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**LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ
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A TRANSLATION OF SELECTED SERMONS
OF FATHER CLAUDE DE LA COLOMBIERE
(AS AN ADJUNCT TO JAMES JOYCE SCHOLARSHIP)

by

Patricia Fontaine, S. S. A.

Thesis presented to the School of Graduate Studies
as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Ph. D. in English Literature

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CURRICULUM STUDIORUM

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PREFACE

My aim has been to make available in English selected sermons of the seventeenth-century French Jesuit priest Father Claude de la Colombière, the Chaplain of Margaret Mary Alacoque, in order that Joyceans may more easily continue to develop their study of a relationship between him and Joyce. Aspects of this relationship have been tentatively established by Virginia Moseley in an article "The 'Dangerous' Paradox in Joyce's 'Eveline'"¹ and by Donald Torchiano in an article "Joyce's 'Eveline' and Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque."² In "Another Root for Bloomsday?"³ Eileen Kennedy relates June 16, the date celebrated by Joyce in Ulysses, to the date in 1675 on which the Sacred Heart, in the greatest of His revelations to Margaret Mary, proclaimed His love for humanity. It is interesting to note that, working separately and having approached their material from different points of view, Kennedy and Moseley arrived at similar findings almost simultaneously in regard to June 16, and that in a Note entitled "June Sixteenth Once Again,"⁴ appearing in the James Joyce Quarterly (Fall 1976), William P. Kean supported Kennedy's conclusion.

My decision to translate twenty of the most pertinent sermons of Claude de la Colombière was prompted by conversations with Professor Moseley in which she emphasized their potential value for Joyce scholarship. Further impetus was

derived from the reading of her article on "Eveline," in which a number of significant similarities are revealed between Joyce and the French priest. She notes also that Father de la Colombière was recognized by the eminent French Academician Olivier Patru to be one "who best understood our language and the finest shades of French style."⁵ She points out Joyce's lifelong inter-

est in coincidences and notes that Father de la Colombière and Joyce shared the same birthday, February 2, the feast of Candlemas, a celebration of light. (It might have amused Joyce could he have known that history would record a reversal of their births and deaths: Joyce was born in 1882 and died in 1941, while Claude de la Colombière was born in 1641 and died in 1682.) The name "Colombière" in French signifies "pigeon house," the nickname of Dublin's Light and Power station. And, as mentioned earlier, June 16 was a significant date in both their lives--for Joyce, it was a day he commemorated in Ulysses; for de la Colombière, it was a day made memorable by a major revelation of the Sacred Heart to Margaret Mary, who was under his spiritual guidance.

Similarities in their training by Jesuit priests are also pointed out. Like Joyce, Claude attended Jesuit schools and excelled in music, rhetoric, and drama, and became, at first, a school master. Recognized for his gifts of eloquence and style, he was chosen by his Superiors to speak at the Canonization of St. Francis de Sales, founder of Margaret Mary's Order.⁶ Of particular interest to my work was Moseley's observation that

even a cursory account of this priest's sermons reveals parallels with Joyce's own writings. Moseley points out that de la Colombière, like Joyce, often alternated between dramatic dialogue and familiar speech. Both related great happenings of the past to contemporary events and made use of much homely imagery and some slang.⁷ It is particularly as the stylist par excellence in the art of the sermon that Claude de la Colombière would have attracted and retained the interest of James Joyce.

The excellence of de la Colombière's style drew glowing praise from his contemporaries and continues to elicit admiration from his modern readers. According to Father Joseph Gallifet, who was one of a small group of young Jesuits whose scholastic training was entrusted to Claude in 1679, "He was, in the judgment of all who heard him, a man of superior intelligence, of eminent wisdom, and of renowned eloquence."⁸ Father Jean Croiset, S.J., one of his peers, pronounced him "a great master of style."⁹ Later, in 1780, his name appeared in the Dictionnaire du Dauphiné under the heading "Réflexions sur l'éloquence," where his sermon style was highly rated.¹⁰ Besides Olivier Patru, another member of the French Academy, Lange de Gercy, Archbishop of Sens, stated that de la Colombière was justly famous for the eloquence of his sermons.¹¹ But, unlike Louis Bourdaloue, S.J., perhaps the most widely acclaimed preacher of his day and a contemporary of Claude's, de la

Colombière never preached in the great centers of Paris. His sermons were given in the small provinces of Burgundy and to a restricted audience at the Court of St. James. Yet his renown was such that Pope Benedict XIV remarked that his sermons "made the author famous in all of Europe."¹² In a recent biography (1941), George Guitton writes that, even more than the sermons of the great Bourdaloue, those of Claude de la Colombière have retained "a freshness and vitality that make them relevant to modern times."¹³

After his death in 1682, Father de la Colombière's sermons were collected in six volumes and joined to his Spiritual Letters and Meditations to form Les Œuvres complètes du Bienheureux Claude de la Colombière.¹⁴ In an excellent Introduction to these six volumes, Father André Ravier, S.J., states that this edition (Grenoble, 1900), having been purged of the arbitrary changes and omissions that marred an earlier edition (Lyon, 1757), is faithful to the original text of the author. These volumes contain seventy-eight sermons, the greater number of which were delivered over a period of eighteen months in the Court of St. James in London before the Duchess of York and (because of the violent anti-papist feeling of the times) a carefully selected audience. They began on November 1, 1676, and ended after Easter in 1678. Eighteen of the twenty sermons in my translations are from this period. Father de la Colombière delivered sermons also in the beautiful and spacious chapel of Trinity College in Lyon in 1674. Two of the sermons chosen--one on St. Joseph and the other on St. John the Baptist

--are from this period. The sermons have never been translated before and until now have been available only in French. Those interested in comparative sermon styles should find these translations valuable.

Volume VI of the Complete Works, entitled The Spiritual Letters of Claude de la Colombière, contains one hundred and thirty-nine letters addressed to his family and to members of religious orders, including Margaret Mary and Mother Françoise de Saumaise, her Superior, as well as to several lay persons under his guidance. They are of interest in shedding light on the origin of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, the climate of fear among English Catholics during Claude's stay in London, his personal view of the Court of Charles II, his contact with the sons of the French Minister Colbert, and, finally, Claude's arrest and imprisonment on charges of treason at the time of the "popish plot." These letters, along with his Spiritual Retreats, have been translated into English by Father William J. Young, S.J., in a book entitled Faithful Servant.¹⁵

It is probable that Joyce, whose training had been entrusted almost entirely to the Irish Jesuits--at Clongowes Wood, at Belvedere College, and later at University College, Dublin--would have been familiar with the eminent follower of Ignatius of Loyola. The glowing reputation which de la Colombière had earned for his seventeenth-century sermon style would hardly have been ignored by one who was so evidently enthralled by imagery, rhythm, and cadence. Kevin Sullivan in



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Joyce Among the Jesuits observes that "no one can today read Finnegans Wake without being aware of the artist's unflinching sense of the shape of words, the form and cadence of sentences, the structural rhythms embodying whole passages of this extraordinary work."¹⁶ If, like his hero Stephen Dedalus, Joyce eschewed the literal priesthood, he nonetheless chose to become "a priest of the imagination," so that, by his art, he might transform the bread of daily living into a spiritual experience.¹⁷ Sullivan speaks of Joyce's "sacerdotalism" and suggests that "the workings of his mind, conscious or unconscious, were so conditioned by his early Jesuit training that the effects may be felt in almost everything that he afterwards wrote."¹⁸

Stanislaus Joyce recalls in My Brother's Keeper that his brother once attended the Gardiner Street Church in Dublin to hear a sermon on "Grace" and came away angry and disheartened at the inadequacy of the exposition,¹⁹ an experience which inspired the story "Grace" in Dubliners. As a "priest of the imagination," Joyce displayed powers of rhetoric superior to those of many professional preachers. It is noteworthy that in A Portrait Joyce devoted most of one chapter out of the five to the "Hell fire" sermon. In Ulysses Bloom hears a missionary sermon at All Hallows, and the tones of the preacher sound on occasion in Finnegans Wake.

Kevin Sullivan argues that the inspiration for Father Arnall's sermon on Hell can be traced almost directly to a small book entitled The Sodality Manual, which was published on Joyce's birthday (and Father de la Colombière's), on February 2, 1886, by the Irish Jesuits. This manual went through five

editions in ten years, and it is possible that it was in Joyce's hands as early as December 7, 1895, the date on which he was first received into the Sodality of Our Lady, or at least by September 25, 1896, when he was elected prefect of the Sodality of Belvedere.²⁰ In a footnote, Sullivan states that the Manual was actually a synopsis of the methods proposed by Ignatius of Loyola in the Spiritual Exercises, a work with which both de la Colombière and Joyce were doubtless familiar.²¹

An examination of the Spiritual Exercises, composed by the founder in 1548, reveals a set of very definite rules and guidelines which have inspired Jesuit retreat masters throughout the centuries and have created a definite "Jesuit-style" sermon. In simplified form, as outlined by Aloysius Ambruzzi, S.J., in The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius in Our Daily Prayer, the plan can be stated thus:

1. Appeal to the Senses--Or Composition of Place: Imagining the person or the location described in the Sermon.
2. Appeal to the Intellect: Understanding the truths to be learned, their application to the past, the present, and the future.
3. Appeal to the Will: Realizing the good to be achieved.
4. Resolution to change one's life according to the principles understood.
5. Colloquy: A heart-to-heart talk with the Maker requesting His aid. ²²

James R. Thrane, while agreeing that the Spiritual Exercises supply the narrative structure of the sermon in A Portrait, suggests in "Joyce's Sermon on Hell: Its Sources and Its

"Background" that the specific patterns of Father Arnall's sermons, as well as the language, derive from a text by Pietro Pinamonti, an Italian Jesuit.²³ I would argue that, in view of the many references to the devotion of the Sacred Heart and to Margaret Mary Alacoque in the works of James Joyce, and in view of the striking similarity between the sermon on Hell in A Portrait and the one delivered by Claude de la Colombière and translated here, it is likely that this seventeenth-century French Jesuit was also one of Joyce's sources.

This likelihood is reinforced by the knowledge that Joyce had access to the Works of Claude de la Colombière while he was in Paris in 1903, not long before he wrote "Eveline" and began Stephen Hero. The 1900 Grenoble edition of the sermons was recognized to be superior to previous editions and was hailed by Father Ravignan, a prominent Jesuit historian, as "the best collection of French sermons available."²⁴ Richard Ellmann stated that Joyce spent his days in the Bibliothèque Nationale and his nights at the Bibliothèque Ste-Geneviève after reaching Paris in 1903.²⁵ He could well have been drawn to these works as representative of the finest metaphysical sermon style as practiced by French Jesuits. A master of languages, Joyce had studied Dano-Norwegian to read Ibsen in the original, had majored in Italian to read Dante, and had learned German to read Gerhart Hauptmann. Reading Father de la Colombière's sermons in French would have presented no difficulty to such a gifted linguist.

It was also in 1903, as pointed out in Dr. Moseley's

article, that Joyce reviewed John Pollock's "Popish Plot,"²⁶ which described the period of terror that overtook England while Claude was Chaplain at the Court of St. James. This review, entitled "A Peep into History,"²⁷ appeared in the Dublin Express for September of that year. Although Joyce is not profuse in his praise of Pollock's work, his review indicates a scorn for Titus Oates and his followers who incited the mobs to violence. In Claude's biography it will be seen how severely the menace of Titus Oates and his alleged "popish plot" changed the course of the priest's life.

Another review by Joyce appeared in the Dublin Express in October of the same year and was entitled "A French Religious Novel--A Review of Marcelle Tinayre's The House of Sin."²⁸ In this review, Joyce considers "the horrible image of the Jansenist Christ."²⁹ Jansenism, with its rigid strictures and adherence to the letter of the law, was anathema to Claude de la Colombière, who in his sermons on the Eucharist never failed to denounce this heresy of the seventeenth century.

