large shower of holy preaching: concerning which shower namely it is written: "Who covers the heaven with clouds, and prepares rain for the earth" (Psalm 147). Whence also Paul himself, who testifies that he is the apostle and teacher of the nations (2 Timothy 1), says to the Galatians: "When they had seen that the Gospel of the uncircumcision was committed to me, just as to Peter that of the circumcision. For he who worked in Peter for the apostleship of the circumcision, worked also in me among the nations" (Galatians 2). In which it is to be noted how great the dignity of blessed Paul, how great is his glory. Surely he who taught blessed Peter and the other apostles while yet passible and mortal, himself instructed Paul now glorified and exalt above the angels.

Christ stood forth as the teacher of the apostles when he was subject to the injuries of men; he did not disdain to teach Paul when he was already walled about by the services of the celestial virtues. He lived with the other apostles while he yet bore the infirmities of our mortality; he made Paul familiar to himself when, the empire of death having been trodden upon and powerfully overturned, he presided upon the throne of paternal majesty. This is why he says: "I make known to you, brothers, the Gospel which was

evangelized by me, because it is not according to man, for neither did I receive it from man, nor did I learn it, but through the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1). And therefore, although the holy apostles perceived all the deeds of our Savior through corporeal sights, they nevertheless did not precede the knowledge of blessed Paul in anything, while the same teacher who previously dwelt with them on earth corporately instructed him from heaven. Whence it is that he says to the Corinthians through an interrogation: "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?" (1 Corinthians 9). Therefore, with God revealing, he arrived at such a fullness of knowledge, and was so led into all the truth of the evangelical rule that, although all survived, he did not need the magisterium of the apostles. This is why he says to the Galatians: "But when it pleased him who segregated me from my mother's womb, and called me through his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might evangelize him among the nations, immediately I did not acquiesce to flesh and blood, nor did I come to Jerusalem to my predecessors the apostles" (Galatians 1). But when he went, he opens, when he subjoins: "Then after three years I came to Jerusalem to see Peter" (Ibid.). To see, not to learn.

But someone will say: This sermon does not speak of Luke the evangelist, as it promised, but is occupied in the disputation of Paul the apostle. This is clearly true, nor can we deny it. But since blessed Luke stood forth as the inseparable com-

panion of the same apostle and learned from him all that he wrote, where we express the dignity of the preceptor, we do not keep silent the praise of the alumnus. And the praise of the teacher redounds to the disciple, while the history of evangelical truth, which the former learned divinely, the latter, perceiving it from his mouth, faithfully inscribed with letters. Of how great dignity and how great excellence therefore Blessed Luke may be, is clearly detected in this, because while Mark, taught by blessed Peter, and Matthew and John, who described the Gospel, learned the deeds of our Redeemer on earth, he alone, so that I may speak thus, merited to write this Gospel which descended from heaven, while namely the Holy Spirit revealed this to Paul from heaven, and afterwards through the same Paul, as if through his own organ, Christ became known to Blessed Luke. This is why Paul himself says: "You seek an experiment of him who speaks in me, Christ" (2 Corinthians 13).

Therefore from heaven Christ poured the sacraments of his deeds into Paul, and transfused the same through Paul into Luke, as if a golden pipe were mediating, so that to this blessed man there seems not undeservedly to agree what is said through Isaiah: "First to Zion he says: Behold I am here; and to Jerusalem I will give an evangelist" (Isaiah 41). And therefore not by chance, but by the magisterium of the Holy Spirit, it was done that blessed Matthew, who learned the Gospel from the Lord conversing on earth, should descend by enumerating forty gen-

erations (Matthew 1); but Luke should describe seventy-seven degrees of kinship by ascending (Luke 3). Indeed, through the number forty, labor is expressed, with which namely Christ is fatigued in his body, which is the Church, through the diverse times of this life. This is why Moses (Exodus 24) and Elijah continued a fast for forty days (1 Kings 19). But also the Lord himself abstained from the perception of foods under the same number (Matthew 4). Therefore through Moses the law is understood, through Elijah prophecy, but through Christ the grace of the New Testament is clearly understood. Through the affliction therefore of the law, of prophecy, and at the same time of grace, the labor of the universal Church is hinted at, fatigued through the universal ages of this mortal life. This is why the sons of Israel, worn out by the hardships and labors of a long pilgrimage, entered the land of promise after forty years (Joshua 5), because namely all the elect, after the course of this pilgrimage has been measured, shall soon possess the land of the living by hereditary right.

Therefore through the number which Matthew ordains, the undertaking of our laborious mortality [is signified]; but through that which Luke placed, the mystery of our redemption is indubitably expressed. Similarly through that number we are taught that Christ, according to prophecy, himself bore our sins (Isaiah 53); through this one indeed we subsequently learn that, according to the Apostle, he has given us all our offenses (Colossians 2). For it is he himself,

the Lamb who was offered because he himself willed it (Isaiah 53); it is he who also took away the sins of the world (John 1). Indeed, the seventy-seventh number which Luke placed signifies the remission of sins, as the Lord himself hinted when, to Peter asking how many times sins were to be forgiven to a brother, he replied: "I say to you not only seven times, but up to seventy times seven" (Matthew 18). Nor is it a wonder if through this number, which is born from eleven and ten, the abolition of human depravity is designated. Indeed, the number eleven, if it is multiplied seven times, surely the sum of seventy-seven is completed. But the number ten, which is perfect, signifies the Decalogue. But through the number eleven, which transgresses this, what is figured except the legal transgression?

Since therefore in that whole sum of the law, and at the same time of the transgression, both numbers are comprehended, what wonder if through it the remission of crimes is designated? Clearly the sevenfold number, which descended upon the Lord in a dove, abolished the eleven-fold [number] of our depravity. Concerning which number namely of charisms it is said through Isaiah: "The Spirit of wisdom and of understanding shall rest upon him; the Spirit of counsel and of fortitude; the Spirit of knowledge and of piety; and he shall fill him with the Spirit of the fear of the Lord" (Isaiah 11). Whence Blessed Luke, so that he may show us to be expiated from our crimes through the advent of our Savior, begins the order of the kinship of Christ

not from the beginning of the evangelical narration, but only from the baptism. Which also is evidently shown in the book of Genesis, where Lamech is narrated to have said to his wives: "Sevenfold vengeance shall be given concerning Cain, but concerning Lamech seventy times seven" (Genesis 4). Indeed vengeance is said to be given seventy times seven concerning Lamech, because seventy-seven men are recorded to have gone out from his loins, and, afterwards with the flood devouring, are reported to have been absorbed. But because Lamech is expressed as either striking or struck, what is figured through him except the first parent of the human race, who surely inflicted the weapon of sin, by which he himself first struck perished, also upon the whole race of the succeeding posterity? Concerning this Lamech therefore seventy times seven vengeance was given, because the sin which the first man contracted flourished through seventy-seven generations in the human race. Indeed original sin remained until Christ, which he himself deleted through the sacraments of his baptism (from where Luke begins). Where namely it is said of him: "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1).

The matter therefore of our redemption both holy evangelists thus divide in turn, and each takes for himself the congruous part of the narration, so that Matthew, by descending through the line of generations, may report that Christ came from the heavens to us sinners; but Luke, by ascending from the sacrament of baptism up

to the Father, may show that he has drawn us with himself to celestial glory, having been washed from the filths of sins. The former surely asserts Christ mercifully descending to the earth; the latter confesses him lifting us up to celestial things. The former shows the shepherd leaving the ninety-nine sheep in the deserted pastures; the latter teaches [him] bringing back the sheep which he had lost, placed upon his shoulders, to his own sheepfold (Matthew 18; Luke 15). The former reports the physician descended to the sick; the latter confesses that he has led back us, having been healed, with himself to the joys of eternal safety. The former shows only the Only-begotten sent from the Father to us; the latter teaches because he transferred a multitude of the elect to the celestial fatherland.

Furthermore, the Blessed Apostle comprehends the intention of both evangelists in one sentence, saying: "God sent his Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin, so that concerning sin he might condemn sin in the flesh" (Romans 8). For when he says: "God sent his Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin," he shows the undertaking of our mortality, which Matthew openly declares when, by descending to Abraham, he enumerates forty generations. But when he subjoins: "And concerning sin he condemned sin in the flesh," he reports the abolition of sins, which Luke indubitably expresses when he weaves the line of seventy-seven kinships. Which both sentences namely the same Paul elsewhere embraced in one little verse, saying: "Jesus Christ was delivered up

for our sins, and rose again for our justification" (Romans 4). For Christ descended that he might rescue us from sins; but he rose that he might exhibit [us] shining with the brightness of justice.

Which diversity of both blessed evangelists namely is also evidently shown in this: that Matthew, through Solomon, in whose mother David fell through adultery, produces the line of the Lord's generation by descending; but Luke ascends through Nathan, through whose namesake prophet namely the Lord expiated this very sin of the same David, and thus as if having pitied the one who had fallen, he raised him up. The former therefore teaches the Son of God humbly inclined toward us; the latter pronounces Him exalted from heaven together with us in triumphal glory. For Christ descended to those lying prostrate, so that he might advance them as victors with himself into the stars. Whence it is believed to have been done not without a divine presage that this blessed evangelist is called by such a name. For Luke in Hebrew is turned into Latin as himself rising or lifting up.

This therefore he preferred in his own name which he himself afterwards wrote concerning the Savior. For our Redeemer himself also rose from death, and lifted us up, living, from the dead to celestial things. Whence also it is said by the Apostle: "Who has raised us up together with him, and made us sit together in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 2). He therefore is principally called "rising" or "lifting up," since he rose from death for this purpose, that he might raise us

prostrate in death: for this he ascended into heaven, that he might lift us up with himself to celestial things. What therefore Blessed Luke reported by writing concerning Christ, this he designated as if prophetically by his own name. And this certainly is a great mystery, that Blessed Luke begins from the baptism of the Savior, and produces the line of generations by ascending even unto God the Father. For through the washing of sacred baptism we are cleansed from sins, and thus we are reconciled to God the Father through the Mediator of God and men. In baptism therefore is the beginning of our ascension, and thus one arrives to God from those living through the increase of good work.

Nor must it be passed over that since our Redeemer is truly both king and priest, just as Blessed Matthew wove His royalty by describing His progeny, so on the other hand Luke indicates the priestly dignity through the whole text of his volume. Indeed, he is mostly occupied in the priestly office, and while he runs through the diverse deeds of the Lord's work, he nevertheless does not recede from those things which pertain to the priesthood. For now he narrates the office delegated to the priest, now the progeny, now the turn, now the sacrifice, now he names the temple, and although he comprehends very many things within the series of sacred history, he nevertheless perseveres in the intention of following the priesthood which he had begun. For from the very beginning of his narration he thus started, saying: "There was in the days of Herod, king of

Judea, a certain priest, named Zechariah, of the course of Abijah, and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron" (Luke 1). Then he placed the priest himself before the altar to offer the sacrifice. Afterwards also he directs the Virgin Mary to the house of the same priest. He also describes three canticles to be sung in the Church, which none of the evangelists is found to have done besides him: one namely of Zechariah, the second of Mary, the third of Simeon (Luke 1 and 2). On the fortieth day truly after he was born, he narrates the Lord offered in the temple with the women. Then he constituted him at twelve years old sitting in the same temple among the teachers. He also narrates that the parents of the Lord were accustomed to ascend to Jerusalem every single year on the solemnity of the Passover for the sake of prayer. Finally, he concludes his Gospel with this, so that he says: "They, adoring, returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were always in the temple praising and blessing God" (Luke 24).

Whence it happens that Blessed Luke holds the appearance of a calf, just as both the prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1) and John the Evangelist (Apocalypse 4) pronounce themselves to have seen. For the calf was accustomed to be offered in the temple. And well a calf, because it furrows the fields of our heart with the plow of the sacred language, and fecundates them with the vital fruit by the casting of the evangelical seed. Or certainly for this reason Blessed Luke holds forth the image of the calf, because while he describes the evangelical and apostolic history,

he winnows the enemies of Christ and the adversaries of the true faith as if with two horns, and he expels them, lest they depopulate the floor of the catholic Church. With these horns therefore he is fortified, with which he may both strike the non-believing Jews, and from here and there conclude the heretics declining from the rule of the true faith.

He wrote therefore Blessed Luke the labors of the apostles, and the acts, in which he himself as a collaborator was present. He wrote also the Gospel, which he perceived from heaven as if a sealed weight of a great treasure. To which namely that prophecy of Isaiah is congruously adapted, by which it is said: "And the vision of all shall be to you as the words of a sealed book, which when they shall have given to one who knows letters, they shall say: Read this, and he shall answer: I cannot: for it is sealed" (Isaiah 29). For what is that sealed book, except the holy Gospel figured with mystic sentences, enveloped, and removed far from the intelligence of the human mind by a certain secret depth? This indeed is that book, concerning which John says: "I saw in the right hand of him sitting upon the throne a book written within and without, sealed with seven seals" (Apocalypse 5). But what are the seals, with which the evangelical book is said to be signed, except those seven sacraments, by which surely the whole order of the Lord's dispensation is fulfilled? namely the incarnation of the Lord, his birth, passion, resurrection, ascension into heaven, then judgment,

finally the kingdom? With these seals therefore the evangelical book is thus signed, so that unless Christ had opened it, it could not be open to anyone at all. Whence it is subjoined: "Behold the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered to open the book, and to loose its seven seals" (Apocalypse 5). But in the Acts of the Apostles while he narrates as if a naked history, he in a certain way suckles the tender infancy of the nascent Church.

But if we diligently attend because he is a physician who writes, we find nothing else in that history except namely the medicine of languishing souls. For to human conduct, he as if extends a certain line of rectitude, and through it he directs us as if through a path; so that just as we consider the primitive Church to have lived, in as much as faculty is available, we also may study to live, so that the same purity, which emanates from the origin of the fountain, may also flow down nevertheless through the following descents, and such as it proceeds in arising, such it may be preserved in the end. For he himself is one of the four rivers of paradise, who namely through the flowing breasts of his doctrine has irrigated the whole breadth of the world. Concerning which waters namely it is said through Isaiah: "Waters are broken out in the desert, and torrents in the solitude, and that which was dry into a pool, and the thirsty into fountains of waters" (Isaiah 35).

Let us recur therefore, most beloved, to the innocence of the primitive Church, that we may

learn both to relinquish possessed things, and to rejoice in the simplicity of royal poverty. Let not the weight of earthly substance depress us into the depths, since the celestial King invites to the glory of the supernal Jerusalem. Let not that allurements of carnal seduction rashly retract us from this, for whom surely the court of the heavens is open through the entry of our preceding Redeemer. For while the order of his generation is produced from the humility of baptism even up to the Father, it is clear beyond a doubt, that he promises the entrance of the celestial fatherland to those following him, and where he first entered, he paved the way for those ministering to him. "I will," says the Father, "that where I am, there also my minister may be" (John 12); so that surely the members may collect themselves to the head, and (as is promised by the same one pledging) where the body shall be, there also the eagles may be gathered (Matthew 24).

SERMON LIV.

ON ST. FIDELIS THE MARTYR. (OCTOBER 28)

You know, most beloved brothers, that for this reason we frequently assemble from ecclesiastical institution to hear the victories of the martyrs of Christ, so that while we are instructed by their deeds, we may be more fervently kindled to the love of the celestial fatherland, which they obtained by manfully contending; and while we heard those ones contemning the edicts of kings, the threats of princes, the tribunals of judges,

[and] having run through so many kinds of torments, it may shame the noble minds of the faithful at least not to resist the vices of their own flesh. For it is shameful thus to behold the victories of the warriors of Christ, so that while we behold others distinguished with triumphal titles, reporting spoils from the enemies, we ourselves in domestic peace, with vices creeping up, or as if with adversaries lying in wait, should feebly succumb. Furthermore, the blessed martyrs, even before they poured out their blood in the contest, flourished with diverse virtues. To us, however, because we cannot die for the defense of the faith, the victory is consummated if we study to live in the conduct of holy virtues, so that from there we may be immediately transferred to the kingdom, from where they merited martyrdom. Indeed, from the merits of life, by which they merited to obtain the palm of their contest, from there we without any obstacle of persecution are led to the crown.

One thing therefore in the holy martyrs we ought only to venerate and admire, another also to imitate. Let us admire namely those dying constantly and nobly; let us imitate those living in honest conduct of character. Let us venerate in them that they delivered their body for the faith to various torments; but let us imitate that they first crucified their flesh with its vices and concupiscences. Let us admire those manfully dying lest they themselves should deny life, but let us also imitate [them] by insisting with the zeal of charity upon holy exhortations, so that they

might draw others also to life. And so that I may conclude in a shorter sermon what I desire, then the memory of the martyrs is worthily recalled, if while their heard death brings in a miracle, the preceding life also is led as an example.

Behold this Blessed martyr Fidelis, whose festivity we celebrate today, as the history of his deeds witnesses, is known to have led a life worthy of martyrdom even before the occasion for martyrdom was provided. For when he was supported by clear titles of birth, and with a smiling abundance of things, he could have taken the way of the world not ingloriously, having spurned the patronage of any of the great ones, he preferred to adhere devotedly to a religious bishop, so that he might patently show himself not to pant for the favor or riches of a potentate, but rather to choose the blessing of a priest. With whom namely he did not think it worthy to resort to the quarrels of forensic litigations, nor to the prestigious figments of scenes, nor to theatrical spectacles, but rather he visited the prisons of the martyrs. And because he was devoted to the martyrs, he himself also eventually merited to become a martyr.

Thus formerly that dispenser of the royal house, Obadiah, because he fed a hundred prophets hidden in caves, he himself was worthily remunerated afterwards, receiving prophetic grace (III Kings 18). And he who then fed the crowd of prophets with both bread and water by the service of pious diligence, now by the oracles of his prophecy, namely with celestial nourishments, he recreates and feeds the whole

Church. Thus Joshua, who paid the service of servitude to Moses, namely the leader of the Israelite people, afterwards both laudably presided over the same people, and triumphed over its adversaries with great glory (Joshua 1). Why should I mention Elisha, who while he does not allow himself to be separated from Elijah even for a moment, subsequently merits his double spirit? (IV Kings 2.) As if already then the Lord intoned that evangelical [saying]: "He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward" (Matthew 10).

Indeed, nor did this blessed Fidelis exhibit the office of pious humility only to the holy martyrs, but he also extended his diligence to winning even those who were held by the errors of idols. And as he himself is seen to assert in his own words, while he was engaged in secular warfare, he obeyed the divine command more than the earthly one, to such an extent that he restrained some from the profane culture of idolatry, and called them to the knowledge of the true God with salutary admonitions. He was present indeed among the camps of the armed men, but he bore the standards of celestial warfare. Finally, he seemed to be mixed with the wedges of the armed, but for the sake of the celestial camps he busied himself with associating to himself soldiers of an alien profession. To whom surely he did not promise the belt of earthly warfare, nor the donative of temporal pay, but the citizenship of the celestial court.

Under the cloak of earthly warfare therefore he stood for the celestial camps, so that he might make fugitives from the earthly, for whom he might increase the number of celestial warfare. We know something similar to this to have been done also by David, namely when he was staying with Achish king of Gath, fleeing Saul. He often carried away rich spoils namely from those regions over which the aforesaid Achish commanded; and according to what the Scripture witnesses, to speak in his own words: "David struck the whole land, nor did he leave a living man or woman, and taking sheep and oxen, and asses, and camels, and garments, he returned, and came to Achish." Whom when Achish asked: "Against whom have you rushed today?" (I Kings 27), he confessed that he had rushed against the south of Judah, or against the regions of Israel. David therefore had offered himself as if devoted by pressing necessity to the foreign king; but he was heaping up very many slaughters from his profane people. Blessed Fidelis truly under the profession of secular warfare was toiling in the preparation for the celestial camps. Therefore he, mocking the world, or rather the prince of this world, whom he seemed to serve in appearance, was busy with abstracting followers as far as he could, and aggregating them to the assemblies of a more powerful warfare.

That one therefore was cutting down barbaric nations with iron; this one was killing men of an unformed and truly barbaric rite from carnal life with the sword of the Spirit, which is the

Word of God (Ephesians 6). The former snatched away crowds of various animals; this one led brute men to the stable of the Church, and to the vital fodder of receiving reason. The former, consulted, witnessed that he had stood contrary to the people of God; this one also reported himself in a certain way to resist the part of the faithful, while he seemed to carry on secular warfare with the infidels. For by military profession he seemed on the surface to assert that he was attacking the inheritance of God, of which he himself was a part, with diverse characters as if with certain swords. Thus surely, thus holy fraud proceeded more freely, while he, to whom suspicion was lacking, was insisting upon acquiring the faithful for Christ. We shall see therefore, because Blessed Fidelis pertained to the crown of martyrdom by a preceding merit, who toiled in the study of true charity for winning souls even before martyrdom. For as if good earth, he first brought forth the seed of holy work, and thus then received the light of triumphal glory. Hence it is indeed, that in the beginning of this world the earth is first commanded to germinate, but on the following day the luminaries are made in heaven (Genesis 1); because it is necessary that we first bring forth the vital fruits of holy operation, so that we may be able afterwards to arrive at contemplating the light of the supreme truth. Surely he had founded his house upon a firm rock in peace, whence afterwards while the winds of threats were raging, while various floods of torments were dashing against it, it remained immobile (Matthew 7).

And as if the root of an excellent trunk, it had first conceived strength in secret, supported by which afterwards the adult crop did not fall when the breezes were pushing. In peace therefore from good operation he merited, that he stood unvanquished and undaunted in the stadium of persecution. He worked in leisure, what he overcame in war. Within the walls of peace he acquired, what as victor he obtained in the field.

Among the other signs of his merits, however, of how great glory is that, that this blessed and most unvanquished martyr, as soon as he was struck in the head, a turbulent tempest and excessive flashing is said to have emerged? This surely was the judgment of divine equity, so that through this it might become manifest and clear, that he who was receiving his martyr in glory, was worthily terrifying his torturers in wrath.

For the terrifying of the reprobate therefore the flashing and tempest erupted; which namely accompanying, the supernal arbiter shall come to judgment, as is said through the prophet: "Fire shall go before him, and round about him a mighty tempest" (Psalm 96; Matthew 27). Furthermore, in the death of the Lord the elements are read to have been disturbed. Of how great dignity therefore is it, and how noble a sign of triumph, after the likeness of the Lord's death, that also in the beheading of the martyr the elements were moved? so that from some part he might hold the form of his death by dying, whose doctrine he imitated by living.

That also must not be undervalued, that a certain one of the persecutors is reported to have been seized by a demon, who surely when he promised that he would deliver the body of the martyr to burial with great reverence, if through his intervention he merited to be freed from the demon, as soon as he touched the corpse of the martyr, the demon departed. In this also the example of the same our Redeemer is clearly seen. Since from the very persecutors of the Lord whoever merited to touch the mystery of his most holy body, were loosed from the yoke of demons, redeemed by that very blood which they shed. And so that in his martyrdom the servant might be seen to imitate the passion of his Lord as if a follower, while the executioners announced the miracles to their prince, which had been shown through the blessed martyr; he altogether prohibited anyone to report such things, and, terrified, commanded to conceal them perpetually. For who hearing this, would not immediately recall to memory that which the princes of the priests said to the guards: "Say," he said, "that his disciples came by night, and stole him away while you were sleeping; and if it shall be heard by the governor, we will persuade him, and make you secure" (Matthew 28). Those ones surely taught the guards to feign a lie; he commanded the officials to suppress the truth with silence. Both surely are enemies of truth, while they either wickedly fabricate the comments of fallacy, or hide the truth with the silence of malignity.

But we, most beloved brothers, who have heard the constancy of so excellent a warrior, who behold the signs of so great virtue as if placed before our eyes, let us also study to have virtues with the help of Almighty God. Let it shame [us] to languish under the torpor of laziness, because we see others penetrate with so great glory to heaven. Let our mind grow warm for the struggle of the contest; and if it does not fear to clash boldly with the enemy, let it not doubt that, with Christ as leader, an easy victory will come to it. And indeed to us the labor is less, although nevertheless the reward is common. For who does not know it to be incomparably more difficult to submit the neck to the sword, than to restrain the allurements of the gullet? Who would not rather toil with labors, or freeze with nakedness, than sustain the fires of raging flames? Who would not judge it lighter to hunger and thirst, than to be scraped with claws, or delivered to the bites of beasts? Or is it not more dangerous to contemn the flashing commands of raging kings in public, than to go against depraved thoughts in the mind secretly? To deliver oneself voluntarily to death, than to refrain one's own wills and the desires of the flesh? Since therefore we tend to the same beatitude with less laboring, why do we neglect to imitate those contending in the stadium, so that we may be able to exist as consorts with the victors in the fatherland.

Let us fight therefore, my brothers, and let us take care to cut off the allurements of the vices

attacking us; for we cannot, according to the voice of Paul, rejoice here in the world, and reign there with Christ (II Timothy 2). And indeed we know the blessed martyrs to have fought with the members of the devil; we however have the struggle of an irreconcilable fight with the very head of the iniquitous ones. They conquered him raging immensely through his members; we are commanded to overcome [him] lurking under the frauds of snares. In both ways the glorious martyr Fidelis obtained a triumph over him, who both in peace through the grace of edification snatched away some from his bond, and when the moment of persecution was offered, nevertheless contemned him wheedling and terrifying through his members. Conquered he conquered, cast down he ascended, he submitted his own head to the sword, and trampled the neck of the devil with the foot of perpetual victory. Now beyond a doubt he shines among the fiery stones of the supernal Jerusalem, and with his purple-clad fellow soldiers alternates the song of celestial harmony to his emperor. By a happy commerce surely he put off the fragile tunic of the body, and obtained the bright stole of immortality. Having been beheaded he lost his head, and now proceeds crowned with a precious stone. He indeed remunerates him as victor in eternal rest now, who also among wars had recently protected the one contending, Jesus Christ our Lord, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

NOVEMBER. I. Homily on all the saints.

XI. Sermon on St. Martin, bishop and confessor. (NOV 11) XXX. Sermon I on St. Andrew the apostle. Sermon II on the same.

LV. HOMILY ON THE FEAST OF ALL SAINTS. At that time: "Jesus seeing the crowds went up into a mountain: and when he was set down his disciples came to him." And the rest. Today a more serene day has smiled upon us, and the sun has shone more brightly than usual upon the lands. For not one, but all the saints sanctify it, and irrigate it with luminous splendors. That spectacular solemnity of the heavens, which becomes famous not with annual, but with continuous joys; where light is seen in light, and the substance of the Trinity is opened to blessed eyes, eye to eye. There is known the eternal reason of the one begetting, and the one begotten, and the one proceeding, which here can be believed, [but] cannot be comprehended. There the queen of virgins accompanied by innumerable virgins, perambulates the mansions of the angels, and with both natures admiring her glory she says: Why do you admire me? It is a divine mystery this which you behold, divine indeed, not human, nor ever comprehended by human reasons. There the numerous army of angels shines in sacred divisions, delighted by flying service, it does not veil, but reveals the majesty of the Lord. There the primitive election of the patriarchs, the reverend society of the prophets, the glorious choir of the apostles, the purple multitude of the martyrs, the florid congregation of the confessors, the bright troop of the virgins, the infinite num-

ber of monks. The Lord of virtues sits in the midst, and from the pouring out of his glory he inebriates those beholding: "For they shall be inebriated," says the Prophet, "by the abundance of your house" (Psalm 35). There secure peace, voluptuous rest, perpetual life, wisdom of mind, agility of body, illumination of heart. "Blessed are they who dwell in your house, O Lord" (Psalm 83). Just as the habitation of all the rejoicing is in you (Psalm 86), city of God: and in your streets the voice of exultation is intoned with sweeter melodies. "Why are you sad, my soul, and why do you disturb me? Hope in God, because I shall yet confess to him" (Psalm 41, 42). I shall confess to him there: for here the stadium, there the reward; here the fight, there the crown. It is vain to rise before the light. The mind must be hardened, and abstracted far from the allurements of pleasures, and the matter of both substances must be purged, if we wish to fly away to our own origins. The thinness of poverty must be loved meanwhile, a more bitter speech suspended, pride fled, labors sustained, one must engage with vices, secular riches eliminated.

This is what that poor and only one (Psalm 24) in today's reading of the holy Gospel says to the poor, whom he had called from the poverty of the world: "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matthew 5). These are the eight, or rather seven beatitudes, because the eighth is the same as the first. Most happy steps, by which one goes to the Lord, all of which he first ascended in his own person who ascended into the mountain, and opened

his mouth, so that he might teach his disciples. Finally, who was poorer than he, who did not have where he might recline his head (Luke 9)? Who was milder than he, who is mild and humble of heart (Matthew 11)? Who seeing the city wept over it (Luke 19), wept for Lazarus (John 11), taught justice, did justice, in whose mouth guile was not found (Isaiah 53). Who was more merciful than he, who delivered the adulterous woman? He healed the sinner woman accumulated with seven demons. Who was cleaner than he, who did not commit sin? (I Peter 2.) He came to pacify, both those things which are in the heavens, and those which are on the earth; he left peace to his disciples (John 14), he suffered persecution for justice, scourged in the flesh, suspended on the cross, defiled by death (Luke 23). He who says he remains in Christ, ought, just as he walked, also himself to walk (I John 2). Sing therefore the song of degrees, and ascend step by step, nor with a premature leap pass over any; because, he who shall have offended in one, is made guilty of all (James 2).

Be therefore poor in spirit, nor think this first step to be touched lightly, since it is of much solicitude to relinquish the world and worldly things, and from the customary course to recall the heart, body, and study. For he who is poor in spirit, rejoices in vileness, embraces humility, tramples earthly desires; but because that poverty is execrable, which swelling with a royal spirit sows discords, serves litigations, is delighted by detracting speeches, one must fly

away to the sublimity of the second step, so that he may be mild. Mild is he who returns evil for evil to no one. Having been hurt he asks for pardon, and does good to those hurting [him]. Nor let anyone boast of a full victory, whoever perhaps has ascended this [step], since it is to be lamented with every fountain of tears, that we have served for so long in the mud and the brick under the power of Pharaoh; and therefore blessed are those who mourn. But the mourning of the saints is not concerning the diminution of things, concerning the infirmity of bodies, concerning the ferocity of a more sublime power; for they mourn sins, either their own or those of others, the ruin of the world, the detriment of faith, the contempt of justice, the abundance of iniquity, the delay of the kingdom.

Nor is the limit of consummation to be imposed here, since perfect justice is to love one's neighbor as oneself; and to rebuke his excesses with free discretion, and discrete liberty. For he who, for the sake of the person whom he bears, does not resist those sinning, let him know himself to be condemned by his own silence. He hungers therefore, and thirsts for justice, who destroys vices, constructs virtues; sober to himself, just to his neighbor, pious to God. Whose soul the zeal of the house of God burns, who sings with the just one: "Your zeal has made me to pine away, because my enemies have forgotten your words."

But because according to the voice of the orator, very often the highest right is malice,

and inconsiderate justice brings forth a precipice, therefore there follows: "Blessed are the merciful." Mercy is a beautiful ornament of human nature, of which he who is void degenerates badly, and denies the human. But it is true mercy, when mercy is superexalted by judgment, when either by the largess of substance, or by good will, or by the doctrine of the word, or by the example of the deed, we refresh the body and soul of the neighbor. But when we have already begun thus to walk from clarity into clarity, from the clarity of our heart, to the clarifying of the heart of the neighbor, we must be cleansed from all defilement of flesh and spirit, from all aspersion of this world, to be wiped purely and closely, as is subjoined: "Blessed are the clean of heart." Who shall boast that he has a chaste heart (Proverbs 20)? Depraved is the heart of man, and inscrutable. Who shall know it? (Jeremiah 17.) It is difficult to cleanse that, since lurking in its hidden places, it receives crowds of rushing thoughts, very much even with us resisting, but by no means being able to strive against them. He therefore has a clean heart, who with the motions of both men mitigated, not only represses passions, but is ignorant of them, fortified by the natural course of good works, crucified to the world, and to whom the world is crucified (Galatians 2). But few are they, into whom the fullness of so great grace has poured itself. Whoever however they are, they are already near the palm of the supernal vocation, if by the peace, with which they have been refreshed, they study to pacify those disagree-

ing, and to say with the Prophet: "With those who hated peace I was peaceable" (Psalm 119). Therefore there is subjoined: "Blessed are the peacemakers," not only pacified, but peacemakers, making peace, sowing the seeds of concord.

But because quite often either by the adulation of the powerful, or by the love of temporal things, we either dismiss justice, or do not defend it when dismissed, the right hand must be stretched out to the goal of the course, so that for justice we may suffer persecution not only for our own, but also for another's, and resist even unto blood, or even unto death. And this is that which follows: "Blessed are they who suffer persecution for the sake of justice." But after these things what? Here we adhere to the Lord, and are made one spirit with him. Here the cloud is broken, and the prayer passes through. Here with revealed face we speculate the glory of the Lord. Here sweetness of spirit, sweetness of heart, jubilation of mind. Blessed is the people that knows jubilation (Psalm 88).