From his earliest childhood, Joyce would have been familiar with the popular print of Jesus displaying His Heart, as well as with the blessings promised to those who honored this devotion. In a letter to his Aunt Josephine Murray, Joyce reminded her that Ireland was dedicated to the Sacred Heart and not to him.³⁰ Furthermore, his association with the Jesuits, who have always been in the forefront in promoting this devotion, was a certain source of knowledge. According to Margaret Mary's written account of her visions (recorded in Vie et oeuvres de la

Bienheureuse Marguerite-Marie Alacoque), the Sacred Heart favored her with a special appearance on July 2, 1688,

in which the role of the Jesuits was clearly defined:

The Blessed Virgin was on one side and our Father, St. Francis de Sales, on the other with the saintly Claude de la Colombière. After addressing some words to the Daughters of the Visitation, Our Lady turned towards Father de la Colombière and said:

"And you, faithful servant of my Divine Son, have a great share in this precious Treasure; for, if it is given to the Daughters of the Visitation to make It known, loved, and spread to others, it is reserved to the Fathers of the Society to make known Its utility and value, so that all may profit by It, receiving It with the respect and recognition due to so great a benefit." ³¹

The theme of priesthood is a dominant one with Joyce, according to Robert Boyle, S.J., who points out in an essay on "A Little Cloud" in Dubliners--Critical Essays that Joyce habitually associates the vocation of the artist with that of the priest, and specifically with that of the Jesuit.³²

Kevin Sullivan says the retreat master of Belvedere College at the time when Joyce was a student there was Father James A. Cullen, S.J. This priest was at the same time the director of The Irish Messenger, "a pious unimpressive magazine dedicated to popularizing the devotion of the Sacred Heart."³³ It is certain that Joyce would have had ample opportunity--in the course of five annual retreats (according to Sullivan), and as prefect of the Sodality--to become quite conversant with matters relating to this popular devotion.

Because Joyce's method is that of symbolism--concealing as it reveals--one must be ever ready to look beneath the surface of his writing. When he refers to Margaret Mary or to the Sacred Heart, it is probable that Joyce is not separating what "heaven has united,"³⁴ Margaret and her Chaplain. He could hardly have escaped knowing of the close association between these two. Margaret Mary's Autobiography records that she had learned in a special vision of the great bond which was to unite her forever to the Sacred Heart and to Claude de la Colombe:

As I went up to receive Him in Holy Communion, He showed His Sacred Heart as a burning furnace, and two other hearts were on the point of uniting themselves to It and of being absorbed therein. At the same moment He said to me: "It is thus that My pure love unites these three hearts forever."³⁵

Later, she said, "He made it known to me that we should be as brother and sister, sharing equally in these spiritual treasures."³⁶

References to Margaret Mary and to the Sacred Heart are interspersed throughout Joyce's works. Mrs. Kernan, depicted as a typical Dublin housewife in the story "Grace," "believed steadily in the Sacred Heart as the most useful of all Catholic devotions."³⁷ In A Portrait, Father Arnall closes his sermon on sin by this warning: "Every impure thought . . . is a keen lance transfixing that sacred and loving heart."³⁸ In the final chapter of this book, Stephen experiences "an enchantment of the heart."³⁹ But, after writing the lines of his villanelle, he is "confounded by the familiar print of the Sacred Heart above the untenanted

sideboard."⁴⁰ Shortly before this moment, he had announced:
 "the heart's cry was broken."⁴¹

In Ulysses, Stephen Dedalus reminisces about his time in Paris, recalling Montmartre,⁴² the heart of Paris's Bohemia, as well as the site of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart. In her article, Dr. Moseley notes that before he sailed for Paris for the first time, Joyce had written in an essay "Drama and Life," given at the University College, Dublin, that "the traditions of romance are upheld only in Bohemia."⁴³ The Basilica of the Sacred Heart on Montmartre was erected in accordance with a vote of the National Assembly, to commemorate the revelations to Margaret Mary. The cornerstone was placed on June 16, 1875, the 200th anniversary of her Third Great Revelation--and the day commemorated by Joyce in Ulysses (as noted in the Moseley and Kennedy articles). Stephen's reminiscences of Paris continue with a mention of "rue Gît-le-Coeur"⁴⁴ (Here lies the heart), which confirms his awareness of Montmartre's relationship to the Revelations. At Paddy Dignam's funeral in Ulysses, Bloom's thoughts recall this devotion:

The Sacred Heart that is: showing it. Heart on sleeve. Ought to be sideways and red it should be painted like a real heart. Ireland was dedicated to it or whatever . . .⁴⁵

In the Martello Tower episode, as Stephen holds forth on the amorous adventures of famous men, Mulligan raises his eyes in mock horror and invokes "Blessed Mary Anycock."⁴⁶ In the Nausicaa section Gerty MacDowell ponders a proper gift for

Father Conroy" and remembers that "she went there about the flowers for the forty hours' devotion."⁴⁷ This devotion was established to atone for sins against the Divine Presence, but also as a result of Christ's request to Margaret Mary in the Third Great Revelation.

I have organized the selected twenty sermons according to the following divisions: Part I, eight sermons on the life of Christ; Part II, six sermons on the lives of the saints; and Part III, six sermons on doctrine. The sermons will retain the Roman numerals which identify them in the Complete Works, even though I have displaced their original order, and the Table of Contents will show this Roman numeral as well as the volume from which each sermon was taken. I have attempted throughout to retain the seventeenth-century style as far as possible and, except when clarity dictated otherwise, I have adhered to the original sentence structure. Footnotes relating to the sermons, because they are few in number, appear at the bottom of the page and are indicated by numbers if they occur in the original Grenoble edition, and by asterisks if they are my own.

The Latin quotations used by Father de la Colombière have been translated into English and are always included within the text. According to Father André Ravier, S.J., in his Introduction to Ecrits spirituels, it is probable that Father de la Colombière quoted the Latin Vulgate in his biblical references, since this was the text most commonly used by Jesuits of the time.⁴⁸ I have used the Douay Version of the Bible, which was translated from the Latin Vulgate in two parts: the New Testament in 1582, the Old Testament in 1609. A special bibliography

on Claude de la Colombière and Margaret Mary Alacoque, divided into French and English sections, is presented in an Addendum.

In selecting twenty sermons out of a possible seventy-eight for translation, I have considered major themes in the Joyce canon, particular imagery associated with his settings, and characters, or style. Some of the salient parallels which I see as useful to Joyceans are suggested.

Part I is devoted to sermons on the life of Christ because of the continuing use Joyce makes of religious festivals and the association of his heroes with both Christ and Satan, especially in A Portrait and Ulysses. Sermon V, for Christmas Day, recalls significant settings in A Portrait and "The Dead." In Sermon IX, for Epiphany, de la Colombière's explanation of this event may be contrasted with the meaning expressed in Stephen Hero. The feast of Epiphany, which occurs on January 6, celebrates the arrival of the Magi at the stable. In Joyce's Stephen Hero, the epiphany is "a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture, or in a memorable phase of the mind itself."⁴⁹ Joyce characteristically finds the remarkable in the commonplace. In this sermon, Father de la Colombière emphasizes the number thirteen in regard to the number of days which have elapsed since the birth of Christ. Bloom at Dignam's funeral wonders if McIntosh is the thirteenth man, or if it is he himself. This leads him to question whether Christ or Judas was the thirteenth person at the Last Supper. The sermon deals with the Wise Men from the East, a continuing theme in Joyce. Sermon IX also makes use of two symbols frequent in Joyce--the rose and

the star. For example, Joyce's strong sense of parody is exemplified in his description of Bloom as "the last sardine of summer,"⁵⁰ an expression which effectively connects Bloom to the rose as well as to the fish and the Savior. The evil rich man referred to in the same sermon shows an excessive attachment to material goods; in the case of Stephen Dedalus the goods coveted are those of the mind. In Ulysses Joyce's hero acquires sufficient self-knowledge to realize that his gifts must be used to bring light to others; that, like the Prophet Elias, he must often speak unpleasant truths if he is to "create the conscience of his race."⁵¹ Also in Sermon IX Father de la Colombière deals with Grace, of such interest to Joyce that in Dubliners he entitles one of his stories "Grace," and has Father Furdon deliver a sermon on that subject.

Sermon XIII for Easter focuses on the disciples on the road to Emmaus, an incident which Joyce seems to parallel and parody in the Eumaeus episode of Ulysses. The doubting Thomas segment finds its counterpart in the story of Tom Kernan in "Grace" and its reversal in the "atonement" of Stephen and Bloom.

Sermons XX and XXI consider the Eucharist and the Feast of Corpus Christi. Eucharistic symbols--representing, for Joyce, values quite different from those held by de la Colombière--are used extensively in Ulysses, even providing a structural base for the story. Images of food in the sermon are paralleled in the Lestrygonian episode. De la Colombière compares the Body of Christ offered as food to the wonder of mother love. In the hallucinatory Nighttown episode of Ulysses, Bloom undergoes a change from father to mother, a reversal which sets the stage

for Molly's own reversal, in her final soliloquy, from mother and wife to a figure resembling God the Father, as she sits regally on her orange chamber pot, mistress (or master) of all she surveys.⁵² This sermon also suggests the idea of double roles or reversal of roles: King Assuerus, in order to assure the frightened Esther that no harm will befall her for violating the royal edict, says: "I am your King, but I am also your husband and your brother." In this sermon, emphasis is placed on blindness, which is a reminder of Joyce's own increasing blindness, of the blind tuner in Ulysses, and, in the same book, of Bloom's assistance to a blind man in the street. Lucifer, in the sermon, is a bearer of light, recalling the Nighttown episode and Stephen's destruction of the chandelier in Bella Cohen's brothel; for Joyce, Lucifer is the prototype of Buck Mulligan and Blazes Boylan, who are satanic figures in regard to Stephen and Bloom.

Sermon XIII, for the Transfiguration, exhorts the listener to seek happiness not in the flesh or in the spirit but in God who created both of these. The final episode of Ulysses seems to show a reconciliation of these elements in a new "trinity": Bloom, Molly, and Molly's lamp.

Part II is devoted to sermons on the lives of saints because of Joyce's use of such religious figures as archetypes. For example, throughout her book Joyce and the Bible, Virginia Moseley speaks of Joyce's use of "divine exemplars." William Tindall, in his book James Joyce, confirms that Bloom is identified with Moses, Elijah, Jesus, and God.⁵³ Richard Ellmann notes

in James Joyce, that Stephen is not only Daedalus but Icarus, Hamlet, Shakespeare, and Lucifer.⁵⁴ In Sermon II, for the Feast of All Saints, Father de la Colombière dwells on the Heavenly Jerusalem, using a description in the Book of the Apocalypse. In the Workbook of Daedalus, Stanislaus

Joyce reports that his brother was so taken with this Book that he copied the King James version of it into his Notebook for further use.⁵⁵ The heavenly Jerusalem is parodied in Ulysses when Bloom's house at No. 7 Eccles Street is implied to be "an abode of bliss," and paradise becomes "Bloomusalem." In this sermon, as in almost all the others, Father de la Colombière calls upon the authority of St. John Chrysostom, a Father of the Church, and the name "Chrysostom" appears significantly on the first page of Ulysses.

Sermon XVIII, for the feast of the Pentecost, dwells on the mystery of the Trinity, an important theme in Ulysses, and describes the amazing transformation of the Apostles after the coming of the Holy Spirit. To those who witness the change, they appear to be drunk or delirious. There is an obvious similarity between their state and that of Bloom and Stephen in the Nighttown episode. The wind, symbol of the mystery, finds its counterpart in the Aeolus section of Ulysses, and the perfume imagery recalls Molly Bloom's seductive scent.

Sermon XXXIV glorifies the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, which is celebrated on September 8, the date which Joyce selected as Molly Bloom's birthday. Father de la Colombière uses birth as a metaphor for conversion to a more virtuous life. Fertility,

procreation, renewal, and salvation are important themes in the Oxen of the Sun episode. Sermon XXXVI honors St. Joseph by emphasizing the great purity and humility which caused him to be chosen as the father of Christ. Stephen Dedalus eventually recognizes three fathers in Ulysses--the mythical Daedalus, his physical father Simon, and a foster father Bloom. From his association with his foster father, Stephen seems to acquire a degree of humility and purity.