First, therefore, let us see in ourselves the abundance of sins. "For your name's sake, O Lord, you will be propitiated for my sin: for it is much (Psalm 24)," says that unique confidant of the eternal king. We have sinned above the number of the sand of the sea, and our sins are multiplied. Do you strive to count the innumerable, and to put in a sum that which exceeds the sum? Behold, a great heap, an impetuous torrent, nor can so great misery be discussed; since our iniquities have gone over our head (Psalm 37). We have

walked with neck extended, our eyes are full of vanity, our ears with detraction. Let us smell not the odor of ointments, in which the bride boasts that she runs; but the odor of death unto death, whose mouth is described to be full of cursing and bitterness. Our hands are full of blood, our feet swift to shed blood; contrition and unhappiness are in our ways, and the way of peace is cast away; there is no fear of God before our eyes (Psalm 13). What therefore is to be done, in what is there to be hoped, or whither is there to be fled? One must stand in this heap, not of new, but of old fruits (Ezekiel 3), and a vision to be feared must be seen, and let us set ourselves before our eyes, lest the judge at some time rebuke us, and set us before our face. In this vision of God a whirlwind is seen by us, because according to the just man, here the paths of their steps are entangled (Job 6). But do not think this vision to be numbered among small things, since this leads to the vision of the cherubim, and of the winged animals; and introduces to the aspect of the ruler himself.

The abundance of our sins having been seen, therefore, let us see secondly our negligence. We have drawn our sins like a long rope, and blood has touched blood, and we have dissembled; wound, and bruise, and swelling sore, and we have not looked (Isaiah 1). The zeal of God has departed from us, and we have despised it. Thus accumulating negligence upon the multitude of sins, we have blocked for ourselves the way of confession, we avoid the paths of justice, being

not only negligent, but also boasting of negligence, according to that saying of the wisest man: "Who when they have done evil, rejoice and exult in the worst things (Proverbs 2)." Do you wish to know that from the abundance of sins, negligence, a most evil daughter, is generated? "The sinner, when he has come into the depth of evils, despises (Proverbs 18)." But on the contrary, he who fears God, neglects nothing; because, "he who despises small things, shall fall by little and little." The multitude of sins threatens negligence, negligence contempt, contempt everlasting death.

See also thirdly the patience and longanimity of our God. "These things you have done, and I was silent (Psalm 49)." He sees all and hears all, and nothing is removed from his eyes, of whom it is said: "The eyes of the Lord in every place contemplate the good and the bad (Proverbs 15)." Have you feared the eyes of men, but did not dread the eyes of the Most High? Behold, he himself has known all things last and ancient, nor from the East, nor from the West, nor from the desert mountains is there a place of fleeing, since God is the judge. He saw your works, the returns and excursions of your crimes; and he contained his wrath. Heaven did not thunder, water did not submerge, the earth did not swallow up; and since all the earth is full of the glory of the Lord, in his glory you have vomited your misery, nor have you revered the present Lord, and to exercise your uncleannesses before so great cleanness. But what did he himself do? "I," he says, "as if not

seeing." Did he reveal your ignominy to any of his ministers, who are the avengers of his wrath, constituted for this very thing? Behold, he sees, and is silent; he sees, and does not manifest; he sees, and does not judge; he sees, and does not vindicate; he sees, and dissembles seeing; he calls, and you do not hear; he promises, and you despise; he threatens, and you do not fear, and you treasure up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath. Since therefore he is a just and strong judge, he is very patient, nor is he angry every day (Psalm 7). Behold, he contains his wrath, represses his fury, turns away his eyes, spares those sinning; and they gather all these things into their own judgment, guilty of all. Shall he who has thus been silent and still, always be thus silent? Or have you not read that he shall come to judgment, casting away patience, knowing not humility, ignorant of mercy?

You have waited patiently for him when silent, wait also for him when speaking impatiently: "As one bringing forth," he says, "I will speak (Isaiah 42)." You have seen him dissembling, see him also counting every smallest thing. "You have numbered," he says, "the footsteps of my feet (Job 13)." What place will there be for hope, when the judge shall come, who stood under a judge, with trumpets sounding before, with angels shouting together, with the elements burning? To whose aid shall we flee, when with winds raging from across, the worldly machine shall be torn asunder, and fire glowing white shall mix heaven and earth in final conflagrations? He

himself shall come with great power and majesty; not with sweetness and humility, because there justice is full in his right hand, which here sowed and scattered mercy. Then that merciful eye shall not spare, and shall not pity; but shall strike and kill, clothed in wrath, filled with fury, full of cruelty. But what of the sinners? Seeing, they shall be troubled with a horrible fear, but incorrigible, hearing that horrendous thunder: "Go, you cursed, into eternal fire (Matthew 25)." Of how great sorrow do you think it will be to be excluded from the face of God, to see, and to lose God, when the king of glory shall enter the sublime city, with all hope of mercy forever sealed to the miserable sinners? Whoever you are, therefore, who despise the riches of goodness and patience of God, read again the text of the Epistle to the Romans (Romans 2), and it shall tell you more fully that you have not escaped the judgment of God.

Look also fourthly at his mercy; although you have sinned, although you have neglected, and have provoked the patience of God, he is nevertheless ready to have mercy when you wish, and to return to the one returning, to forget and to cover your sins, and to cast them into the depth of the sea. Nor will there be delay between the one confessing and the one remitting; between the one groaning and the one hearing the groans, because he is kind and merciful. The men of the world are easy to anger, difficult to mercy; but God is both difficult to be angry, and easy to have mercy. They fly back to the reproaches which they

have remitted; he, when he has remitted, it is as if it had not been. We keep watch more frequently at the thresholds of the powerful, not having free access to speak, and if we have committed any fault, we amend it with suppliant eyes, with troubled face, with humble words. But they very often with proud eye, and shoulder disdained, do not wish even to look back upon those prostrate at their feet.

Not so the Lord Jesus, who more willingly speaks with me than I with him; whom I find as often as I seek; who meets the one fleeing with loaves, who shows a joyful countenance to me, who embraces my penance as innocence, everywhere joyful, everywhere good, everywhere pious, everywhere sweet with the great multitude of his sweetness. He does not knit his brow, he does not turn his eyes away, he does not twist his face, nor does he sound forth bombastic words, but he meets the one returning, and runs into embraces, weeping over my neck, and commands the first robe to be brought forth, the ring of understanding to be given (Luke 15), and the feet to be shod in the preparation of the Gospel (Ephesians 6), to be recalled in choir and symphony to supernal joys, and the fatted calf to be killed for the remission of my sins. You see therefore how long the patience is in God, how swift the mercy. "Long-suffering," says the saint, "and much merciful (Psalm 102)." Willingly therefore I flee to you, Lord Jesus, who suffer for a long time, and quickly have mercy, because you are God,

and not man as the prophet says (Hosea 11), who would keep anger, hide malice, seek vengeance.

To these things also this is to be considered in the mercy of the one pitying, because the men of the world remit once, or twice, or at most seven times, or ten; but he remits a thousand times in a day, if it could be, what we commit, and this as long as we live, as long as we journey as pilgrims from him. These things which we have enumerated having been seen, lift up your eyes also to see the largess or familiarity of the Lord. If we have done something to any very powerful man that would displease him, does he deign to speak with us any more, much less to bestow anything, or to be familiar? We are burdensome to him even to be seen, and he counts it as a great benefit if at least he desists from harming us; and although we defend the offense with manifold and devoted services, yet always the memory of the injury flies before his eyes, nor can it be obliterated either by benefit, or by service, or even by old age itself. Is my God, my mercy, thus? Far be it. For he is accustomed to honor penitents more than the innocent; those returning, more than those remaining, because the fervent penitent is more devoted than the tepid innocent, since the former has the matter of fervor, the latter of tepidity.

Perhaps I shall be accused of presumption, who, against the precept of the Apostle, bring in novelties of words, but I have at hand testimonies, neither small nor few, which themselves have been made exceedingly credible, and which can satisfy the murmurer. The apostle Peter, not

just any apostle, but the prince of apostles, to whom was delivered the principality of heaven and earth (Matthew 16), is he not from the choir of penitents, and from the lot of the gravely unjust? Is it not he who denied God, left the master, deserted the friend, failed the promise? Who began to detest and to swear that he knew not the man (Matthew 26), adding perjury to denial, adding crime to crime? He fell, but he was not crushed, because the Lord placed his hand under him. See what the Scripture says: "The Lord," it says, "looked upon Peter (Ibid.)."

The look of Christ is followed by the weeping of Peter, and the bitterness of tears restores the sweetness of the ancient dignity. Happy, O holy apostle, are your tears, which wash away fault, restore rank, remit debts, commit greater things. Piety looked back, and impiety ceased, and the former familiarity approached. Finally: "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these? Feed my sheep (John 21):" and things similar to these, what are they, if not great documents of familiarity?

That singular organ of the Holy Spirit also, whom the Lord found according to his heart, to whom were revealed the uncertain and hidden things of the wisdom of God, was he not marked with the note and name of a traitor by homicide and adultery? But see with how swift a leap of penance he bounded back to the citadel of innocence, and so bound up the great wounds that not only did the traces of the wound not remain, but not even of a scar. For rebuked by the prophet

and stung by the parabolic retort, he said: "I have sinned (2 Samuel 12)." And he from the treasury of divine mercy immediately added: "The Lord has transferred the sin from you, and you shall not die (Ibid.)." The sin was transferred and taken away, which was dividing between David and God; and it being taken away, David was the same as before.

But also that Vessel of election, who flew upon the wings of the winds, who labored more than all, to whom were entrusted the oracles of God, is it not said that he first burned more ardently than the others against the primitive Church? (1 Corinthians 15.) The Apostolic Acts are for a testimony of how great evils he did to the saints of God in Jerusalem. But he who did so great evils, afterwards suffered so great things for the name of Christ, and shines in the firmament of heaven, nor is there any gem more precious in the crown of the eternal King. Let that woman also approach, who was filled with seven demons, that is, with all vices, to whom, loving much, much is forgiven, who first sees the Lord rising from the dead, the apostle of the apostles, the specially beloved of the Savior (Mark 16).

Let now the whole choir of the innocent come, and let all virginal purity be united; who will be there who dares to aspire to their glory, much less to transcend it? Therefore I will confess to you, Lord Jesus, and I will give praise to your name, because with you there is propitiation, and because of your law I have waited for you (Psalm 129), O Lord. What is that law, what is that

propitiation? That though offended, you promise yourself merciful; you admit penance; you omit to punish. Great therefore is the virtue of true penance, since Ambrose says: I have found more easily those who kept innocence than those who did fitting penance.

See also sixthly his custody, because unless he himself shall keep us, we watch in vain. The six visions therefore having been traversed, let us pass to the second voice of the Savior saying: "Watch." One must watch altogether, and sleep must be taken away from the eyes, because many robbers besiege our way, to be dreaded for their poisoned missiles, sustaining to pass nothing at all unattempted. For we have three principal enemies and persuaders of the precipice: the flesh, the devil, and the world; of which two, even if they sometimes intermit, yet they never dismiss; but the third, namely the devil, exercises such inexorable hatred against us that we can never extort a truce from him, even in the twinkling of an eye. But that we may put the words of that orator, who everywhere smells of Cicero: with him is a daily and uncertain encounter, from him is an innumerable wound, nor easily promising a scar; under him is frequent fall, and difficult breathing; concerning him is rare and never secure victory; to him the will is always iniquitous, and the principality of deceiving. Who shall be able to watch against him, unless that guardian from the night shall come to our aid? For through ourselves we are not sufficient, rather we fail, if we trust in ourselves.

Attend moreover concerning this invisible enemy, how great he enters into the singular contest, what kind of arms he bears, how strong, with what whirlwind he hurls the spear. Recall the book of Job, and the history of the Kings, and consider both the armed one and the arms, because he who is Goliath in the book of Kings, the same is the devil in the kingdom of Christians. For he has the spear of delight, the shield of obduration, the breastplate of despair, the sword of killing, the armor-bearer pride, who goes before him, and reproaches the ranks of the living God, and the enemy says: "I will pursue, and I will overtake, I will divide the spoils, my soul shall be filled (Exodus 15)." But what of you? Take up the apostolic armor, the shield of faith, the breastplate of justice, the sword of the spirit, the spear of circumspection; and let humility precede you and say: "I will pursue my enemies, and I will overtake them, and I will not turn back until they fail (Psalm 17)." O Lord Jesus, is there an equal fight of man and demon, of the double and the simple, of the strong and the weak? Call upon me in the day of tribulation, says the Lord, and I will rescue you, and you shall honor me (Psalm 49). I call upon you, Savior, take hold of arms and shield (Psalm 34), that I may see against the strong armed one a stronger armed one, and crush the Assyrian in your land. The encounter having been made, therefore, he shall crush your enemies like dust before the face of the wind, and like the mire of the streets he shall blot them out (Psalm 17).

Thus however one must watch against him that you may always fear concerning a renewed contest and not despair of victory.

The flesh however under the appearance of necessity veils the image of its furious tumult, and now filled with a variety of dishes, now changing precious wines, it begins to grow wanton, and the reins having been loosed, it is borne headlong altogether. Immediately the affections grow raw again, thoughts rebel, seen images are proposed, and we paint in our hearts what for many days cannot be blotted out. For being engorged, not comforted; filled, not nourished, we are distended both in body and in heart, and that satirical saying is fulfilled: No discrimination is held between the groin and the head.

I spare words, because a foul sentiment cannot be explained except by foul words, and for each of us it is all, either what we are silent about, or what we wish to pass over. But a thin table, harsher food, simpler drink, strengthen the body, confirm the soul, and render the state of both men more cheerful.

But what does the world do? It offers us whatever is beautiful to the sight, and the concupiscence of the flesh, and of the eyes, and the ambition of the age, that it may ensnare the miserable, strangle the ensnared, and involve the strangled in everlasting conflagrations. It tempts us with multiform snares: from above through pride, from below through luxury; on the right through prosperity, on the left through adversity; in front through the concupiscence of the world,

behind through the recollection of past vices, in a circular motion through the involvement of the senses.

It is necessary therefore to watch against little robbers of this kind, and the hand of an assassin, and to say with Isaiah: "Upon the watchtower of the Lord I am, standing continually by day; and upon my ward I am, standing all nights (Isaiah 21)." Nor is it fitting only to stand, but to stand armed with that armor which the Apostle mentions: "Put on the armor of God (Ephesians 6)." Another Tullius of our times, of whom I made mention above, blossoming everywhere with the flower of sermons, has gilded the armor in this manner with most lucid chapters. If fabled spirits and incanting motions of the flesh should sound around you, trust, and say: "Depart from me, you wicked, and I will search the commandments of my God (Psalm 118)." If you feel the flesh growing warm again, and wishing to fly back to its ineptitudes, be constant and say: "Pierce my flesh with your fear, O Lord (Ibid.)." If you have begun to hate poverty, and have begun to be stirred by the desire for riches, awake and say: "Woe to you, rich, who have your consolation here (Matthew 6)." If an adulator should soothe you, and the mind grows cheerful at the praises of the little people, be strengthened, and say: "Let not the oil of the sinner fatten my head (Psalm 140)." If it should be suggested to you to defer a good purpose to a future time, arise and say: "The day of the Lord shall come as a thief in the night (2 Peter 3)." If a raging gluttony should commend

more sumptuous preparations to you, kick back and say: "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink (Romans 14)." By these things, as if by certain rebukes, the enemies flee, the memory of pleasures slips away, the gurgling of the flesh grows silent, the beginnings of holy conduct grow strong, the world is despised, the ancient enemy is overcome.

Thus therefore seeing and watching make a threefold cord, which is with difficulty broken, and pass to prayers, entering the interior of the veil with our high priest the Lord Jesus Christ, who is propitiated for all your iniquities, who stands before the face of God for you. But having been admitted, do not so boldly and brazenly thrust yourself before the eyes of majesty, but shaken with most humble trepidation, at least wonder how you could have been admitted to such great miracles.

Let prayer therefore be modest, that we may blush for our sins, and defer to so great reverence; pure, that we may seek nothing from him besides himself; devoted, that we may extend it in the fatness of the spirit; ample, that we may extend it even unto enemies; let it be continuous, lest by intermission it become more remiss; let it be peaceful, lest it be submerged by the turbulent waves of thoughts. I confess, I have exceeded the limit, and have not feared to burden your ears more than usual, while the style is extended into length. But I know that you have heard me patiently disputing concerning the patience of him, who is God blessed forever. Amen.

Today, most dear brothers, the votive festivity of Blessed Andrew has shone for us, which amidst the very mist of the icy winter, has brought a pleasant serenity of joy to our minds; and while the inclemency of the air stiffens without, the heard victory of so great a warrior incites pious hearts to the preparation for spiritual contest, and inflames the distinguished minds of the warriors of Christ with the fire of divine love. Among all kinds of martyrdom indeed, that one is judged to be more noble, that one not undeservedly principal, which is known to have been dedicated in our Redeemer himself, the head namely of martyrs. Whence since the divine dispensation wished Peter and Andrew to be consummated through the punishment of the cross, among the other apostles, although all are of one power and dignity, he made them in a certain manner eminent and conspicuous. For the cross, which sent the king and the scepter before, the same subsequently raised both soldiers to the reward.

O blessed brotherhood, which as one consanguinity brought forth to the world, so the same triumphal death transmitted as victors to the stars; and those whom nature brought forth as consorts of one kind in this life, the cross brought forth as equals into that eternal beatitude. Of the same nobility on earth, they obtain the same loftiness of lineage in heaven. For those who are here sons of John, are there sons of the cross. For these are the sons of Korah, who are noted before in the titles of certain psalms. For the cross, which withdrew them as dying from this

life, brought them in as new citizens being reborn with triumphal glory to the heavenly Jerusalem. And Andrew indeed is placed second in the catalog of the apostolic senate, who yet is found first in the recognition of the Lord, according to the evangelical faith. For John the Evangelist says: "That when John stood, and two of his disciples, and looking upon Jesus walking, he said: Behold the Lamb of God. And the two disciples hearing him speaking, followed Jesus." And a little after: "Andrew," he says, "the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who had heard from John and had followed him." Then there follows: "He first found his brother Simon, and says to him: We have found the Messiah, which is interpreted Christ, and he led him to Jesus (John 1)."

Behold Andrew fructifies amidst the very rudiments of his new apprenticeship, and is already made a preacher of the truth, of which he was still scarcely a hearer. Having been made a new disciple, he is not content with his own salvation, he seeks fellow disciples, fraternal love extends itself to the gaining of others. He finds a treasure, he rejoices to reveal it to others, he considers it a theft to possess it without consorts. Finally, the new recruit displays auspicious and illustrious signs of future character, who in the very beginning of his novice conversion, soon taught what he had learned, and faithfully disbursed what he had received. A new and wonderful relation brought a great message, to show him visibly about to be promised, whom the ora-

cles of so many prophets had foretold would be present.

Andrew certainly stood as the bearer of a great mystery to his brother, who indeed testified that he had found him whom from the origin of the world all the saints waited for with great desire, and yet were not able to see. This was not granted to the patriarch Jacob, who said: "I will wait for your salvation, O Lord (Genesis 49)." Not to Abraham, to whom the divine promise was made, that in his seed he should inherit all nations (Genesis 22). O at how great a price that distinguished prophet Isaiah would have valued this, if it had been permitted to him to aspire to this spectacle! Doubtless when kindled with the ardor of so great a desire he was demanding the coming of the Mediator, and as if impatient of tedious delay he cried out, seething: "O that you would rend the heavens and descend. At your face the mountains would flow down, they would melt as the burning of fire, the waters would burn with fire; that your name might be made known to your enemies (Isaiah 64)." How terrible and vehement a trumpet this voice sounded in the heart of Peter, and like a sudden lightning flashing unexpectedly, it made him astonished: "We have found," he says, "the Messiah, who is called Christ (John 1)."

The King of glory had clearly come alone for the battle, and therefore he was already gradually acquiring soldiers for the preparation of war. For he had come so that, coming upon the strong armed man, he might overcome him and take

away all the arms in which he trusted (Luke 11). He had come to rescue captive man, who was pressed under the yoke of diabolical tyranny, and to restore him to the titles of his ancient nobility. He had come to release his Israel from the bond of the old Pharaoh, and as a leading guide, to bring them with a strong and robust hand into the land flowing with milk and honey. Yet he did not choose for his aid those famous for triumphal titles, nor strenuous warriors, nor riders of snorting horses, nor finally philosophers and eloquent men, but bearers of nets and rowers of a very small boat, so that the victory might be ascribed to divine power alone, not to human strength.

Furthermore, that ancient subversion of the city of Jericho prefigured this victory, when its most fortified walls collapsed not by missiles of spears, nor by heavy bolts, nor certainly by any machines of war, but by the shout of the shouting people and the clanging trumpets (Josh. 6). For the Lord had commanded Joshua that armed fighting men should precede the ark of the covenant, and that seven priests should blow seven trumpets, and thus they should circle the walls of Jericho for no less than seven days. On the seventh day, therefore, while the shouting of the people was mingled with the clanging trumpets, Jericho immediately collapsed from its foundation and was subverted.

But why is it that to capture the city no sword is drawn, no spears are brandished, no javelin is thrown, no military battle line is packed for the force of the assault, but only the sacerdotal

trumpets are sounded, and thus the victory is obtained over the conquered enemies not now by the right of war, but rather by the power of the sacrament? It would certainly seem a folly of madness if the evident victory had not followed. But by Jericho, which is called the moon, the world is not incongruously suggested, which is thus finished through the passing moments of time, as if through monthly losses. Moreover, the holy ark was the Church; but the trumpets are the apostles, or the five holy doctors of the Church, by whose admonitions, while one strives always to fight against the allurements of the flesh and the snares of the ancient enemy, we are incited as if to the line of conflict and to join battle by the clanging of the trumpets; these trumpets are indeed said to have been seven, because the holy preachers are filled with the grace of the sevenfold Spirit. By the succession of seven days, also, the whole time of our mortality is unfolded.

Therefore, the priests carrying the ark and clanging for seven days circle the city of Jericho, and its walls fall through the presence of the ark and the sound of the trumpets, because in the course of this mortal life, while the holy Church moves and is expanded everywhere through the circle of the earth, through the insistence of holy preaching all the pride of the exalted world is broken, and all obstacles of infidelity are brought down.

And it should be noted that the armed soldiers are commanded to go with the priests: undoubtedly, so that those to whom the office of sounding

the trumpet has not been enjoined should by no means understand themselves to be removed from the engagement of wars, so that even those who do not preach may nevertheless proceed always armed and circumspect against the snares of the hidden enemy. The leaders and princes of this war are the holy apostles, who carry the ark of the covenant around the walls of Jericho with the clanging of trumpets; because throughout the circle of the whole world, they diffuse the sacraments of the Church by the office of holy preaching. "Their sound has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world (Psalm 18)." After six days have passed, on the seventh day at last, the king of Jericho with all the people is consumed by the devouring sword, because on the last day the devil, who is the king of pride, with all his followers, is condemned to perpetual death as if by a certain sword of divine judgment. Then indeed shall happen what is said by the Apostle: "When he shall have abolished all principality and all power and virtue, lastly the enemy death shall be destroyed (1 Cor. 15)." But only the house of Rahab the harlot escaped, which a scarlet cord in the window distinguished. That house prefigures the one Church, which was purified from the foulness of fornication through the window of confession, in the remission of blood. This house is clearly delivered from the common destruction of the perishing world, because she binds the scarlet cord in the window of her house, while she does not cease to carry in the mouth of her body the sacrament

of the Lord's passion. "For with the heart we believe unto justice, but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Rom. 10)." Furthermore, that cord was bound to the house, but was seen from the outside because the faith of the Lord's cross is retained in the heart, which is brought forth by the confession of the mouth. While the rest were perishing, all who were found in that house escaped the danger of death; because just as within the Church all the elect are saved, so outside the Church no one can be found saved.

But perhaps it is asked how both the ark, which besieged the city by circling it, and the house of Rahab, which was attached to its walls, both signify the one Church, since the ark besieges and expels, while the house seems besieged? But this question is easily solved if the diversity that exists in the members of the Church is subtly considered. For the Church expels the Church, when the preachers, teachers, and presiding disciples, and those who obey, proceed from the one source of divine regeneration, and finally seem to complete the one body of the Church as different members. To which Church indeed it is said through the Psalmist: "Instead of your fathers, sons are born to you;" the apostles themselves, who twisted such valid, such robust lightning-bolts of their preachings for the capture of the Jericho of human pride.

They seem to be in some way both the fathers and the sons of one and the same Church: the sons, namely, of the patriarchs and prophets; but the fathers of all subsequent elect from then on.

For this is why it is commanded by the divine voice to Moses that he should cast silver bases and erect gilded boards above them (Exod. 26). What is signified by the silver bases, if not the order of the prophets, who, since they first spoke of the sacrament of the Church, we see rising from the foundation as certain bases and sustaining the weights of the structure placed upon them?

But what is signified by the boards, if not the holy apostles, who were most amply expanded by their preaching extended through the world? For the doctrine of the apostles rests, as if upon certain bases, on the prophetic preaching and is firmly solidified by their authority for the strength of its status. Wherefore also two joined bases are placed under each board, because while the holy prophets in their words agree with one another concerning the sacrament of the future Church, they also build up the subsequent apostles who are building; and since they differ in nothing from themselves, they fix them more robustly in themselves. Nor without reason is it commanded that the bases, by which the prophets are signified, should be cast from silver. Indeed, the brightness of silver is preserved by use, but without use it is turned into blackness. The words of the prophets also, before they were clarified by apostolic preaching, because they were not in the use of spiritual understanding, while they could not be seen on account of obscurity, remained as if black; but after the hand of apostolic preaching wiped away the obscure prophecies, whatever light was lying hidden in

them shone forth, and gave their mystical senses into use, because it clearly announced that the words were already exposed by facts. Rightly, therefore, are both silver bases and gilded boards commanded to be made, because apostolic precepts are much clearer than the oracles of the prophets.

To return, then, to the previous matters, it is not incongruous if both the ark and the house of the harlot which is besieged seem to express one and the same Church, since of the same Church, as has been said, the members are diverse: some indeed besieging through the circuit of holy preaching, others to be brought down from the fortification of their infidelity or depravity by the javelins of the doctrine of salvation, others already domestic, others still alien through the aversion of an evil work. Isaiah had already sensed this conflict in testimony of spiritual battle when, after he had clearly described the coming of the Savior, he immediately added: "And the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst thereof, and I will make the Egyptians concur against the Egyptians: and a man shall fight against his brother, and a man against his friend, city against city, and kingdom against kingdom; and the spirit of Egypt shall be broken in the bowels thereof (Isa. 19)."

Therefore, since through the siege of apostolic preaching, dearest brothers, we have been rescued from the destructions of the perishing Jericho, or rather divinely liberated from the destruction of subverted gentility, let us not be re-

luctant to follow our leaders where they precede; let not whatever they command us for our salvation seem burdensome.

Behold, the blessed apostles Peter and Andrew, at the one command of the Lord ordering them, did not hesitate to leave all things they possessed, that they might merit to exchange earthly things for heavenly. They dismiss what is before their eyes, that they may receive invisible goods. They postpone what they have, they reach for what they hope for, they pass to the kingdom through punishment, they are advanced to the joys of eternal life through the momentary gibbet of the cross. They reserve nothing for themselves in their pilgrimage, so that arriving at the fatherland they may find all things at once. Whence, with them this was done through the change of the right hand of the Most High, so that those who then seemed abject and humble, are now judges of souls and senators of the celestial court. Then possessors of cheap nets, now in the heavenly kingdoms they obtain the principality of glory. And those whom, while placed on earth, the very abundance of earthly things had destitute, now they hold the monarchy of the whole world and preside alone over the judicial power in that heavenly Jerusalem. And those who had been almost the last of men, are now fellow citizens and participants of the angels. Indeed, they adhered to the footsteps of a good teacher and a gracious rewarder, who returned to them gold for mud, all things for nothing, light for darkness, truth for a dream. To whom indeed he himself is

the reward in heaven, and on earth also he subjects the laws of all kingdoms.

Through this way, therefore, my brothers, by which they preceded us, let us follow, if we wish to reach where they are. Following after them on the right way, let us so leave Jericho, submerged [overturned] and destroyed by their siege, that we may by no means usurp anything from its anathema. For that Joshua forbids that anyone should covet anything from the wealth of Jericho (Josh. 6). And our Jesus, the old Savior indeed, forbids that anyone should love those things which are of the world. "Lay not up," he says, "for yourselves treasures on earth (Matt. 6)." And through his apostle: "Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world (1 John 2)." Let us not, therefore, after the example of the unhappy Achan, defraud anything from the anathema of Jericho (Josh. 7), so that, namely, we may insert nothing from the dissolved morals of worldly conduct into ecclesiastical disciplines. Let us not take away the cloak, so that after the garment of faith, we may in no way put on the dress of secular conducts. Not the shekels of silver, so that we who store up eternal treasure in heaven, may place no temporal money in a napkin through ambition. Not finally the golden rule, so that we may not introduce into the Church of Christ the accurate dogmas of heretics, the unweighted studies of philosophers disputing acutely, or the elaborated fictions of poets. For this is that golden rule, directed by polished and refined speech indeed, and clothed as if with the golden

brightness of brilliant eloquence. This rule Arius, Marcion, and Apelles, and other pests of perverse men, have stolen, who while they tried to introduce the sects of philosophers into the Church, seemed in some way to provoke the wrath of God over the camps of Israel. But these were crushed with Achan under a heap of stones, because they were oppressed by the immense weight of their sins.

But we, dearest brothers, because our philosophy is Christ and him crucified, and therefore we have fishermen as teachers, not orators, not crafty and eloquent, but mild and simple, let us despise the wisdom that blinds; let us seek the foolishness that illuminates those who learn. "For since," as the Apostle says, "the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (1 Cor. 1)."

Therefore, let us hold the doctrine in its purity, and let us apply the efficacy of work to the right faith. Let us swim out from the stormy wave of worldly perturbation. Let us be glad to be enclosed by the nets of such great fishermen. Let our heart grow warm at the example of such prompt obedience, of such most fervent devotion, and what we know our teachers did then, let us also strive to fulfill with the help of divine clemency. Behold, the blessed brothers, Peter namely and Andrew, we never read that after their conversion they adhered more familiarly to each other by a certain carnal necessity than to others, nor were they more closely joined among themselves by

mutual affection, nor were they companions in the same provinces for the sake of preaching; and, so that you may wonder more, Andrew did not take it ill that he who was first in faith was made second in the dignity of order; nor was he led by zeal because Peter, who believed later by his guidance, and to whose faith he himself was the precursor, nevertheless received the rights of priority among all the apostles. Indeed, the heavenly master placed this rule of mortification before our eyes, and exhibited to us this norm of true humility through which we might follow him on the right way. For in those first disciples, whom he also instituted as teachers of the world, he significantly expressed the form of all virtues so that until the consummation of the world each of the faithful may direct the eyes of imitation toward them, and may walk through their path without being about to deviate to either side, so that by holding the rivers of vital abundance we may reach the fountain, and by following the soldiers on the right journey we may be led to the king, Jesus Christ our Lord, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns through all ages of ages. Amen.

SERMON LVIII.

II. ON ST. ANDREW THE APOSTLE. (NOV. 30)

Both the quiet study, and the attentive silence, and so great a festivity of so great a man advise, indeed compel me to say something to show the glory of the deity, the glory of the apostolic dig-

nity, and the virtue of confession. Let us give him the glory of praise (Psalm 65), whom all nations praise, who both praises his ministers and makes them laudable. It is he before whom the angels stand to hear the voice of his sermons (Psalm 102); who calls the stars, and they say: We are here (Baruch 3); whose hand stretched out the heavens; who founded the earth upon its stability (Psalm 103), who walks upon the waves of the sea; who alone does wonderful things (Psalm 71); into whom the angels desire to look. It is he who made all things, and in all things which he made, whatever he willed. To serve him is to reign; who served for us under a hard and heavy necessity, and covering the purple of his divinity with the hairshirt of our mortality, he came poor and a beggar into our region. Does it not seem a game to you, Jews, pagans, heretics, and all that crowd of mockers, indeed of madmen, when we say that the Son of God tolerated the flesh, the cross, death, the nails, and the lance? It is certainly a game, whence it is so played by us that you are mocked:

That unique Wise One, not ignorant of this mystery, preplayed this game in elegant speech. "I was delighted," he says, "every day, playing before him in the world (Prov. 8)." For he played before God when he took up the flesh by his command, and in the world, because for the redemption of the world, delighted every day, he rejoiced in each of the apostles, while to one he delivered the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 16), for another he made a place of reclining on his breast

(John 13). "And my delights were with the sons of men (Prov. 8)." I used to think, Lord Jesus, that your delights were not with the sons of men, but with the choirs of angels, where admirable in the glory of the deity to the thrones and powers, you reflect the eyes of superior natures. There you inhabit inaccessible light (1 Tim. 6), and you cover the surrounding of the clearest lights with the majesty of your light. But that most clement piety of yours and adorable benignity says that its delights are with the sons of men. These are the sons of men, who have hoped under the cover (Psalm 35), whom you chose from the people, whose feet you washed, into whom you poured your Spirit, who carried the faith of your name through the fourfold world by the evangelical chariots.

Note however that he says not with men, but with the sons of men. I think men pertain to the old man, but the sons of men to the Son of Man, according to which understanding the boy harper thus intones: "What is man that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you visit him? (Psalm 8)." Do you see that he confirms God to be mindful of man, but to visit the son of man? We presume and we sigh, because he will show us his mercy in the sight of the sons of men, if meanwhile he protects us in the secret of his face from the disturbance of men (Psalm 30).

The fourth degree, therefore, is the confession of the mouth. This must be done purely, because one part of the sins is not to be told and the other retained, nor light things confessed and grave things denied, nor another accused and oneself

excused; but it must be said with the just man: "Do not incline my heart to words of malice, to make excuses in sins (Psalm 140)." For these are words of malice and of grave malice, than which one more grave or worse could hardly exist. Confession must be made, and humbly, so that the same thing may be in the heart which will sound in the mouth. For there are some who are accustomed to narrate in confessions what they did either by literary argument or by brave gladiatorial conflict—alas!—bringing in pride under the cloak of humility and thinking they can avoid the eyes of the judge who discerns all things. Did not both kings Saul and David, when rebuked by the prophets Samuel and Nathan, say: "I have sinned"? And yet Saul heard: "The Lord has transferred the kingdom from you, and will give it to your rival (1 Kings 15)"; and David: "The Lord has transferred your sin from you, and you shall not die (2 Samuel 12)"? What is this, except that what Saul had in his mouth was not in his heart; and the humility which existed in the mouth of David also radiated in his heart.

It must also be said faithfully, so that in the faith of the Church one believes his sins are forgiven, because Cain and Judas confessed purely and humbly, but by no means faithfully; for one of them, despairing, ran to the noose (Matthew 27), the other vomited that great crime: "My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon (Genesis 4)." You lie, thief, because the piety of God is greater than any iniquity, because "his mercies are over all his works (Psalm 144)."

There follows the fifth degree, the mortification of the flesh (maceratio carnis), which is to be thinned by fasts and vigils, lest by a new itch it fly back to voluptuous depravity. This, however, must be done with permission, because what is done without permission will be imputed to vain glory, not to reward; secretly, so that "your left hand may not know what your right hand is doing (Matthew 6)"; discreetly, on account of the weakness of the body and manifold infirmities. For we have seen many at the beginning of their conversion so break the barriers of discretion that they were rendered unfit for the solemnities of praise, and thereafter needed to be cherished for long periods with more refined preparation.

Now thus illuminated, let him proceed to the sixth, which is the correction of work. Therefore, prohibit your tongue from evil (Psalm 33), work what is good, and restrain your sensual movements with the reins of continence, and thus there will be peace in the land of your flesh. And do not allow justice to be buried by the bad, on account of the person you hold, and in your presence.

Come to the seventh degree, which is the perseverance of goodness, and in this seventh the Lord will call you with Moses out of the midst of the darkness (Exodus 24), and you will fix your inner eyes upon the very substance of the divinity. Moreover, expectation of rewards, remembrance of punishments, the firstfruits of the spirit, and the heavenly gift, of which the Apostle speaks (Hebrews 6), produce perseverance;

which he who has experienced does not ignore, nor he who is inexperienced understand. For it is foolishness to him (1 Corinthians 2), and he who is examined spiritually cannot understand.

Hear also briefly who ought to be ordained to the dispensation of this ministry; for he ought to be no less learned than religious, so that he may have the zeal of God, and according to knowledge, since indiscreet religion is usually more harmful than profitable. Learned, moreover, for this reason: so that he may know what he should enjoin, whom he should spare, when he ought to spare, and what consolation he should bring forth from the Scriptures. Religious, indeed, for this reason: so that he may lift up pure hands to God and intercede faithfully for sinners. Let him see to it, however, that he never makes any mention of those things which he received under the seal of confession (signaculo confessionis), nor consents to anyone speaking of them. Let him also beware lest he become vile in the sight of him who showed him his own vileness, nor be suspicious, nor judge the future life of a sinner from the past.

But if by chance a cause should be aired before him concerning those things which he received in confession, let him not, as one who is conscious, decline to one side, but as if ignorant let him permit the judicial order to run its course. Moreover, let him have it in his will to suffer with and to free him, and let him strive to detract something from severity, imitating the sweetness of my Lord, of whom the saint says: "Since you have

made my judgment and my cause (Psalm 9)." But, alas! in our times through the whole world a pestilential disease (pestilentialis morbus) has grown, so that those whom neither knowledge nor life commends are preferred to the churches, like leaders of the blind, both themselves precipitated and leading others into the precipice.

We have heard about the one confessing and about the one receiving confession; let us now hear what things they are which hinder confession. As far as I can gather, four especially occur: shame, fear, hope, and despair. Nothing is stronger for attacking the grace of God than human fear, because, while we blush to confess what we have committed, we revere God less than men. "This is the confusion that brings sin (Sirach 4)." Let us therefore oppose to it the consideration of reason, the reverence of God who looks on, the comparison of a greater confusion. For reason advises that we confess, and God, who sees, compels; and if we are confounded to speak here, what will it be in that great confusion, where all things will be open to all? Fear, moreover, oppresses most people, lest they be struck by grave penance and be unable to bear it. Truly, "he who fears the frost, the snow shall fall upon him (Job 6)."

Here it must be considered how grave is the punishment of Gehenna, how long, how fruitless. On the contrary, however, present penance is light, brief, and fruitful. Hope, moreover, overwhelms many, who while they desire present goods, are unwilling to open their consciences,

lest, if they appear as they are to men, they should ascend to no goods of the present life. To whom it must be inculcated that the goods of this world are small, uncertain, and momentary, and those of that life are greatest, most certain, and eternal. Despair kills very many who fear this alone, lest they not be able to contain themselves: For it is indeed true that "the sinner, when he has come into the depth of evils, treats them with contempt (Proverbs 12)." This we ought to crush with the vigor of confession, the grace of humility, and the compassion of him to whom we open our conscience.

Moreover, it should be known that there is one confession which bewails sin, and another which sings praise. Confession is a good ornament of the soul, which both purges the sinner and renders the just man more purged.

It follows: "He who believes in him shall not be confounded." To believe God is to give faith to his words. To believe God is to confess that God is everywhere. To believe in God is to direct all one's hope into him. The demons believe God and about God, but they do not believe in him, in whom he who believes shall not be confounded, because they do not place their hope in him.

Behold, as much as I could, if not as much as I wished, I have discoursed concerning the sacrament of confession. But because we have drawn out the sermon to a length, let us hear at the same time the end of the speaking. May the spouse of the Church, the Son of Mary, who is God blessed forever, grant us to believe in the heart unto

justice, to confess with the mouth unto salvation (Romans 10), and to believe in him. Amen.

DECEMBER.

6. Sermon on St. Nicholas, bishop and confessor.

24. Sermon on the Vigil of the Nativity of the Lord.

25. Sermon on the Nativity of the Lord. Another sermon on the same.

26. Sermon on St. Stephen the protomartyr.

27. First Sermon on St. John, apostle and evangelist. Second Sermon on the same.

30. Sermon on St. Barbatianus, priest and confessor.

31. Sermon on St. Columba, virgin and martyr.

SERMON LIX.

ON ST. NICHOLAS, BISHOP OF MYRA AND CONFESSOR. (DECEMBER 6)

This Nicholas of mine, indeed and yours, chosen from the womb, holy from a boy, the glory of youths, the reverence of old men, the honor of priests, the splendor of pontiffs, gladdens your assembly with his festivity. This is Nicholas, whose miracles are spread through the whole breadth of the world, whom the orb of the earth and those who dwell in it praise. For so many and such great miracles are accumulated that all the cleverness of literary men would hardly suffice for writing them, nor ours for reading them. And

although the number of scholars, on the rhetorical anvil (incude rhetorica) under the hammers of Quintilian or Cicero, might extend the thinnest plates of orations, yet the glory of the confessor surpasses voice, mind, tongue, and conscience. For his wonders increase daily, nor does the Spirit of God rest from continuing his miracles to the memory of his soldier. He is glorified on the sea, he is praised on land, he is invoked in all dangers. Finally, "those who go down to the sea in ships, doing business in many waters, they have seen the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep (Psalm 106)." They have seen the works of the Lord, and the miracles of Nicholas through God in the deep.

Is it not that after the memory of the Virgin, such sweet piety or pious sweetness is present in the hearts of the faithful that in the day of tribulation the name of Nicholas is held in the mouth and rests in the heart? If lightnings flash and from on high vengeance proceeds with thundering storms, Nicholas is taken as a patron, Nicholas is sweetly called upon. If a raging tempest and the cruelty of the sea threaten death to those sailing. Nicholas is tearfully implored that he may hear; he is humbly invoked that he may come; he is mercifully acclaimed that he may rescue. If we are struck by troubles or grieve over obstacles, immediately the holy name leaps into our mouth, Nicholas is redoubled, the patronage of Nicholas is sought.

Lest you think that I speak declamatorily, or aggregate the splendor of words with rhetorical

beauty, since the whole world feels the benefits of the confessor, nor is there anyone who hides himself from his love. In testimony are the pilgrimages to his holy body undertaken from the ends of the earth, that the wonders which are done through him may be seen. Moreover, not only to Christians, but also to pagans, the authority of the holy name has flown with such reverence that they flock together in rivalry to praise and glorify his holy name. Especially the crowd of priests and clerics is affected with such devotion toward his cult that in the whole world whoever, from wherever, give themselves over to serve such great solemnity. Boys rejoice, youths congratulate him, virgins are adorned, old men are gladdened, and every age resonantly plays. Moreover, each one has matter for joys; so that boys may praise the boy fasting, youths the youth liberating, virgins the one redeeming the infamy of virgins, old men the one pitying the poverty of the old man. Youths and virgins, old men with the younger, praise the name of this Lord (Psalm 148).

But now after his acts, excellently spread by the distinguished tongues of the Greeks, what does a poor speech dare to stammer? Nevertheless, lest I seem to induce excusatory tergiversations, I return to the evangelical reading; and what I received from the common store, I bring forth into the common store. For he says: "A certain noble man went into a far country, and said to his servants: Trade until I come (Luke 19)." I will trade securely, as my Lord commands; I will

not fear the Psalmist saying: "Because I have not known trading, I will enter into the powers of the Lord (Psalm 70)." For no small strength of confidence is afforded to me, that that supreme commander became my trader, and carried out my business without leisure, as long as he was on earth, and carrying the bundles of precious merchandise to the Father, he showed to the very face of God both what he bought and what he redeemed, and from where he redeemed it. Do you then, while he is busy, dispose yourself to be at leisure? while he is laboring, to rest? He himself came to trade in a far country, and do you despise walking to the neighboring regions? Advance and enter into the region of dissimilarity (regionem dissimilitudinis), namely this world, and see how frequent the markets are there, how many vanities sprout and sprout again, truly of dissimilarity because it is certain that we have lost the region of similarity, where we were made after the likeness of God. Is it not a great dissimilarity, from paradise to hell, from an angel to a beast, to the devil from God? Go therefore through the forensic tumults and look around at those contending here. Moreover, as far as I gather, all will swims in three causes. Some lean on riches, others on honors, others on glory.

You run to India, you encircle Ethiopia, you cross the seas and open another world to yourself by sailing, that you may gather riches; you flee your fatherland, you ignore your children, you are torn away from your wife, and having forgotten all necessities, you seek that you may acquire, you

acquire that you may perish, you lose that you may grieve, you treasure up and do not know for whom it is said: "Sons of men, how long with a heavy heart, why do you love vanity and seek a lie? (Psalm 4)" And this indeed for riches. Hear also briefly about honors: They have appointed you a leader, and power is given to you that you may be wretched, and rest no more. The matter of solicitudes is accumulated, and among the tribulations eating the very heart, it is necessary to put on a face of joys. Can anyone be in honor without pain, in prelacy without tribulation, in height without vanity? Wretches, according to the philosopher, we love the reward of miseries, and we execrate them. We put on the minds of kings, and whatever does not respond to you according to your will, immediately calls it forth, nor is common humanity reconsidered, and yet there is a gnawing worm which continually tortures the conscience: the fear of a superior power.

This is the most just law, that you live with an inferior as you wish a superior to live with you. Hear also about glory. If you seek glory, you have provided the seeds of envy to all. Inflated, and full of a winnowing spirit, you are burst asunder, nor do you attend how many follow you, but how many precede. All conglomerate to detract from you, they sharpen their tongues to curse you, and you are most clever if you can evade either the tongue or the hand of the envious. Behold, whence you wished to be glorious, you are convinced of being inglorious. For the multitude pursues no one more inexorable than him who

arrogates to himself the leadership of the multitude. Join to these three power and pleasure, which themselves are snatched away with a thin and superficial joy, and you will see that abundance is poor, honor humble, grace vile, power weak, and pleasure laborious, so that, according to the Apostle, we may reduce every intellect to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10). Read again that greatest of Latin philosophers, and in his words you will find my opinion. Contemn therefore all these things, because all are to be contemned, and from all these things make your bundle: the contempt of the world.

This region having been traversed, and what is more precious taken away from it, pass to the second, which is the cloistered paradise (paradisus claustralis). Truly the cloister is a paradise. Here are the green meadows of the Scriptures, the overflowing abundance of tears, which that heavenly love distills from the purest affections. Here are trees most erect with the choirs of saints, and there is none which does not rejoice in a great fertility of fruit. This is that sublime table, at which God is both the feeder and the food, the rewarder and the reward, the offering and the oblation, the guest and the banquet. Here are gathered the riches of the Almighty, here is poured back the glory of the angels. Do you think there are no markets here, and that those who dwell of one manner in a house (Psalm 67) are at leisure? You may see this one intending upon sacred readings, that one leaning upon prayers, this one weeping for his excesses, that one exulting

in the praises of God, this one watching, fasting, and that one envying each other in the office of piety. They rise at night to confess to God; in the evening, morning, and at noon they relate and announce his praise, and all their assiduity is rotated in the orb of divine service. Run therefore through all, run through each one, and from all and each make your bundle: the form of living.

Having therefore left the world and the manner of living taken up, pass to the third, which is the region of expiation (regio expiationis). In this region the benign Father examines his rusty sons, as silver is examined; he leads through fire and water, that he may lead into refreshment (Psalm 65). Three are the distinctions of places, which souls obtain according to the diversity of merits. For those fly immediately to heaven who have used the dwelling of the body as a prison, who have preserved the refined and pure substance of both the inner and outer man. On the contrary, those who have done even until death what is worthy of death, are assigned to gehennal places without mercy. But those who are neither, but are between both, who indeed committed mortal sins, but around death repented, not fulfilling penance, unworthy to rejoice immediately, nor worthy to burn forever, obtain purgatorial places, in which they are scourged, but not to their foolishness, so that having been extorted they may be transferred to the kingdom. For those who are in heaven, one must not pray, because we ought to pray to them, not for them. For those who are in hell, prayers are to be suspended, to whom

the gate of mercy is closed and all hope of salvation shut out. For those only must we watch in prayers, and help by the singular sacrifice, who are cleansed in the purgatorial places, that the benign Father may quickly convert their penance into satisfaction, and satisfaction into glorification. Run again through these with the intuition of piety, and make your bundle: the affection of compassion.

The fourth region is the gehennal region (regio gehennalis), a hard region, a region to be greatly feared, a land of affliction, a land of oblivion, a land of miseries, a land of darkness, a land of whirlwind and of caliginy, a land of malediction and of death, in which no order, but everlasting horror inhabits. I tremble and shudder all over at the memory of this region, and all my bones are shaken. There is the fire which is not kindled, the worm which does not die (Isaiah 66), a horrendous cold. There an intolerable stench arises, the striking hammers resound incessantly, the spread darkness is more cumulatively thickened. There is the confusion of sinners, the horrible face of demons, the fertile multitude of inextricable chains. There is weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 13; Luke 13), wailing and groaning, and alternating evils tear the impious apart without piety. Nothing is so valid for uprooting the roots of pleasures as the memory of these and the remembrance of the wounds of my Lord, who stood before the judge, who received blows, who was scourged, who was spat upon, who was crowned with thorns, who was beaten with fists,

who was hung on the wood, to whom as he hung he was insulted, who died on the cross, who was struck with a lance, who was buried, who rose again, who ascended to heaven, who made us a kingdom and priests to God and the Father. Run through these tumultuous markets, so that while living you may descend into hell, and make your bundle: the hatred of sin.

The fifth region is the supercelestial paradise (paradisus supercoelestis), a blessed and glorious region, full of pleasure and glory, of sweetness and joy, of grace and benignity. There is rest from labor, pleasantness from novelty, security from eternity. There is the city of the great King, whose streets are paved with the purest gold, which is fertile in sapphires, in which bulwarks of jasper shine forth, and stones are laid in order. For all its walls are precious stones (Revelation 21). There all live, no one dies; all exult in the voice of exultation. David had entered into his sanctuary, and in mind had gone out to God, yet he could carry away nothing else except that "glorious things are said of you, city of God (Psalm 86)"; and that: "Blessed are they who dwell in your house, O Lord, they will praise you forever and ever (Psalm 83)." I know not what great thing is promised, to see God and to praise him. "I rejoiced," and I too, "in these things which were said to me, we shall go into the house of the Lord (Psalm 121)." Already we stand in the courts of Jerusalem, already from the vestibule of the great city we dream of joys. Run therefore also through

this region, and make your bundle: the love of God.

"Trade therefore until that noble man comes, who went into a far region to receive for himself a kingdom and to return (Luke 19)." He will plainly return, and then with interest he will exact the money which he delivered to us. He loses nothing, he forgets nothing, he leaves nothing unpunished. Let us therefore supplicate the confessor that he may deign to supplicate for us today to our Redeemer, his friend, who is God blessed forever. Amen.

LX. HOMILY ON THE VIGIL OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD. (DECEMBER 24)

At last from the sea to the port, from the promise to the reward, from labor to rest, from despair to hope, from the way to the fatherland we have arrived. The "pen of a scribe writing swiftly (Psalm 44)" had indeed written to us in frequent letters. Wait, re-wait; but we could say what is subjoined: "A little there, and a little there (Isaiah 28)." Runners rich in promise had run ahead, but most poor in exhibition. One was saying: "Act manfully, and let your heart be comforted, and sustain the Lord (Psalm 26)"; but another: "If he makes delay, wait for him, because coming he will come (Habakkuk 2)." With equal counsel they had gone out from the sanctuary of God, bringing back nothing with them except a multitude of promises. Whence also our harper had already slumbered through weariness, and in silent allegations against God

himself he twisted the whole fault in mournful ways. "But you," he says, "have rejected and despised, you have put off your Christ (Psalm 88)." From the mournful also he turned to the intemperate, with impatience driving him, which is the mother of impudence and frontosity. "You who sit," he says, "above the cherubim, manifest yourself (Psalm 79)." Why sitting so long in the ruling chair, with angels flying around and walling you in, do you not look down upon the sons of men, whom iniquity has swallowed and swallowed up, committed indeed through Adam, but permitted by you? Remember what is my substance, fabricated after the likeness of your substance, because although every living man is vanity, yet passing in your image (Psalm 38), he cannot be vanity. Have you so vainly constituted all the sons of men, of whom you say: "And my delights are with the sons of men (Proverbs 8)," that that most malignant deceiver should beat and beat them again with art, who could not deceive except by your permitting? Bow down your heavens, and descend, and bend those merciful eyes upon the wretched supplicants, nor at least forget us forever.

This indeed he said, but twisted by groans and tribulations he abjured the sentence of such great presumption. "I said," he says: "I will guard my ways, that I may not sin in my tongue (Psalm 38)." But that noble man, and pre-eminent in the urbanity of profound speech, warming up in affectionate excesses: "For Zion's sake," he says, "I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's

sake I will not rest, until her just splendor goes forth (Isaiah 62)." Would that, he said, you would break asunder the heavens, and descend! (Isaiah 64) and many other things, which fastidious prolixity forbids inserting. Here also suspended by the distance of more lingering grace, and exceeding in the excess of grief, he impatiently barks out, saying: "Behold the nations are as if they are not, so they are before him: as nothing and emptiness they are reputed to him (Isaiah 40)." Jeremiah, breaking forth into a voice of congratulatory praise with a demonstrative adverb: "Behold," he says, "the Lord shall do a new thing upon the earth, and a woman shall encompass a man (Jeremiah 31)." But yet he is taught by the tears of sudden subversion, so that receiving lamentation before the advent, he becomes utterly silent. To Daniel it is said: "The vision is for days, and for long times (Daniel 10)." And Ezekiel is involved in such great darkness that it can hardly be discerned whence he comes, or where he goes. Finally, all that prophetic assembly, weary with the long lingering of delaying grace, now by asking, now by complaining, varies its prayer, and for the most part intermingles indignant words with exortative speeches. We too have heard them enough, and enough, and they are read again to us in weariness. Let Moses now flee (Exodus 6); for he has become to us of a more impeded tongue: the lips of Isaiah are unclean (Isaiah 6); Jeremiah does not know how to speak, because he is a boy (Jeremiah 1); Ezekiel eats polluted bread (Ezekiel 4); Hosea takes a wife of

fornications and an adulteress (Hosea 1); Daniel is gravely weakened by a vision (Daniel 8). All the prophets are tongueless and mute. Already we cannot rejoice and exult, unless he kisses us with the kiss of his mouth; you have been heard and answered. The benignity and humanity of God our Savior is present (Titus 3), which would not suffer the love of the languishing to be put off or taken away any longer.

For what have you heard? "Be sanctified, sons of Israel, and be ready, because tomorrow the Lord will descend." The remainder of this day and the progression of the coming night, which can hardly be mediated, separate us from the face of glory, from the boy God, from the singular childbearing. Run, swift hours, and with more rapid pace complete your goals, that it may be allowed to see the Son of God crying in the cradle, and to prepare whatever services for the saving nativity. I believe you to be sons of Israel sanctified from every defilement of flesh and spirit, ready for the sacraments of tomorrow's day, both with solicitous devotion and with devoted solicitude. For what else have you done in these sacred days dedicated to his advent?

I have seen old men, forgetful of old age, stand at the sacred vigils with youthful alacrity, and youths, with youth buried, assist with the elderly gravity of reverence for the divinity. The benches were full of the continent, and with an equal harmony voices resounded in the heights, so that with happy envy I saw you jubilate to God in the voice of exultation. Psalteries were in

your hands, psalms on your lips, devotion in your heart; hilarity of face, movement of body, and solicitude of work indicated the solemnity of the mind. I inspected the priests with watchful eyes subtly searching out the first risings of the day, being clothed in sacramental vestments, entering to the altar of God to sacrifice the body and blood of the Redeemer. I saw the crowd of assistants, with ministerial devotion now bending the knees, now kissing the hands, and at the nod of those commanding obeying more quickly than a nod. But I also beheld the boys, who do not know what is between their right and left hand, envying each other's psalteries and carrying them off to their little beds, stealing sleep from their eyes and in their bed through the nights seeking him whom their soul loved. Which although it may be presumed against custom, yet not against devotion.

I confess, among all these things I was thinking: these are the camps of God; "This is nothing else but the house of God and the gate of heaven (Gen. 28)." Whether I wished it or not, I was drawn by your devotion, and while you were busy, I could not be idle. I followed you, but from afar, either wandering from the way or limping from my paths, mourning and saddened, because I could not equal those who were running. He alone knows—with whom alone I began to be one in the Lord—with how frequent complaints I filled his ears, because you were with the bridegroom at midday, and I tarried in the evening cold. Come now, brothers, if any flowing mois-

ture from the river of this mortality still bedews your affections, wipe it away, and cover it with the snowy garment of confession, and shoe yourselves in the preparation of the Gospel of peace (Eph. 6), so that you may be of those about whom the saint says: "They shall pass through the river on foot (Psalm 65)." But what after these things? "There we shall rejoice in him." Concerning this river, or rather concerning those rivers, the prophet Isaiah in the nightly readings disputed more largely. "The Lord," he says, "shall smite the river of Egypt in seven streams, so that they may pass through it in shoes (Isa. 11)." I wish to talk with you for a little while about the river and its ruins, how and in what manner they are smitten, and what it is to pass through it in shoes.

That by Egypt this world is figuratively expressed, the searchers of the divine oracles affirm, which is placed in the evil one, which is filled with darkness and confusions. The river is the flux of the human race, which breaking forth from our first parents from an unhappy vein, has flooded an impetuous torrent through the whole breadth of the world, which derived into seven torrents, has settled over the valleys and deep plains with a profound whirlpool, threatening that same flooding even to the very peaks of the mountains, whence one of the higher ones cries out: "The torrents of iniquity have troubled me (Psalm 17);" and: "The waters have entered even unto my soul (Psalm 68)."

The first stream of this river is evil thought, an overflowing stream, and one which is repelled

by no obstacles. It has a frequency of rains, the windows of the bodily senses, which more pouringly administer deadly showers to it from the world's cataracts. There occurs to the gaze of the mind what it has seen and heard, what it has smelled and tasted, what it has felt and touched, and for the most part what we have beheld with a simple eye, the versatile twister wrests back into a stumbling block and a scandal. He feigns likenesses, paints images, fits colors, and involves all things in the chamber of the mind, if by chance he may elicit consent and infect the affection. He offers horrible things concerning the divinity, terrible things concerning the faith, marvelous things concerning the institution of the faith, and into the small vessel of the mind he injects poisonous potions, which the burdened sinner dreads to vomit out even in confession. He comes into the oratory, occupies the dormitory, sits in the refectory, goes around the cloister, revisits the workshops, omits no art of harming, but everywhere assigns the subtleties of his cunning, and in the choir indeed, between praying and singing the psalms, he draws the mind away into diverse things, involving the purity of the intellect with the remembrance of past things.

In the bed he involves multiform senses of lust, lying in wait for our solitude, and attacking with stronger weapons—would that he might not conquer, but prick, and not wound! In the refectory, moreover, he entices the throat to see what things are brought forth, and with great greed he burdens the distended belly, so that it

needs greater labor to discharge than to ingest. In the cloister he plucks books from the hands, cuts back the memory of the Scriptures, and now turns from that one to this one with signs and scurrilousness. Through the multitude of workshops he makes you run out and makes himself a companion to the wanderer, until he either opens or breaks the door of silence. What more? In the choir he uproots devotion, in the bed chastity, in the refectory parsimony, in the cloister reading, in the workshops the virtue of silence, the enemy of virtue. Nor is it enough in waking to pierce the walls of the heart with subtle spears, but in sleeping he turns and returns himself with singular astuteness; which I leave better to your conscience than to the knowledge of my pen.

But even to the altar of the Lord of hosts these spirits follow you, flying into the very eyes of the mind, and they can hardly be driven from memory by any thought either of the God being born or of Him hanging on the cross. That great patriarch could hardly drive away birds of this sort from his sacrifices. What are we, who presume to put them to flight? Who in this stream will deny that he is either dipped or submerged? You see how turbulent a torrent it is, and regurgitating with muddy filth, which is hardly or never led to this, that it may be utterly dried up. I do not think that he who closed heaven by prayer (1 Kings 17), closed his mind from thought, so that it is easier to lock heaven than the mind.

The second stream is perverse speech. No man can tame the tongue, says the Apostle: an unquiet

member, a deadly member, easy to speak, more prone to comply (James 3). And it is to be noted that one is born from the other, since the door of perverse speech is open to evil thought. And there is one word which is false, whence it is said: "Thou shalt destroy all them that speak a lie (Psalm 5);" another is vain, of which it is written: "Each one has spoken vain things to his neighbor (Psalm 11);" another is cursing, of which the Apostle writes: "Neither shall railers possess the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6);" another is impure, of which the same says: "Let no foul speech proceed out of your mouth (Eph. 4);" another is excusatory, whence the Psalmist: "Incline not my heart to words of malice, to make excuses in sins (Psalm 140);" another is deceitful, of which the Prophet: "May the Lord destroy all deceitful lips (Psalm 11);" another is idle, of which the same Lord: "Of every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account of it in the day of judgment (Matt. 12);" and if there be any other kinds of this pestilence, which we cannot leap over with a short jump.

The third is evil action. After thought and speech, one comes to deeds, when we present our members as weapons of iniquity to sin, and affect our bodies with insults. For what is more base than to stain with lustful ardors the members of Christ, consecrated by His blood and buried together with Him in baptism, and not to heed the reverence of the present God, threatening punishment and promising glory. Far be it that any of you should be subjected to this idol, so as

to receive the Son of the Virgin in the temple of Venus, so as to place the ark of God next to Dagon, lest he who was nourished in scarlet should embrace the dung. What has Peter to do with the magician? What has Christ to do with Antichrist? What has the virgin to do with lust? What has purity to do with impurity? Far be it that any of you should walk in the passion of desire, even as the Gentiles who know not God, you who either consecrate the body of Christ or minister to the body of Christ, chosen to serve the Emperor, that you may sit with the Emperor when He shall sit on the throne of His majesty. With what face, with what eyes would He see us, would He live with us, who would serve such great obscenities among us? With what mind, with what conscience would he approach the Holy of Holies to sacrifice the Holy of Holies, whose reputation would be held contemptible, his life notable, and his speech reprehensible?

But if perhaps, I speak humanly because of the infirmity of our flesh, any of us has folded any such thing in the chamber of his conscience, let him double it through confession and penance, and I promise him from the mercy of the newborn boy that, if he shall have confessed and repented, the light of the world shall be born in him, so that with the deceptive darkness removed, he may receive the splendor of the true light. For how shall mercy be denied to the wretched on this night, in which the merciful and compassionate Lord is mercifully born? God and man is present, mother and virgin, flesh and Word, light and illuminat-

ing, good and goodness, mercy and truth, fruitful virginity, virginal fecundity, eternal novelty, new eternity, divine humanity, human divinity, humble sublimity, and in all these things mercy is fabricated. Restrain, therefore, haughtiness from the eyes, loquacity from the tongue, cruelty from the hands, pleasure from the loins, feet from the path not trodden, and come and rebuke Him, if on this night He does not break asunder the heavens, if He does not descend to you, and cast into the depth of the sea all your sins. For who is there who is not dipped and redipped by the urgency of this third stream?

The fourth stream is the defense of sins. In truth I say to you that nothing so exasperates the wrath of the divinity as the defense of iniquity. For we contend with the Lord in an equal contest when we defend what He hates, when what displelies Him pleases us. For there is a great difference between a proud and a humble sinner, since He despises the former and regards the latter: because "He regards the humble, and the high He knows from afar (Psalm 137)." When can he be healed who spurns the physician, tramples upon the medicine, and enflames his weak substance by the reception of contrary things? You call evil good, bitter sweet, darkness light, and you pour back insults upon the Creator, so that you may disparage what He has praised, and praise what He has disparaged. This must not be kept silent with a stroking dissimulation, since I have seen some of you agitated by such great stings of impatience that at the first words of correction they

exhibit not only an excuse, but a defense, and unless disciplinary vigor meets it, it breaks forth into tumults and quarrels. This is the greatest impiety against God (Job 31), the greatest fault, which a simple and upright man, and a boy of the Lord, avoids with the utmost circumspection.

The prophet brings in a most elegant comparison concerning these things, which he carried away from the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit: "There," he says, "the hedgehog had its den (Isa. 34)." The hedgehog, if it feels itself being seized or touched, is so thickened with very dense spininess that it is clothed on all sides with prickings and stings; but when it thinks it has obtained solitude, it opens its head, puts forth its feet, and demonstrates life-giving movements in a plain walk. If anyone should come upon it, immediately with the swiftest speed the head with the feet is reported back to its inner hiding place, so that if you wish to hold it, you see your blood before you see its body. Thus also the head of the sinner with the feet, the intention with the action, is looked upon by the solicitude of the pastors, and what is the vice of almost all those who sin, since it is seen by all, he thinks he is seen by no one. If you study to cut back the vice, and to catch the entrance of the intention with the exits of the actions with corrective hands, immediately Cicero's eloquence is renewed, and what you oppose is excused and defended, and you who propose it are accused and offended. He asks about the place, about the time, when it was done, and a new dialectician breaks forth with a

thrust-out tongue, calls his parents into the middle, seeks patrons, judges himself to be burdened, indicates that he will depart and would rather die than suffer such things, and denying what you saw, and retorting upon you insults which he did not see. Thus you feel the spine and lose the fault, you incur hatred and do not correct, and him whom you thought you held entirely, you lose entirely. You see with what manifold abundance this stream pours itself into every man and especially into our order.