Sermon XXXVII presents St. John the Baptist in his role of Precursor of the Savior, a role analogous to that played by Cranley in A Portrait and Mulligan in Ulysses. Father de la Colombière compared John's spirit of penance to a fortress, which brings to mind the Martello Tower which sheltered the mourning Stephen for a time before his flight. John's retreat from the world is perhaps reflected in Mr. Kernan's retreat in "Grace," and the allusions to the cross as an instrument of redemption are perhaps reflected in the tea-tasting activities of the same Mr. Kernan in Ulysses. During John's baptizing of Jesus, the Holy Spirit is made visible in the form of a dove, and the dove image is one which occurs in "An Encounter" of Dubliners, when two schoolboys venture out to the Pigeon House, as well as in the Nighttown episode of Ulysses, when Molly and Bloom are depicted in dove imagery: Molly walks like a "pouter pigeon" and Bloom is "pigeon-breasted."

Sermon XL is devoted to St. Stephen the first Christian martyr, whose name in Greek signifies "crown." And, as Father de la Colombière points out, it means "rule" or "model" in

Hebrew. Like Joyce's hero, he possessed the gifts of oratory and, according to the accounts in the Acts of the Apostles, he manifested both scorn and affection for his countrymen. The sermon uses imagery related to the Church, the family, and the nation--Stephen Dedalus' three "nets" in A Portrait. The enemies of Stephen in the sermon account are likened to ferocious beasts or blind men, but paradoxically they turn out to be his benefactors by helping him to earn the crown of martyrdom. This "coincidence" of "contraries,"⁵⁵ emphasized by de la Colombière in this sermon on St. Stephen, is an idea which greatly interested Joyce. In Finnegans Wake he created Shem and Shaun to exemplify the opposites in his own mind.

Part III contains six doctrinal sermons. Joyce makes much use of doctrinal concepts. The Trinity, Hell, Conscience, Serving God and Mammon, and Charity are but a few of the many doctrinal subjects that serve as his themes. Sermon XIX is devoted to the Trinity, a theme which is emphasized in Joyce's introductory episode of Ulysses and which seemingly underlies the concept of his three main characters throughout. (Father de la Colombière himself was destined to form part of an important trio when it was revealed to Margaret Mary Alacoque that "these three hearts," referring to her own, to that of Claude, and to the Sacred Heart were destined to be joined together forever in a strong union.)

Sermon IV is a vivid description of the horrors of Hell based on accounts by Isaiah

and John. The followers of Ignatius of Loyola adopted a very definite pattern for sermons, and this sermon was regularly given at the beginning of retreats.⁵⁷ The "fire and brimstone" approach was meant to inspire fear of losing one's eternal happiness and was meant to be followed in a subsequent session by a powerful description of the happiness of heaven. This sermon is, in many respects, similar to the one which so frightened the young Stephen in A Portrait that he was driven to a complete, if shortlived, literal amendment of his life. Referring to his early years, Joyce recalls that his father once threatened to make him "smell Hell,"⁵⁸ indicating perhaps to what degree the senses were involved in his mental conception of that place. In the manner of Father de la Colombière, Joyce makes frequent use of personification in his writings. In this sermon, LV, the French priest addresses the hours, the days, and the years with rhetorical questions. The keys of heaven are used symbolically by de la Colombière; the key theme is significant in Ulysses.

Sermon LVIII, On Serving Only One Master, is based on a text and an argument comparable to those Joyce used in the story "Grace." However, there is intentional irony on Joyce's part in presenting a priest who suggests that spiritual works be pursued for practical reasons and for worldly aims; the same comic and ironic vision is at play in the presentation of Mrs. Kernan, who regards her devotion to the Sacred Heart as the most practical of Catholic devotions.

Sermon LXII deals with Conscience, man's inner directing voice. A Portrait closes with Stephen Dedalus' famous statement, "Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race."⁵⁹ In Ulysses Stephen suffers from "agenbite of inwit," his version of a bad conscience, over his refusal to kneel and pray at his mother's deathbed.

Sermon LXXII, On the Love of God, and Sermon LXXI, On Christian Charity, point out that the lover is transformed into the loved one by the action of love. In Ulysses Joyce refers to "metempsychosis," or a process involving, among other reversals, a change of roles and even a form of spiritual communion between the main characters. Before "atonement" could be achieved, Stephen and Bloom had a "séance" in the cabman's shelter. The references in the Ithaca episode to "Stoom" and "Blephen" suggest that a merging of the two personalities has been achieved. De la Colombière uses the image of a master in his own household, a position assumed by Bloom at the end of the book.

According to Ellmann and Moseley, Love is the central theme and the most basic concern in Joyce's works. For him, as well as for Gerty MacDowell in Ulysses, "love was the master guide."⁶⁰ Both Claude de la Colombière and James Joyce recognized love as the highest and most nearly perfect state.

FOOTNOTES

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³Eileen Kennedy, "Another Root of Bloomsday," 7 James Joyce Quarterly, (Spring, 1969), 271-72.

⁴William P. Keen, "June Sixteenth Once Again," 14 James Joyce Quarterly, (Fall 1976), 94-95.

⁵Quoted from Margaret Yeo, These Three Hearts (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1940), by V. Moseley in "Eveline," p. 177.

⁶Moseley, "Eveline," p. 177.

⁷Ibid., p. 179.

⁸Pierre Charriér, Histoire du Vénérable Père Claude de la Colombière de la Compagnie de Jésus (Lyon: Nouvellet, 1904), p. 39.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰R. Trublet, Ecrivains du Dauphiné (Paris: P. Lethiellieux, 1780), p. 57.

¹¹Charrier, p. 39.

¹²Ibid., p. 40.

¹³George Guitton, Le Bienheureux Claude de la Colombière (Lyon: Emmanuel Vitte, 1943), p. 173.

¹⁴Claude de la Colombière, S. J., Oeuvres complètes (Grenoble: Imprimerie du Patronage, 1900).

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¹⁶Kevin Sullivan, S. J. Joyce Among the Jesuits (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), p. 82.

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¹⁸Sullivan, p. 82.

¹⁹Stanislaus Joyce, My Brother's Keeper (New York: Viking Press, 1958), p. 227.

²⁰Sullivan, p. 134.

²¹Ibid., p. 135.

²²Aloysius Ambrozzi, S. J. The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius in our Daily Prayer (Calcutta: Xavier Press, 1955), p. 4.

²³James R. Thrane, Notes for Joyce--An Annotation of James Joyce's 'Ulysses,' ed. Don Gifford (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1967), p. 117.

²⁴E. M. Goedert, De la Colombière (Paris: Lethielleux, 1901), p. 213.

²⁵Richard Ellmann, James Joyce (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 124.

²⁶John Pollock, The Popish Plot: A Study in the History of the Reign of Charles II (London: Duckworth, 1903), p. 419.

²⁷Richard Ellmann, ed., The Critical Writings of James Joyce (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), pp. 119-20.

²⁸Ibid., p. 123.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Stuart Gilbert, ed., Letters of James Joyce (New York: Viking Press, 1957), p. 191.

³¹Mgr. L. Gauthey, Vie et oeuvres de la Bienheureuse Marguerite-Marie Alacoque (Paris: Librairie Poussielgue, 1915), p. 240.

³²Robert Boyle, S. J., Essay on "A Little Cloud" in Dubliners--Critical Essays, Ed. Clive Hart. (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), p. 84.

³³Sullivan, p. 128.

³⁴A. Hamon, Vie de la Bienheureuse Marguerite-Marie Alacoque (Paris: G. Beauchesne, 1923-1939), p. 49.

³⁵Gauthey, p. 240.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷James Joyce, Dubliners (New York: Penguin, 1976), p. 158.

³⁸A Portrait, p. 134.

³⁹Ibid., p. 217.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 219.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 218.

⁴²James Joyce, Ulysses (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1968), p. 49.

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⁴⁴Ulysses, p. 49

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 115.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 202.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 356.

⁴⁸André Ravier, ed., Ecrits spirituels (Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1962), p. 68.

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Blessed Claude de la Colombière, S.J.

Photostat taken from Pierre Charrier, Histoire du Vénérable Père Claude de la Colombière de la Compagnie de Jésus (Lyon: Nouvellet, 1904).

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF CLAUDE DE LA COLOMBIÈRE
(1641-1682)

Claude de la Colombière was born on February 2, 1641, in a well-to-do household of St. Symphorien near Lyon in France. He was the third in a family of seven children born to Bertrand (a royal notary) and Margaret de la Colombière. Both parents were renowned for their piety, and all five of their surviving children were marked by the spiritual training received in this home. Humbert de la Colombière, the eldest, settled in Grenoble, where he acquired the reputation of a saint in the world. Two older brothers became secular priests; one of them, Joseph, was a missionary in the Order of St. Sulpice and labored in Canada until his death. The only daughter, Margaret Elisabeth, who was eight years older than Claude, joined the Visitation Order when she was twenty-five.

From 1650 to 1658 Claude attended Trinity College in Lyon, a Jesuit school, where he showed marked ability in his studies and more than ordinary piety. On October 25, 1658, he entered the novitiate of the Society of Jesus at Avignon and after two years of probation completed his philosophical studies at the college in the same town. There, too, he taught the classics for five years until ^{in 1666,} he was sent to Paris to study

theology and was ordained in that city on April 6, 1669. While in Paris, Claude recognized the evils of Jansenism, a heretical religious movement he would later combat in

his sermons, especially in those dealing with the Eucharist.

In the autumn of 1670 he returned to Lyon as a teacher of rhetoric in the college where he had studied as a boy. Here he remained for four years, and during this period he became known as a preacher of distinction. He was chosen to fill the pulpit of the Church of the Holy Trinity from 1673 to 1674. The last days of 1674 were spent in the tertianship, or third year of probation made by Jesuit priests before their last vows. He followed, as is customary, the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius from November 4 to December 8.

The publication of de la Colombière's Notes, Réflexions chrétiennes¹ (1674-1681), made him known throughout the Catholic Church, particularly because of the vow by which he bound himself to observe the Constitutions and Rules of the Society under pain of sin. These Notes, as well as the Spiritual Retreats and Letters of Father de la Colombière, have been translated into English by William J. Young, S.J., in Faithful Servant.²

In time de la Colombière would be known as one of the most distinguished writers of the seventeenth century. An early biographer, Pierre Charrier, noted in Histoire du Vénérable Père de la Colombière that Claude was obliged to wage a strong battle against the sin of pride in his early career as a preacher.³ This struggle is borne out by Claude's own writings, Ecrits spirituels,⁴ a personal account of his efforts to achieve holiness. His reputation as an orator would be enhanced by praise from such eminent men as Louis Bourdaloue--himself

a renowned speaker--and Father François de la Chaise, who was his Provincial Superior and Louis XIV's Confessor for thirty-one years (1678-1709).⁵ According to André Ravier, editor of Oeuvres Complètes du Bienheureux Claude de la Colombière, Pope Benedict XIV would praise Father de la Colombière for his style as well as for his saintly life; and Pierre de Ravignan, a noted Jesuit, would call him "the king of preachers."⁶

After his religious vows, pronounced on February 2, 1675, Father de la Colombière was named Superior of the small Jesuit residence in Paray-le-Monial. He would spend only eighteen months in this little town but his stay would be memorable. He arrived at a time when the guidance of a wise and experienced director was sorely needed to enlighten Margaret Mary Alacoque and her Superior, Mother Françoise de Saumaise.

From her earliest childhood, Margaret Mary's life had been marked by divine favors and mystical experiences, according to her own account in her Autobiography.⁷ These memoirs were written reluctantly and only after she was ordered "under obedience" (a term which implies a strict and formal order by a religious authority and which binds under pain of sin) to do so. Thus, the descriptions of the Revelations of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, the events surrounding them, and the personal feelings of Margaret Mary come directly from her own written account.