The fifth is exultation in sins. O detestable joy and to be changed into the sadness of everlasting grief, to exult in sins as if in virtues. Do not all robbers and criminals, when they attain the fullness of their desires, lose themselves for joy, so that they even dare to mutter thanks to the divinity itself? "Who, when they have done evil, rejoice and exult in the worst things (Prov. 2). Coals shall fall upon them, and they shall be cast into the fire (Psalm 139)." But how also this stream pours over wretched living beings with a billowy reflux, the conscience understands better than eloquence.

The sixth is to teach others to do evil. This doctrine is derived from the chair of pestilence, which He detests and reproves who teaches man knowledge (Psalm 93). O how in vain he receives his soul who hunts the souls of others unto death, who draws sins like a long rope, who mixes blood with blood, for whom it does not suffice that he perish for age upon age, unless he also draws others into everlasting destruction! For you know that many vices are imprinted upon the most

tender ages, which afterwards in a great body one can hardly mitigate, let alone anyone be able to extirpate. Unhappy masters, who have planted nurseries of this sort, which are rooted out from that heavenly plantation, which that heavenly Father planted! Who shall glory that he has not been surrounded by the torrents of this stream?

The seventh is to persevere in all these things. Here the sinner is submerged and absorbed, and the pit has closed its mouth over him. For when he does not lift his eyes to heaven, nor remembers the just judgments, he is dead and buried in the sepulcher of his conscience. Then confession perishes from the dead man, as from one who is not (Ecclus. 17). Then "the sinner, when he has come into the depth of evils, becomes contemptuous (Prov. 18)." This is in the extreme of the rivers of Egypt. Here the multitude of the mercies of the Lord is taken from his eyes. O evil river, worst streams, exterminating streams: on this night the Lord passed through them shod, when in the virginal substance He took pure flesh and immune by the pre-taxation of all pests, shod with that shoe which He extended into Idumea (Psalm 59), whose thong that great Baptist could not loose (Luke 3). He sent His Son from on high and received me in the womb of the Virgin, and thus at last He took me up from many waters, which we have briefly tasted before you. "Deliver me," he says, "from them that hate me, and from the depths of the waters (Psalm 68)."

We shall smite them, if we think of our sin, if we restrain our tongue from deceit, if we decline

from evil and do good, if we confess our injustice against ourselves to the Lord, if our grief be always in our sight, if we teach the unjust the ways of the Lord, and the praise of God be always in our mouth. And, that we may sew something for our morals from the shoemaker's art, let us have shoes that are dense and subtly sewn, which can exclude the opposing waters. Let us make our flesh firm and fixed by the fear of the Lord, which may exclude the moisture of lust and, baked by tribulations and thickened, let it become a new wineskin for preserving the new wine, of which it is said: "Because I am become like a wineskin in the frost (Psalm 118)."

But now let us dismiss in peace our hearts and bodies prepared for receiving the Son of the Virgin, and let us all in common embrace with innocent arms the light for the revelation of the Gentiles, who is God blessed forever. Amen.

To your charity, dearest brothers, I desire to make a word of edification; but because, as you know, I was recently promoted by God's authority to the height of the episcopate, while my conscience fears, my tongue, not yet accustomed, also stammers as I speak before your prudence. For does not he who enters a ship, unskilled in rowing, fear to take the helm? And does not the raw recruit who newly enters military service dread to carry forward the standard of the princes? But I, who distrust my own weakness, believe that I am to be helped by your prayers through God's mercy. Otherwise, how can we utterly despair of our own imperfection, we who

celebrate the infancy of the born Savior? For He who deigned to grow through the increments of ages is also able to promote us from the smallest things to the greater, and to strengthen the tender infancy of our sense by the grace of His perfection. He surely deigned for this reason to become small in our things, that He might make us great in His; for this reason He bore our weakness, that He might solidify us with the fullness of His virtue.

Therefore, let us not fear that the transitory word will fail us, we who seek the glory of that Word which remains forever, concerning which, indeed, you just heard while the reading of the holy Gospel was being read: "Because in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1)." But this was said of that nativity which is from the Father, by which indeed God existed as God with God before the ages and created all things from nothing by His own power. Whence it was not without merit said: "Because all things were made by Him, and without Him was made nothing (Ibid.)." But He who according to that nativity made all things, according to this which is of today deigned Himself to be made. Which the same blessed evangelist plainly made known, when after some things he subjoined: "The Word," he says, "was made flesh, and dwelt among us." Where it is immediately added: "And we saw His glory, the glory as it were of the Only-begotten from the Father (Ibid.)."

In both natures, therefore, the Son of God is the same, receiving ours and not losing His own. Who, while He renews man in man, perseveres in Himself immutable. For God, who in order to raise us up mercifully inclined Himself, translated us indeed into His glory, but nonetheless He Himself remained in His divinity. He conferred upon us, and diminished nothing for Himself. So great in the form of God, so small in the form of a servant, that neither by this smallness was that greatness diminished, nor by that greatness was this smallness oppressed. For not even when He received human members did He desert divine works. For what you hear, my brothers, that the Word was made flesh, you ought by no means to understand that the nature of God was changed into flesh, but that flesh was received by the Word in the unity of person. By the name of flesh, moreover, man is accepted, with whom within the womb of the Virgin, made fruitful by the Holy Spirit, the Son of God is so inseparably united, that He who was begotten without time from the essence of the Father, Himself was born temporally from the womb of the Virgin. But this ineffable sacrament of the Lord's Nativity, what mind can comprehend, what tongue may be able fully to explain? For it was not without cause said by the prophet: "Who shall declare His generation?" (Isa. 53).

Having set aside, therefore, those things which have been more broadly discussed by our Fathers concerning the most sacred nativity, it is pleasing, dearest brothers, to turn for a little

while the point of our discourse to the humility of our Redeemer, and to weigh in common discussion with you what He bore for our salvation already in His very nativity. For who may be able worthily to wonder? Who would not be struck with awe that He, who is not contained by the immensity of heaven, is reclined in a narrow manger? He who clothes His elect with the stole of immortality, did not disdain to be covered with cheap rags. He lay down upon the straw of animals, He who is the food of angels. He who mitigates the storms of the seas, who supplies the abundance of waters to the rivers, waits for rare drops of milk from a virginal breast. Milk is pressed from the breasts of the Virgin and is turned into the flesh of the Savior. Happy is that woman in childbirth, who so rejoices in the fruitfulness of her offspring, that she in no way grieves for the loss of her virginity; who cherished Him by whom she was cherished; who carried in her arms Him by whom the machine of the whole world is contained. The infant is bound by His mother with childish swaddling clothes, He who, measureless, governs the laws of all things with the Father.

O how great then were the turreted palaces of the kings of the world, how great the dining rooms adorned with wondrous stones! and yet He despised all those things, He who chose a manger for the cradle of His nativity. He did not seek beds covered with golden garments, nor adorned with purple or painted tapestries; but He lay in the stable of animals, He who is surrounded

by innumerable companies of angels; He wished to be cast down so that He might advance us to the highest things; He was made poor in this world, so that He might show us as sharers of His riches.

This humility of our Redeemer, dearest brothers, weigh with the whole consideration of your mind; be careful to hold this skillfully, despise the glory of the world, and consider being poor with Christ to be true riches. Be eager to offer to God the sacrifice of a good will, if you wish to appear truly rich in His sight. For you have heard that when the Lord was born today the holy angels sang: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will (Luke 2)." Today indeed peace was made between God and men, but not with men of many riches, or of earthly wisdom, or of noble birth, but with men of good will.

Let us rejoice therefore, most beloved, and be delighted with our whole hearts in the Lord, because Christ our peace, who made both one (Eph. 2), therefore deigned to visit the world today so that He might lead men of good will to the fellowship of the deity. He, indeed, who made both one, because He joined men with angels in the shared cohabitation of the heavenly Jerusalem. He made both one, because He brought back the sheep which had perished to the flock on His own shoulders (Matt. 18), Jesus Christ our Lord, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns blessed for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON OF AN ANONYMOUS AUTHOR CONCERNING THE NATIVITY OF THE SAVIOR AND THE ILLUSTRIOUS MIRACLES PERFORMED THEREIN. (DECEMBER 25)

That which I have conceived in my mind cannot be explained in speech, for the amazement of miracles overwhelms me, and while I unfold all things, all things are folded together: "Who shall be able to think of the day of His coming?" (Mal. 3.) Therefore the tongue becomes tongueless, the memory unmindful, the sense insensible. In the unusual nativity all things shine forth, and all things obey the birth of the Virgin. Wonders are done in heaven above, and on earth below, and all things have sworn obedience to the nascent God. The vaults of the heavens are marked by a brighter star, and the flaming places are bound by much light. Radii more glowing are spread through the fourfold world, and a new fire dulls the plurality of stellar fires. The world wonders that the heavens have brought forth a new splendor, and that their unchangeable state has been turned to signs and portents. The Chaldeans see in the heavens what Balaam left in his writings: "A star shall rise," he says, "from Jacob, and a man shall spring from Israel, and all the earth shall be his possession (Num. 24)." A star is born in the heights, and God on earth, whose possession is from sea to sea. The kings of Tarshish prepare themselves, so that with the novelty of gifts they may see the new mother, the sons the new nativity. A fountain of oil bursts forth from the earth. The temple at Rome, which was called eternal,

fell, which had been wonderfully completed with all the expenses of both the City and the world. For when the Romans, in memory of victorious antiquity, had decreed to build a temple of singular design, they asked of all that multitude of gods, or rather demons, how long so excellent a work of laborious construction could last. The answer was: Until a Virgin should bring forth. They, twisting the oracle toward impossibility, called that solemn machine the eternal temple. But on this night, when the virginal flower of Mary went forth from the virginal chamber, it so fell, and that mural and columned work was so broken, that the tracks of its ruins scarcely appear.

O Bethlehem! city of the most high God, both in you and in your suburbs wonders have been seen today. God hangs from breasts, is placed in a manger, is bound in a cradle, is wrapped in rags, and with swaddling clothes loosened, He spreads His happy hands and holy little arms through the smallness of the cradle. He plays with the Virgin, smiles at His mother, and turns His coaxing eyes toward Mary. The queen of heaven stands terrified by such great miracles, she ponders in her heart the salutation of the archangel, the conception of God, the nativity of the child; and she wonders that He, who was so able to come to us, so willed to help us.

Joseph is also present; but removed from both, and in an ecstasy of mind he wonders, and cannot wonder enough, how he was admitted to the secret of so great a condescension. The multitude

of the heavenly host is present and with glorious voices "Glory to God in the highest" is heard (Luke 2). The shepherds come, and find the boy and the girl. The star goes forward, the kings approach, they adore the Son, they venerate the mother, they offer gifts, they pay homage to His majesty (Matt. 2). Herod is tortured, Jerusalem is troubled, the Scribes are sought out, the place is foretold; simulation is introduced, the simulator is reduced to nothing, the comments of frauds are uncovered. The Magi return by another way, peace unheard of for an age reigns, the whole world is described for the census, a stream of oil drips from the earth, and the sanctified liquor bubbles up in a rich vein.

What is this, unless because true peace has appeared on earth, unless because citizens are enrolled for the supernal kingdom, unless because the fountain of mercy flows from the Virgin, "oil poured out is your name" (Cant. 1)? The Holy Spirit, the one and unique fabricator of this Scripture, left some sweetness of His fatness under this chapter. But you are so exhausted by nocturnal vigils, that you can scarcely remove sleep from your eyes. Wake up, however, for a little while, and shake off the torpor of sleep. He will be present, of whose nativity we speak, that He may illuminate our eyes, lest we fall asleep. But the whole sense of the opinion will be borrowed from the chest of him whose counsel is as the counsel of God. He is that Lord, namely of Clairvaux, whose religion and discretion, wisdom and eloquence, life and fame run not unmeritedly

through all Latinity; for I willingly adore his burdens. But let us return to the proposal.

That benign Spirit, from whose more secret fountain the river of songs flows out, left in these three words three things for us to seek: namely, the name of the bridegroom, why it is compared to oil, and how it is poured out; for it is silent about the name, says nothing about the comparison, and speaks nothing about the outpouring. First, let us look at the name. Many names of the bridegroom, as I think, are read scattered through the divine Scripture, but in two words I embrace them all. Truly you will find none that does not sound of either the power of majesty or the grace of piety. The boy of the Lord, of whom I more frequently make mention, introduced into the chamber of the king, heard as it were two more sublime things from the mouth of divinity itself: "Power is of God," it says, "and to You, Lord, is mercy" (Isa. 61). But the Savior Himself, attesting to the prophetic truth, says: "You call me teacher and Lord, and you say well; for so I am" (John 13). Lord is the name of majesty, teacher of piety. For if it is pious to provide food for the body, it is much more merciful to impart food for the soul, which is properly the work of teachers, who restrain undisciplined minds under the rigor of discipline.

Let us see which of these names is poured out: whether the name of power into the name of grace, or the name of piety into the name of majesty. Far be it that mercy should be included in power, because "His mercies are over all His

works" (Ps. 144). It is certain, therefore, that the power of God has been poured out today into a greater piety, when the heavens distilled from the face of God, and from the virginal members the Ancient of Days arises. There is no one who may hide himself from this heat; because a more abundant outpouring of oil descends from the head into the beard, which also more largely bedewed the extreme hem of the garment. So great is the abundance of the Merciful One, that He is reckoned not only under the name of outpouring, but also of emptying: "He emptied Himself," says the Apostle, "taking the form of a servant" on this day (Phil. 2), and with the whole multitude of His mercies He leaped forth from the virginal chamber; for that abyss of the counsels of God had no sweeter way to redeem us, because whatever of divinity was found in the treasury of piety, the whole was gathered into the womb of the Virgin.

I do not contain myself for joy, that that majesty, emptying its own nature, should come over into the nature of my flesh and blood, and include me, a wretch, into the riches of His glory, not for an hour, but forever. He becomes my brother, my Lord; the affection of the brother overcomes the fear of the Lord. Lord Jesus, I willingly hear You reigning in the heavens, more willingly being born on earth, most willingly sustaining the cross, the nails, and the spear; for this outpouring ravishes my affection, and the memory of these things strengthens my heart, purged by the bitterness of a living and vivid potion. This word is living and effective, and sharper than any

two-edged sword, reaching even to the division of soul and spirit, a discerner also of the joints and marrow (Heb. 4).

One of those who is either the master or among the masters of the prophetic choir, under the sixfold division of the divine names, prophesied about this outpouring wonderfully indeed, but subtly: "His name shall be called," he says, "Wonderful, Counselor, God, Strong, Father of the world to come, Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9). My Lord was indeed wonderful among the angelic orders, hearing the hymn of His glory, wonderful to that wonderful creature, doing wonders in heaven and on earth, in the sea and in all the abysses. I, however, rolled in the mud of dregs and misery, a wretch and miserable, had lost all hope of emerging. He in glory, I in misery; He wonderful, I miserable. "Holy and terrible is His name" (Ps. 110), which that more worthy nature would scarcely dare to name. This name, closed and whole, how could I grasp, which the angelic eye can scarcely look upon, let alone perceive?

But see the outpouring. He who was wonderful to the hosts of angels, bows the heavens and becomes the counselor of men. The name of majesty is poured out into the name of piety; and He who is wonderful in the heavens, comes to counsel on earth; He hides the purple under the garments of misery, and bowed down to the mud where I was lying, He is not submerged. He, I dare say, fixed in the mire of the deep, stretches out His right hand to the work of His hands, extracts it from the depths of the waters, washes

it when extracted, clothes it when washed, brings it back when clothed, confirms it when brought back. He stretches out His right hand when He is born, extracts when He speaks, washes when He dies, clothes when He rises, brings back when He ascends, confirms when He sends the Spirit from the heavens. A good counselor indeed, who defends the counsel which He gave by voice even by death. For He was teaching, says the Evangelist, as one having power, not as their Scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 7); God and Strong; these are names of power, but God is poured out into the Father of the world to come, Strong into the Prince of Peace. I run briefly, because I speak both to those who are weary and to those who know the law.

What is it to you, muttering Lucifer, in such great outpouring? The whole itinerary of God is closed to you, and your malignant eye has grown too dim here. But my Lord was wonderful in His nativity, counselor in His preaching, God in the flashing of miracles, strong in His passion, father of the world to come in His resurrection, prince of peace in that eternal beatitude. Do not be terrified by the novelty of words, because nothing new is introduced. Thus also of old names were changed and poured out, Abram into Abraham, Sarai into Sarah (Gen. 17), and whatever other changes you remember reading in that old workshop. But even from the very principles of the world, in a certain secret place of the Scriptures, I remember having found the outpouring of the divine name. God speaks to Moses about the

liberation of Israel, and after much conversation between God and Moses, the prophet subtly inquires His name, and the Lord says: "I am who I am: this is my name forever. This you shall say to the children of Israel: He who is, has sent me to you" (Exod. 3). Moses, terrified by the authority of the inextricable name, as if he were saying: This exceeds my intellect, I cannot grasp it unless it be poured out; hears from majesty: "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Do you see the outpouring? Behold, the God of angels calls Himself the God of men.

Let us run therefore, brothers, into the odor of these ointments. Let us run to the oil pressed from the olive beautiful in the fields, infected by no dregs, by no bitterness of substances, the oil that gladdens the face of man (Ps. 103), which heals wounds, takes away pain, restores sweetness. Did not our Samaritan bring to us, wounded by the worst thief, oil and wine to purge and mitigate the magnitude of the wound? But much oil, little wine; much mercy, little justice. Thus indeed it befitted the Merciful One, thus it was expedient for the wretch. "Enter not into judgment with Your servant, Lord," says the Just One, "for in Your sight no living person shall be justified" (Ps. 142); but crown me in mercy and compassions (Ps. 102). Coming indeed today, He brought five vessels of oil, only two of wine. For the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel, of knowledge, and of piety (Isa. 11), does it not sound of sweetness, fragrance of mercy, belch forth abundance of sweetness? Fortitude and fear

are wine. But with this wine that powerful one was drunk, when Christ in the spirit of fortitude descended to the lower regions, not timid, but to be feared.

Let us see now why oil is compared to oil. If you have nothing better: it lights, it feeds, and it anoints. The name of Christ does the same, and in all things it agrees with the comparison. Preached, it lights; meditated upon, it feeds; invoked, it soothes and anoints. See when those illustrious lights carried the light of this name upon the lampstand of eloquence, if the flashings of God did not illuminate the orb of the earth, if the earth was not moved and did not tremble in the splendor of the lightning. "In the name of Jesus Christ arise and walk" (Acts 3), says the prince of the apostles to the lame man. Did it not leap forth like lightning from the mouth of Peter, when the name was named which the mouth of the Lord named? "And immediately," it says, "his bases and soles were strengthened." The name of Jesus, as the nobler tongue of Origen defined it, sweet and glorious, most worthy of all scent and worship, which it did not befit to be brought into the world by men first, but by a certain more sublime and excellent nature. Indeed all the prophets either knew not this name or were entirely silent about it, and the dignity of the prerogative was reserved for the archangel Gabriel, who with a holy mouth first unfolded it to the most holy Virgin (Luke 1). Did not Isaiah, caught up in an ecstasy of mind, agree with those same

archangelic words in almost the same syllables, even to the novelty of the holy name? (Isa. 7.)

It feeds indeed, nor is there a happier feeding in the place of pasture where the Lord has placed us (Ps. 22). What equally fattens the mind of the one thinking? The name of Jesus is honey in the mouth, melody in the ear, jubilation in the heart. Every food that is not seasoned with this is tasteless. Scripture that has not been smeared with the oil of such great devotion is either insipid or bitter. Once Tully was sweet to me, the songs of poets coaxed me, philosophers shone with golden words, and sirens sang to my intellect until my ruin. The Law, the Prophets, the Gospel, the Epistles, and all the glory of the sentences of my Lord and His servants seemed either small or nothing. I know not how now the son of Jesse murmurs more sweetly, who by the varied harmony of speeches and sentences renders all those whom I was accustomed to love speechless and mute.

It soothes and anoints, because nothing so recreates in tribulation. Finally, one may also prove it: "Invoke me," He says, "in the day of tribulation; I will deliver you, and you shall honor me" (Ps. 49). This is the name, this is the oil, this is the outpouring of oil. Amen I say to you, this jar of oil shall not fail, nor shall it be diminished until He may drop more diffusely the voluntary rain (1 Kings 17), which was set apart for His inheritance, until He makes a new heaven and a new earth (Ps. 67), because His mercy is from eternity and even unto eternity upon those who fear Him (Ps. 102).

But let us now rise and prepare ourselves for the jubilation of the more solemn mass, sparing neither hearts nor voices for the honor of the boy who is born for us, who is God blessed forever. Amen.

* SERMON LXII. ON ST. STEPHEN THE PROTOMARTYR. (DECEMBER 26)

Still we have the Son of the Virgin in our hands and we honor the infancy of the crying God with an obedient definition. The Virgin leads us to the venerable cradle, and she, beautiful among the daughters of men, leads us to the one beautiful in form among the sons of men (Ps. 44); the blessed among women leads us to the blessed among men. She murmurs in our ear, lest perhaps the exasperating house should hear and be stirred up, that the veils of the prophets have been revealed, and the counsel of God completed. See the miracle of the mother of the Lord, because she was a creature, and the Creator is created. The star sparkles, the magus adores, the pole exults, the earth resounds; the angels glory, the shepherds rejoice; the Virgin brings forth, God is born, and the lights of the heavens follow with a brighter light the light arisen in darkness. We are occupied in these good things. "Blessed is the man who has fulfilled his desire from them" (Ps. 126). I know that it is sweet to you: "In the beginning was the Word;" sweeter: "the Word was made flesh" (John 1); sweetest, the Word hung on the cross. From such a childbearing, what insane person would presume to remove his eyes, let alone tear

them away, unless He Himself commands who says: "Turn away your eyes from me, because they have made me flee?" (Cant. 6.)

Behold, while He kisses us with the kiss of His mouth (Cant. 1), while by so many miracles He makes us both stunned and attentive, Stephen, full of grace and fortitude, does great wonders and signs among the people (Acts 6). Is it right to abandon the King and turn one's eyes back to the soldier? By no means, unless the Emperor has commanded it. The King Himself, the Son of the King, arises, and breaking through the lines of those stoning, He stands by the triumphal contest not without sorrow of heart. He sees the first and chief of the purple cohort being overwhelmed, and fountains of blood bubbling from the body of the protomartyr by the hailstorm-like density of stones. He sees that the whole revelry overflows into Himself, and upon Him alone the reproaches of those upbraiding are piled. Where is Your piety and mercy, Lord, if You do not suffer with the one suffering? Where are both equity and justice, if You do not judge and avenge upon the stoning people? Let us run to the spectacle, to which he runs who exults "as a giant to run the way" (Ps. 18), and let us see with what arms the standard-bearer of the martyrs, about to fight, descends into the field, and so that the first prerogative of the singular martyrdom may shine forth more diligently; let us recall to memory the description of the apostolic Acts, in which the conduct and passion of the belligerent soldier is contained in historical and figurative words.

"Stephen," they say, "full of grace and fortitude, did great wonders and signs among the people" (Acts 6). No small mystery lies hidden here, nor is the manifest position of the Scripture to be slighted by the simpler folk. For the archangel speaking to the Virgin, with words taken from the heavenly chests, and fabricated by no other than the Spirit of God Himself, concludes with a new salutation. There is no doubt that they exceed the height of all words, as being unfolded from the better disciplines of the Holy Spirit, by whose enunciation that unique sacrament of the Word and man, of divinity and flesh, was to be joined. "Hail," says the fortitude of the Lord, "full of grace" (Luke 1).

But what about Stephen? "Stephen, full of grace and fortitude." Does not Luke speak of both in almost the same letters? But although a far more excellent mode is preached in the Virgin, yet it is praised secondarily in the martyr. Stephen therefore has grace in a more sublime genus than the remaining multitude of martyrs, full of grace, filled namely and heaped up, which a subtle inquirer will rarely find in the canonical Scriptures. Fortitude is joined to grace, because the soul ignited by the infused Spirit of liberty breaks forth into the light of truth, nor does it suffer in any way the rigor of sadness, to be either submitted to or dismissed at any time. Thus breastplated with grace and wisely gnashing with the spear of fortitude, he did great wonders and signs among the people. He can do signs and wonders in whom grace and fortitude have established a

most strong seat. Thus Stephen goes out to the homicides, to the adulterers of the law, to the crucifiers of the Son of God the Father; he speaks to the sinful nation in Egypt, to the people with heavy iniquity in the desert, to the wicked seed in the land of promise, to the criminal sons in the death of the Savior (Isa. 1). "Stiff-necked," he says, "and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you have always resisted the Holy Spirit," etc.

"But there arose some from the Synagogue," surely of Satan, they are gathered from all sides, either to convict or to kill; they make one wall, scale of impiety is joined to scale, serpents hiss to one another, and they come together into one against the Lord and against His servant. Whether it wills or not, impiety yields to piety, error to truth, folly to wisdom, presumption to the Holy Spirit, and the vanity of the human spirit. "And they could not," it says, "resist the wisdom and the spirit which spoke." He did not say, "They would not," which belongs to the rational and the perfect; but "they could not," where the ability is taken away from the evil mind, even if the will is not changed.

"They were refuted," it says, "by him with all confidence." He acts confidently, nor does the undaunted mind change or is it changed, which loves justice more than life, faith more than blood, death more than the silence of justice. Running together, they seize him, lead him into the council, and rejoice to have enclosed him within their nets: but "in vain is the net cast before the eyes of the winged ones" (Prov. 1). Then

his voice is more free, and the speech of truth is sharpened by their rocks, and the Spirit of God snatches the whole martyr to Himself, and from his mouth he modulates with a louder organ. One face of the Scriptures appears to him, and he reduces the costs of the Old Instrument into a compendious brevity. He unfolds the promises and benefits of God, the murmurings and misdeeds of the people, the good things provided, the evil things returned, and at the last he upbraids the outpouring of divine blood. He calls those refractory to the Spirit stiff-necked, uncircumcised in heart and ears, and with a sublime voice he calls them homicides and traitors. He does not fear the conventicles gathered from bloods, and between the hands of those seeking his soul (Ps. 15), by the deliberation of justice he ascends the summit of truth. They are cut to the heart, and they gnash their teeth at him, they conceive sorrow, and they are near to bringing forth iniquity (Ibid.).

It is a wonder that the ones unaccustomed are not called back by the novelty of the miracle, that the luminous face of the protomartyr does not restrain the insane. "They saw," it says, "his face as the face of an angel standing among them." What is it, Jews? The glorious Levite is marked by the light of the face of God, so that Stephen is made serene by a vibrating splendor, your eyes are reverberated, and yet the magnitude of envy closes the majesty of the vision. Let the researchers of the divine volumes answer me, where they have found a man placed on earth to have put on an angelic face; and when they find it rarely or never

in either law, let them be astounded by the glory of the triumphant one.

It follows: "But since he was full of the Holy Spirit, looking up to heaven he saw the glory of God." Wondrous to say, and a surpassing of the whole creature. He looks into heaven, he sees now not heaven, but the heavens opened, he sees the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of the power of God. This intention moves me, which, poured back from the purity of heart, does violence to the heavens, and penetrates and reaches even to the consistory of divinity itself. The heavens are opened, the glory of God is seen, Jesus is beheld, standing not only at the right hand of God, but at the right hand of power. The rejection of the world, the contempt of himself, the cleanness of heart, the love of God, the love of neighbor, the defense of truth, the desire for Christ had made this intention.

All these things would have to be referred to the common little flowers of mortality, unless the excellence of the martyr were to be commended. Happy eyes, subtle sight, glorious vision. And at the same time significantly recall the position of the words. He is full of the Spirit, and thus he looks into heaven because he who is inspired by the Spirit of divinity, with earthly things trampled underfoot, gapes for heavenly and eternal things. After these the heavens are opened, and no obstidacy or bars prevail which that mind, affectingly clinging to the supreme mind, does not fly across or break into. The heavens are opened, therefore, and I think that all the heavens and

their opening are followed by the vision of the glory of God, and the Lord Jesus is seen standing at the right hand of the power of God. Lest He be thought less than the Father, He stands with the one standing, He fights with the one fighting, He who is stoned in the one stoned.

No small amazement wraps me, whether the primitive flower of martyrs looked upon these things with bodily or incorporeal eyes. A great miracle indeed if with a mortal gaze he immersed himself in stellar secrets, if eyes clean of heart looked upon so solemn a vision. But if with bodily eyes, it is certain that he outflew all the race of men in disparity of glory, and by the wings of faith and virtues, apprehended if not comprehended the incorporeal by the corporeal. I dare to define nothing rashly, or to precipitate a sentence abruptly; since I have not read that I have found a definitive rule on this sort of thing. More safely, however, I follow the Apostle, or rather the Spirit of God in the Apostle, who with the greatest deliberation of words commits these things more to a safe ambiguity than to a dangerous definition. "Whether," he says, "in the body or out of the body I know not, God knows" (2 Cor. 12).

Immediately they exclaim with a horrible cry, they hold their ears, and block them to the truth. They made an onset with one mind upon him, having become friends in his death, and casting him out of the city, they stoned him. The martyr is cast out of the city of bloods, in which justice had previously dwelt, but now homicides, of which the holy one says: "Since I have seen iniquity and

contradiction in the city" (Ps. 45). This is the city which iniquity surrounds day and night, the city contemptuously called a fortress, which against the apostles and the Lord of the apostles is fortified with the hardest bars of infidelity (Matt. 21). Outside the gate of this city the Lord suffered, outside it the servant is stoned going out to Him outside the camp, and bearing the likeness of His reproach. The garments of the martyr are laid at the feet of the persecutor, who by the touch of the sacred clothes and by the prayers of the one to be stoned was to be converted: "And they stoned," it says, "Stephen invoking and saying: Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7). They run to stones, and he to prayers; stones strike a stone, but a softer stone, from which flows the oil of charity, and the tinkling of piety is returned. Lord Jesus, he says, do not lay this sin to them, because they know not what they do. He asks that his spirit be received; his spirit indeed, and that spirit which the Apostle significatively commands to be preserved as a certain third thing in man. "That my soul, and spirit, and body may be preserved whole and without blame for the day of the Lord" (1 Thess. 5).

O how great a piety, how great an affection, and the integrity of a most ardent charity. Rightly does that man claim for himself the flower of martyrdom, in whom the likeness of the Lord hanging on the cross is impressed with wondrous formulas. For fixed and crucified on the wood with thorns, nails, and spear, He dissimulates that unique sorrow, and forgets His near death,

about to introduce a new example, He opens the breadth of charity, and in a more open field He amplifies the limits of the traditioned law, no longer a friend to friends only, but whether they will or not, a friend likewise to enemies. "Father," He says, "forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23). The prayer of the dying one could not be ineffective, whence even the multitude of enemies passed over to the number of friends.

See by how right a course Stephen, even if he does not equal, yet follows the Redeemer. A shower of stones flies, and by the most strong hands of the envious the places of wounds are doubled, but our crowned one patiently suffers, about to be transferred from the crown of name to the crown of government. He knows not the affection of the flesh, and he ignores the hour of death; and see what he deliberates to be done. But with knees placed he cried with a loud voice saying: "Lord, do not lay this sin to them, because they know not what they do." He cries with a loud voice, because with a great charity indeed; with knees placed, because with true and humble simplicity. Praying for himself he stands and is upright; for those stoning he bends his knees. Who has ever heard such a thing, and who has seen one like this? He grieves more for the sins of the persecutors than for his own wounds; for their iniquity more than for his own death.

"And when he had said this, he fell asleep in the Lord." A happy sleep with rest, rest with pleasure, pleasure with satiety, satiety with security,

security with eternity. He fell asleep, it says, in the Lord, absorbed into the abyss of clarity, and resting between the arms of his God. The Lord Jesus was sitting at the right hand of God, but for the first martyr He was the head of martyrs. Do you recall what that tongue of the Church, I speak of Augustine, thought of this martyr, who asserts that after his death seven were raised from the dead?

Eia you, who shine forth in the levitical order, sing to this one a new song, and apply yourselves with festive voices to so great a festivity. Perhaps he will be present to those singing, and will suggest about us to his Lord, our judge: Do not lay anything to them for sin, You who are God blessed forever. Amen.

SERMON LXIII.

ON SAINT JOHN THE APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST. (DECEMBER 27)

Today, most beloved, the joys of holy gladness are doubled for us, because while the Lord's Nativity is still fresh, the glorious solemnity of Blessed John occurs. Today the disciple whom Jesus loved is pressed in the embraces of his Lover, enjoys His society, and what he had seen, what he had heard, what he had touched with his hands concerning the Word of Life, he now contemplates as much more clearly as it is more sublime (1 John 1). Today namely that wondrous eagle, whom of old Ezekiel saw standing out from the other four animals (Ezek. 1), and John

himself, having become, so to speak, a prophet of himself, beheld flying in mystical vision, happily outflew to the unique food of angels and men, poised on the wings of sublime merits. For although wherever the body shall be, there the eagles will necessarily be gathered (Luke 17); yet this one approaches the food of life as much more familiarly, now released from the bonds of corruption, as even while still placed in the flesh he fixed the rays of a purified mind into the orb of the eternal sun itself, that is, into the clarity of the divine substance.

O how wondrous a dispensation of heavenly counsel over us! O how profound is the height of divine wisdom! God descended to man, that He might lay open the hidden Deity to men. He deigned to go out into the public of human mortality, that He might reveal to us the secret of His eternity. But if, as soon as He began to break forth into the words of evangelical doctrine, and to open the mysteries of new grace to the still rude hearts of the unskilled, He had immediately opened the sacrament of His divinity, whose hearing I ask would have borne it, whose intellect would have ever grasped it? For to say nothing of divinity now, when the Lord said: "Unless you shall have eaten the flesh of the Son of Man, and drunk His blood, you shall not have life in you: and, he who eats me, the same shall live because of me" (John 6); immediately they slighted the word, and were horrified saying: "This is a hard saying: who can hear it?" Then the Scripture subjoins: "From this time," it says, "many of his

disciples went back, and walked no more with him" (Ibid.) namely not from the crowd; not just any unskilled persons, but even the disciples themselves were unable to grasp the word of the mystery. What then would these do before the sun, who are blinded at a lamp? How would they sustain the sound of thunder, who are unable to bear the weight of a clanging trumpet, or rather who grow deaf at the thinness of a suppressed and tempered human voice.

Therefore, for this reason, our Redeemer made the disciple beloved to Him by a special prerogative a certain organ, as it were, for declaring the essence of His divinity, and that he might supply here what the Lord Himself had dispensatively suppressed for a time, He left him as a vicar for Himself. So that the mystery of the passion, and of the resurrection and ascension having been completed, after almost thirteen lustra of years, when namely men would have a freer gaze of mind for grasping the truth, he might open the sacrament of the coessential and coeternal Word to God, saying: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1). For the order of human weakness required that he should first thoroughly know the principles, course, and consummation of Christ's humanity, and learn also the miracles which He did in man, and thus gradually, refreshed by his advancements, aspire to comprehend the mystery of the hidden divinity. Wherefore it was the cause of the divine counsel that the other Evangelists, who were occupied in describing the

Savior's humanity, should precede him by far; but John, when men as if first nursing should now fix firmer tracks in the way of truth, should promote them to condescending the grace of divine science.

Finally, he conceived this supereminent height of divine knowledge with a mind then divinely enlightened, when he reclined upon the breast of the Redeemer at the most holy banquet of the mystical supper (John 13). And because in the breast of Jesus are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, from that heavenly treasury he drew the summit, wherewith he enriched the need of our poverty with copious liberality. From that treasury, I say, he brought to us the abundance of riches, and spent them right lavishly for the common salvation of the whole world; nay, he reclined upon the fountain of perennial life, that he himself might then draw the ever-flowing streams of divine doctrine, and afterwards offer the same to us at the appointed article of a certain time.

A great river of paradise indeed, which, flowing from the principal origin of its fountain and proceeding with a more abundant inundation of heavenly charisms, irrigates the squalid deserts of human minds, and fertilizes them with most abundant fertility to bring forth the seeds of good works as if of new fruits. And not undeservedly was so deep, so supereminent a revelation of the deity owed to the Virgin, so that he who cut off from himself the allurements of the flesh might, by a happy exchange, enjoy the riches of

heavenly feasts instead of carnal sweetness. He was indeed advanced to such a privilege of grace that, transcending every creature, he might reach thither with the sharp sight of his mind, where no prophet, no patriarch, nor finally anyone from the very beginning of the world is known to have aspired while placed in the flesh. Nor is it a wonder if our Redeemer delegated to blessed John His own turn for declaring the mystery of His divinity, whom He also substituted in His own place as another son to guard His venerable mother, namely the perpetual Virgin, saying: "Woman, behold your son"; and to the disciple: "Behold your mother (John 19)." For it had been worthy that He should commit earthly things to him to whom He especially committed heavenly things.

And because the Mediator of God and men consists of two natures, namely divine and human, one Emmanuel, it seemed very right that blessed John should be a faithful minister of both natures, who should both write the sacraments of divinity and exhibit the ministry of his perpetual custody and diligence to the blessed Mother. He testifies that he is in a way a minister of each, namely of the most excellent sacrament, when through the entire series of his evangelical text he so tempers the mode of his style and alternates with a certain vicissitude of mystical variety that at one time he pronounces human things, at another reveals divine things, now inserting historically what belongs to humanity, now drawing out what belongs to divinity with a certain majesty of sublime and subtle words. And

with such art of speech he tempers the force of his words and dispenses them with the sobriety of balanced moderation, so that he neither suffers the secrets of divinity to be made common, nor those things which are necessary for our faith to be hidden.

Hence, while he weaves the words of history, he permits the brightness of divinity to flash, as it were, through very thin chinks to the eyes of men, and thus, while the eye of our mind is touched by a very thin ray of eternal light, it is soon more piercingly opened to track down that inaccessible light of the highest truth. Because indeed blessed John, with the order of his narration alternated, now subtly intones the divinity of Christ, now in a way plainly and humbly asserts the things of His humanity, as he himself began in the beginning of his Gospel, so he held this same manner serially unto the end through every article of his description. For, as you know, at the head of his book he places that deific and singular exordium: "In the beginning, he says, was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1)." Behold the eagle of God flies sublimely to the vertex of heaven, but for the food of the flesh it is necessary that with wings repressed it sometimes descend, humbled to the depth. Whence also hear what he subjoins a little later: "And the Word, he says, was made flesh, and dwelt among us (Ibid.)."

This diversity, therefore, of humanity and divinity united to each other and unconfused, the bride says of the groom in the Canticles: "His

belly," she says, "is as ivory, set with sapphires (Cant. 5)." Indeed, in the members of the human body, scarcely anything is found more fragile or more tender than the belly, and therefore by the belly is rightly understood the fragility of the assumed humanity in Christ; but ivory is the bone of the elephant, which animal is said to be most chaste and of a very cold nature. The groom's belly, therefore, is as ivory, because the assumed humanity of the Redeemer remained entirely chaste and inviolate from all contagion of sins. For He committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth (1 Pet. 2). Moreover, the sapphire is a stone having the color of a serene sky; whence it is also said in the vision of the Lord: "There was under His feet as it were a work of sapphire stone, and as heaven, when it is serene (Exod. 24)." By the sapphires, therefore, are understood the works of divinity, which the Lord showed in the flesh. The groom's belly, then, was set with sapphires, because Christ's humanity shone with divine virtues. Nor is it said to be full of sapphires, but set with them, so that namely between the sapphires the whiteness of the ivory might appear, because thus the Lord worked human things from the part of the assumed man, so that He nevertheless sometimes showed also divine things from the part of the deity. For to hunger, to thirst, to weep, and finally to be crucified and to die, were works of humanity; but to work miracles, and to raise not only others but Himself from the dead, were most evident signs of divinity. In this manner, therefore, blessed

John distinguishes the groom's ivory belly with sapphires, while he sometimes opens the sacraments of divinity, and sometimes describes the infirmities of humanity.

Because therefore this blessed John speaks of God wonderfully and incomparably beyond other mortals, it is by right that he is called "the Theologian" everywhere, not only by the Greeks but also by the Latins. Mary is Theotocos because she truly brought forth God; John is the Theologian because he not only saw ineffably that the Word of God was with the Father before the ages and was God, but also described it with profound sublimity. Whence he can not undeservedly say with the Prophet: "My heart hath uttered a good word (Ps. 44)." Rightly, therefore, is a virgin delivered to a virgin for service, and in the place of the Lord a servant is substituted as a son, so that the splendor of virginal chastity might agree between each person respectively, and the flowery aspect of inward whiteness might perceive that what it considers to flourish in itself, this also blooms in the other.

It is pleasant here, most beloved brothers, to weigh the beautiful variety of the divine disposition, and to compare how two distinguished disciples of our Redeemer agree with each other in a certain similarity of dignity? Peter, namely, and John. For the Lord committed the keys of the Church to Peter (Matt. 16); He willed also to delegate the custody of Mary to blessed John (John 19). Each indeed is a mother: Mother Mary, Mother Church. But Mary is the mother of

Christ, the Church the mother of the Christian people. From Mary Christ received flesh; but He produced the Church from the flesh of His side. From the former He came forth born according to the flesh; the latter He brought forth when already dead in the flesh. From the former He willed to be born; for the latter He deigned to die. From the one He was born once in His person; from the other His members are born daily. He drew from the former what He would die for the latter, so that by this both should be saved in common. Great therefore and happy mother and blessed virgin Mary, from whose bowels the flesh of Christ was taken, from which again through water and blood flowed the Church. In this manner, therefore, the Church also seems to have come forth from Mary. Yet both are chaste, both pure, both fortified with the belt of perpetual virginity.

Of these two mothers, therefore, of these two perpetual virgins, the Lord willed to commit one to Peter and to commend the other to John, so that, the weight of each ministry being carefully weighed, the dignity of excellent merits in these two senators of heaven might be seen to be equaled. The Lord says to Peter: "To thee I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 16)." Was not also the blessed Virgin, my brothers, a heaven, in whose virginal womb the whole fullness of divinity remained for nine months? For from her chaste and pure bowels, the Word of God, through which all things were made, clothed itself with immaculate flesh. In a narrow

womb, indeed, He lay enclosed, yet immense He ruled the laws of the whole world. Placed in the very brief domicile of the virginal womb, He both governed the empire of heaven and had not lost the principality of all earthly things. Not presumptively, therefore, is the venerable Virgin Mary called a heaven; and therefore the Lord constituted blessed John to be in a way a key-bearer of heaven, when He decreed him to be the guardian of His blessed Mother.

Furthermore, that John may be compared to blessed Peter in many ways, when our Redeemer asked His disciples what opinion men held concerning Him, and they immediately replied: some John the Baptist, others Elias, others Jeremias, or one of the prophets (Matt. 16). Until it came to Peter, the assertion wavered nor was the bond of ambiguity loosed. But when what the sense of the disciples held was demanded, he who was first in apostolic dignity preceded in the confession of truth, namely Peter, saying: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God (Ibid.)." Amidst the sinuous volumes of a faith still wavering, amidst the tempestuous storms of fluctuating ambiguities, this fisherman fixed the anchor of truth, and placed the ship of faith in the most safe bosom of a tranquil port.

But let us see whether John also holds any similarity with blessed Peter in this work. He is convicted of most constant preaching, and thus is destined for exile by Domitian, then Caesar. Forthwith the heretics Marcion, Cerinthus, Ebion, and many others, whom he appropriately

calls Antichrists, break into the folds of the ecclesiastical flock, and like heavy wolves they raven over the sheepfolds destitute of the shepherd's aid, dogmatizing that Christ was not before Mary, and thus corrupting the simple purity of the evangelical faith with the squalor of their perfidy. The world is confounded, the Church is disturbed, faith wavers, and as if in a bristling tempest of perfidy very many are shipwrecked. What more? Finally, Domitian being slain, John returned to Ephesus by the guidance of divine grace, and groaned over the disturbed Church. But whatever he found disturbed by the whirlwind and tempest of error, he recalled more solidly and robustly to the foundation of the ancient faith. For being asked, as is handed down by historians, by the charity of almost the entire universal Church, he finally burst forth into that elogium of divine inspiration: "In the beginning," he said, "was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1)." By this seal of truth, therefore, he both fixed the goal of the heretics' tergiversation and will henceforth and thereafter strengthen the faith of Catholics with perpetual certainty.

Peter, therefore, is the rock (petra): "Thou art Peter," He said, "and upon this rock I will build my Church (Matt. 16)." John also was made a rock, upon the foundation of whose faith the structure of the whole Church rises, which namely, whether the fury of heretics strikes it, or the impetus of temptations rushes upon it, does not overturn it. This rock fills the sling of the true

David, with which he may significantly strike the Philistine Goliath on the forehead (1 Kings 17), where namely the profane and impious man did not have the banner of the cross. For this rock destroyed all adversaries of ecclesiastical doctrine, this prostrated Jewish perfidy with all heretical depravity. Nor is it a wonder if after the manner of Peter, John also is called a rock, since the Lord said these things to Ezekiel: "Behold, I have made thy face stronger than their faces, and thy forehead harder than their foreheads; as an adamant and as a flint I have made thy face (Ezek. 3)."

Clearly, what each disciple brought forth concerning the sacrament of the Lord's faith, although it be most profound and entirely divine, and in like manner exceeds the strength of the human mind, nor does it seem diverse in the dignity of excellence because it was brought forth by the dictation of the same Spirit, nevertheless that sentence of blessed John is seen to claim a place of singularity for itself, because neither before him nor after him is anyone found to have written this same thing. For that sentence of the blessed apostle Peter, we read that Martha, the sister of Lazarus, also brought forth in almost the same words. To whom indeed when the Savior said: "Everyone who lives and believes in me shall not die for ever (John 11);" and subjoined: "Believest thou this?" immediately by the inspiration of the same Spirit as Peter, she replied: "I have believed," she said, "that thou art Christ, the Son of the living God, who art come into this world (Ibid.)."

But what wonder if we prefer John speaking of divinity to blessed Peter, since we see that unique beginning of his Gospel even exceed, if it be permitted to say so, the very words of the Lord? Nor is an injury done to our Redeemer if it be said that He Himself drew out something more sublime through the disciple than through Himself, and through the latter's tongue manifestly brought forth what through Himself He did not wish to open clearly. For, that some comparison might still be seen here between the same blessed apostles, the Lord granted this to blessed John in words, which He also conferred upon Peter in miracles, namely that the former should bring forth more lofty things and the latter should flash with greater wonders of virtues. For in the Acts of the Apostles we find that they cast out the sick into the streets, and placed them in beds and couches, that, when Peter came, at least his shadow might overshadow any of them and they might be delivered from their infirmities (Acts 5); which, however, we nowhere read that the Lord did, that namely through the shadow of His body He brought the remedy of health to anyone. But what He foretold He exhibited, what He promised He fulfilled. For in the Gospel of the same John He says: "Amen, amen, I say to you, he that believeth in me, the works that I do, he also shall do; and greater than these shall he do, because I go to the Father (John 14)." For He Himself worked in Peter, He Himself spoke in John. "For it is not you," He says, "who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you (Matt. 10)."

By right, indeed, a singular glory of eloquence precedes blessed John and all preceding and following writers of divine volumes, whom luxury did not pollute, nor lust corrupt, but virginal integrity decorated with the title of perpetual incorruption. He indeed, deserting the chamber of nuptial union, transferred all the heat of carnal allurement into the pleasure of heavenly delights, and joined himself most closely in the love of his Redeemer and lover, for whose sake namely he abdicated the pacts of the conjugal bed. Whence it was divinely granted to him that his heart should be so filled with the grace of charity even toward his brothers, that the most holy temple of his breast seemed like a certain furnace of divine fire. Which indeed is patently recognized in any of his Scriptures, in which through almost every page, as if through certain chinks, he seems to pour out the vapors of charity, and to glow with the heats of charity. For now he provokes the fathers by name to charity, now he calls them not sons, but little children, as if loving them tenderly. Now by the proper names of their ages he admonishes infants, now young men, now adolescents individually. Now also he destines epistles to women, and invites them to the caution of faith and the study of sincere love.

Thus, kindled with an ineffable heat of charity, turning himself hither and thither, going round everywhere, running about everywhere, he incites all kinds of men to salvation, traverses all increments of ages, investigates all orders of human condition with the eye of curious solici-

tude, and having become as it were the Argus of the universal Church, he embraces the sum of the whole human race with the arms of paternal love, and endeavors to draw each one individually to the fellowship of his Redeemer by admonishing them. For the love of the Lord, with which He loved him above all mortals, also exhibited to him this weight of fraternal love, so that namely he who was more loved should love more, and he who was first in the love of the Redeemer should become preeminent in fraternal charity.

How great a place of obtaining requests before the Lord, how great a privilege of special familiarity John obtained, we can gather more manifestly from this: which the same blessed evangelist testifies, because in that very banquet of the vital supper (John 13) Jesus was troubled in spirit, and protested, and said: "Amen, amen, I say to you, that one of you shall betray me." Then follows: "The disciples therefore looked one upon another, doubting of whom He spoke." And soon he subjoins: "Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved." Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, and said to him: "Who is it of whom He speaketh?" And lest I be held by the style of history, to John who soon questioned him the Lord replied: "He it is to whom I shall reach the bread dipped (John 13)."

O wonderful and incomparable man, and to be preferred above every heraldry of Christian devotion! Behold, the word is brought forth into the midst, and all are silent, and the senate of the apostles is repressed under the censorship

of silence; for so great appeared the authority of the presiding master, that the blessed assembly of the disciples restrained itself under strict discipline. They hesitate, they doubt, and as it were questioning among themselves they look with nods of the eyes; yet they do not presume to bring forth with the tongue what they desire, or to inquire by consulting the Lord. Peter is silent, the key-bearer of heaven is silent. That tongue finally is silent, which, having been made the key of the heavens, binds and looses both heaven and earth at once. He is silent, I say, against whom the gates of hell cannot prevail, who obtains the principality of binding and loosing souls (Matt. 16). Andrew is still, who was the forerunner to his brother to the fountain of life (John 1). Thomas does not speak, who, having professed that he did not know the way, recognized that He was the way, the truth, and the life, as He Himself related (John 14). Philip does not presume to open his mouth, who while he asked for the Father to be shown to him, heard the profound mysteries of the individual Trinity (Ibid.). All are silent, all doubt, and they inquire secretly, not indeed by the prolation of words, but only by the nods of the eyes.

But when the matter hung long under this ambiguity, nor did anyone loose the knot of doubt, at length John's patronage is sought, and thus knowledge of the doubtful thing is reached. He indeed, having taken upon himself the person of his fellow-disciples, approaches as a consul-

tant, who trusts in the greater prerogative of familiarity and love.

Whence it should be considered, my brothers, with what instance of devotion we ought to flagitate the help of blessed John, whom the apostles themselves sought as an intercessor for them. How much will he be able to do before the just judge for sinners, who also intervened for the senators of the heavenly court themselves? And he who was made an advocate for the highest, how humbly must he be implored by the least? That angel indeed in the Apocalypse (Apoc. 22) knew this eminence of the man, this height of sublime merits, who prohibited himself from being adored by him. "See," he said, "thou do it not; for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren who have the testimony of Jesus, adore God." He refused to receive service from him whom he knew familiarly to obtain a place of grace before the common judge. He did not want an adorer whom he decreed to be an equal. He recognized a brother, judged him a companion, and did not receive the obedience of subjection. For although in all the saints there is always a cognate virginity and companion of angelic purity, nevertheless blessed John so far surpasses other virgins as he approaches the virginity of blessed Mary through the merit of his diligence and perpetual custody. By whom alone he is preceded, because the virginal fecundity which is in Mary is not to be compared to any merits at all, and not only because she is fecund, but because she is Deific. For a virgin to bring forth is a new and unique

thing; but for her to bring forth God so transcends every novelty of singularity, so precedes all things that are to be wondered at, and so incomparably exceeds them, that it can neither be conceived by the mind nor in any way explained by the tongue. But just as the virginity of the venerable Mother of the Lord exceeds the virginity of blessed John, so he himself, because of his glorious companionship with her, excels all other virgins from the beginning of the world.

To this is added that reclining upon the breast of the Savior, that divine heat which he conceived from His secret inspiration, so consumed the fuel of all lusts in his bowels that his body, as if truly a temple of the Holy Spirit, bloomed, purified from all the squalors of glowing luxury; nor did the flame of lust claim any place in him, whose temple the grace of the Holy Spirit continually overshadowed. Wherefore it was fitting that the blessed apostle John should be had as a companion to the archangel Gabriel for the custody of the Mother of the Lord, so that the former heavenly best man should invisibly guard the intact Virgin, and the latter should externally exhibit the ministry of his obedience to her feminine fragility. And it was congruous that she who brought forth such a one, who was Lord of heaven and earth at once, should have citizens of both countries in her company; that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word might stand (Matt. 18; 2 Cor. 13). Wherefore blessed John, as much as he is more familiarly conversant with the Mother of the Word, so much also is he found nearer to the

Word Himself. And since he was called the son of Mary not by another but by the Truth Himself: "Woman, behold thy son;" and by reiterating confirms this same thing, saying to the disciple: "Behold thy mother (John 19)," no one by right seems greater in merits than he who by a certain special glory is the brother of the Savior.

Let us labor, therefore, most beloved brothers, to keep the precepts of one so sublime, so pious, so chaste, and so most excellently beloved by God; let us study to walk in his footsteps as much as we can, under the guidance of divine grace. For if all of us cannot now have virginity with John in the flesh, because after shipwreck a second plank remains, let us study to flourish in virtues, and thus we shall best compensate the loss of lost virginity. Let not the heat of avarice glow in us; let not the fury of anger impel us. Let not the flame of lust glow in us; let not an evil thought defile the beautiful appearance of our soul before God. Let not the abundance of earthly faculty lift us up in pride; let not tenacity close the bowels of mercy to the poor. Let perpetual chastity, humility, patience, sobriety, justice with piety, severity with mildness, flourish in us.

Among these gifts and the other virtues, most beloved brothers, charity, which is the mother of all, should always hold the primacy in the sanctuary of our breast; because, as John says, "God is charity (1 John 4);" so that because through charity the Son of God descended into the Virgin, through it He may exalt us to the brightness of paternal glory, He who lives and reigns in per-

fect Trinity, one and true God, forever and ever. Amen.

SERMON LXIV.

ON SAINT JOHN THE APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST. (DECEMBER 26).

We rejoice, most beloved brothers, that a copious gathering of your fraternity is present, because while the glory of Blessed John provokes us to today's festivity, the Holy Spirit also undoubtedly inspires you to gather so reverently, so peacefully, and so devotedly. Indeed, it is worthy that he who was specially loved by Christ above all mortals should also be most greatly loved by those who love Christ, especially since he himself has stood with such charity toward us that, with the keys of wisdom and knowledge delivered to him from heaven, he expanded all the treasures of the heavenly sacraments, and by sharing with us the riches of eternal life which he alone had received, he generously and faithfully distributed them. For what of divine wisdom do you seek that you cannot find in John? For what heretical depravity, what Arian perfidy, what insane calumny of the Jews, what cunning of the Gentile philosophers, what finally abominable schism of the schismatics has not been overcome by the eloquence of Blessed John, and evidently crushed by his doctrine? For if ever volumes of questions are thrown at us by the enemies of truth, immediately John comes into the midst, John runs to meet them, John imposes silence on the wordy.

Whenever a struggle of question arises concerning the true humanity and divinity of Christ, which is clearly a common matter of fighting for all enemies of peace, immediately one runs to John's Gospel, John's patronage is sought in the fight, and thus soon all the quarrels of the contentious struggle fall silent.

What, therefore, is necessary in doctrines that the sacrosanct volumes of John do not hold? What in virtues, what in merits in which the most blessed one does not incomparably excel? For he is an Apostle in his Epistles, an Evangelist in the Gospel, a prophet in the Apocalypse. A prophet, I say, and not just any kind, but a wonderful one and, in the likeness of the other John, more than a prophet. For because the office of a prophet is to predict future things, not to demonstrate present ones, Blessed John the Baptist therefore shone forth above other prophets because he showed with his finger the Lord whom he was prophesying (John 1). Is not this John also more than a prophet, who beyond the custom of all prophets, beheld himself in the spirit, and among many sacraments of heavenly revelations, while he saw the likeness of a flying eagle, he truly recognized himself? But Ezekiel beheld the same eagle by the revealing spirit (Ezek. 1), not indeed flying, but eminent above the other animals. With which prophet, clearly, Blessed John, having considered the volume of each, is not doubted to agree in many things. With him, doubtless, he also ate in his mouth the book which was sweet like honey, and describes the places of the sanctuary (Apoc.

10), and in many other things the prophet walks consonantly with the apostle.

O how admirable is the change of the right hand of the Most High! (Ps. 76.) O how terrible is the Lord in His counsels over the sons of men! (Ps. 65.) For who could worthily consider from how great humility this fisherman deserved to be sublimated to the summit of such height? Indeed, he who once was content with a vile little boat and simply searched the depths of the sea with nets, now penetrates heavenly secrets with the ray of an enlightened mind, thunders mysteries, reveals the hidden things of the divine counsel to men, brings forth prophetic oracles, and delivers apostolic teachings to men: indeed, in speculating on the essence of the supreme divinity, he precedes the prophets, surpasses the patriarchs, and overcomes the apostles. Finally, he transcends the wits of all humanity, and stretches the edge of his mind as far as an angelic creature can scarcely reach. O full of the grace of God! "For the peace of God," as the Apostle says, "surpasses all understanding (Phil. 4)," so that he may not undeservedly seem to say that of the spouse: "The king introduced me into the wine cellar; we will exult and rejoice in you (Cant. 1)."

Let us therefore consider, brothers, how much this man then differed from what he is now, when, with his mother intervening, he asked that the Lord grant that he with his brother should sit, one on the right and the other on the left. For as far as the words go, he seemed to ask this: that the Lord choose one from them on the right, and

reprove the other on the left with the sinners. But because he asked foolishly, suffering a repulse, he immediately heard with his sons what he deserved: "You do not know," He said, "what you ask. Can you drink the cup which I am about to drink?" And to those responding, "We can," he promptly subjoins: "You shall indeed drink my cup, but to sit at my right and at my left is not mine to give to you (Matt. 20)."

Behold here in the words of the Lord it is clearly shown that John was also a martyr, since it is certain that he drank the cup of the Lord. And he was truly a martyr, because he endured many punishments of persecutions for the Lord. He was a martyr, therefore, because he carried the cross of the Lord through the affliction of his own body and the compassion for his straying neighbors by living for a long time: and as he remained in the flesh longer than the other apostles, so he sustained the torments of a harder martyrdom. Whence it is piously to be believed that among those one hundred forty-four thousand virgins who have the name of the Lamb and the name of His Father written on their foreheads, who were bought from the earth and sing a new song before the throne of God and the Lamb, this Blessed John is distinguished and remarkable; and with all these he follows the Lamb wherever He goes (Apoc. 13) all the more closely as he stood more beloved and familiar to the same Lamb, and moreover joined himself to His mother, who is the Virgin of virgins, in perpetual subjection as a son. For from the consort of both, namely the

mother and the Son, John's virginity shone forth excellently, and as far as human merits can be advanced, having become as it were the goal of virtues, he increased without ceasing.

Nor indeed are those words, which our Savior uttered while placed on the cross, saying, "Woman, behold your son," and to the disciple, "Behold your mother (John 19)," to be taken so simply as if they seemed uttered only in human fashion, but they are altogether effective, supported by divine virtues and sustained by the inevitable authority of Truth. For that unique Word of the Father, who was hanging on the cross, is substantive and consubstantial with the Father and everlasting, and therefore the words which He spoke, because they are Spirit and life, could not pass away in vain: "Heaven," said the pious Jesus Himself, "and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away (Matt. 24; Mark 13)." For just as He said to the mother, "This is your son (John 19)," so He said to the disciples, "This is my body (Matt. 26; Luke 22)." And so great was the effect in those words that immediately that bread which He gave became the Lord's body. For He spoke, and all things were made; He commanded, and they were created (Ps. 148). From a certain likeness, therefore, if we may dare to say so, Blessed John not only obtained the name of son, but on account of those words of the Lord, he deserved to obtain a certain greater sacrament of necessity with the Blessed Virgin.

Let us therefore consider, most beloved, of how great glory this great man is to be believed,

who through a certain mystery of hidden adoption is both the son of the Virgin and the brother of the Savior. Hence it is that almighty God raised his mind to such a peak of purity and mystical revelation that He showed him not only the state of the present Church, but also revealed what would follow henceforth for ever. Whence he also wrote that noble Apocalypse of his, which indeed is known to overflow with such great mysteries that it seems to have as many sacraments as words; indeed, multiple understandings lie hidden in individual words.

Which truly is sent to the seven Churches of Asia, and is destined for the whole universal Church, which is ruled under the sevenfold magisterium of the Holy Spirit. Whence it follows that all Churches throughout the whole world diffused all around do not doubt that they have Blessed John as a common teacher. To whom, clearly, as a certain distinguished messenger of the royal empire, destined from heaven by Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn of the living and the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth, he brought grace and peace together from Him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and laid open many mysteries of the heavenly secret.

Now truly, whom would that marvelous novelty of his blessed migration not move? Who would not be struck with awe at the glory of his most happy consummation? For because he lived wonderfully, he died wonderfully; and because he did not lead a common life with men, he did

not pass away by the common death of men. For, as the histories contain, he commanded a square pit to be made in the Church, and soon descending into it with extended hands, after the words of a long prayer had been poured out, he migrated. But soon so great a light was emitted over him from heaven that no sense could bear it. Afterward, truly, the pit was found containing nothing else in itself but manna, which clearly, as it is said, does not cease to spring forth even unto this day.

Thus indeed, thus it was worthy for the disciple beloved by the Author of life to pass from the world, so that he might become as foreign to the pain of death as he had been alien to the corruption of the flesh. In burial he wished to lie in the manner of a cross, because he carried the cross continually by living, and just as Peter followed the Master, being crucified by persecutors, so in a certain way John was buried in ecclesiastical peace.

But the Lord taught that there would be a diversity between them, when He said to Peter: "So I will him to remain until I come. What is that to you? You follow me (John 21)." For He who wished Peter to triumph with Him on the gibbet of the cross, Himself decreed that John should rest in ecclesiastical peace, so that both the former might provide an example of undergoing martyrdom to the others, and the latter might migrate quietly to heaven, the building of the Church having been raised upon the foundation of faith; the former would be a form of constancy

for the martyrs to follow, and the latter would be a discipline of morals and spiritual virtues for those newly planted in the faith.

"So I will him to remain until I come." I will come, He says, to absolve him from the bond of the flesh. I will come, to transfer him to the consort of my glory. I will come, to return the reward of worthy remuneration for his labors. Finally, He gave a clear sign for the effect of this promise, when at his death He caused a radiant light to shine forth, through which it clearly appeared that the Author of light Himself had arrived from heaven. The Lord was present, therefore, not unmindful of His promise, both to receive his soul in that quiet of the supernal Jerusalem and to transfer his most sacred body into the hidden recesses of the secret, which He Himself knows. For it is also read of Blessed Enoch that he walked with God, and was not found, because God translated him (Gen. 5).

Now truly, who could worthily wonder at that, that in his tomb manna is found, and in a pit of the earth the bread of heaven is born not once, but daily? For concerning manna, saving a deeper mystery, it is written: "You gave them bread from heaven, O Lord, having every delight (Wis. 16)." Let all the nations of the Gentiles come, therefore, and be struck with awe at a miracle unheard of in all ages everywhere. Let them come, I say, and admiring let them behold that in a tomb, which is without doubt a house of worms, the bread of angels is born, so that as the Prophet pronounces in admiration of a great gift that God granted

manna as food to the Israelite people, saying: "He gave them the bread of heaven; man ate the bread of angels (Ps. 77);" what was then sent to them from heaven, is now seen to spring forth from a tomb. For if manna were not a great miracle on earth, by no means would the Lord have commanded it to be preserved through the ages by Moses: "Fill," He said, "an omer with it, and let it be kept for future generations to come, that they may know the bread with which I fed them in the solitude, when I led them out of the land of Egypt (Exod. 16)." Behold what virginal modesty deserves. Behold of how great magnitude is the integrity of inviolate flesh. See, my brothers, consider, weigh, what delights the incorruption of the flesh has in heaven, if it germinates the food of heaven in a tomb. With how great honors is blessed virginity sublimated there, where indeed there is glory alone, if even in a place of stench and putrefaction it is so wonderfully glorious.