Father de la Colombière's arrival in Paray in 1675

coincided with the last of what is called the Three Great Revelations. Although each of these encounters between Margaret Mary and Christ centered on the human Heart of Jesus and God's love for man, the revelations were so graded in beauty and importance, as pointed out by Emile Bougaud in Histoire de la Bienheureuse Marguerite-Marie, that they were like a drama in three acts.⁸ The first of these had occurred on December 27, 1673, on the feast of St. John the Evangelist, when Margaret was twenty-three years old. According to her Autobiography, she had spent twelve hours on her knees between Thursday night and Friday morning in a state of rapture before she saw Christ in a visible form. It was on this occasion, she relates, that Christ showed His Heart for the first time and pronounced these words: "My heart is so passionately filled with love for men that It can no longer contain the flames of Its ardent charity and must, through your assistance, spread them among men." The second revelation had occurred in 1674, but the exact date remains uncertain. Margaret Mary relates that whereas in the first apparition God had appeared as a father and a friend, in the second "He seemed like an outraged spouse and an irate king demanding reparation." After revealing to her the secrets of His love, He asked her to make up for the world's ingratitude, she recounts, adding: "From His Heart came a flame so intense I thought I would be consumed by it. Then He said, 'Fear not, for I will be your strength.'"⁹ In the same meeting, continues Margaret, He requested that she receive communion the first Friday of each month in atonement and keep a vigil from eleven to midnight each week from Thursday

until Friday to expiate the sins of the world. The Third Great Revelation took place on Sunday, June 16, 1675, and revealed the public aspect of this devotion. At this time, said Margaret Mary in her Autobiography, Christ requested that a special feast be celebrated to honor His Heart and specified that it should be on the Friday following the Octave of Corpus Christi.

It seems providential that just when these events were spreading consternation in the small convent of the Visitation Order, a priest of such virtue and wisdom should have been assigned as the spiritual director of this house. But, as revealed in her Autobiography, Margaret Mary had been advised by Christ in a vision that "a faithful servant and perfect friend" would be sent to guide her, and that she should faithfully manifest to him all the treasures and secrets of His Sacred Heart. She explains that on Claude's very first visit to the monastery she had heard an interior voice saying, "This is he whom I have sent thee."¹⁰

As confessor extraordinary, it was his duty to hear the Confessions of the nuns, and Margaret Mary records that although she revealed to him nothing about the apparitions or communications with which she had been favored, he spoke as if he knew all that had occurred. At a later meeting, Margaret revealed to Claude in detail her encounters with Christ and her feelings of inadequacy. He reassured her concerning the authenticity of the revelations and encouraged her to become ever more worthy of the favors God had chosen to heap

upon her. He also reassured Mother de Saumaise, Superior of the Visitation Convent, who had received only expressions of disbelief and scorn from the local priests whom she had consulted about these events. The records left by Mother de Saumaise in the Archives of the Visitation reveal that, upon his first meeting with Margaret, Claude had stated that she was "a soul of grace."¹¹

Although his stay in Faray was of short duration, his influence on the life of Margaret Mary is inestimable. Not only had he been chosen to be her spiritual director at this momentous time, but he had also been chosen, according to a vision recorded by the Saint, to promote the devotion of the Sacred Heart even in a foreign land, and to be linked with Margaret Mary forever.

Once while receiving Communion from the hand of Father Claude, Margaret, according to her Autobiography, had a vision in which she saw two hearts being completely submerged into the Heart of Christ. She then heard a voice saying: "Thus it is that My pure love unites these three hearts forever."¹² The same account reveals that Christ wished them to become as brother and sister, sharing equally in these spiritual graces.

Of the forty or more letters addressed by Father de la Colombière to Margaret Mary or to her Superior, Mother de Saumaise, almost all dealt with the devotion and the promises of the Sacred Heart, even though it was not judged

prudent--at least at the outset--to speak publicly of these revelations at a time when the Church was beset by the problems of Jansenism in France and anti-papism in England.

Late in the summer of 1676, Father de la Colombière was sent by his Superiors to England to be the confessor of eighteen-year-old Mary of Modena, Duchess of York and sister-in-law of Charles II. Before he left Faray, he received from Margaret Mary a note containing a three-fold warning "from heaven" for one who would soon become involved in the world of terror and intrigue that would overtake England. The third section of her note read thus:

Let him be particularly careful not to separate the good from its source. This sentence is short, but it contains much which God will enable him to understand according to the diligence with which he applies himself to find its meaning.¹³

Claude accepted this note as a message from heaven, "although it contained almost as many mysteries as it did words,"¹⁴ according to his view expressed in Ecrits spirituels. He would be shown in his London retreat during the second half of January, 1677, its immediate and immensely practical usefulness. "Truly," he wrote on February 7, 1677, in his Spiritual Notes, "Our Lord left nothing more to be said. This was the saving advice against all the evils that would befall me."¹⁵ And, in a letter to Mother de Saumaise, he stated: "The note from Sister Alacoque strengthens me very much and gives me reassurance in a thousand doubts which come to me very often."¹⁶ He pondered many hours over the admonition "not to separate the good from its source," and at first

believed that the good mentioned referred to his personal glory which he should attribute to God; later, he became convinced that it referred to the income he derived from his services at Court and resolved to divert all his funds, except those needed for bare necessities, to the poor of London.¹⁷

On March 24, 1677, the third Wednesday of Lent and the eve of the feast of the Annunciation, Father de la Colombière thought the hour had come for him to speak publicly of the devotion to the Sacred Heart. In his meditation "On the Patience of Jesus Suffering," he invited his listeners in St. James Palace to "enter into the Heart of the Son of God and see what are Its sentiments with regard to His enemies."¹⁸ This was the first sharing of this devotion with the public. Its message re-echoes the virtues expressly mentioned by Christ as characteristic of Himself in the Gospels: "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart." (Matt. 11:29).

Father de la Colombière remained for two years in London at a time of religious and political upheaval. His Superiors were well aware of the sensitive nature of his mission as Chaplain to a Catholic Duchess in a strongly Protestant Court. In his biography of de la Colombière, Pierre Charrier relates that Claude's predecessor, Father St. Germain, S.J., had been expelled after being denounced by a man named Lusancy, who feigned interest in the Catholic faith and then claimed that he was forced by Father St. Germain to join the Church against his will.¹⁹ In seeking a replacement for Father St. Germain, the Duke of York turned to Father de la Chaise, S.J.,

for counsel. The choice had to be made with great care, continues Charrier, not only because of the delicate political situation that existed in England, but also because of a private conflict which existed between the Duchess of York and her sister-in-law, Queen Catherine.²⁰

Claude's responsibilities centered mainly on the spiritual guidance of Mary of Modena, Duchess of York and future Queen of England (1685-1688). Most of the seventy-eight sermons collected in the Complete Works were delivered in her presence in the Palace Chapel on each Sunday and holy day, as well as on each Friday of Lent. At least two of Claude's biographers, Pierre Charrier and George Guitton, believe that the Duke of York heard these sermons, not from the Chapel but from behind a window on the second floor where he was unseen and would not provoke Protestant criticism. It is possible, according to both of these biographers, that the King himself, Charles II, also secretly heard the sermons. Claude's great theme was the love of God, and in many of his sermons he openly attacked the great heresy of his day, Jansenism, which emphasized fear and awe at the expense of love.

This religious movement, named for a Fleming, Cornelius **Jansen**, was based on a strict interpretation of Augustinian teachings. It was declared heretical by Innocent X on May 31, 1653, because of its unorthodox teachings regarding grace, free will, predestination, and concupiscence. The controversy raged especially in France, in the Low Countries, and in Italy in the

seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It brought forth a large number of books and pamphlets--more than two hundred in 1714 alone.²¹ Many religious historians of the time, Emile Bougaud among others; felt that the devotion of the Sacred Heart with its message of love was meant to eradicate the doctrine of Jansen, which placed undue emphasis on respect and kept the faithful away from frequent communion.²²

Quietism, the name given to a spiritual doctrine proposed by Miguel de Molinos, was also strongly opposed in de la Colombière's sermons. The New Catholic Encyclopedia explains its teachings as an exaggeration of the doctrine of St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross:

Whereas solid doctrine holds that there is a state of contemplative passivity in which God acts in man by His operating grace and which one reaches normally only after exercising himself in the ascetical life for a long time, the quietists held that the way of passive contemplation is acquired by the very cessation of every operation.²³

Father de la Colombière was quick to sense the depth of spiritual devotion of his young charge and engaged in many private talks with her, ministering to the Duchess's needs. According to Pierre Charrier, he was on hand to comfort her at the death of her infant son on December 22, 1777.²⁴ The same biographer reports that as Princess of Modena she had decided to enter religious life in the Visitation Order when the Duke of York requested her hand in marriage. Pope Clement's statement about the sad plight of Catholics in England helped her to decide in favor of the Duke. She was eighteen years

of age and had been married for two years when Father de la Colombière arrived to guide her. His great respect for her was revealed in a letter written on November 20, 1676, to a fellow Jesuit:

"The Duchess of York is a princess of great piety and virtue. She receives communion weekly and each day spends a half hour in meditation."²⁵

According to other letters written by him from London, there is evidence that, when not occupied at the Palace, he helped both Catholics and Protestants in matters of spiritual direction, visited the sick and the poor, brought the sacraments to at least three groups of nuns in their convents, and encouraged the sending of priests to Virginia. These activities would be used in evidence against him at the height of the so-called "popish plot."²⁶

Charles II, King of England (1660-1685), led an indolent and extravagant life at court. Though he professed the Protestant faith for political reasons, he was a Catholic at heart, according to the historian Alfred Kaufmann in Modern Europe.²⁷ He hoped to remove the strong repressive measures used against Catholics and other Dissenters and thereby obtain the right to declare his own religious convictions. The Test Act, passed by Parliament in 1670, forced all civil and military officers to abjure the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation and take the Sacrament according to the Anglican rite; and The Act of Uniformity, passed a few years earlier, obliged every clergyman and every schoolmaster to declare his assent to the Book of Common Prayer. In 1668, reports Charrier,

his brother James, Duke of York, was converted to the Catholic Church and Charles entertained similar thoughts. In a secret treaty with Louis XIV of France in 1670, he agreed to declare himself a Catholic "when it was safe to do so."²⁸ This Treaty of Dover was meant, among other purposes, to bring about religious freedom in England. To this effect, continues Charrier, secret emissaries carried messages between London and Versailles, bypassing the official ambassadors, who were almost without exception Protestants and who could not be expected to sympathize with the cause. A secret correspondence was carried on between Edward Coleman, Secretary of the Duke of York, and a French Jesuit priest, Father de la Chaise, in Versailles.

When these secret activities were revealed, there was great fear in England that Catholicism would be restored and that a Catholic King, the Duke of York, would succeed Charles. In 1678 Titus Oates approached the King and announced a "popish plot" which in time would be recognized as a baseless tissue of lies and extravagant inventions but which, in this atmosphere of distrust, gained credence and created a reign of terror and death.

Oates declared that the Pope, the King of France, the Archbishop of ~~Armagh~~, and the Jesuits of England, France, Ireland, and Spain were actively conspiring to kill Charles, enthrone his brother James, and impose Catholicism in England by the sword.²⁹ In Oates' account, three thousand cutthroats were planning to massacre the leading Protestants of London

and burn the city to the ground.

At twenty-nine, Oates had already acquired a reputation as a lying and scheming knave. He was the son of an Anabaptist preacher, had become an Anglican clergyman, and had been expelled from his post for disorderly conduct. After accepting, or pretending to accept, Catholicism, he had studied in the Jesuit Colleges of Valladolid and St. Omer, from which he had also been expelled. He claimed that while attending these Jesuit Colleges he had learned the secret plans of the Jesuits for the conquest of England. He claimed to be present on April 24, 1678, at a conference in London where plans were made to kill the King. He named five Catholic peers as being implicated in the plot.

Although Charles dismissed these accusations as unsound, the Privy Council summoned Oates and believed his account. The members of the Council ordered the arrest of several papists. One of these was Edward Coleman, Secretary to the Duke of York, whose correspondence with Father la Chaise revealed a genuine plan for the conversion of England to Catholicism.

One letter by Coleman suggested that Louis XIV provide money to influence members of Parliament to further the Catholic cause and added: "Success will give to the Protestant religion the greatest blow it has ever received."³⁰ The letter also spoke of the conversion of three kingdoms and the "utter subduing of a pestilent heresy."³¹ The fact that Coleman had partially destroyed the correspondence led the Council to believe that

he had known of the plot and was perhaps involved in it. Even Charles came to believe that there was some basis for belief in a plot.

This belief became widespread when Justice Minister Edmund Godfrey, after having disappeared for five days, was found brutally murdered in a suburban field. Durant states that the assassination was ascribed to Catholics who hoped to prevent publication of Oates' deposition. This event seemed to confirm the charges laid by Oates, who now enjoyed the protection of the Earl of Shaftesbury. In the atmosphere of distrust left by the secret Treaty of Dover and the fear of James's succession, most of Protestant England credited the accusations of Oates. The result was a frenzy of arrests and executions.