Whence even if we do not dare fully to define it, it is yet pious to think that just as it is believed of the Blessed Mother of God, so also Blessed John may probably be asserted to have already risen, so that as they were participants in virginal integrity, so nevertheless they may deservedly seem equal in anticipated resurrection; nor let there be a diversity in resurrection for those for whom there was such unanimity of conduct in life. For if those most blessed virgins, namely John and Mary, had by no means risen, why would their buried corpses not lie in their tombs, when clearly the bodies of Blessed Peter and Paul

and the other apostles and martyrs are known to be entombed each in their own mausoleums? For that Blessed John truly died and without doubt paid the laws of death, can be proved by no means better than through his own words. For when the word had gone out among the brothers that that disciple would not die, why would he himself have met those telling the truth, saying: "And Jesus did not say: He does not die (John 21)." Indeed, he would seem to weave a delay here and multiply words in vain, if while they said the truth: "He does not die;" he had immediately resisted, saying: "Jesus did not say: He does not die," and by this he would in a certain way contradict the truth, even if he were to go against those reporting the words. But, while he denied that the Savior had said he would not die, he indubitably asserted that he would die.

Furthermore, whether he had risen or had not risen, that his holy body no longer appeared in the tomb was without doubt an operation of divine virtue. It is written in Deuteronomy: "Moses the servant of the Lord died in the land of Moab at the command of the Lord, and He buried him in the valley of the land of Moab over against Beth-peor, and no man knew his tomb until this present day (Deut. 34)." That miracle concerning the body of Moses is therefore renewed now also in John; and He who then deigned to bury the lawgiver with no one knowing, Himself also wished to withdraw the body of His evangelist from burial by a certain secret mystery. Each is clearly a light of the world, each a bearer of

heavenly commands, each a revealer of the divine counsel. Nor undeservedly do they agree in the dignity deferred to their corpses, who also shone concordantly in the sublime merits of their lives, although at different times.

But if the matter is weighed with diligent consideration, to speak with the peace of Blessed Moses, John is found to be more powerful. For the former stood as a minister of the law, the latter as a preacher of grace. The former delivered precepts by which sins were punished, the latter conferred the baptism of penance by which all crimes were deleted. The former is the announcer of the shadow, the latter the minister of the truth. The former said to the Lord: "If I have found grace in your sight, show me your face, that I may know you;" but he immediately heard: "You will not be able to see my face; for no man shall see me and live (Exod. 33);" while the latter not only saw and heard the incarnate God, but even touched Him with his hands, as he himself testifies, saying: "What was," he said, "from the beginning, what we have seen, what we have heard, what we have beheld with our eyes, and our hands have handled of the word of life, and we have seen and testify, and we announce to you the eternal life which was with the Father, and appeared to us (1 John 1)." And not only did he see the God made man with carnal eyes, but he also beheld the Word itself, which was with the Father, through which all things were made (John 1), with his mind divinely enlightened.

And that the comparison may still be produced, Moses presided over the tabernacle which the cloud covered, so that sometimes not even Moses himself could enter, as is read in Exodus: "Because the cloud covered the tabernacle of the testimony, and the glory of the Lord filled it (Exod. 40)," nor could Moses enter the roof of the covenant, the cloud covering all things; John truly, having been made the guardian of a better tabernacle, stood as the minister of Blessed Mary, whom no corporeal cloud of this air indeed covered, but the Holy Spirit overshadowed invisibly. And the glory of the Lord, that is the Son of God, who filled this tabernacle, not about to depart soon, but about to receive true flesh, remained not under the darkness of an aerial cloud, but rather in the light of the sun, as is said through the Prophet: "In the sun He placed His tabernacle (Ps. 18)." Through the former, manna was then given to the Israelite people; behold how much more gloriously this man has manna even in his tomb. And what more? The former veiled his face, lest he be seen by the people (Exod. 34): the latter also reveals the essence of the divinity, that God may be recognized by all (John 1). And to repeat the same, the former covered the splendor of his countenance, lest he be beheld by that people; the latter clearly revealed the Word of God, which is the image of the Father, the splendor of glory and the figure of His substance (Heb. 1), that He might be recognized by us.

Finally, the Son of God, whom the latter had in his hands, with whom he conversed for a

very long time, by whom he was uniquely and specially loved, the former indeed earnestly and desirably asked for, saying: "I beseech you, Lord, send whom you are about to send (Exod. 4);" but he was not able to obtain it. Nevertheless, while both shone with great and supreme merits before God, both were full of the same spirit, both concordantly burned with the desire for the Redeemer. Nor do we presume to prefer one to the other, if we weigh the diversity for the dignity of each. For of two travelers unequal in no vivacity of eyes, he who walks when the sun has risen beholds any opposing things more clearly than he who rises before dawn. And he is richer who catches the autumnal maturity of fruits than he who planted the saplings of the spring offspring. It was fittingly done, therefore, that just as He hid the remains of Moses, so also almighty God hid those of John, and in two true wonders exhibited one miracle.

And it is to be noted how affectionately, how piously, how paternally, how amiably the Savior said: "So," He said, "I will him to remain until I come (John 21)." I will come, He said, I will not send. I will not send, that is, some supernal power, nor any angelic power, to perform this office of ministry for me, or to carry out the effect of this obedience. I myself shall come through my very self; I myself shall receive his departing soul into the brightness of my glory, which I also used to enlighten divinely while he remained in the flesh. With how much reverence, therefore, is this Blessed John to be held by men, whom the

very author of life honored while he lived in the flesh, and honored also as he departed from the world: "For your friends, O God, are exceedingly honored (Ps. 138)." For He honored him in life, when He made for him a place of reclining from His own sacrosanct breast. He honored him again in death, when He deigned to arrive to receive his soul, happy in merits. Nor is it a wonder if He heaped various honors upon him, whom He also called into the fellowship of an adoptive brotherhood with Himself.

Blessed James was also called the brother of the Lord; but he was a brother by nature, this one a brother by grace; the former by kinship, this one by special love; the former through the line of maternal consanguinity, this one through the bond of paternal charity: "If anyone," He said, "loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him (John 14)." And what more shall I say? That one was the carnal brother of the Lord, this one the spiritual. But how much spiritual kinship is proved to exceed carnal necessity, we can find more clearly than light in the words of the Lord himself. For He says: It is the Spirit who gives life, for the flesh profits nothing.

Maternal nature, therefore, ordained James to be the brother of the Lord; John, however, is a brother so much more nobly, as the Lord of nature himself assumed him into affinity with himself by spiritual adoption. Although James himself is also blessed for this reason, that he holds a participation of the same spiritual life

with the Lord. Otherwise, unless he were joined to the Lord through the spirit, he would in no way be saved by the Lord through that bond of earthly consanguinity. But John so much more excellently, as even placed before the cross he heard: "Behold your Mother (John 19)." Justly, therefore, in that He loved him more than the others, He honored him more sublimely than the others. And let us, dearest brothers, according to our small measure, strive to extol him with worthy praises, and always venerate him with worthy services.

It is to be noted, however, that we never worship the blessed apostles as worthily or as reverently as when we keep the apostolic precepts, when we always look to them as they precede us in the way of God, when we follow their footsteps, and when we hold their narrow and straight path without offense. Indeed, in baptism we followed the leadership of the apostles, because through them we learned the faith of the Holy Trinity among the very rudiments of our regeneration. Under the mystery of which figure, the priests of the Israelite people once preceded them in crossing the Jordan, and the people followed. But it did not seem sufficient to them if they followed only the footsteps of the priests in the crossing, unless they also took twelve stones from the bed of the Jordan and placed them in Gilgal for a testimony. “Choose,” the Lord said to Joshua, “twelve men, one from each tribe, and command them to take from the middle of the bed of the Jordan, where the priests fixed their

feet, twelve very hard stones, which you shall place in the location of the camp, where you shall pitch your tents tonight (Joshua 4)."

But that I may not discuss all the words, although full of mysteries, what is indicated to us by this deed, except that after we cross the currents of the mystic Jordan, after we rise from the fount of the salutary washing, we should strive to set before ourselves for imitation the twelve very hard stones, that is, the most firm examples of the apostles? Indeed, we place the stones where the priests had fixed their feet in the place of the camp, if, placed in the preparation for battle of spiritual warfare, we hold the footsteps of the apostles constantly and firmly. For according to the sentence of Solomon: "He who is soft and dissolved in his work, is the brother of him that wastes his own works (Prov. 18);" clearly those who are soft and fluid in their morals, after the manner of water fall headlong to the bottom; but those who are constant and firm, grow daily into the citadel of virtue. Which surely is also weighed to be signified by that same history: for, as that same people crossed, the upper waters swelled into the likeness of a mountain, but the lower ones fell away into the Dead Sea (Josh. 3); because indeed of those who are baptized, some persevere in the accepted sweetness of heavenly grace, others cease not to flow away into the bitterness of sins by living reprobatly, and fall as it were into the saltiness of the Dead Sea, while by savoring earthly things, they tend toward death through the slopes of a perverse life.

But we not so, most beloved, not so, but transferring our mind to true wisdom, let us so strive by the mercy of God to profit in the depth of the study of virtues, that it may shame us to decline into the abyss of vices. Let us so persevere always in hastening toward supernal things, whither we tend, that we may continually preserve the sweetness of divine love in our minds: let us labor, therefore, to become participants of that wisdom by which Blessed John deserved to be incomparably enlightened through the abundance of more ample grace; having conceived the splendor of which, he penetrates the heaven like an eagle, so that, transcending all created things, he reaches to the very summit of all things by the contemplation of his mind.

You know, my brothers, that in the origin of the world's birth, on the third day the earth brought forth sprouts, on the fourth the lights of heaven were made, on the fifth the winged creatures were created (Gen. 1). But why did this order run in the creating of things, except that we might be instructed that it is first necessary that our mind bring forth the works of greening virtues, so that it may thus deserve the grace of heavenly light, and finally be able to fly away to contemplate the appearance of truth? Let us sprout, therefore, brothers, that we may be enlightened, so that having been enlightened, we may be raised to heavenly things by the wings of virtues. Let not the false sweetness of this world soothe us, let not the luxurious pleasure of carnal allure dissolve us. Nowhere surely is the precept

found in the ceremonies of the Old Testament that honey should be mixed with sacrifices. By which it is understood, that in those who offer to God the sacrifice of their life, God wishes no carnal sweetness to be present, nothing to live in them which pertains to carnal pleasure; but oil is frequently put in, that every offering of our operation may be offered cheerfully: "For God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor. 9)." In all things also salt is commanded to be mixed in, that every sacrifice of a good work may be seasoned with the salt of reason, of discretion, and of heavenly wisdom.

Moreover, with this salt of divine wisdom, all the doctrine of Blessed John is seen to be sprinkled, so that he is worthily called the mouth of God, the tongue of the Holy Spirit, the cedar of paradise, the light of the Church, the ornament of the world, the herald of heaven, the light of the world, the star of men, the specimen of angels, a living stone, the mirror of light, the logothete of divinity, the form of faith, the pillar of heaven, the architect of the true tabernacle, which God fixed, and not man. For he is also justly presented as a cherub, who is known to have perceived the fullness of knowledge from the very breast of the Redeemer.

Nevertheless, although we strive as much as possible to extol him, we do not equal the merits of his height; because the fragility of the human tongue does not rise to worthily praise the merits of him who deserved the praises of divine commendation. For he himself is his praise, who

was once his price, and now has been made his reward.

By his footsteps, therefore, most beloved, let us tend toward our Redeemer with full love of heart, let us always prefer his doctrine before our steps like a shining lamp in the darkness. Let it shame us now to lean upon earthly things, we who have begun through the desire of hope to hasten toward heavenly glory. He who hastens to the delights of heavenly nuptials, let him blush to wallow in the mire of earthly pleasure: he who hopes to be adorned with the titles of angelic dignity in the homeland, let him not seek a place of dignity in exile. Moreover, in vain we gather earthly gains, we who possess immortal riches in the treasury of the heavenly kingdom. Him, therefore, whom the weight of earthly corruption aggravates, let the abundance of things flowing from without not extol. He who has been ordained to this, that he may continually fight with all his strength with the adversary, let the dissolution of torpor and negligence not enervate him. So, so by the help of divine piety, both flourishing in virtues and giving a repudiation to vices, if we follow him here, who showed us the way of the cross, we shall arrive there to him, who, having trampled the empire of death, penetrated the heaven with triumphal glory, Jesus Christ our Lord, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns through all ages of ages. Amen.

SERMON LXV.

ON SAINT BARBATIANUS, PRESBYTER AND CONFESSOR. (DECEMBER 31)

Recently, most beloved brothers, we celebrated the ineffable nativity of our Redeemer; now with doubled joy of solemnity we worship the venerable assumption of his most blessed priest. In that festivity our Savior, the appearance of his majesty having been overshadowed, descended into the world; in this one his most glorious servant, the weight of corruptible flesh having been laid aside, ascended free. In that one the Only-begotten Son of God received the form of our humanity for our salvation; in this one his blessed confessor reached the appearance of angelic beatitude by a happy death. In that solemnity our Redeemer, clothed in the trophy of the flesh, approached to fight in the world to overcome the aerial powers; in this one truly his distinguished soldier, the prince of the world having been triumphed over, entered the heavenly palace as a victor. For God descended for this reason, that man might ascend; for this reason He deigned to be humbled, that He might exalt man.

At the Nativity of the Lord the angelic voice sounded: "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will (Luke 2);" today to his beloved the sweetest voice of divine majesty thundered, saying: "Well done, good and faithful servant, because you have been faithful over a few things, I will appoint you over many things, enter into the joy of your Lord (Matt. 25)." In that festivity the Lord went out from the womb of the Virgin, in this one his venerable servant

went out from the prison of the flesh. In that one Christ was wrapped in swaddling clothes for us, in this one his priest was clothed by Him in the stole of immortality. The former disdained not to enter the narrows of the womb, that the breadth of heaven might receive the soul of the latter. The former descended veiled in flesh, that the latter might ascend decorated with the stole of glory.

Consider, most beloved brothers, how great this man was, how fully the Holy Spirit inhabited him as truly a most sacred temple, who even in the peace of the holy Church flashed with so many miracles. For in the beginning of the nascent Church those also used to perform miracles, who had not been worthy to perform signs: and many without the virtues of morals excelled in the virtue of signs. Whence Truth itself says: "Many will say to me on that day: Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? did we not perform many virtues in your name? And then I will confess to them: That I knew you not; depart from me, workers of iniquity (Matt. 7)." For that the holy Church might grow to the faith, it had to be nourished by miracles; because we also when we plant saplings, we pour water on them for so long, until we see them have grown strong in the earth: but if they once fix their root, the irrigation will cease. This is hence why Paul says: "Tongues are for a sign not to believers, but to unbelievers (1 Cor. 14)."

But when we say these things, we see a question arise for us not without some difficulty. For if signs are said to have been given because

of unbelievers, what is this, that our Redeemer is presented as having been able to perform scarcely any virtues in his own country because of the incredulity of men? For as Mark the evangelist testifies: "Many hearing were astonished at his doctrine, saying: From whence has this man all these things? And what is the wisdom that is given to him, and such virtues, which are performed through his hands? Is not this the son of the carpenter and of Mary; the brother of James, and Joseph, and Jude, and Simon? Are not also his sisters with us? And they were scandalized in him." Whence also a little after it is added: "And he could not perform any virtue there, except that he cured a few sick ones by laying his hands on them; and he wondered because of their incredulity (Matt. 13)." What is this, brothers, that Paul affirms signs were given for unbelievers, while Mark asserts they were withdrawn because of unbelievers? (Mark 6.) Can they proffer sentences contrary to each other, who are full of one Spirit?

But it is to be noted, that in those unbelievers themselves there was a certain mode of diversity. Indeed, the error of all who did not believe was equal, but there was a great diversity of merits. For it is one thing if someone be deceived by ignorance alone, another if malice be also added. Paul had sinned by ignorance, who said: "I who before was a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but therefore I obtained mercy, because I did it being ignorant (1 Tim. 1)." Judas sinned through

malice, and therefore he by no means deserved to come to indulgence.

For those unbelievers, therefore, signs were given, whom divine providence had mercifully decreed to save. But because of those they were withdrawn, whom the justice of strict severity repelled from the lot of the elect, as their sins required. Moreover, in Christian times when now almost the whole world everywhere persisted in the Catholic faith, and scarcely any savagery of persecutors disturbed the peace of the holy Church, why did the most blessed confessor of Christ Barbatianus shine with the virtues of so many miracles, except because he shone with the virtues of excellent merits before the eyes of the divine majesty? For he was, as is said of John, a burning and a shining lamp (John 5), burning clearly through the love of his heart, shining with the splendor of his distinguished conduct. But then he had wished the lamp to be hidden under a bushel, when, as is told in the history of his most holy life, hiding in his cell he avoided being made manifest to princes. He did not wish to become known to the kings of the world, that he might be able to adhere more familiarly to the King of kings: he refused to receive temporal glory from men, that he might deserve to acquire the eternal with the angels. To this surely pertains the fact that to those whom he desired to restore to health, he often bestowed something to be placed over them, like a plaster: often something to be eaten, like a medicinal antidote; with this study surely, as I think, that while the virtue

of herbs, or the power of medicinal species is believed, the restored health should in no way be ascribed to the powers of his sanctity; and while the medicine is received from him, he might seem more a physician than a saint. But tell me, O good physician, whence did you bring the confection of so efficacious, so sudden a virtue to our borders, that it is not expected for three days, nor two days, nor even for the space of one moment, but as soon as it has been applied, immediately every languor, every wound is restored to its pristine health? For an epithem cannot be cured, unless it lies over the tumor as long as it is placed there, until it either transfuses its vigor through hidden channels into the interior parts of the body, or throws out the pestiferous humor to the exterior parts by the power of its virtue. But an antidote, which is performed by the mouth, must necessarily make delays for so long, until its hidden force penetrates fundamentally through the veins and pores into the viscera, and either solidifies the corrupt parts or purges those swollen with noxious humors. Your wondrous medicine, however, weaves no delays, does not seek the discretion of diet which is guarded by physicians, but as soon as it is touched to the furthest degree, the most integral health is repaired. Loosen therefore, Father, loosen, I beseech you, the binding, and hand over to us the knowledge of such incomparable medicine.

Let us also see the inestimable species of your pigments, let us smell the most pleasant sweetness of your fragrant aromas. Come, brothers,

hear; let the book of his most sacred life open before all which species of aromas his medicinal history, truly most salutary, contains in itself. Of what aromas that confection consists. For it says among other things, that a certain Julian's son's throat was miserably swollen, who when he had been brought to the blessed man, and when the father was tearfully asking for his son, the venerable man making a certain confection, of bread indeed, and wax, and oil, placed it over his wounds, and, the sign of the cross having been made, immediately in the point of his mouth miraculously drove all the pest from his throat.

You have heard, most beloved brothers, what kinds of pigments our distinguished physician had, who healed a mortal wound with such speed? Bread, wax, and oil, which had the use of sustaining life, he transferred into the instrument of medicinal cure; and whence he nourished his own life, from thence he repelled the death of another; using indeed domestic species, he diminished the estimation of price for foreign ones. Sometimes he reached out a piece of citron to a sick person, sometimes a dried fig; and by this kind of curation he recalled them to the strength of perfect health, all the molestation of languor having been expelled, with this intention, if I am not mistaken, that because each of these fruits is seen more rarely among some in the Roman borders, it might be believed to have been something medicinal; and while the repaired health is attributed to the medicine, the opinion of his

sanctity might be diminished in the estimation of men.

What therefore are we miserable ones about to say, what are we to do in the strict examination of the tremendous judge, we who both have no virtues, and yet are proud before human eyes concerning the excellence of our merits? we who seek with no desire to have sanctity before the eyes of the internal arbiter, and rejoice to falsely usurp the name of sanctity among human judgments? For how many do we see today, who if they could have touched even the last particle of the virtues of this admirable man, would exalt themselves in the horns of pride to heaven, who often perhaps do something of virtues, but through this seek not heaven, but earth. Affecting surely the praises of men, they dissipate the fruit of their labors in themselves; and when they desire to show themselves to the eyes of others, they damn all that they do before the intuition of the divine majesty. Often also they instruct others with the erudition of the sacred law, and gird all that they feel with testimonies, yet they seek not through this the life of their hearers, but their own favors; because they desire to proffer no other things except those which shake the hearts of the hearers to repeat praises, but not to tend toward tears. For the mind occupied with exterior things does not glow with the fire of divine love, and therefore words which are proffered from a cold heart cannot inflame their hearers toward the desire of supernal things. For nor does a thing which has not burned in itself

kindle another. Whence it happens frequently that the sayings of hypocrites neither instruct their hearers, and render those same ones who proffer them, elated with praises, worse. For as Paul attests, "Knowledge puffs up, charity builds up (1 Cor. 8)." When therefore charity does not erect the hearers by building them up, knowledge perverts those proffering it by puffing them up.

Frequently also hypocrites, my brothers, afflict themselves with wondrous abstinence, wear away all the strength of their body, and as it were fundamentally extinguish the life of the flesh while living in the flesh, and so through abstinence appropriate themselves to death, that living they die almost daily, but for this they seek human eyes, they expect the glory of admiration: Truth attesting, which says: "For they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast (Matt. 6)." For their mouths grow pale, their body is shaken with debility, their breast is urged with interrupting sighs; but among these the word of admiration is sought from the mouth of their neighbors, and nothing else is thought of for so great a labor except human estimation.

Consider, my most beloved brothers, how miserable a folly it is to act laboriously and to gape for praises from the mouth of men; to serve the heavenly precepts with strong work, but to seek the reward of earthly retribution. For as the blessed Gregory says, he who desires human favor for the virtue he performs, carries a thing of great merit for sale at a vile price. Whence he could have merited the kingdom of heaven, from

thence he seeks a coin of transitory favor. Therefore inside, my brothers, the good things we do are to be kept inside, if we expect to receive the reward of our work from the internal judge. For hence it is that the Truth says in the Gospel: "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth, that thy alms may be in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee (Matt. 6)." Hence it is, that it is said concerning the Church of the elect through the Psalmist: "All the glory of the king's daughter is from within (Psalm 44)." For the daughter of kings is the holy Church, which was generated in good work by the preaching of spiritual princes, which while it exercises itself in the virtues of holy conduct, because through this it studies to please God alone, has glory not without, but within. Hence Paul says: "Our glory is this, the testimony of our conscience (2 Cor. 1)." The Apostle mentions his glory as the testimony of conscience, because not seeking the favors of another's mouth, he knew not how to place the joys of his life outside himself.

The good things we do are therefore to be hidden, most beloved brothers, lest carrying these incautiously on the journey of this life, we lose them by the incursion of robbing spirits. For behold here this most blessed man Barbatianus, whose festive birthday has shone upon us today, did not seek the glory of human praise, nor affect the favors of men; he did not wish to appear wondrous himself by showing so many miracles, nor did he expect the reward of human retribution for

so many benefits conferred upon the weak; but even he pretended the appearance of medicinal exercise, so that he could have obscured the most bright splendor of his virtue. And like a great star of heaven he took care to oppose a cloud to his virtues, so that while he expanded the rays of his light less to exterior things, as if collected in himself from all sides, he might shine more fully in the sight of the eternal sun.

It is pleasing, most beloved, to consider studiously the beautiful order of divine dispensation, namely how almighty God decides to send his stars into the face of heaven to illuminate the night of this present life, and through them to illustrate the darkness of the whole world; so that while we see the shining stars radiating through the climates of heaven, we may walk the journey of our night with an unoffended foot of work. For just as the morning star (lucifer) preceding the sun rises first from the Eastern region, then ascends the higher parts of the meridian climate: at last also prone it turns toward the western axis; so indeed, so the most blessed confessor of Christ Barbatianus, went out from the borders of Antioch, whence he had originated, and passing through Rome, drenched it with much light of miracles: finally arriving at Ravenna, he introduced Christ, who is the sun of justice, to very many minds of men: namely he shone at Antioch with the splendor of his birth, at Rome he scattered very many little fires of signs, but he illustrated the city of Ravenna as if by the sunset of his most sacred death. Thus indeed by

the merits of this most holy man, as if by the splendor of a new morning star, the whole world glows red in three of its chief regions, while in one region of the world his rising is seen, in another in some way his ascent is seen, in the third his sunset is celebrated. And, as we have already said in another sermon concerning his compatriot the most blessed Apollinaris, how rightly the name of the morning star (lucifer) agrees with him, who having entered Rome, made the first miracle of his virtue from light. For Queen Galla Placidia, as you have heard, suppliantly flagged his help for a certain attendant of hers, who was tortured with intolerable pains of the eyes; who soon commanded her eyes to be touched with his pallium, and thus immediately drove away from her all the molestation of the pestiferous sickness.

Wherefore when I consider your dignity, most happy city of Ravenna, with subtle meditation, I perceive that you have been enriched with the most lavish benefits of divine mercy. For I see that from the very original fountain of the Christian religion, you have merited to drink the cup of perpetual salvation. For in Antioch, as is read in the Acts of the Apostles, the disciples were first called Christians (Acts 11).

From that very foundation of the holy Church, therefore, you received squared stones, upon which, erected as if upon the firmest bases, you are founded with an immovable solidity of faith and sanctity. For from thence you have Apollinaris, the apostolic martyr, and from thence also Barbatianus, the distinguished confessor, who

like two most excellent cedars of paradise, so overshadow you with the branches of their protection, that if you wish to remain humbly under them, they expel from you every whirlwind of the adversary's tempest. And so that nothing might be lacking to them which pertains to the heap of your happiness, as soon as they go out from the borders of Antioch, they dwell in Rome, which without doubt is the head and principal seat of the whole holy Church; surely that they might first learn in the school of Peter what they might afterwards instruct you concerning the doctrine of truth; and that they might drink abundantly from the most pure fountain what they might transfund into you by the mastership of salutary doctrine, as if by eructing. For as if another Paul, another Apollos, whom that one planted in the faith, this one watered with a most lavish rain of miracles and preaching. But because neither is he who plants anything of himself, nor he who waters, let us also say, following the apostolic words: "But God gave the increase."

Therefore love these so bright senators of the heavenly court, most beloved brothers, with perfect love of heart, and take care to imitate their examples with all devotion of soul: for if you wish to be what they are, it is necessary that you also do what they did. Walk therefore through the narrow and rough way of labor, most beloved, in this world with the saints, that afterwards you may be able to arrive at the latitude of their joy. For he who says he abides in Christ, ought himself also to walk even as he walked (1

John 2). But without doubt he wanders from the footsteps of Christ, who fleeing the narrow way, treads the way of latitude. For this most blessed man, whose solemnities of today we rejoice to frequent, did not wish for earthly honors, did not gather deceitful riches, did not seek the glory of the world, did not dilate the estates of transitory possession; he spurned relatives, he left his country, he also utterly denied himself for the love of Christ. Therefore let no one say that those alone are held worthy of heavenly rewards who are struck by the swords of persecutors for the name of Christ. God has closed every entrance of our tergiversation, he has obstructed every refuge of human excuse. Behold, if we are not now able to undergo death for God with the blessed Apollinaris, we can at least lead a life pleasing to God with the blessed Barbatianus. For it is a great thing to die for Christ, but it is not inferior to live for Christ. For Paul weighed both in a scale with an equal balance, when he said: "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself; for whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord. Whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's (Rom. 14)." Whoever therefore loves martyrdom, let him show himself worthy of martyrdom, and he will without doubt obtain the reward of martyrdom. He cannot shed blood; he can strike himself with the weapon of penance and sacrifice himself in the contrition of the heart. Let the throat be prepared for the striking; the rewarder will not be lacking, even if the sword should be lacking.

The executioner who strikes the neck from without is lacking; the judge is present who renders the reward of good will. Let us study therefore, most beloved, with the most blessed confessor of Christ Barbatianus to despise the blandishments of the world, to avoid the abundance of temporal things, to repress the incentives of the flesh, to carry the cross after Christ even in ecclesiastical peace, so that we who now follow his imitable life may afterwards be led with him to the desirable glory, by the grant of our Lord Jesus Christ, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and is glorified through infinite ages of ages. Amen.

SERMON LXVI.

ON SAINT COLUMBA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR (DEC. 30).

While we still cultivate the recent, nay the present birth of the Virgin, most beloved, behold a new triumph of a virgin occurs, which germinates solemn joy for us and invites us to rejoice again, the Apostle exciting us, who says: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say: Rejoice (Phil. 4)." A virginal victory is inserted into the virginal birth, and redivivus joys are repaired in the still erect souls of the faithful. Lately the Lord humbly proceeded from the Virgin, today he miraculously triumphed through a virgin. Then the Founder of the heavens descended to us, the integrity of the virginal womb being inviolate; today with the unshaken faith of a virgin he reported titles of victory to heaven with glory, saying to her whom he was bringing into the heavenly thrones:

"Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come (Cant. 2)." Then the Mother of God was keeping Christ wailing in the manger, today Blessed Columba finds him flashing on the throne of paternal majesty. Then at the birth of the Virgin the shepherds exulted, now at the sight of the virgin the emperors are confounded. For there is one, as his blessed Mother says, who both "hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble (Luke 2)." For, as is found in the described history of blessed Columba, the emperor Aurelian, that he might be able to tear her away from the faith of the heavenly Spouse, tried to couple her to his son with the bond of marriage. But the prudent virgin, utterly alien to the folly of madness, constantly held the rule of discipline, immediately recurred to the example of our Savior, which as an impenetrable shield the fervent warrior snatched up, and pierced the one directing poisoned darts against her with the *siromastes* of the divine Word. This, she said, the ancient enemy used as an argument, when he showed to my Lord Jesus Christ all the kingdoms of the world, saying: "All these things will I give thee, if falling down thou wilt adore me (Matt. 3)." What is this, my brothers, that this emperor, so powerful, so sublime, and so terrible, could by no reason subject a fragile girl to his laws, and now by promising a kingdom, now by threatening punishment, was in no way able to move her from her purpose? He reaches out the scepter, she disdains it; he brandishes the sword, she is not terrified. Thus the craftsman

and bloody cruelty exercises all the nerves of its malice; thus it mixes hard things with bland ones. For sharper indeed are the darts of gold than of iron, and ambition for honor breaks the mind more strongly than torment. And so he moves kinds of all arms that he might shake the foundation of the tower of Christ; thus the column of God remains immovable and the unarmed girl contemns the armed king.

She disdains to be the daughter-in-law of the emperor, she does not refuse to undergo the tortures of a bloody torturer. What is it, I say, that the infirmity of the fragile sex is not shaken by so great a hail of darts? Now soothed by blandishments she is not bent, now attacked by the stridors of thundering threats she is not moved. What is this, unless because he had received the infirmities of our flesh who administers the strength of his fortitude to the weak and infirm? For to this the power of God was emptied (exinanita) that he might strengthen our weak things. To this the sublimity of God was inclined that he might erect the dejected. To this life deigned to die that, destroying the empire of death, he might recall the dead to life. Which surely is declared even in the very origin of the human race. For it is written: "Because the Lord sent a deep sleep into Adam; and when he had fallen asleep, he took one of his ribs, and filled up flesh for it, and the Lord rebuilt the rib, which he had taken from Adam, into a woman (Gen. 2)." Over which when the Apostle spoke, saying: "A man shall leave his father and mother, and

shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh;" he immediately subjoined: "This is a great sacrament. But I speak in Christ and in the Church (Ephes. 5)." And truly it is an indication of great virtue, a sacrament of wondrous depth. For through Adam is designated Christ, through Eve the Church. But what is it that the Lord first put Adam to sleep, then led out a rib from his side, whence the woman might be formed, unless because first the Redeemer slept in death and thus from his side flowed blood and water into the sacrament of the Church? Eve was translated from the side of the sleeping man; the Church went out from the side of the Savior hanging on the cross.

But what is it that the almighty Founder, when he disposed to propagate the fragile sex from the man, that is, from the stronger, wished to exhibit to himself not the flesh of the man, but rather a bone as material for making the woman? For God could have drawn flesh from the man, whence the woman might be formed, and this certainly would seem more congruent. For the weaker sex knew what indeed proceeded more consequently from the infirmity of the flesh than from the fortitude of the bone; and that you may more marvel at the sacrament of the divine work, he did not render bone for bone, but rather filled with flesh what was vacant in the man's body? Whence the Scripture when it said: "He took one of his ribs;" soon added: "And he filled up flesh for it (Gen. 2)." Surely he could have drawn flesh from the man to fashion the woman, he could

have restored the loss of a bone with a bone in the mutilated body, but he took a bone and rendered flesh, and thus he formed the fragile from virtue. Weak therefore was Adam made, that Eve might become strong. Christ was weakened, that the Church might be strengthened. For his infirmity is our fortitude, and to this he bore our infirmity, that he might establish us at his fortitude. "What is the weak thing of God, says the Apostle, is stronger than men (1 Cor. 1)." And elsewhere: "For although Christ was crucified from infirmity, yet he liveth from the power of God. For although we are weak in him, yet we live with him from the power of God (2 Cor. 13)." Indeed the men of this world, who ambiently desire to become bright with the virtue of wars, who wish their victories to be celebrated through the mouths of the common people, when they are about to enter battle, subject in their body what is weak and soft, and place over it what is hard and difficult to penetrate. Surely they clothe themselves with iron breastplates (loricis), they contend to guard the flesh, which easily yields to a blow, so that that hard and strong thing which is without may defend the soft thing which is within.

Our Redeemer, when he enters the field of this world about to fight, when as a strong warrior he is armed to defeat the wickednesses of this air, because he ought to instruct a new battle, he put on a new kind of arms, namely that he might superpose what is infirm, and hide what is robust; he put on the breastplate (loricam) indeed of weak flesh and hid the insuperable

fortitude of divinity. So, so through the flesh the devil lost from the second man he who through the flesh long ago overcame the first man, and the same was now made the cause of ruin to him which had been the material of victory over the first parent.

That thing premonished through the mystery of allegory that which David, fleeing from the face of King Saul, feigned himself to be mad in the presence of Achish, the king of Gath. For the Scripture says that "his salivae flowed down into his beard (1 Sam. 21)." Surely because the beard is proper to a man, what is it through mystic intellect unless the indication of virtue? What therefore through the salivae, which indeed are fluid and flux, unless the infirmity of the flesh? What truly through the beard, unless the fortitude of divinity is hinted at? The beard therefore is covered by the flowing salivae, because the virtue of divinity is clothed with the fragile veil of the flesh. But what David was doing by the industry of dispensation, this was thought to be insanity by those who knew not. Whence Achish said to his servants: "You have seen a madman, why have you brought him to me? Do we lack madmen, that you have introduced this one to be mad in my presence? (Ibid.)" Did not something similar happen even to the true David, our Redeemer, that he was thought to be insane by the insane and was said by the demoniacs to perform miracles through demons? Hence it is, that Mark the evangelist says: "And when his own had seen, they went out to lay hold on him. For they

said: That he is become mad (Mark 3)." To which words he soon added: "And the scribes who had come down from Jerusalem said: That he hath Beelzebub, and that by the prince of devils he casteth out devils (Ibid.)" Furthermore, because salivae frequently run out from the mouth of infants, did not his words seem like infantile things when he said: "Unless you shall eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you. Which the disciples hearing, said: This saying is hard, and who can hear it? (John 6)." And as the evangelist reports, "they walked no more with him." But those salivae were covering the beard of David, because under these infantile words divine virtue was lying hid.

Our Redeemer was therefore made infirm, that he might make us strong; he was seen as a fool, that he might recall us to true wisdom. Whence the Apostle says: "Because the foolish thing of God is wisdom to men." And a little above: "Because the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (1 Cor. 1)." Nor is it unworthy for infirmity or foolishness to be said concerning the Lord our Savior, since he did not disdain to be mystically figured even through a leper, and also through a serpent. Whence it is that, Scripture attesting, God said to Moses: "Put thy hand into thy bosom. Who when he had put it into his bosom, brought it forth leprous as snow. Draw back, he said, thy hand into thy bosom. He drew it back, and brought it forth again, and it was like the rest of the flesh (Exod.

4)." What is designated in this place by the hand of Moses unless the Son of God? Whence it is said in the Psalm: "Let thy hand be made to save me (Psalm 118)." As if he should say: Let him be made, through whom all things were made, that, while he is created, he may be freed from the contagion of his guilt. This hand is in the bosom of the Father, as John the Baptist says: "The Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him (John 1)." But this hand when it was brought forth from the bosom, that is, when it appeared through the mystery of the incarnation, the people from whom it proceeded estimated him a sinner, and as if drenched with the leprosy of crime. Whence Isaiah says: "And we thought him as a leper, and smitten by God and humbled (Isaiah 53)." But this hand when it returned into the bosom, utterly lost the leprosy; because our Redeemer after he returned to the Father, the empire of death having been trodden under foot, will now at the end of the world appear to all the Jews not as a sinful man, but truly as God and man. For it is written: "For if the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, the remnant shall be saved (Rom. 9)."

He was also figured through a serpent, when the Lord said to the same Moses: "What is that which thou holdest in thy hand? He answered: A rod. He said: Cast it down upon the ground. He cast it down, and it was turned into a serpent, so that Moses fled. And the Lord said: Extend thy hand, and take it by the tail. He extended it, and took it, and it was turned into a rod (Exod. 4)."

What by Moses, unless the Jewish people? And what by the rod, unless the power of the Divinity? And what by the serpent, unless the mortality of our Redeemer is expressed? For because through the serpent death, rightly mortality in the serpent, or surely, since it is written: "Be ye wise as serpents (Matt. 10);" because that same highest prudence, that is, the wisdom of God, deigned to be incarnated, rightly his mortality is figured in the serpent. Whence also in the Gospel he speaks concerning his passion, saying: "As Moses exalted the serpent in the desert, so must the son of man be exalted (John 3)."

Moses therefore held the rod, because the Jewish people before the coming of the Redeemer trusted in the divine power: but he cast the rod on the ground, because the same people through the patriarchs and prophets announced that God was to be incarnated. The rod truly is turned into a serpent, because our Redeemer, God remaining in himself, was made mortal among men. But Moses beholding the serpent was very afraid and fled, because the Jewish people while it saw the Redeemer of the human race mortal, while it would believe, was terrified as if fearful. To whom it is commanded that he hold the serpent by the tail, because that perfidious people, which now refuses to believe, in the extreme part of the Lord's body, that is, in the latter time of the holy Church, namely at the end of the world, recollects itself to the faith. And it holds the serpent by the tail, because him, whom it had before despised as mortal, it confesses as its Redeemer

in the last part already of the Church. But soon the serpent returns into a rod, because immediately as the Jewish people shall have believed in our Redeemer, the same Redeemer will appear for judgment in the power of his divinity, so that to it now the serpent may be a rod, because he who on earth was a despised man, coming from heaven, will be seen as God above the angels. Just as therefore the Lord is said through mystery to be a leper without leprosy and a serpent without venom; so nonetheless, he is perhibited as a fool without folly and infirm without imbecility. Who indeed so composes and contemperates himself to our infirmity that he both strives with those who fight and at the same time tolerates punishments with those who suffer.

What wonder therefore if Blessed Columba, while she stood before the tribunals of the rabid persecutor, was both strong in punishments and wise in responses; if, while she was being tortured, another was speaking through her? She indeed was moving her tongue, but another was forming the words. "For it is not you, he said, who speak, but the Spirit of your Father, who speaketh in you (Matt. 10)." It was hers to expose the body to punishment, it belonged to the other to minister the constancy of virtue and patience. She stood indeed before the tribunals of the king, she was tortured subjected to the hands of the executioner, but she derided both, more sublime than the one judging and more robust than the one punishing. Whence the bridegroom in the Canticles, as if directing his speech specially to

her, when he says: "How beautiful art thou and how comely, my dearest, in delights! Thy stature is like to a palm tree (Cant. 7)." For the holy mind is called most dear in delights, because while worn out it is afflicted without by persecutions, seething with pious desires it is recreated with the sweetness of inward pleasantness. Whose stature is said to be like a palm tree, because as it is not inclined by the blasts of titillating vices, so neither by the terrors of any persecutions whatsoever. And while the madness of those persecuting her beats her as if by the impacted rams of threats, she constantly leaning upon the foundation of unconquered faith, truly standing and supereminent perseveres insuperable. In no way like those, of whom it is said through the prophet concerning the malignant spirits: "Because they have humbled thee and have said to thy soul: Bow down, that we may pass over (Isaiah 51);" but rather observing that which the Lord said to the children of Israel: "I am, he said, the Lord God, who brought you out from the prison (*ergastulo*) of the Egyptians, that you might walk upright (Exod. 6)."

And since a palm is wont to adorn a victorious hand, rightly a holy and insuperable soul is perhibited to be like a palm tree, because through every course of its contest it meditates upon the reward of the victory performed. And for that reason he counts as nothing all that he tolerates in the lowest things, who erected like a palm, firmly hopes for that which he beholds in the heavenly things. To this is added, because

when he commemorates that the Lord of heaven has run through the same way of passion, he already greatly exults, who is dust and ashes, to imitate the footsteps of his Savior. Whence also the bridegroom says to the same bride: "The hair of thy head is like the king's purple joined to the channels (Cant. 7)." As by the head we understand the mind, so by the hair of the head we not inconveniently receive thoughts. For just as hairs come forth from the vertex, so thoughts proceed from the mind. But the purple color, because it has the appearance of blood, what does it hint through mystery unless the Lord's passion? But what do the channels signify unless the minds of the saints? For as in the channels of shellfishes blood is poured out, that the wool may be turned into a purple color: so in the minds of the saints the blood of the Lord's passion is recollected by meditation; and thus in some way any pious soul is dyed with blood, that it may imitate the purple of the eternal King. In this way indeed we are made conformable to our Savior, that we may also merit to be co-heirs afterwards.

The hair therefore of the head of the blessed martyr Columba was like the king's purple joined to the channels, because established in the passion of her own body, she recollected assidue the punishment of the Redeemer, lest namely she should succumb in her own passion, while she thought that her rewarder had preceded her through the same way. For the passion of the Lord is proposed to us as if a certain vicarious table, that whoever of us invited to it sit down,

we also may prepare similar things. To which the bridegroom invites us in the Canticles: "Eat, he says, O friends, and drink, and be inebriated, my dearly beloved (Cant. 5)." And in the Proverbs of Solomon: "If thou shalt sit, he says, to dine at the table of a powerful one, considerately understand what things are set before thee, and so put thy hand, knowing that it behooves thee to prepare such things (Prov. 23)."

Which is that table of the powerful one, unless whence is taken the body and blood of him who laid down his life for us? And what is it to sit at it, unless to approach humbly and reverently? Where considering those things which are set before us, we understand if we think worthily of the grace of so great a gift. And then we so put our hand that we may know that it is expedient for us to prepare such things, when we prudently understand that as Christ deigned to die for us, so we for him, if occasion be given, ought to lay down our lives. "For what, says the Psalmist, shall I render to the Lord for all the things that he hath rendered to me? I will take the cup of salvation (Psalm 115)." Hence it is also that the bridegroom in the Canticles to his beloved, when he had premissed: "Under the apple tree I raised thee up," consequently subjoined: "Put me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm (Cant. 8)." As if he should say: Because I have loved thee so much that through the death of the cross I raised thee up being dead; do thou also love me in return, and put me in thy not only thoughts, but also works, as a seal of integral and perfect

love. For by the apple tree we ought to receive the Lord's cross, to which tree indeed he elsewhere compares Christ himself, saying: "As the apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my beloved among the sons (Cant. 2)."

The apple tree is therefore the cross of Christ, through which the soul is raised, being namely loosed from the bonds of eternal death. "Put me," he says, "as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm (Cant. 8)." What should we understand by the heart, if not thoughts; what by the arm, if not the strength of work? We ought therefore to imprint Christ like a seal in our heart, so that no hostile irruption may prevail to violate this. We ought also to engrave Christ in our works, so that through all that we do, we may demonstrate ourselves to be the disciple of the Crucified teacher. The Apostle showed this seal to be significantly imprinted also upon his exterior life, when he said: "I bear the marks (stigmata) of Jesus in my body (Gal. 6)." And again: "Always carrying about the mortification of Jesus in our body (2 Cor. 4)."

Clearly, if our Savior considers us to be engraved with this character, he himself also places us as a seal for himself in a grateful turn. As he promised to Zerubbabel, the leader of Judea, through the prophet Haggai, saying: "In that day I will take thee, O Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, my servant, and I will place thee as a seal in my sight (Hag. 2)." But if we forget him, which God forbid, it is necessary that we ourselves consequently be delivered to oblivion by him: as the Lord says of the impious king: "If Jeconiah," he

says, "were a signet ring on my right hand, thence would I pluck him away (Jer. 22)." The blessed bride of Christ, Columba, had clearly imprinted this seal significantly upon herself within and without, since royal chambers could not resolve her to fluid allurements, nor the ambition of honor provoke her, nor the fury of thundering threats entwine her, nor certainly could any kind of hard and exquisite torments retard her from the impetus of her course. No hostile battle line could break into the sanctuary of the eternal King, fortified by this seal; no efforts of creeping frauds prevailed to violate it.

Girded therefore with the arms of virtues, the glorious martyr and virgin hastened through iron, through fires, through immense punishment to the heavenly kingdoms. Where now among the choirs of virgins she joins in jubilation by modulating a new song, and carries the palm of victory in her blessed hands. Where she is held fast in the chaste arms of her bridegroom, whom she had loved, is clothed with a stole of beauty, and is happily adorned with a crown of glory. Now therefore, like a golden star, she shines among the fiery stones of the supernal Jerusalem, and always sparkles festive in the gaze of him who, being the fountain of life and the origin of light, illustrates all those assisting him with the rays of unsetting splendor, Jesus Christ our Lord, who with God the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

EXTRAVAGANT SERMONS ON THE SAINTS. Sermo I. On the Birthday of the holy virgins.

Sermo II. On the same. Sermo I. On the dedication of a church. Sermo II. On the same. Sermo III. On the same. Sermo IV. On the same.

SERMON LXVII.

ON THE BIRTHDAY OF VIRGINS.

Among all the deeds of the saints, dearly beloved brethren, there is nothing that is more able either to kindle pious hearts to the love of the Creator, or more abundantly to excite them to act strongly, than the victory of the holy virgins. For who, having heard the name of a virgin, does not immediately recall to memory the beginning of human salvation, and does not recollect that singular birth of the untainted Virgin. To this is added that when the fragile sex is known to have obtained the victory of its contest, the mind of the hearer is more greedily inflamed to the labor of contending.

In this way therefore a virginal birth still buds, still that virginal fecundity accumulates the fruits of heavenly harvests, when the infirmity of a woman not only overcomes the sex, but also triumphs over the prince of this world with an insuperable magnanimity of mind. For to this end the Son of God was conceived from the flower of a budding womb, that he might turn the old leaven into the unleavened, and through the flesh, which had been conquered, might repair victory for the human race. Indeed he composed for himself a breastplate from our fragility, in which exulting as a giant, and pow-

erful and strong in battle, he fought down the aerial powers. Thus therefore from infirmity was constancy, from captivity victory, from ruin was ascension procured. Hence indeed it was brought about that the ancient enemy, who was applauding that victory had come to him through the folly of one woman; may now blush to see himself conquered and confounded through many women. According indeed to the voice of the prophet: "The yoke shall rot before the face of the oil (Isa. 10)." Because as soon as the grace of the Holy Spirit flowed into human minds, man is immediately both absolved from the yoke of the former servitude and is adorned with the title of a new liberty. Whence is that in the Canticles: "Thy name is as oil poured out (Cant. 1)." In Greek it is called chrism, in Latin unction. From chrism therefore Christ is named, and from Christ one is called a Christian. But through oil the Holy Spirit is wont to be understood, as is said through the Psalmist to our Savior: "God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows (Psalm 44)." Oil poured out therefore is the name of Christ, because in so many is the grace of the Holy Spirit propagated, as there are those who truly sort the name of Christ.

But it can move one why John the Baptist should perhibit that "God giveth not the spirit by measure (John 3);" while Paul on the contrary says: "To every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ (Ephes. 4)." How therefore not by measure, and how according to measure? (Coloss. 2.) But what

John asserts, that the spirit is given not by measure, ought without doubt to be understood of our Redeemer; in whom namely dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead corporally. Which is patently recognized if the series of the evangelical text itself is attended to. For when he had premissed: "God giveth not the Spirit by measure;" he immediately brought in: "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand (John 3)." Whence also elsewhere he says: "Of his fullness we have all received." John therefore agrees with the Psalmist, because to this one he takes away the measure, whom that one asserts to be anointed above his fellows.

But that the Apostle places a measure, this he wishes to be understood of each of the faithful. For according to the measure of the spirit there is in each a measure of virtue and of constancy, that he may either resist vices when they attempt in peace, or being established in a contest may insuperably run through torments. For Samson, as long as he had seven locks, was insuperable (Judg. 16), and he who has the Spirit of sevenfold grace, shows himself invincible when the tempest of any wars whatsoever rushes in.

Hence it is, that this most sacred virgin, whose glorious triumph we recall in today's solemnity, could more easily die than be recalled from that holy purpose which she had once conceived. For she was the temple of God, the court of the eternal King, the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, a virile strength shone in her feminine breast, which could not be bent by smooth-

talking persuasions, nor terrified by the asperity of threats, nor finally overcome by any kinds of punishments. For hers was a noble and inflexible mind, and therefore unknowing how to be conquered, because it also glowed kindled with the fervor of faith, and therefore was established as if on the summit of a high mountain. She judged the judge presiding in the chair of pestilence to be beneath her; she abhorred him when smooth, she mocked him when angry; and it was of as much value to her if he, menacing and terrible, should gnash his teeth, or certainly if he should inflict blows and wounds of an exquisite death, as if he were offering a weight of gems or of vibrating metals. Hence it is that the bridegroom says in the Canticles: "Arise, O north wind, and come, O south wind, blow through my garden, and let its aromatics flow (Cant. 4)." What is meant by the north wind, which indeed is a cold wind, unless the asperity of persecution? What by the warmth of the south wind, unless the remission of those who smoothly flatter? But among both kinds of persecution, among both arguments of the malignant spirit, the aromatics of the ecclesiastical garden are commanded to flow; because a strong mind caught among these contests opens whatever of strength, whatever of faith, whatever of insuperable fortitude it has hitherto hidden, and like aromatics they flow forth, virtues come forth to human notice, and spread the odors of a pious reputation far and wide.

This venerable virgin, therefore, sent forth aromatics in the field of contest, which previ-

ously were hidden in the secrets of her heart; crushed by the press of persecution, she scattered the odor of aromatic. For David was fighting in her as if in the stronghold of Zion against the face of Damascus; or rather, as in a fragile sex, he himself, small and despised, was fighting against the great Goliath with one stone (1 Sam. 17), of whom also in the book of Kings it is said as if in a heraldry of great praise: "David sitting in the chair, a most wise prince among three (2 Sam. 23)." He himself is like a most tender little worm of the wood, who killed eight hundred in one impetus. Why is it that David is raised up with a heraldry of such new, such unheard-of praise? Who is this one so humble and so sublime? Who, I say, is this David so weak and despised that he bears the appearance of a little worm? So strong and valid that in one impetus he kills eight hundred men? In the chaff of the letter it indeed seems ridiculous, if the sacrament did not lie hidden in the marrow of the spirit.

Who therefore is this little worm, except he who through the same David sings in the Psalm: "But I am a worm, and no man (Psalm 21)?" For just as a worm is begotten from the matter of wood alone, so the Catholic faith confesses Christ to have been begotten without virile seed from the virginal womb alone. But although the worm be tender and weak, and the hardness of the wood be strong and solid; yet the worm turns the wood into decay, and renders it cavernous and hollow. So our Redeemer, truly strong in hand and desirable, who emptied himself, who

having no form nor comeliness, appeared invalid and despised: gradually softened from its rigor the human race whence he arose, and procured for himself a great space of habitation in his elect. This David therefore sits in the chair, because established in the glory of the Father's majesty, he judges all things, to whom the Father says: "Sit at my right hand." He is most wise, because he is the very Wisdom of the Father.

But how is David called a prince among three, when he held the empire of the royal scepter not among any others, but rather over all? (Psalm 109.) For that praise depreciates, it does not exalt; it depresses, it does not raise; since he was not so much among three as he was over all. But while this sentence seems to disagree with that David, it is to him whom it can most aptly agree. For that blessed and singular man, who is mystically called a worm, as soon as he is received by the Word in unity of person, reigns not unequally in the Holy Trinity. He is therefore a prince among three, because he is united to the Word, which is one person in the Holy Trinity. This one killed eight hundred in one impetus. The number eight pertains to the resurrection, the number hundred to perfection. David therefore killed eight hundred in one impetus, because our Savior killed with the sword of his spirit all who either seek the perfection of faith or desire the glory of the resurrection, while through the mystery of his incarnation and cross he rendered them dead to the love of this world; and this he worked in one impetus, that is, in one advent

of his incarnation. For once he died for our sins, he dies no more (Rom. 6). Or is his advent not rightly called an impetus, of which Solomon says: "Behold he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping over the hills (Cant. 2)?" And David: "He hath rejoiced," he says, "as a giant to run the way (Psalm 18)." For he who runs undoubtedly makes an impetus. For also the Word of God, as a river of living waters, came with impetus, and like a torrent subverts all the pollutions of burning doctrines. Whence also in the Song of Songs it is said: "A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, which flow with impetus from Lebanon (Cant. 4)." Hence also the Psalmist: "The impetus of the river maketh glad the city of God (Psalm 45)."

To this king therefore, so humble and so sublime, so weak but thus most strong, let us return thanks, who for that reason deigned to become a worm on the wood, that he might establish us as citizens in heaven. Therefore he permitted the ancient enemy of the human race to rise up against him, that through him he might afterwards triumph not only through men, but also through women, Jesus Christ our Lord, who with God the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

SERMON LXVIII.

II. ON THE BIRTHDAY OF VIRGINS.

Today, dearly beloved brethren, a virginal beauty has shone upon us, which has renewed in

our memory the victory of divine virtue. Furthermore, the more fragile the sex, the weaker the vessel which carries the triumph from the enemy, with so much greater reproach of confusion is the devil clothed, so much more wonderful is God recognized in his saints, so much more joyfully also is Christ the king of martyrs delighted in his female defenders. Hence it is also, that our Savior coming into the field of this world to fight down the aerial powers, chose not rhetoricians and philosophers, but the simple and those altogether ignorant of literary industry; so that in both sexes it may be true what the Apostle says: "Because not many wise according to the flesh, not many powerful, not many noble, but the foolish things of this world hath God chosen, that he may confound the strong: and the base things of the world and the contemptible things hath God chosen, and things that are not, that he might destroy those that are, that no flesh should glory in his sight (2 Cor. 1)." For to such ones almighty God often gives a more abundant grace of preaching, and through them convinces the crafty arguments of worldly wisdom. Hence it is that the bridegroom says to the bride in the Canticles: "Thy navel is like a turned bowl, never wanting cups (Cant. 7)." But the navel is the most fragile part of the body. What therefore is designated by the navel of the Church, unless the assembly of the infirm and weak? But what by the bowl, unless we understand the order of preachers: who indeed proffer the wines of heav-

enly doctrine to the minds of the hearers, and inebriate them with the cups of holy preaching?

The navel of the Church, therefore, is rightly compared to a bowl, because frequently anyone weak and infirm is made a vessel of heavenly doctrine. Which does not want for cups, because it does not cease to be watered by the streams of heavenly eloquence. Whence well is this bowl said to be turned, since one works more easily with a lathe. For they often run through holy preaching more expeditiously and without offense, who have received the grace of preaching not by their own study, but divinely. That victory of Samson figured this grace of preaching to be given to simple men, or to holy women, by which namely seizing a warm jawbone of an ass, he killed a thousand men of the Philistines (Judg. 15). For what is signified by the jawbone of an ass, which indeed is a simple animal, unless the unskilful mouths of simple men? Samson therefore, not with arms, not with various kinds of missiles, but with the jawbone of an ass killed a thousand men; because our Redeemer, whom he signified, with the unskilful and rude extinguished the perfect number of infidels from the life of the old error.

But what wonder if sacred eloquence should designate holy preachers through the jawbone of an ass, when it also denounces the very word of preaching through barley at times, which is indeed the fodder of beasts of burden. Which certainly is recognized not only through the five evangelical loaves, but also through this which

is found in the book of Judges. For when Gideon is directed, by the Lord's command, to the camp of Midian for the sake of eavesdropping, one Midianite professes to another that he had seen a dream. "It seemed, he says, to me as if a barley bread baked under ashes was rolled, and descended into the camp of Midian (Judg. 7)." And when it had come to the tabernacle, it struck it, and subverted it, and leveled it utterly to the ground. The hearer responded: "This is nothing else than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash the Israelite: for the Lord hath delivered into his hand Midian, and all his camp." By Gideon, who is said not to be a circuiter, but a circum-goer in the womb, he is rightly designated, who while he was enclosed in the virginal womb was encompassing the whole machine of the world, and was disposing it by his empire. But by Midian, which is interpreted as from judgment, the infidel people are received, of whom the Lord says: "He that believeth not, is already judged (John 3)."

Furthermore, until the advent of the Savior, after the manner of barley under the chaff of the letters, both the precepts of the law and the oracles of the prophets were hidden; but after he coming, broke the barley loaves, and gave them to the disciples, that they might set them before the crowds: of which work also the exposition is what the Evangelist says: "Because he opened their sense, that they might understand the Scriptures (Luke 24);" already from barley, which seemed to agree with brute animals, he deigned to make the bread of souls. For just as

barley is crushed between both millstones, that the bran may be separated from the mixture of flour; so as if between two stones, namely of the Law and the Gospel, the doctrine of the holy Church is ground together, that the surface of the letter may be discerned from the marrows of the spirit. But that we may not dwell longer in these words, this barley flour, sprinkled with the water of sacred baptism, mixed, and thoroughly cooked by the fire of the Holy Spirit, becomes bread, which namely subverts the camp of Midian, because it destroys all the machines of infidels. This bread, according to the conjecture of that true interpreter, is the sword of Gideon; because, as the Apostle says: "The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God (Ephes. 6)."

With this sword of the Holy Spirit, Christ the king of armies arms his soldiers, with this he also ungirds and strengthens his female warriors. From both sexes indeed he instructs the wedges of his warfare, and composes the battle lines, because he admits men and women indifferently to the preparation of the blessed contest. And although God be wonderful in men, yet more wonderfully and gloriously does he triumph in women. To this warfare furthermore Judith was ascribed, who while she rejected the gilded and gemmed chambers of Holofernes, cut off the drunk head of the luxurious prince with his own dagger (Judith 13). Of this warfare Esther was a consort, who while she soothed the fierce minds of King Ahasuerus with skillful speeches, both rescued Mordecai from the sentence of imminent

death and retorted upon the head of Haman, who had existed as the author of this death, the arguments of worthy damnation (Esther 8). Deborah rejoiced to carry this warfare, who while she governed the Israelite people with prophetic oracles, also engaging in battle like a certain Bellona of God, destroyed the copious army of King Jabin and absolved the people of God from the yoke of most hard servitude (Judg. 4). Jael the wife of Heber serves this warfare, when she indeed blandly received Sisera fleeing within the tabernacle, but transfixed his brain with a nail of the tabernacle through both temples (ibid.).

Of this warfare certainly that distinguished female warrior was a participant, namely blessed Felicity, who while she sent seven sons before her into the contest, saving for herself also the reward of her own contest, triumphed in a sevenfold martyrdom in her offspring. This warfare also this most bright virgin, whose votive festivity is celebrated today, strenuously carried. Who namely held the victory of a double fight, while she both tamed the titillating incentives of the flesh, and trampled the horrific torments of punishments brought upon her. O with how great rewards will she be accumulated in the retribution of the just! with how much glory will she be enriched, Christ judging, who was weighed down by so great a weight of the cross of Christ! For according to the voice of Truth, "the seed which fell into the earth, one brought forth thirty-fold, another sixty-fold, another a hundred-fold fruit (Matt. 13)."

Since therefore, as authentic doctors expound, a hundred-fold fruit is owed to virginity, with how great gifts will this blessed virgin be accumulated, with the infulae of how distinguished a grace will she be adorned, who after she had harvested a hundred-fold fruits from virginity, also reported the crown of martyrdom with so much glory? For when she was established in the contest, fortified by the breastplate of faith and girded with the arms of invincible patience and twofold charity, she was surrounded by double columns of diverse enemies. Within she fought against seditious citizens, without she contended against the battle lines of persecutors and those resisting the faith. For two camps stood one female warrior. Here she defended the enclosure of modesty; there, with the character of her Bridegroom imprinted, the seal of faith. Thus a hand taught for battle, the shield of virtue being moved around on all sides, now repelled the poison-smeared weapons of luxury, now the hail of rushing javelins from imminent perfidy.

Therefore the judge of the contest of God said: "I am black but beautiful, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the skin of Solomon (Cant. 1)." Kedar is interpreted as darkness; these are the infidels not having the light of faith. "I am black," she says, on account of the heat of persecution, on account of the adversities which I suffer from the sons of darkness. But within I am beautiful, because "the king hath desired my beauty, and all my glory is from within." I am beautiful, I say, like a skin, that

is, like the tabernacle of Solomon. For as a tabernacle is made from the skins of dead animals, so only those are the habitation of God who, being dead together with Christ, are also extinct to the vices and concupiscences of the flesh. For neither could this virgin have died for the Lord, unless she had first been dead to the world. "Consider me not," she says, "that I am brown because the sun hath altered my color (Cant. 1)."

O daughters of Jerusalem, that is, O faithful souls, established in that heavenly glory through desire, do not consider me that I am brown, that is, do not despair, or be too much terrified, because tribulations oppress me, because persecutions affect me, because in this shipwreck of tempest and storms the swelling waves strike me, because the sun has altered my color, since the heat of persecution has glowed white upon me, and has darkened the beauty of my comeliness and loveliness. As if she should say: Do not so much attend to those things by which I am afflicted from without, as consider the budding species of interior comeliness. Such is also what the Apostle says: "Do not faint in my tribulations for you, which is your glory (Ephes. 3); for the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the future glory which shall be revealed in us (Rom. 8)." But this interior beauty and exterior blackness Jeremiah briefly comprehends, saying: "Her Nazarites were whiter than snow, purer than milk, ruddier than old ivory, more beautiful than sapphire (Lam. 4)." Behold the beauty, but hear the blackness; for immedi-

ately there follows: "Their face is made blacker than coals, and they are not known in the streets. Their skin hath cleaved to their bones, it is withered, and is become like wood (ibid.)." But we behold the exterior blackness, let her open whence the interior beauty may be: "Show me, she says, him whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou liest in the midday (Cant. 1)." As if she should say: O heavenly Bridegroom, whom my soul ineffably loveth, in whom through desire it continually rests, whom it embraces with the arms of intimate love, in whom it is delighted with all its bowels, tell me where thou feedest, that is, thou who art the good shepherd, where thou makest thy sheep to feed, also where thou thyself liest, that is, where thou restest in the heat of persecution and the fervor of our temptation; where namely, except in those who know not how to yield to the raging madness, and do not succumbing enervatedly to the attempts of thick-coming malice.

Thence therefore this bride was saying that she was beautiful, because he in that very point of persecution was resting delightfully in her, who by the serenity of his countenance clarifies all things. Whence also the bridegroom to her: "Thou art all fair, he says, O my love, and there is no spot in thee (Cant. 4)." All fair within and without, without in the perfection of a bright work, within in the purity of a most pure thought. And she what to the bridegroom? "My beloved, she says, is white and ruddy, and altogether desirable (Cant. 5)." The beloved is white in vir-

ginity, ruddy in passion. "For he hath washed us from our sins in his blood (Apoc. 1)." But he is altogether desirable, because he is desirable in his singular birth, in his life-giving death, in his glorious resurrection, in his triumphal ascension. He is desirable while he speaks, while he works wonders. And O how distinguished and sweet a commerce where by mutual preaching in turn the Bridegroom and bride, the Creator and the creature are praised! Thus is fulfilled what is said through the Psalmist: "Let my speech be pleasant to him, but I will be delighted in the Lord (Psalm 103)."

And in truth this is that part of the human race, namely the virginal choir, in which almighty God is more readily and specially delighted. For let it be that all the disciples are loved by the Lord, as he is loved by the Father, he himself perhibiting, says: "As the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you (John 15)." Let it be that Peter received the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Let it be that in heaven and earth, he sorted the primacy of binding and loosing (Matt. 16), yet John, because he is a virgin, he is the disciple whom Jesus loved (John 13). Hence it is also that in the Apocalypse John says: "Because no one could say the song, except those hundred and forty-four thousand, who were bought from the earth; these are they who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins, these follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth (Apoc. 14)." But that many virgins may be able to follow this Lamb where he walks, he himself gives constancy in preserving virginity,

victory in overcoming temptation, a crown in the retribution of the reward. He himself says: "I am the lily of the valleys (Cant. 2)." A lily clearly on account of the snowy whiteness of most pure chastity. A lily not of the mountains, but of the valleys, because he chooses the pious minds of the humble, he does not inhabit the rocks of the proud.