A reign of terror began and continued for four years. James fled to the Netherlands, and citizens of London armed themselves against invasion. A cannon was planted in Whitehall, and guards were stationed in vaults beneath the House of Parliament to circumvent a second Gunpowder Plot. Parliament passed a bill excluding Catholics from the House of Lords. It hailed Oates as a savior of the nation and awarded him a life pension of twelve hundred pounds a year and an apartment in Whitehall Palace. Soon prisons were filled with Jesuits, secular priests, and Catholic laymen--all denounced by Oates. Trials were expeditious because judges feared the cries of the bloodthirsty crowds outside the courts. False witnesses, bribed by Oates, swore to wild tales. The accused were generally allowed no counsel and were told only on the day of the

trial what the accusations would be.³² Thousands of innocent people, including four of Claude de la Colombière's English Jesuit colleagues, were executed during this reign of anti-papist terror: Fathers Whitbread, Ireland, Fenwick, and Jenison.³³

Pierre Charrier observed that Claude seemed protected from the storm that raged around him. He was a foreigner and was not involved in any political affairs. As the preacher and director of the Duchess of York, he could not easily be implicated in the "plot."³⁴ But Oates had attracted many followers and many came forward to denounce alleged religious crimes. One of these, Olivier Fiquet, denounced Claude. The priest's letter of July 1680 reads: "I was denounced in London by a young man from Dauphiné who had come to me for instruction and pretended to be converted. I was at that time tutoring the young sons of Edward Coleman, who, in turn, were helping me to perfect my English idiom."³⁵ This association with Coleman's sons was used as evidence against Claude. The official charges recorded by the author of Conspirations d'Angleterre were pronounced on Monday, November 21, 1678, and read thus:

1. Claude de la Colombière, Chaplain of the Duchess of York, has said, in a small group, that the King was a Catholic at heart and that Parliament would not always have the power it now enjoys.
2. He was a friend of Edward Coleman.
3. He had used his influence to force a former Recollet Father to return to his monastery and urged this man's wife to reject Protestantism.
4. He was directing a group of nuns who were living secretly in London.
5. He urged that priests be sent to Virginia in the New Territories to implant the Catholic faith.³⁶

The accusation was made public and Claude was arrested in his room at the Palace on November 24, according to Pierre Charrier.³⁷ Margaret Yeo's account in These Three Hearts records that "armed men dragged him from his bed off to King's Bench Prison in Southwark."³⁸ He was allowed time only to snatch some of his clothes and his ~~brevisy~~ ^{brevisy}. Prison conditions were appalling, and the King's Bench was about the worst in London. Tramps, beggars, cutthroats, and prostitutes--almost naked, and covered with vermin--were thrown together in dank, airless cells.³⁹

One month of such confinement destroyed his health, already undermined by long hours of work. When sentence was pronounced, the decision was not death but banishment. Margaret Yeo states that the French Ambassador, Paul Barillon, had written to Versailles on November 28, 1678, in Claude's behalf, and that there had been a hurried exchange of diplomatic notes. According to Yeo, Louis XIV demanded the instant release of one who was a French subject, and the French Foreign Secretary also wrote to insist sharply on Claude's nationality. It is perhaps due to these interventions that Claude's life was spared and that consideration was shown for the condition of his health, since the order of banishment was not immediately enforced. The execution

of the order was postponed "upon representation made that the prisoner was in a languishing condition, being consumptive and spitting blood" ⁴⁰ He was granted a delay of ten days before embarking for France in January of 1679.

Weak from tuberculosis and his stay in prison, Claude travelled through France in slow stages, arriving in Dijon at the end of January. His old friend from Paray, Mother de Saumaise, was mistress of novices in Dijon, and he stopped to pay her a visit and address her group. One of them, Sister Jeanne Madeleine Joy, would one day compose the first collection of practices of piety in honor of the Sacred Heart and make one of the first images of this Heart. Towards the end of February Claude appeared in Paray, where he spent ten happy and fruitful days reassuring Margaret Mary and her new Superior, Mother Greyfié, in regard to the revelations of the Sacred Heart. When he arrived in Lyon on March 23, he wrote: "Our Lord has taught me some days ago to offer Him a sacrifice even greater than those He asked of me in the past: to be determined to do nothing at all, if that be His will." ⁴¹

While enjoying the country air of St. Symphorien, he wrote to the Superior of the Visitation Convent in nearby Charolles, requesting that she and her community make a special Communion the day after the Octave of Corpus Christi to atone "for all the irreverences committed against Jesus Christ during the octave He is exposed on our altars throughout the Christian world." ⁴² He wrote a similar message to his sister Marguerite

in her convent at Condieu.

Somewhat recovered, Father de la Colombière was made spiritual director to some sixteen young Jesuits studying at Lyon during the two scholastic years 1679-81. But, as his illness progressed, he was removed from Lyon and sent to Faray in August, 1681. He communicated with Margaret Mary and learned that "the Lord was glorifying Himself through Claude's illness."⁴³ As he showed no improvement in Faray, his brother sent a comfortable carriage to remove him to Vienne; it was on January 29, the feast of St. Francis de Sales, a day dear to both him and Margaret Mary. A note came from her to the effect that he should not leave Faray if he could remain without disobeying the orders of his Superiors. In writing he asked why; in writing he received an answer. He stayed.

There is no record of the last ten days of his life. On February 15, 1682, at seven o'clock in the evening, he died of a violent hemorrhage. He was forty-two years of age and had been a Jesuit for twenty-two years. At five o'clock the next morning, a devoted friend named Catherine de Bise-franc carried the news of his death to Margaret Mary. "Pray for him, and have others pray for him," said Margaret. But at ten o'clock the same morning, Margaret sent this note to Catherine: "Weep no longer. Pray to him. Fear nothing. He is now more powerful than ever to help you." Sister Margaret Mary later begged her friend to do all in her power to retrieve the last note she had sent to Father de la

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Colombière. But the Jesuit Superior, Father Bourguignat, absolutely refused to surrender it, saying he had rather hand over all the archives of the house. To explain, he read the note to Catherine: "He has told me that it is here that He wishes the sacrifice of your life."⁴⁴

The process of beatification for Father Claude de la Colombière was begun in 1874, and he was declared blessed in 1929. A special altar has been erected in a small church of Faray-le-Monial to honor his memory. In the considered judgment of the Church, as expressed in the document of his beatification (Acta Apostolicae Sedis, 1929), he is the outstanding champion and promoter of the devotion of the most Sacred Heart of Jesus.⁴⁵

FOOTNOTES

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(Lyon: Nouvellet, 1904), p. 79.

⁴Claude de la Colombière, S. J., Ecrits spirituels
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⁷Mgr. François Gauthey, ed., Vie et oeuvres de la
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⁸Emile Bougaud, Histoire de la Bienheureuse
Marguerite-Marie (Paris: Poussielgue, 1915), p. 79.

⁹Gauthey, Vie et oeuvres, p. 351.

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¹¹Ibid.

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- ¹³Sister Mary Philip, A Jesuit at the English Court (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1922), p. 115.
- ¹⁴Claude de la Colombière, S. J., Ecrits spirituels, p. 137.
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- ¹⁹Charrier, Histoire, p. 170.
- ²⁰Ibid.
- ²¹L. J. Coney, "Jansenism," New Catholic Encyclopedia, 7 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 820-24.
- ²²Bougaud, Histoire, p. 41
- ²³S. V. Range, "Quietism," New Catholic Encyclopedia, 12 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 26-27.
- ²⁴Charrier, Histoire, p. 172.
- ²⁵Claude de la Colombière, S. J., Oeuvres complètes, 6, 431.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Alfred Kaufmann, S. J., Modern Europe (New York: Allwyn and Bacon, 1930), p. 124.

²⁸Charrier, p. 172.

²⁹Will and Ariel Durant, Age of Louis XIV--The Reformation (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1957), p. 280.

³⁰Ibid., p. 280.

³¹Ibid., p. 281.

³²Ibid., p. 282.

³³Charrier, p. 241.

³⁴Ibid., p. 233.

³⁵Ibid., p. 242 ff.

³⁶Ibid., p. 251.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Yeo, p. 225.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 229.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 270.

⁴²George Guitton, Le Bienheureux Claude de la Colombière (Lyon: Emmanuel Vitte, 1943), p. 624.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Gauthey, Vie et oeuvres, p. 499.

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PART 1

SERMON V

FIRST SERMON
FOR CHRISTMAS DAY

Pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.

Peace to men of good will.
(Luke 2:14)

Jesus Christ was born to serve as a guide for the faithful. He knows all the roads that lead to God, and He teaches them to us with great clarity and precision; He always leads the way by His examples, and He assists the faithful on the journey; He even carries them by His grace.

It is true that when Jesus Christ was born, in the reign of the great Augustus, a profound peace covered the earth. But we can say that this peace was like the calm and quiet of the night, a condition which favors those who seek only rest

or the freedom to satisfy with impunity all their desires, but a condition which fills with sadness and terror those who enjoy honest work or who must walk in darkness to reach their homes.

The practice of idolatry was at that time so widespread that, save for the Jewish people, all nations were immersed in it; it had spread to the point that one could count almost as many gods as there were people. It is true that among the more enlightened, there were some who recognized the error and the absurdity of this practice, but it had become so deeply entrenched that even those who could still see the light dared not communicate it to others or follow it themselves. What can I say that will describe the state of their moral decay--a state that always prevails whenever truth is absent? It would hardly be fitting in an assembly of this kind to discuss the examples of decadence which St. Paul describes in his first Epistle to the Romans and which St. Jerome reports at greater length in his Commentaries on Isaias. It will suffice to say that vice not only reigned among them, but was an object of their adoration; that Vice had even become the common divinity which linked all the various sects, and that each sect had added it to its list of private gods.

Amid such darkness, sinners, no doubt, found great peace; for there was nothing to disturb the deep lethargy that enveloped them, and their shameful conduct was readily sanctioned by the general depravity which prevailed and by the very examples of their gods. But, for the pure souls, for

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those who had a better understanding of virtue and who may have wished to practice it--what sorrow, what pain to find almost no traces of it anywhere on earth, to be deprived of the lights needed to find the roads leading to virtue and of a guide who could direct them on these roads! May God be eternally glorified! May He be honored and blessed throughout the ages! For this is the dawning of a new day, by the light of which we shall be saved from such a deplorable state. The Son of God comes into the world to enlighten us and to teach the ways of holiness to all who desire their own sanctification: Pax hominibus bonae voluntatis (Peace to men of good will). This was the message sung by the angels at the birth of this Prince of Peace. May all who have received from God the gift of good will cease to worry and to fear! For them Jesus will open the road which leads to heaven, and He Himself will guide them along that road. Permit me, Gentlemen, to explain this truth; it is a source of great comfort to all who desire to lead a Christian life; and I have no doubt that today each of us has been touched by that desire in the Sacrament of Penance. Let us ask God to send us the lights needed to derive fruit from this discourse. He can refuse us nothing after having given us His only Son, especially if we invoke the aid of her by whom this Son was given. Ave Maria.

A man of good will, to use this term in its simplest and most literal sense, is one whose will tends toward the good and whose wish is to become good. There are, of course,

many kinds of wishes but, obviously, we are speaking here of those which are most effective. In order to illustrate what I have often observed in regard to this sincerity of desire, I know of no better example to present to you than that of the traveller parched with thirst who has journeyed over hills and dales in search of water to quench his burning throat; and who pounces avidly upon the first stream he finds without stopping to consider whether it is clear or muddy, much like those unfortunate Greeks who, facing at the same time the torture of thirst and the imminent danger from their enemies, ignored the threat to their lives and battled one another to drink water in which mud mingled with their own blood.