This Lamb, most beloved, let us follow in the way, which being placed in this life he held, that we may also merit to follow in glory, to which having conquered death he ascended. Let us consider diligently where his footsteps are imprinted, nor let us decline from the path of him walking, if we wish to be consorts of him reigning. The leader of our journey stood as the carrier of the cross, he was fed with gall. He therefore who desires to follow the standard of this leader, let him despise the honey of carnal sweetness. "For we cannot, according to the voice of Paul, rejoice here of the world, and there reign with Christ." Hence it is, that by the command of the law, every sacrifice is sprinkled with salt, but honey, or leaven, is utterly prohibited to be burnt in sacrifice. Whence the Lord to Moses in Leviticus: "Every oblation, he says, which is offered to the Lord, shall be made without leaven, nor shall any leaven or honey be burnt in the sacrifice of the Lord (Levit. 2)." For whoever seems to expend either rapine in a work of piety, or to exercise anything good for the sake of vain glory, this one attempts to offer not the unleavened of sincerity and truth, but the leaven of malice and wicked-

ness (1 Cor. 5). The Lord also does not approve the sacrifice of honey, because he damns the pleasure of luxury and all the sweetness of carnal allurement. But salt is commanded to be applied to all oblations, that whatever we offer to the Lord upon the altar of a devoted heart, we may always study to season with the flavor of reason and intelligence. For he says: "Whatever thou shalt offer of sacrifice, thou shalt season with salt, nor shalt thou take away the salt of the covenant of thy God from thy sacrifice." And that he might inculcate more deeply what he was saying, and lest our mind should perhaps at some time foolishly become unsavory, still redoubling, he says: "In every oblation of thine thou shalt offer salt (Col. 4)." This clearly is that salt of which the Apostle says: "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be always in grace seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man (ibid.)." Of this salt also the Lord says: "If the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned? (Matt. 5.)" Let us not therefore be unsavory salt, lest, which God forbid, arriving he should find us with the foolish virgins, and should close the door of the nuptial feast to us knocking and groaning, but let us study through divine grace to be salt of this kind, which he wants us to be, who says to his disciples: "Ye are the salt of the earth (ibid.)," so that relinquishing the works of darkness, we may now labor to walk as sons of light, and afterwards among the wise virgins, with lamps kindled, we may merit to meet the arriving Judge, who with

God the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns through all ages of ages. Amen.

SERMON LXIX.

I. ON THE DEDICATION OF A CHURCH.

After the cross, after the virgin, after the angels, what is greater on earth, what more sublime in the heavens? She surely whom the Most High accepted, who wounded the heart of her Bridegroom, to whom the same Bridegroom says in the Canticles: "Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my bride, in one lock of thy neck, and in one of thine eyes (Cant. 4)." How beautiful is this bride, who in one little hair and the sparkle of a little eye wounds the King of heavens, the Lord of angels, the Son of God the Father. Of her we speak, although the speech be not in our tongue. This is she who is placed for the pride of ages, whose glory is from sea even unto sea, whom kings and princes serve, whom a multitude of heavenly legions flies around, in whom the fountain of wisdom is laid up, "a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed." A garden where bright rose-bushes flash with a more beautiful color, and happy rods are accumulated with the glory of flowers and fruits; a garden which the alternation of winds does not touch, where the grace of a softer breeze frequently breathes and a budding loveliness allures those beholding; enclosed, not by a machine of walls, nor by the glutinous tenacity of the stones of cementers, but walled by an angelic station; a fountain, from which the fountains of Israel are

derived, which waters the universal surface of the earth, both inebriating and cleansing; sealed, clearly with the seal of the whole Trinity, which that malignant burglar would not dare, I do not say to break, but not even to touch. In her dead buds regerminate and drier signs easily turn green again.

In her is gathered a manifold variety of sacraments, and the antiquity of the mercies of the Lord our God is covered. And that we may briefly disclose the search of our little intelligence, there are twelve sacraments in the Church, which the piety of one faith covers, around whose instance the authority of the Christian religion is reflected.

The first is the sacrament of baptism (see the Scholia at the foot of the sermon). This is more precious than all riches, and all things which are desired are not able to be compared to this. For who may fulfill by thought of heart, or by volubility of speech, how great sacraments are completed in the substance of waters? Before the world was being travailed with and from unformed matter the diversity of multiform species should leap forth, the Spirit of God was borne in the manner of a charioteer over the waters (Gen. 1), and was pre-soothing this element with a figural obsequiousness. The heaven itself compact from waters the authority of the Hebrews delivers, and through waters that universal purgation is celebrated. The patriarchs become uxorious at the waters, and through waters the terrible murmur of the Jews is extinguished.

All that series of the Old Instrument more diligently introspected, has consigned a greater height of sacraments in the matter of waters. The Savior himself following the law, announced the beginning of his itinerary to the waters, when in the river that sublime power willed to be baptized by that great man (Matt. 3). The first miracle he made from waters (John 2). To the Samaritan woman by the well of waters he repromises a fountain of water leaping into eternal life (John 4). Finally he who from waters had begun, ended in waters. For from the wounded side of the Crucified, there flowed water (John 19), which whitened the orb of the lands with a purgatorial washing. At the last an inclusive sentence imbuing the apostolic choir: "Go, he says, baptize all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Mark 16)." Do you not therefore clearly gather that the sublimity of both laws has refounded the force of sacramental things in the liquor of this element? Let the paucity of examples not move you, when very many were at hand, had the speech not avoided prolixity.

The second is the sacrament of confirmation. In baptism the Spirit is given for pardon, here for battle; there we are cleansed from iniquities, here we are pre-fortified with virtues. Does not the consecrated hand imprint the unction of sacred Chrism on the lintel of the forehead of our terrestrial house? Nor is any one whatsoever read as the executor of so great a mystery, but the bishop alone, upon whose head the oil of

unction is poured, and to whose dominion the priestly multitude is subjected. The authority of the ancients delivered the grace of baptism to every man, or every sex; but only the pontifical person vindicates the ensign of confirmation to his own dignity. Thence it is that the decretal pages, and the institutes of the holy Fathers decree, that the virtue of this sacrament is not to be deferred after baptism, lest that fraudulent distorter should find us unarmed, from whom no one ever extorted a truce of harming. Being therefore anointed with the ointment of both dews, healed by that, comforted by this, let us descend more securely to the singular contest. Nor let the arms of Goliath deter us, or his statural magnitude move us, because great with us is the Lord our God, and great is his virtue (Psalm 146), apprehending arms and shield, that he may rise up for our help (Psalm 34).

The third is the unction of the sick. To us weakening, and even unto death languishing with the mortal fever of sins, the Spirit of piety assists, and has remembered that we are dust. For the divine James says: "Is any among you sick? Let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall alleviate him; and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him (James 5)." A solemn unction, an excellent liquor, by which health is restored, sin is forgiven, the fear of the Lord is sent in. Do you see how the priestly hand alleviates the body of the weaken-

ing one, and the most sacred unction mitigates the alluring motion of the senses? Whence also the holy Fathers have sanctioned this unction to be a sacrament.

The fourth is the consecration of a pontiff. This, as it is more sublime, so it is approved as more worthy. For when by canonical sanctions a person is chosen, who ought to undergo the summit of so great a dignity, a brighter pontiff is called forth with the other pontiffs. The Church is prepared, about to receive a father from a son. His head is anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows, in the figure of him who, in the virginal chamber being more profusely bedewed with spiritual balsam, distilled the oil of blessing upon the sons of men. The hands also are smeared, so that whatever they shall have blessed may be blessed and may be acceptable to the sight of the divine majesty. The evangelical page is also placed upon his head as he reclines, that he may both feel his own reason to be exceeded by the word of life, and his eyes may fail for the speech of the Lord. The miter (cidaris) is placed on the consecrated head, and the glory of the forehead is pre-signified by a golden plate, in which the name of the divinity is woven. The ring of secrets is delivered into his hand, so that he may say with the Prophet: "In my heart have I hidden thy speeches, that I may not sin against thee (Psalm 118)." The feet are also shod in the preparation of the Gospel of peace (Ephes. 6), that he may be of those of whom it is said: "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach peace

(Isa. 52)." He also receives the pastoral staff, so that from the very quality of the rod it may be signified how he may collect the mild, and correct the unquiet. So, so pre-flashing with the solemn glorification of vestments, and entering and going out more familiarly to the altar of God, he devolves the wrath of the judge into the mercy of the father by a happy commutation. This one has the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God (Ephes. 6). This one can deliver to Satan for the destruction of the flesh (1 Cor. 5).

The fifth is the anointing of a king. This is a sublime besmearing, because it makes a sublime power. For when the blood of such great nobility, either by lineage or by election, is consecrated as king, religion with nobility is called together with all the forces of the kingdom. There stands on one side the glorious society of primates, metropolitans, and bishops; on the other, the not-to-be-despised nobility of dukes, counts, and castellans. The man proceeds in the midst, about to reign over men, surrounded by a personal troop. He is led finally to the altar of the sublime Prince, about to obtain the beginning of his reign from Him through whom kings reign (Prov. 8). But before he is clothed with the imperial ornaments, the will of the clergy and the people is required concerning him, and with his own hand he swears to the liberty of the Churches. From then on he is divested of his garments and is sprinkled with the oil of sanctification, so that, bedewed with the typical dew, he may glory in the fullness of the heavenly ointment. He is finally clothed

with purple, which is the ensign of royal majesty, bearing the scepter of the kingdom in his hands to rule the holy people of God. A golden crown is also placed upon his head, expressed with the sign of holiness, the glory of honor, and the help of fortitude (Ecclus. 45). The sword is also carried before his eyes, so that he may know that he is the avenger of the wrath of God, appointed for this very thing. Having been initiated, therefore, by so many and such great mysteries, he is carried back to the palace, from that day and thereafter to be feared and loved alike. Happy is he, however, if he joins the sword of the kingdom with the sword of the priesthood, so that the sword of the priest may mitigate the sword of the king, and the sword of the king may whet the sword of the priest. These are the two swords of which one reads in the passion of the Lord: "Behold, here are two swords; and it is answered by the Lord: It is enough (Luke 22)." For then the kingdom is promoted, the priesthood is dilated, both are honored, when they are joined by the happy confederation pre-taxed by the Lord.

The sixth is the sacrament of the dedication of a church. It can hardly be said how great a variety of sacraments and alternation of institutes there is in this place. For first the church is whitened inside and out, twelve crosses are imprinted in the interior circuit of the church, as many wax tapers are lit, the church is cleansed, the pontiff goes around the church on the outside with holy water, and striking the lintel of the door thrice with the pastoral staff, he says: "Lift up your

gates, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of glory shall enter in;" those within answering: "Who is this King of glory?" (Psalm 23.) Then he blesses water sprinkled with salt, ash, wine, and hyssop, he writes out the alphabet transversely in a quadrangular manner, he sprinkles the altar seven times with the same water, he anoints the crosses with chrism, and the altar indeed with a mixture of chrism and oil, he burns incense at the four corners of the altar, he covers the wiped altar with new veils, and many other things which the brevity of the speech does not permit to insert. After these things, heaped with all the glory of vestments, he enters to the altar, about to celebrate the singular sacrifice, and thus about to put an end to the sanctification. Who could illuminate the darkness of this abyss with the clarity of speech? Yet we would have touched it ever so little, unless in our times a certain one, who presided over the church of Chartres, had declared all things more lucidly with a most vivid fire of the mind. To that most full fountain, therefore, we send the thirsty one, where he may draw the most full truth. It is to be noted, however, that the preceding sacraments are not done without visible unction, while the subsequent ones are read to contain nothing of this kind by merit.

The seventh is the sacrament of confession. How great or of what kind the good of confession may be, is not to be extolled by the praises of our thinness, since the preeminent geniuses of the Fathers have distinguished it with many documents. This is the common way to God, a

fountain open to the just as well as to sinners, which wipes away the abundance of crimes with a more abundant liquor. It restores the first robe of innocence, and reduces the fugitive son into the paternal embraces (Luke 15). From this fountain the happy tears of the apostle flowed forth; in this the demons of the sinful woman were submerged (Luke 7); through this the adulterer and homicide David (2 Kings 11) is read to have been confirmed by the principal spirit (Psalm 50); in this that happy robber wallowed, who by a short bridge of the cross was translated from the gallows to the kingdom, from punishment into paradise (Luke 23), consummated in a short time, he fulfilled many times (Wisd. 4).

In this virtue the eyes of very many grow dark, who either deprived of discretion or seduced by flattery, either do not know what they should enjoin, or, if they know, they prefer private grace to the truth. Truly we have not undertaken here to open what we feel from it, but we reserve its property for our own speech. Let it not be tedious, however, for the reader to understand this, that he who confesses to his pastor ought to exhibit purity of heart, truth of mouth, and maceration of the flesh. But he to whom he confesses should care to administer to his confessor a worthy penance, continuous prayer, and perpetual taciturnity.

The eighth is that of the canons. These are those sublimated on the throne of the Church, who, refulgent in white garments in the episcopal see, repromise the innocence of hearts by

the color of their clothes. These, living from common and in common, or owing to live, are to be corrected by perpetual penance if they shall have sinned; for their habit is shown to be not of penance, but of innocence. Let the friends of the Bridegroom themselves see what they should answer before the face of the Bridegroom, who judges the orb of the earth in equity, when He shall have begun to require an account of the bride. We do not wish to be carried against them, but let them beware of this alone, lest they be poured in with more sumptuous feasts from the patrimony of the Crucified, or be adorned with more neat garments, lest they hear from the prophet: "They were not compassionate over the contrition of Joseph (Amos 6)."

The ninth is that of the monks. These are they who, elongated from the tumults of forensic causes, patiently elude the delusive incantations of demons. Assiduous in the Scriptures, principal in obedience, fervid in charity, they contemplate the joys of the blessed city from the vestibule. Let them look around themselves, however, lest they trust in the vileness of a larger tonsure or a looser shoe, since man sees in the face, but God in the heart.

The tenth is that of the hermits, who, lurking through the caverns of mountains and the hollows of valleys, associated with angelic spirits, are snatched with contemplative eyes into the riches of glory, and in the flesh forgetting the flesh, they fatigue their nature with untiring meditation.

The eleventh is that of the nuns. These, conquering sex and the world with a stronger daring, report a spectacular victory from the ferocity of the ancient enemy. A glorious thing, where tender members are broken by a longer martyrdom, and they enervate the fortitude of him who coveted the likeness of the Most High. To the spectacle of this fight that merciful intuition is quickly converted, and is delighted by such a victory most of all.

The twelfth is the sacrament of marriage. This is great, says the Apostle (Ephes. 5); and the Lord in the Gospel: "For this a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh (Mark 10)." For what is more one than they who have one flesh, one table, one bed, one inheritance? "Honorable is marriage, says the Vessel of election, the bed undefiled (Hebr. 13)." By this incestuous marriages are destroyed, and a worthy progeny of legitimate heirs is propagated. These are the twelve sacraments, which (unless I am mistaken) those twelve crosses signify, which we see imprinted in the circuit of the church. But already the stylus must be dismissed, because both the poverty of genius and the infirmity of the flesh, which has overflowed more harshly than usual, forbid me to write anything longer. If I shall be able to recover, I will pursue what I have begun, to the honor of Him who is blessed forever. Amen.

SERMON LXX.

II. ON THE DEDICATION OF A CHURCH.

"Immolate to God the sacrifice of praise, and render thy vows to the Most High (Psalm 49)." There are three principal and perfect sacrifices, which we are bound to render to the Lord. The sacrifice of pious contrition, the sacrifice of just operation, the sacrifice of praise or jubilation. Two of these are necessary in the present, the third begins here, and will be consummated in the future. Of the first it is said: "A sacrifice to God is a troubled spirit (Psalm 50)." Of the second: "Sacrifice the sacrifice of justice (Psalm 4);" and elsewhere: "Then shalt thou accept the sacrifice of justice (Psalm 50)." Of the third: "Blessed is the people that knoweth jubilation (Psalm 88)." Likewise: "The sacrifice of praise shall honor me (Psalm 49)." The first sacrifice placates God, the second delights Him, the third honors Him. God does not care for these sacrifices unless they are marrowy and fattened. Whence the psalmist says: "As with marrow and fatness let my soul be filled (Psalm 62)."

In the law all fat is commanded to be offered, and a fat holocaust is praised. For lean flesh, and without fatness, neither when it is eaten does it provide flavor, nor when it is roasted does it return odor. But this fatness ought to be understood not of the body, but of the spirit; not of the flesh, but of the mind. The fatness of the soul are virtues. These smell sweetly, these in the sacrifice of God please the Lord, and without these no sacrifice is acceptable. With this fat were they fat of whom it is said: "All the fat ones of the earth have eaten and adored (Psalm 21)." And likewise the

three boys in Daniel: "As in a holocaust of rams and bulls, and as in thousands of fat lambs, so let our sacrifice be made (Dan. 3)." That therefore these sacrifices of ours may please God, let them be fat and marrowy.

The sacrifice of pious contrition requires the butter of humility, which consists in three things; namely, that a man consider how imperfect is that which he has, and this in respect to superiors; whence that: "That I may know what is wanting to me (Psalm 38)." Then, that he consider that he has nothing of his own; whence the Apostle: "What hast thou that thou hast not received?" (1 Cor. 4.) Let him consider also, that he has nothing in this life which he cannot lose, according to that: "Remember whence thou hast fallen, and do the first works (Apoc. 2)." The sacrifice of just operation requires the oil of discretion. The sacrifice of praise requires the balsam of devotion.

But these sacrifices have vices opposite to them, coming as if from the side. To the sacrifice of contrition is opposed the wormwood of indignation; to the sacrifice of just operation, the vinegar of confusion; to the sacrifice of praise, the poison of flattery or of detraction. Let us offer therefore, most dearly beloved, to the Lord a pious contrition in interior bitterness and exterior penance; so that "we may live soberly, justly and piously in this world (Tit. 2)." Soberly to ourselves, justly to our neighbor, piously to God. Soberly in two things: in avoiding pleasure and the cares of this life; justly in two things: so that we may harm no one, and may study to benefit

all, according to that: "Decline from evil, and do good (Psalm 56);" piously in two things: so that namely in the present the just man may live by faith, and in the future may expect eternal beatitude. Whence the Apostle: "We know in part, and we prophesy in part, but when that which is perfect shall have come, that which is in part shall be evacuated (1 Cor. 13)." Let us offer worthy praise in the confession of the mouth and the devotion of the heart. For pious contrition of heart is born from the recollection of sins and the fear of the future judgment; just operation, from the love of virtue and the confidence of hope; praise and jubilation from the affection of charity and the recollection of the benefits of God.

But there are three recollections of sin: the first affecting and delighting, which is bad; the second exasperating and pricking, which is useful; the third glorious, which is of the perfect. The affecting one is that by which a man is affected thinking back to the flesh-pots of the Egyptians, how deliciously and sweetly he lived (Exod. 16); and how arduous is the way which he is about to enter upon. The pricking recollection is that he remembers how sordidly and flagitiously he lived, not so that he may return to the prior things, but that he may worthily bewail them and set them before himself, whence David: "My sin is before me always (Psalm 50)." The third recollection, which is called glorious, is when a man, remeditating who he was, and by what grace he was liberated from the lake of misery and from the mud of dregs, gives thanks, saying: "Not to us, O Lord, not to us,

but to thy name give glory (Psalm 113)." And with the Israelites liberated from Egyptian servitude, he decants congratulatingly, saying: "Let us sing to the Lord, for he is gloriously honored, the horse and the rider he has cast into the sea (Exod. 15);" and with Zacharias: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, because he has visited and made redemption for his people (Luke 1)." These are what we ought to offer to God.

We are also bound to render to Him the vows which we have made, according to the admiration of the Prophet: "Come, and render to the Lord your God." He who does not render what he vows, as it were provokes and mocks God. The vow is to be rendered whole and perfect, because otherwise it would not satisfy God, who requires our vow as his own due. Whence also in the law it is said, that an ox and a sheep, with ear and tail amputated, we can voluntarily offer (Levit. 22:23). But a vow cannot be paid from those things in which something of perfection is wanting.

"God made," he says, "two great luminaries (Gen. 1)." It is indeed true that God in the creation of the world distinguished the clear heaven with the ornament of the sun and the moon, so that the one should govern the vicissitude of the day, the other of the night. Furthermore, if we search more interiorly, we shall find the secret of allegory to respond to us. For the Church bears the figure of the world, because just as the world subsists from four elements, so the Church coalesces from the quaternary doctrine of the

Gospel. Moreover, the Church has its own day, and it has the moon in the night. The day of the Church is the time of peace; the night of the Church is the tempest of persecution. But the sun in the day of the Church is wisdom; and the moon in the night of the Church is patience. With these lights God painted his Church, so that in peace it may not be improvident and in war it may not be found soft and broken. Through wisdom the Church protects itself in peace from demons, through patience it defends itself in war from persecutors. The Church does not limp, it is not unarmed; it wisely eludes divine arguments, and patiently sustains the torments of men.

The comparison of the sun to wisdom and the moon to patience is altogether right, because just as the sun prevails over the moon, so wisdom prevails over patience. Wisdom is therefore the sun, because it illuminates; patience the moon, because it comforts. With these twin arms the Church fights, with the one prostrating demons, with the other conquering men. God therefore made these two great luminaries, with which the Church is adorned, with which as with two eyes the dove of Christ is fortified.

The clouds of allegory having been dissolved, we can also draw this rivulet of Scripture to irrigate our morals. For just as God made two great luminaries in this world, so also in man he ordained two great luminaries. Let it not seem harsh to anyone, what we say; for man is another world, whence in the Greek tongue itself he is called microcosmos, that is, a minor world,

because he was made to the likeness of the major world. For just as God presides over the major world, so that he is everywhere whole; so the soul dominates the body, so that it is everywhere whole in the body.

Man therefore has a day, he has also a night; he has a sun in the day, he has a moon in the night. The day of man is the life of justice, the night of man is the life of iniquity. But the sun in the life of justice is charity which presides over the life of justice; and the moon in the life of a sinner is penitence. O how clear a sun is charity, whose fifteen rays the son of the sun, Paul the apostle, enumerates in the Epistle to the Corinthians, where he says: "Charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up!" (1 Cor. 13.) O how clear the beam of penitence! it removes the night of sin because it wipes away the cloud of conscience.

Of this moon, namely penitence, there are four rays: knowledge of sin, sorrow for sins, confession of sin, and the fruit of almsgiving. First it behooves to know the sin, but it is not sufficient; it behooves to sorrow for the sin; confession is also to be added, because he sorrows in vain who does not confess; but to these is to be joined the fruit of almsgiving, which is the price of sin. Whence the prophet says of the impious: "Let him not believe, deceived in vain by error, that he is to be redeemed by any price (Job 15)." Almsgiving is certainly the price of sin. But he who always gives alms and always sins believes in vain that almsgiving profits him. The word almsgiving

(eleemosyna) is therefore to be interpreted. El, in Hebrew, is God, moys in the Egyptian tongue is called water, whence eleemosyna, that is, the water of God. On the contrary we can see that sin is the fire of the devil. Therefore let the water of God be opposed against the fire of the devil. Weigh, O Christian, thy dignity, and the redemption of thy fault. Do not contemn with a beastly mind. God made alms to thee, by delivering his own body to death; do thou make alms to him, by reaching out a morsel of bread to the poor. Be first merciful in thyself, then pour out the rivulet of clemency upon thy neighbor, so that thus together with thy neighbor thou mayest be able to arrive at the fountain of mercy, Jesus Christ our Lord, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns God through all ages of ages. Amen.

SERMON LXXII.

IV. ON THE DEDICATION OF A CHURCH.

. . . . . truly is the mountain of fortitude, the salutary standard is hinted at, that is the cross, which always flourishes with immortal memory, blooms and bears fruit in the minds of the elect.

But by this, that in the sacred altars the relics of the saints are associated with the Lord's body, the body of the holy Church is shown united to its Redeemer, and as if a bridegroom with a bride is placed in the bridal chamber of the holy altar. And because in the Apocalypse, the souls of the holy martyrs are reported seen under the altar

of God (Apoc. 6), it fits most aptly, that among us also their patronages be recondited under the table of the visible altar.

Besides, just as in the sepulcher of the Redeemer myrrh and aloes were sent (John 19), so also here incense is applied, by which the mortification of the same Lord is figured, as he himself says: "As often as you shall eat this bread, and drink the chalice, you shall announce the death of the Lord, until he come (1 Cor. 11)." It is worthy therefore that in the altar, upon which the Lord's body is continually immolated, his death also be announced through the enigmas of invisible things.

On the walls also of the basilica we imprint twelve signs of the cross with holy chrism in the circuit and we affix as many candles, so that we may show it besmeared with the ointment of the Holy Spirit and divinely illustrated by the doctrines of the apostles by these invisible signs.

There are also some other things, my brothers, which we reasonably apply in the consecrations of churches for the sake of a certain mystery, such as is wine, hyssop, salt, ashes, powders, a fragment of red stone. All of which indeed we omit to expose to you in order, why they are applied, lest we burden your charity with prolix speeches. Which things, however, we run through by briefly touching upon them, that we may produce at least a thin line of fuller understanding. Furthermore, just as water signifies the Old Testament, so also wine signifies the Gospel, which the Lord then expressed, when being con-

stituted in the nuptial solemnity he changed water into wine (John 2).

And just as those liquors are mixed together in the consecration of the Church, so without doubt it is worthy that both laws be continually turned in our heart. Salt also is sent in together, so that the insipid flavor of the old law may be taught to be seasoned with the salt of evangelical intelligence. Whence when the citizens of Jericho complained of the bitter waters of that land, Elisha said: "Bring me a new vessel, and put salt into it. Who when they had brought it, having gone out to the fountains of the waters, he sent salt into it, and said: Thus saith the Lord: I have healed these waters, and there shall be in them no more death, nor sterility. The waters therefore were healed even to this day, according to the word of Elisha, which he spoke (4 Kings 2)." By which it is designated, that the bitter water of the old law was to be converted into sweetness through the spiritual intellect of the Gospel. But hyssop, which purifies the secrets of the breast, designates faith, of which indeed the Apostle says: "Purifying their hearts by faith (Acts 15)." In the ash indeed is signified humility, through which namely Abraham speaking to God, says: "I will speak to my Lord, whereas I am dust and ashes (Gen. 18)." But by the species of the red fragment, the fervor of charity is hinted at. Hence it is that Adam is called red earth, namely that in the name of the first man a man may learn that, because he is earth, he may live humbly; and because he is called red, he may not grow lukewarm from the fervor

of twin charity. All of which things indeed are visibly mixed in the dedication of the Church, so that we may be taught to recondite their mystic intellect in our mind. And because we indeed are the Church, through visible and corporeal species it is mystically designated what sacraments of spiritual virtues ought to be in us. Let it suffice for you to know these things meanwhile, so that through these things which we say you may be able to guess also those which we keep silent.

You see besides, most dearly beloved, that this basilica consists of stones and cement, which if the machine of the wall rising on high is heaped up from stones alone, and is not constrained by the glue of lime and sand, whatever has been constructed must necessarily be undermined at the impetus of any violence. What else is the temple of God, but the people of God? Stones but men? What cement, but the tenacious coagulum of charity? Whence the Apostle says: "Having charity, which is the bond of perfection (Col. 3)." As therefore a mural machine constructed without cement is overturned by blowing winds, so the edifice of a good work quickly collapses at any impetus of temptation, if it is not held by the coagulum of paternal charity.

That therefore, most dearly beloved, the structure of our holy work may remain, let the Spirit of God connect you in the joint of fraternal charity. For not all who seem to have the name Christian deserve to arrive at Christ; nor do all who have the society of the Church truly pertain to the unity of the ecclesiastical body. For the taberna-

cle of the covenant, which then prefigured the Church of Christ, Bezeleel the son of Uri of the tribe of Judah, and Ooliab the son of Achisamech of the tribe of Dan, constructed together (Exod. 31). But we all clearly know that from the tribe of Judah Christ was born, but from the tribe of Dan Antichrist is to be born. Thus the universal Church now consists from the members of both, but it is discerned by charity alone, who namely is believed to pertain by merit to Christ, who to Antichrist. Whence also Bezeleel is said in the shadow of God, because whoever truly follows Christ is tempered from the heat of carnal desires by the shadow of the Holy Spirit, from whom he was conceived in the Virgin's womb. Ooliab is interpreted my father's protection, because Antichrist with his own members indeed protects himself by the testimony of his fathers, that is of the ancient Jews, while he keeps the legal mandates according to the letter, and mendaciously dogmatizes that they are to be observed carnally according to their tradition.

Behold, most dearly beloved, we now construct the tabernacle of God by the society of common frequency, and we sufficiently fill the temple of God with corporeal frequency, nay and we ourselves have been made the temple of God through the grace of the new regeneration. "For the temple of God is holy, says the Apostle, which you are, and the Spirit of God dwells in you." Where it is terrible, what is immediately subjoined: "If any man violate the temple of God, God shall destroy him (1 Cor. 3)." A temple

indeed, that is any material and earthly basilica, is sometimes polluted by dust, or by any light sordes; sometimes it is violated through the effusion of blood, or certainly through some grave crime committed; but when only too much dust exaggerates itself, or some thin pollution fouls the cleanness of the pavement, it is swept by a light twig which has been cast in, and thus that which was fouled is recalled to the prior cleanness. But if it is besprinkled by the contamination either of homicide, or of a most grave crime, which heaven forbid, it must necessarily be restored again through the office of the high priest. We certainly on the day of holy baptism through the sanctification of the Spirit were made the temple of God; but if we are touched by the contamination either of an idle speech, or of any small guilt, it is easy that we be purged by the satisfaction of a light penance. But if it shall have happened that we have incurred the leprosy of a grave fault, mother Church is immediately to be approached, the pontiff is to be supplicated, so that the temple of our soul, which is discerned violated and destroyed by a huge crime, be newly restored through the office of priestly authority and the remedy of worthy satisfaction.

Nor is there any doubt that that restoration of the spiritual temple, which is exhibited through the office of the visible priest, is filled within by the effect of divine virtue and power; and Christ Jesus, who is the true King and Priest, that which he considers collapsed or destroyed in man by the art of the malignant spirit, he renovates and

reforms into better through the largess of fuller grace. Which also the restoration of the temple of Jerusalem had then signified, which is read to have been made under Darius king of the Persians through Zerubbabel the son of Salathiel, the leader namely of Judah, and Jesus (Joshua) the son of Jozadak the high priest (1 Esdr. 3). For just as then Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had destroyed the temple of Jerusalem by captivating the people, so the spirit of iniquity, who is the possessor of intimate confusion, often captivates the human soul from its own liberty, and thus contaminates the temple of God with the perverse sordes of concupiscence.

And just as through Zerubbabel and Jesus, the royal namely and priestly person, the temple was then restored, so the soul of man, having collapsed by the impelling fury of the ancient enemy, and being foully violated through his astuteness, is erected from the virtue of our Redeemer, who descended from both lineages, and is reformed not only into that which it had been, but also into the fullness of more ample grace. Whence also through Haggai the prophet it was said of that stone temple: "Great shall be the glory of this last house more than of the first; and in this place I will give peace, saith the Lord God of hosts (Hag. 2)." Then that priest of pontiffs, and King of kings enters to possess his temple perpetually, and he not only purifies it from the contamination of the committed crime, but also illustrates it with the glory of continual inhabitation thereafter. As it is said through the same

prophet: "And the Desired of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts (Ibid.)."

We exhort therefore, most dearly beloved, and we salutarily admonish the prudence of your holy devotion, so that if you know the temple of your breast to be either corrupted by the art of the ancient enemy, or also polluted by the contamination of any most grave crime committed, approach that pontiff who principally obtains the power of restoration and of all human salvation; cast away the sordes of depraved concupiscence from the chamber of your mind, mitigate the stings of fury and wrath through the mildness of patience, expel the poison of petulant luxury, move away the darkness of vain thoughts by the intuition of supernal contemplation; and thus the sordes of all vices being cast far away, let the ornaments of spiritual virtues succeed, by which delighted sweetly, almighty God may construct that domicile in you, in which he himself may be the summit at once and the foundation. The summit indeed, as it is written: "The stone, which the builders rejected, the same is made into the head of the corner (Psalm 117)." The foundation indeed, as it is said: "For other foundation can no man lay, besides that which is laid, Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 3)."

Let not therefore your mind be, most dearly beloved, a warehouse of merchandise, not a treasury of cupidity, not an area of warriors. For whatever you diligently turn in your conscience, this same thing you are also in the divine estima-

tion. For every desire of ours, whether of good or of evil, is discerned depicted in our mind before the divine sight. Furthermore if the flame of lust seethes in thee, thy mind is a house of fornication, not a house of prayer; if the fuel of envy and hatred is within, it is seen to be not a domicile of peace, but a field of contest. Let therefore our mind be not a furnace of obscene luxury, not a sink of carnal passions, not finally a wallowing-place of vices, but let it be with the help of almighty God a hall of spiritual virtues, which the supernal inhabitant himself may deign to visit and to dwell in the temple of the breast dedicated to him, as he promises through the prophet, saying: "I will walk in them, and will dwell and will be their God (2 Cor. 6)," who lives and reigns in the perfect Trinity one and true God forever and ever. Amen.

MORAL SERMONS. Sermon on the vice of the tongue. Sermon on the spiritual contest. Synodal sermon.

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.

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)." 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 austerely, 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?

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)."

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.

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 cis-

tern; 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.

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 acridity 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. 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)."

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. 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.

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. 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. 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.

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)."