This, Christian Listeners, is the simplest picture of good will that I can give. It is the disposition of a man who hungers and thirsts for justice, to use the words of Jesus Christ; who hungers and thirsts for it so avidly that there is no fatigue or danger he will not face to find satisfaction; who embraces blindly any and all means that are offered to him to become holy, without examining them to see whether they are easy or difficult, or whether they are sweet or bitter to his nature. O what a great gift, exclaims St. Bernard, is this holy and fervent will! And how quickly those who have received it from heaven will find themselves blessed by an abundance of supernatural benefits and graces! And by what great lengths they will outdistance the cold and timid souls who show only feeble desires for that which of all things in this world is most worthy of our desires! Grande donum bona voluntas, quia

en animo omnium est origo bonorum et omnium mater virtutum

(A great gift is good will, for in the soul it is the source of all good and the mother of all virtues)! But this good will, which today is a source of such great benefits, what could it produce before the birth of Jesus Christ, other than trouble and fruitless worries? Since the masters of the spiritual life have observed that even today the fervent person without proper direction tires himself in vain and travels great distances with little or no progress, what, then, could be expected of even the greatest fervor before the Incarnation of the Word and the publication of the Bible? It is true that the Old Law produced men of strong virtue. But they were still subject to the errors and weaknesses of other men; and, in imitating them, one could be mistaken. Moreover, they were unable to provide examples of every virtue or of virtues suited to every person. There was nothing at that time that could fully satisfy those whose hearts were aflame with the desire to serve God. But, since the birth of Jesus Christ, Christian Listeners, you have a guide under whose leadership it is not possible to go astray, a guide who is willing to accept, to direct, and to satisfy your holy desires. First of all, this guide knows all the routes which can lead us to God; second, He explains them in all clarity and precision; third, He will always lead the way by His examples; and fourth, He will assist you in your journey, and even carry you by His grace. I have only a few words to say on each of these points, and they will constitute the four parts of my discourse.

FIRST POINT

It is certain, Christian Company, that in creating the soul of Jesus Christ, God embellished it with all the natural and supernatural gifts that would make it worthy of the Word, with Whom it was to be joined in a personal union. He enriched it with every infused grace that was in any way related to the divine perfection, and He took special care to give these graces

an excellence that was in some way infinite. But, because wisdom is the distinctive characteristic of the Second Person, He took even greater care to ensure that this soul would be adorned with a most remarkable wisdom, a wisdom compared to which that of the greatest kings and wisest men seemed but a pale shadow. And, for that reason, Gentlemen, even if the Savior of the world had not received the divine nature, He would still deserve to be the adviser and the ruler of nations, and there would be prudence in following His lights and His maxims.

Moreover, amid all the knowledge bestowed on Him in virtue of this remarkable wisdom, the deepest and the most distinctive knowledge, or, in a word, the most nearly perfect, is the knowledge of the routes that lead to salvation and perfection. The reason for this ^{knowledge} is that He was meant to serve as our guide along these routes, and that God, in justice, must give to His ministers talents equal to the task that He has in store for them. Moses, to whom was confided the role of leading the Israelites, received, by special favor, knowledge of the ways by which the Lord would generally proceed to recall

His wayward creatures, according to God's Own word: Notas fecit vias suas Moisi (He made known His ways to Moses). But, how much greater must have been the enlightenment of Jesus Christ on this subject, since He was meant to be the master of all blessed souls!

And besides this infused knowledge of the roads to salvation, He was given another kind of knowledge, called experiential, which is no less effective in enabling Him to serve as our guide. I mean that He made use of every possible means to achieve the highest virtue. Not only did He achieve by Himself a greater sanctity than all the saints combined, but He also embodied within Himself all the characteristic marks of holiness. He achieved perfection by every route that leads to it: by innocence, by penance, by joy, by pain, by honor, by infamy, by the most remarkable graces, by the harshest trials, by an untiring zeal, and by continuous contemplation. Pray tell me, Christian Listeners, who is better qualified to teach us the roads to salvation than He Who has experienced them all, and Who has gone further on them than anyone else who has ever set out?

And to this argument I add that although Jesus was a traveller on this earth, He was never for a moment deprived of "the comprehensive view," as the Scholastics termed it. That is, although He walked in the ways of holiness, in the same manner of all other saints on earth, He never lost the vision of God as it is enjoyed by the blessed in heaven; He was earning each day a reward which was already His; and He was an in-

habitant of the Celestial Jerusalem while still a pilgrim in this land of exile.

In view of these facts, how could He fail to see clearly, and, from within, all that is most pleasing to God, since He had such a thorough knowledge of the Perfect Being? Who could know better than He what one should do to be like God? In a word, can He fail to lead us in all security, since from the outset He sees our destination and He never loses sight of it? And yet, ^{all} this is still very little, Christian Company; Jesus Christ is not only present along the way and at the end of our journey, but He is Himself the way and the end for which we strive: Ego sum via (I am the way); He tells us in the Gospel, veritas et vita (the truth and the life). I am the way which leads to the truth; I am the truth which leads to life; and I am that very life to which truth leads. That is why when one willingly places oneself under the guidance of Jesus Christ and clings to Him to be led to God, then it becomes just as impossible for him to lose his way as it is for the road itself to cut him off from his destination. Under such wise guidance, not only is he sure of finding what he seeks, but he has already found it!

What a source of joy to the many souls who are so generous and yet so timid; whose greatest desire is to do what is right, but who are always fearful of doing wrong! Deus tuus ipse est ductor tuus (Your God Himself is your director).

Henceforth, your God will be your director. See Him as He appears before you in the visible form of your own flesh, just

as the angel appeared to Tobias in the form of a man to lead him to Gabel. No, He is not lacking in the knowledge of sanctity. Novi (I knew), He can say with Raphael, et omnia itinera ejus frequenter ambulavi (and I frequently walked its ways). I know it truly well, for I have walked along all its roads, and I am Myself the path and the road which leads to it. I am even that sanctity to which you aspire; follow Me and infallibly you will reach your destination. And, He not only knows all the roads which lead to God, but He also teaches them to us with great clarity and precision. This teaching will be my second consideration.

SECOND POINT

There is no doubt, Gentlemen, that some of the Patriarchs and Prophets of the Old Law had gained some knowledge of holiness, since some of them became great saints. But I believe it can be said that none of them actually taught about holiness, or, if they did, it was always in terms that were so mysterious and so obscure that it was not possible to grasp their meaning. Even in the Law of Moses, the rules of perfection appear only in terms of symbols and in the guise of external observances. Far from elevating man above his natural weaknesses, this Law often favored these human weaknesses. Think of the many wives a husband was allowed to keep, and the power he had to repudiate them at will; think also of the practice of usury in regard to strangers, a practice that was never

considered by this Law to be a crime for the Jews; and^{think}/also of the hatred of one's enemies, which was made a precept under the Law.

Jesus Christ was well aware of all the means by which one attains the highest piety, and He communicated these lights to us. We have His own assurance that He revealed to us all His greatest secrets; that He, in a manner of speaking, poured into our minds all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom which He had received from His Father: Omnia quaecunque audivi a Patre meo, nota feci vobis (All things whatsoever I have heard from My Father, I have made known to you). As proof of this, we could find nothing more convincing or more useful to us than the details which comprise His doctrine. Nothing is more explicit than the lessons He gives, nothing more practical than the methods He proposes for our sanctification. It was He Who explained that if we wished to avoid evil actions, we must rid our minds of those thoughts which are the seeds of these actions, and avoid even the glances which give rise to these thoughts. It was He Who, anticipating all the evils that result from the world's inordinate love of gold and silver, revealed to us that beautiful secret of a poverty of heart which detaches us even from the goods that we possess. It was He Who showed us the gravity of venial sin which leads infallibly to more serious sin; Who condemned even our idle words, so that in our efforts to banish them we would be placed far beyond the temptation to lie or to malign our neighbor. It was He Who, in order to combat the evil effects of anger and revenge, went

straight to our hearts and sought to dry up the source of these passions by commanding us to love our enemies and to do good to those who do us harm. To facilitate our practice of patience, a virtue so important in this world of sorrows, He allowed us to see the treasures that are hidden behind adversity and persecution; He explained that even in affliction there is cause for joy, and that what the world regards as a trial, a misfortune, or a calamity may well be the very thing that is meant to bring us happiness, both in this life and the next: Beati qui lugent, beati qui persecutionem patiuntur (Happy are those who mourn, happy those who suffer persecution)..

Thus, to lead us to that moral purity and innocence of life, He opens before us roads, heretofore unknown to us, that are both straight and sure. But for you, Christian Listeners, it is not enough simply to observe the commandments and to practice the virtues required for salvation; you are all aflame with a desire for perfection, and it is your hope that you will be allowed to give full sway to this desire. Before Jesus, Christ, no one had set down any of the rules. The great counsels regarding complete detachment, contempt for the world, hatred of self, mortification, death, and spiritual life had not been brought to the consciousness of man; on the contrary, the ancient Scriptures were full of promises the sole object of which, it would seem, was to nourish in man's heart the love of honors and worldly success. The Savior of the world was the first to point out the difference between a mediocre virtue and a truly perfect piety. He said all there was to say

on this subject, and His pronouncements were so clear that I find it difficult to understand how so many allowed themselves to be misled and to make so many wrong decisions in these matters: Qui vult venire post me, abneget semetipsum (He who wishes to come after Me must deny himself). Did He not say explicitly, and more than once: Let him who wishes to follow Me renounce himself: let him put aside all concern for his reputation and his personal interests; let him no longer heed his passions and natural inclinations; let him declare war on his appetites, his desires, his mortal flesh, and his own will; let him regard himself as a stranger and as his own worst enemy. He who does not hate his father and his mother, his wife, his children, his brothers and sisters, that is, he who prefers their pleasure to Mine, and who, rather than displease them, neglects My service; who is not disposed to walk over their bodies if this were the only way to accomplish My will—this man, I say, cannot be My disciple. Qui non bejulat crucem suam, et venit post me, non potest meus esse discipulus (He who does not carry his cross and follow Me is not worthy to be My disciple). Be not deceived, My disciples; if you plan to sanctify your souls, you must embrace your cross and agree to carry it willingly. I say your cross, the one which was assigned to you. It would be futile for you to fast and to practice even the most excruciating mortifications if you complain about the poverty imposed on you by Providence, about your illnesses, your enemies, or your misfortunes; if you do not endure with patience the ill humor of the husband or wife

whom the Lord has assigned to you: qui non bajulat crucem suam. Sinite mortuos sepetire mortuos suos (he who does not carry his cross. Let the dead bury the dead). For those who strive for perfection, the world should be looked upon as a region of dead people with whom they should seek no commerce. Let these worldly ones expend themselves and become engrossed in their temporal affairs; let them exert their best efforts to conform to civil formalities and empty social practice. Be neither an admirer or a slave of this group of reprobates; seek only to please Him Who should be your only Master.

And, finally, for those who are still not content to do only what is prescribed by these counsels, there are more stringent demands; and it gives me happiness to proclaim them to favor those noble souls who wish to place no limits on their love. Si vis perfectus esse, vade, vende omnia quae habes, da pauperibus et sequere me (If you wish to be perfect, go, sell all that you have, give it to the poor, and follow Me): If you would be perfect, go sell all that you possess, give the money to the poor, and divested of all things, be prepared to do all that I may ask. Some people forego marriage to avoid its responsibilities, while others forego it simply to avoid its pleasures; ask yourself if you have the courage to imitate the latter. But, finally, the greatest proof of perfection is the sacrifice of one's life, to be always ready to die, not only to save one's own soul, but even to save that of another: Majorem charitatem nemo habet quam ut animam suam ponat quis pro amicis suis (None has greater

love than he who would lay down his life for his friends).

And that, Christian Company, is the road to holiness. Nothing could be plainer or easier to understand. We may perhaps be appalled by these maxims, which are so opposed to our nature, but we can never say that we were not made aware of what is needed for holiness. O my God, how grateful we are for your clear teachings in this matter! Who can ever comprehend the greatness of this blessing! Personally, I know of no better way to express my feelings on this subject than to borrow the words of St. Paul which were read to us at Mass: Apparuit gratia Dei Salvatoris nostri omnibus hominibus (The grace of God, our Savior, appeared to all men). Our God and Redeemer has shown us His great mercy and His infinite goodness. And how did He do this, O great Apostle? Erudiens nos, ut abnegantes impietatem et specularia desideria, sobrie, juste et pie vivamus in hoc saeculo (By teaching us to deny ourselves that which is ungodly and worldly, so that we might live piously, justly, and soberly). It was not simply by assuming our human flesh and elevating our nature to the very throne of the Almighty; nor was it, I believe, by taking on our sins with all the pains due to them; nor ^{was it} by shedding His blood, or by conquering death, or by giving us a firm pledge of the resurrection. Apparuit gratia Dei erudiens nos (The grace of God came down to teach us). All of these are great proofs of His love, I do not deny; but, in my opinion, the greatest proof of all lies in the fact that He personally taught us to deny ourselves, to show contempt for the world, to break all our ties with it, and to free

ourselves from the bondage of all vain desires. In a word, He showed us the way to sanctity and justice. Ut abengantes impietatem et saecularia desideria, sobrie, et pie vivamus in hoc saeculo (So that, putting aside ungodliness and worldly desires, we may live piously and soberly). O, a thousand times blessed are those who agree to follow such a loyal guide along these beautiful paths! We call them narrow because at the outset they restrict and constrain our human nature. But what peace and what sweet freedom await those who enter there! I must admit that the mere thought of this heavenly state fills me with the greatest happiness, and were it not for a conscious effort to stay within the limits of my discussion, I could easily be led far from my topic. But let us return to our guide. I have shown that He teaches us the way with great clarity and precision. Now, we shall see how He always leads the way by His examples.

THIRD POINT

The Prophet Isaias, in his teachings on the Incarnation of the Eternal Word, leads the Chosen People to believe that they will be given a Master who will be visible to their eyes: Erunt oculi tui videntes praeceptorem tuum (Your own eyes will see their master). He could have said even more, Christian Listeners. He could have promised that this ^{visible} master would give them visible lessons; that, not only would He assume our human flesh, but that He would also, if I may express

it thus, embody His precepts and maxims by presenting them in His Own person and by expressing in action all that His words had stated. And, without doubt, Gentlemen, there was need for our Redeemer to act in this way, in order to dispel any possible doubts that might disturb persons of good will, and to ward off all their anxieties. If these rules of perfection had come to us merely through His words or in written form, however simple and clear they might have been, the possibility remains of their being clouded by diverse interpretations; different meanings might have been ascribed to them; and, fearing error, many might have ignored them completely. But, with Jesus Christ practicing what He taught and walking before us on the road which He had chosen, what possible reasons could there be for doubt or hesitation? Though the star which had appeared to the Wise Men in the East had indicated by its position in what country they should seek the Messiah, as St. John Chrysostom tells us; though the Doctors of Jerusalem had clearly pointed out to them that Bethlehem would be His birthplace, they, nonetheless, were still beset by some degree of uncertainty, and travelled as if in darkness. But, from the moment that this same star, which had prompted them to leave their homeland, reappeared to them along the route and began to lead them step by step, adjusting its speed to their strength--or rather, to their weakness--then, all their uncertainty vanished, and they completed their journey with a joy which the Scriptures would find it difficult to overstate: Gavisi

sunt gaudio magno valde (They rejoiced exceedingly).

Christian Listeners, this experience is what results when honest souls seek God in the simplicity of their hearts. They are stimulated by the words of Jesus Christ to undertake this quest in accordance with the directions He has given. The wise directors that they find along the way help them to keep a straight course and to maintain their courage in the face of the difficulties which they encounter. But if Jesus Christ Himself, Who encouraged them to set out on this journey, appears to them and points out each step of the way by His examples, what could possibly trouble them or cause them any sadness?

And, Christian Listeners, so He has done with incredible goodness and charity. He told us many times that in order to go to the Father it was necessary to undergo trials and tribulations; that poverty, contempt for the world, love of obscurity, hatred of self, love of one's enemies, were all steps which lead us to the perfect love of God. But, He was not content simply to point out this road to us from afar and to say, as it was said to the Jewish people: Haec est via, ambulate in ea, et non declinetis ad dexteram neque ad sinistram (That is the way; walk in it, and may you swerve neither to the right nor to the left). There is the road; follow it, if you wish, and turn neither to the right nor to the left. Again and again He invites us to follow Him: Venite post me... Veni et sequere me... Qui mihi ministrat, me sequatur (Come after Me... Come and

follow Me...., He who serves Me, let Him follow Me). Come and follow Me; I will not leave you to our own resources; I wish to point out each step for you; there will be no possibility for you to lose your way; simply follow Me and walk in My footsteps.

In fact, the examples of Jesus are such a perfect embodiment of His doctrine that we could almost dispense with all that the Evangelists have so carefully transmitted to us in regard to this doctrine. No, Gentlemen, we have no need to study the words of the Savior of the world, for we may even fail to understand them; we have no need to read the commentaries of the Fathers, for they are not always in accord with the text or with one another, and in some instances, they even contradict themselves. Is it your wish to become a saint? Respice et fac secundum exemplar, quod tibi monstratum est (Look, and act according to the example which He gives you). Cast your eyes on Jesus Christ and on the examples He has given you. See this humiliated God in the poverty of the stable; see this wisdom, silenced and reduced to the simplicity of a child; see this majesty, hidden and almost annihilated in a crib. You are always in search of pious books; you wish to consult all the spiritual fathers to learn how to reach perfection in virtue. Do you somehow expect that they will discover new routes, or are you without eyes to follow Jesus along those He has already trodden? Are you unaware that of His thirty-three years on earth Jesus spent thirty in a carpenter's shop, hidden from the world;

that, during all that time, He had no one but the angels to witness His admirable sanctity; that He had no will other than that of Joseph and Mary, nor virtue, appearing outwardly, other than that of obedience, meekness, and humility? And I am not speaking now of His public life, where His zeal was always accompanied by a remarkable modesty and selflessness; where He displayed so much reserve in His judgments and in His condemnations of even the greatest sinners; where He derived such joy from doing good and took such care to avoid the glory that might attend it; where amid His pressing occupations, He found time for fasting, prayer, and solitude. This is not yet the moment to present Him suffering and dying on the Cross; but let us just say that if all books were lost, all lights extinguished, and all that we had left was a single crucifix, we would have all that is needed to attain the highest perfection: Christus passus est pro nobis, vobis relinquens exemplum, ut sequamini vestigia ejus (Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his footsteps), St. Peter tells us. Christian Souls, Jesus Christ has left you an example in His Passion and death. In them, He has provided you with all manner of good examples. Whoever you are, whatever your state in life, by whatever route God has chosen to call you to His service, you will find on Calvary and on the route that leads there the footprints of the Son of God deeply imbedded and stained with His Own blood.

So that, in place of the thick darkness which

shrouded us before the birth of the Messiah, I believe that we now stand, with the shepherds of Bethlehem, all covered with light: Et claritas Dei circumfulsit illos (And the light of God diffused itself all around them). This brightness is of course very pleasant for the fervent souls who so ardently yearned for the light, but quite repugnant to the tepid and cowardly ones who can no longer justify their conduct, since their eyes are bathed in light and they are forced to see even that which they prefer to ignore. If Jesus Christ had been satisfied merely to recite His doctrine to us, we might well have found (as I previously mentioned) ways of misunderstanding the message; we might well have been divided on the moral content, just as we have been in regard to even the clearest dogmas of the Gospel; in any event, we would have convinced ourselves that all His words on sanctity, constitute nothing more than a beautiful idea, destined to humble the human spirit in its inability ever to achieve such heights. . . . But, having seen each point, each precept supported by a thousand examples, and these examples from a God; having seen a God Who is poor, Who is humiliated, Who is pious, Who is obedient, and Who willingly dies on a cross, Verborum veritas splendet effectibus confirmata (The truth of His words, confirmed by His actions, shines forth), says the learned Theodorat--then, I say, the truth of the Biblical words, confirmed by these actions, produces such a powerful light that we can no longer pretend to ignore this truth; we are forced to admit that we see clearly what should be done but that we lack the determination to do it.

FOURTH POINT

All that I have said thus far about the guide that heaven sent us--that He knows the way, that He teaches it to us with great clarity and accuracy, that He walks before us--all of this, I say, shows clearly that we no longer have cause to fear in regard to our ignorance. But our weakness could very well nullify all these advantages. The same light which so brightens our road also helps us to see the difficulties that lie ahead. Is such a view not capable of shaking the courage even of those with the greatest ardor for good? Such a loss of courage would undoubtedly result, Christian Listeners, if we did not know the strength of Him Who is our leader, and if we were not certain that He would give us all the help needed to prevent us from faltering along the way and all the advice needed to keep us from taking the wrong direction. This consideration brings me to my fourth point, but because I wish to avoid being too lengthy, I shall simply point out that, while other masters are content to enlighten the mind, Jesus Christ also fortifies the heart; that He is the source, not only of truth, but also of grace; that He embodies the fullness of both these gifts, and that He communicates both at the same time, according to the teaching of St. John.

For this reason, the Prophet, looking ahead to His coming, and having said that the twisted roads would be made straight,

added that the rough ones would become smooth, in order to show that He would teach us the roads to salvation, and that along these roads He would smooth out the difficulties for us: Erunt prava in directa et aspera in vias planas (The winding roads will be made straight, and the rough ones made level). Christian Listeners, I can find no better symbol for this guide than that of the pillar of fire which conducted the people of Israel to the Promised Land. It is true that this pillar led them through lands that were frightening and arid, through strange and fierce countries, almost as if it meant to offer them up as prey to the natives of those areas; but it was also the same pillar which cleared away all the obstacles in their path; which hovered over their campsite during the day to protect them from the burning sun; which caused the manna to fall upon them every morning to feed them; and which hurled fire and thunder on all those who would impede their passage. And there, Gentlemen, you have a perfect picture of the Redeemer. He is the mysterious cloud which follows us night and day. He not only dispels the shadows of our ignorance, but He soothes us, He refreshes us, as it were, in the strenuous labor we must undertake as we follow Him; He nourishes us with sweetness and heavenly consolations; He calms our passions, puts the demons to flight, and gives us the victory almost without a battle. Pax hominibus bonae voluntatis (Peace to men of good will), shout the Angels, on this day, in the hills of Bethlehem. They are speaking to men who aspire after holiness and who burn with a desire to

follow the new King. The invitation is not to take up arms and to fortify oneself against the obstacles found on the road to sanctity; but, rather, it is a proclamation of peace and a declaration that all that is demanded of men is a good and sincere will. It is as if to imply that Jesus would do all the rest, that He would not only assume the responsibility for our sins--a burden which would certainly defeat us--but that He would carry us on His Own shoulders; that He would fight our battle alone and would overcome anything that might cause us the slightest pain; in short, that we have but to follow Him and reap the fruits of His bloody victories. O, eternally blessed be the goodness and infinite power of our God which have placed us in so favorable a position! To be holy, now, one need only desire it; the greatest of all blessings, the greatest happiness--the only happiness in this world--can be ours if only we desire it. What have you to say now, O lukewarm souls, who have languished for so many years in your efforts to learn the way, and who have not succeeded in moving one step closer to your God? What possible excuse can you offer to disguise this terrible languor? Will you complain, as did the paralyzed man of the Gospel, that there is no man to lead you or to carry you to your destination? Hominem non habeo (I have no man). But here is a Man Who lacks neither the lights to know, the zeal to teach, the charity to lead, nor the strength to sustain and to assist you on the thorny road to virtue. God Himself became man to render you these services; no longer can you ignore what

must be done: the Gospel has been too explicit, and the life of Jesus Christ is too visible a model; the grace of Jesus Christ is too powerful an aid to leave us any cause to complain of our weakness. It is not a display of strength that is asked of you. God knows too well what He has put into His creatures to expect from them what they do not have. All that is asked of you is your good will; the strength must come from elsewhere; and when God sees that your desire is genuine, He will sooner lose His power than allow you to lose His help.¹

So, Christian Listeners, if we are not fully converted, if we fail to sanctify ourselves, it is surely because we do not wish it. Ah! but I do desire it, you may say, and it is because this desire is so deeply entrenched in my soul that I have lost my rest; I would be in peace if only I were a saint, or if I had no intention of ever becoming one. But I reply that if you were a saint, or even if you truly wished to become one, you would enjoy perfect peace: Pax hominibus bonae voluntatis. We desire to be holy, it is true, but it is also true that we do not desire it: Vult et no vult piger (The slothful wish and do not wish), said the Sage; the indolent soul wants and does not want at the same time, and it is

¹This is an allusion to the words spoken by Our Lord to Blessed Margaret Mary: "I promise that you will be lacking in help only when My heart is lacking in power." This promise was renewed in these terms on December 31, 1678. [Footnotes for sermons, because they are so few, will be placed at the bottom of these pages rather than at the end of the section.]

precisely these contradictory desires which trouble the soul and could bring on its death: Desideria occidunt pigrum (Yearnings bring death to the slothful). A certain woman would like to belong to God and to the world; she would like to go to heaven by ways which do not lead there; she would like to be holier than she is while wishing to remain just as she is; and although it is necessary to change one's life to become a saint, she would have sanctity change its nature to accommodate her inclinations; she would like to devote herself completely to the practice of virtue on condition that she find no obstacles to hold her back, but the things which stop her are so negligible that it is quite obvious that she is all too willing to be held back. A bit of ribbon, a fancy stitch, or a skirt may be enough to restrain her. A small amount of glory that she may attain by her natural talents; a vain fear of blushing either because of her sins at the foot of the confessor, or because of her good deeds in the presence of worldly people; a vestige of pleasure snatched from the pains and disillusion of a worldly life--such are the obstacles which oppose themselves to her holy resolutions and render them ineffective.

O! how far removed this is from that good will which the Angels proclaim today as the condition for peace! This good will, far from being vanquished by the first difficulty which arises, actually seeks out difficulties, in order to surmount them; it allows one to hesitate only long enough to determine what road must be taken; but once the way is

open, there is need of a spiritual director to moderate its excessive zeal, and ^{of} strong orders to keep it within the bounds of Christian prudence. How wonderful it is to observe this soul who at times surrenders himself to God without reserve, saying in the words of St. Paul: Domine quid me vis facere (Lord, what do You want me to do)? Lord, I am ready; what would You have me do? while at other times, emulating the same Apostle, he challenges heaven and earth to shake his courage or diminish his ardor: Quis nos separabit a charitate Christi (Who will separate us from the love of Christ)? This soul, truly obsessed with the desire for sanctity, desires it at least as strongly as the miser desires worldly goods or the ambitious man desires success, that is, he is totally prepared to sacrifice his rest, and even to expose his life a thousand times over to satisfy this desire. All the blessings or misfortunes of the world, all the favorable and unfavorable situations that Providence holds in store, are considered by him to be neither sad nor happy, except as they may advance or hinder his plans; all roads are good inasmuch as they lead him to God, and, with all his heart, he will choose the roughest and narrowest of all, if he but feels that it is the surest and the shortest.

This, Christian Listeners, is the true meaning of hungering and thirsting after justice; and these are the persons whom Jesus Christ has declared blessed in the Gospel, and to whom He has promised that they will surely find satisfaction: Beati qui esuriunt et sitiunt justitiam, quoniam

ipsi saturabuntur (Happy are they who desire and thirst for justice, because they will be satisfied). They will be satisfied because God will never fail to fulfill such a holy desire; they will be satisfied because this desire will extinguish in their hearts all other desires. And, finally, they will be satisfied in heaven, where their eternal desire to enjoy God will be joined to a full and eternal enjoyment of the object of their desire. Amen.

SERMON IX

FIRST SERMON
FOR
THE FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY

Ubi est, qui natus est Rex?

Where is the King Who has
been born?

(Matt. 2:2)

On this day, Jesus makes a brilliant display of His supreme authority over sovereigns, commanding obedience from kings; He manifests a supreme power, inspiring fear in kings; He reveals a sovereign majesty, evoking the respect of these same kings.

Here is a mystery which will give of the Savior an idea quite opposed to the one which was conceived of Him at the time of His birth. You remember, Gentlemen, the indigence and the solitude in which He found Himself on leaving Mary's womb. He was attended by only a few shepherds, whose visit was

much more likely to deepen the humiliation of the manger than to bring Him any glory. All these events took place in obscurity and in silence, and we were astonished to see that men showed so little eagerness to welcome the Messiah Whom they had awaited for so many centuries. But, if we return to Bethlehem today, we will find the scene greatly changed. The city is hardly large enough to accommodate the trains and caravans of those who have come to adore Jesus. In His stable one sees only gold, crimson, and perfumes. In the place of the shepherds there are kings who kneel before Him and who place their crowns at His feet. These sovereigns, who have come from the far corners of the Orient, have spread all along their route the tidings which caused them to undertake such a long journey; they have proclaimed these tidings in Jerusalem and have even brought them to Herod's palace; the tyrant is alarmed by such news and has already begun to tremble on his throne.

This, Christian Listeners, is the mystery that the Church celebrates on this day. I know not what thoughts your piety has inspired in you while meditating on it. For my part, it seems that it is the mystery of the kingship of Jesus Christ, just as His birth is the mystery of His poverty. I showed you on Christmas day that He was born poor and seemed to be only the God of the poor; but today I find that He is a king, and even the King of kings. I shall produce the reasons which compel me to attribute to Him this quality of kingship after we have greeted the Queen of Angels and have humbly asked for her protection. Ave Maria.

Royalty is a quality that is made up of several others, and these can be reduced to three principal ones. It comprises authority, which calls forth obedience; power, which generates fear; and majesty, which attracts the respect and veneration of men. Authority is like the base and the foundation of the throne; power serves as its support, and majesty is much like its ornaments and its splendor. Hence, of all the sovereigns who have ever reigned on earth, there can be no doubt that it is Jesus Christ Who has possessed most perfectly these royal prerogatives. His Father had given Him the infinite authority over all creatures which He Himself has; He had communicated to Him His Own omnipotence by sharing His nature with Him; and the divinity which resided in His physical being was, in the words of St. Paul, reflected on His face in features that were so beautiful and so magnificent that He needed only to be seen to be respected. But, although He possessed these privileges, although this visible world formed part of His realm, it is nevertheless true that His kingdom was not of this world. He wanted to reign on earth solely by showing contempt for all earthly grandeurs, and, although He was superior to all kings in dignity, He was content to show that He transcended royalty itself by His virtue.

Epiphany is the only mystery in which He showed Himself as He truly was. He did what the sun sometimes does on the dark days of this present season; before being completely enveloped by the fog which will cover it until night, it appears

for a moment at sunrise, as if to notify men that it is beginning its course and that, even if it is not visible for the remainder of the day, it is still present. But, it is true that for that moment Jesus appeared crowned with all His rays to give irrefutable proof that He is King of all men; He showed that He is even the King of Kings. Yes, Gentlemen, it is in regard to sovereigns that Jesus today makes a brilliant display of sovereign authority, of sovereign power, and of sovereign majesty. I shall demonstrate this claim in the three parts of my discourse by showing you, in the first, how He commands obedience from kings; in the second, how He inspires fear in kings; and, in the third, how He wins the respect of these same kings. He commands obedience by the merest sign of His will. He inspires fear even of His name. He has only to be seen to be respected. Two brief points, along with an application of each, will constitute our whole discussion.

FIRST POINT

If it is true--as is the general opinion of all the faithful, based on the authority of St. Augustine and St. Leon--if it is true, I say, that the Magi arrived in Bethlehem thirteen days after the birth of the Savior of the world, there can be no doubt that they left Arabia, where they were rulers, as soon as they discovered the new star. It would not have been possible for them to cover such a long distance in

so short a time unless they had acted very quickly, and they themselves say that they lost no time: Ecce vidimus stellam ejus in Oriente, et venimus (Behold, we have seen His star in the East and have come). We no sooner saw the star than we set out on our travels; we saw and we obeyed; there was not a moment's delay. Upon receiving the order to leave, we immediately made the necessary preparations to execute it: Vidimus et venimus (We have seen His star and have come).

In fact, the star itself, though it was carried through the air by an angel, did not arrive much before them: Et ecce stella, quam viderant in Oriente, antecedebat eos (And behold, the star which had appeared in the Orient was preceding them). Perhaps they would even have preceded the star had they not been obliged to stop in Jerusalem to make inquiries concerning the place where Jesus was born. I know that this star hastened or slowed its pace to accommodate the Magi whom it was guiding: Temperat gradum, says St. Augustine, donec magos perducatur ad puerum (It slows down its pace while it leads the Magi to the Child). But I also know that it was a symbol of grace, which, according to St. Bernard, is averse to delays and slowness, so that, if it took into account their weakness, it would not have tolerated their negligence. These facts lead me to conclude that their obedience could not have been more prompt, since it followed so close upon that of the angel who had been assigned to be their guide, and since it was an answer to the desire of Jesus Christ to receive their homage.

This promptness was all the more admirable inasmuch as this heavenly body, after appearing to them in their own land, was hidden from them during the whole journey and remained so until they were very close to Bethlehem. This is the thought of St. John Chrysostom, and it seems to me that the Gospel account does not allow us to doubt it. Vidimus stellam ejus in Oriente (We have seen His star in the Orient), they tell Herod. And, shortly after this, the Evangelist adds: Et ecce stellam, quam viderant in Oriente, antecedeat eos (And behold, the star which they had seen in the Orient was preceding them). And suddenly they again saw the star which had appeared to them in the East. These words indicate, if I am not mistaken, that it had disappeared until that moment. It is for this reason that, on seeing it just outside Jerusalem, they were filled with a joy that St. Matthew cannot emphasize too strongly: Gavisi sunt gaudio magno valde (They rejoiced with great happiness). That they were beside themselves with joy would not have been the case unless their surprise had been overwhelming, and unless the reappearance of the star had come after a long darkness and at a time when they no longer expected to see it. It pleased God to treat them in this way in order to subject their obedience to a more difficult test. If they had never lost sight of the light, if it had always travelled overhead, it would have dispelled all the doubts which apparently assailed them often during their long journey. This constant miracle would have sustained their faith and would have maintained the fervor which it had inspired in

them at the outset. But the new King required of them a submission that was both blind and difficult; He wished, by withdrawing this external assistance, to provide the opportunity for the struggle which no doubt took place in their minds between the desire to obey and the fear of being mistaken, between the motives and the difficulties of obedience.

But tell me, if you will, how did they learn the wishes of their new Master? I know that St. Augustine has said that this star was like the tongue of heaven which proclaimed by its extraordinary brilliance the marvel of a virgin-birth: Mirifica lingua coeli, quae inusitatum Virginis partum inusitato fulgore clamaret (The wonderful tongue of the heavens which proclaimed with unusual brilliance the unusual birth to a Virgin). But, it was, after all, a silent tongue; despite the brilliance of the star, it was still a rather obscure sign of the birth of the Savior, and a very obscure sign of God's will calling them to Bethlehem. He could have sent them an explicit order by an angel to leave on this journey; by such an order He had called the shepherds. The high rank which the Magi occupied in the world, as well as the difficulty of this order, would seem to have warranted something more formal than a sign of this nature. But the Savior, Who had made the poor His equals, wished to treat shepherds as brothers; in regard to kings, however, whose pomp and pride He had come to trample underfoot, it pleased Him to act as a king. For them, a new star would serve well enough to indicate that a

new monarch had been born to them. And, if it is true--as some authors believed--that this heavenly body had a tail like that of a comet which it kept turned toward Judea, that was all that was needed to indicate that the new King awaited them in a town of this kingdom, and that they should hasten to set out in that direction. In any case, it was better to risk a long and difficult journey than to take the chance of being disobedient to one's sovereign. Perhaps He was not asking of them so great a proof of their submission; but, on the other hand, perhaps He was; and, in a case of doubt, a good subject must not hesitate to make the decision that will not displease his Prince, regardless of the difficulties he may encounter in doing so.

But, Christian Listeners, do you not admire the docility of these three kings? If Jesus clearly asserts Himself as their Master, do they not acquit themselves admirably of their duties as subjects in regard to Jesus? A very ambiguous sign was used to command them; they did not wait for a more formal order to obey. There was no lack of excuses that they could have offered to justify their refusal to leave their nations and to enter a foreign kingdom; but, far from trying to invent imaginary difficulties, their only thought was to devise ways of overcoming obstacles that were very real and almost insuperable.

Go forth, great kings, princes who are truly worthy of ruling the world, since you know so well how to obey; go render homage to the Child Who calls you. You will be doing nothing that is unworthy of your station by offering Him your

services, since to serve Him is to reign. Go, once again; the sole pleasure of seeing Him will be ample reward for all your pains; and, besides, this pleasure will not be your only reward. To what summit of greatness will you not be elevated for having worshipped the divine humiliations of Jesus? All the kingdoms on earth belong to Him, and it suffices to say that you will be invited to sit on His throne, that He will share His empire with you; that you will one day become His apostles, and, as a consequence, the judges of the universe; and that death, which topples all crowns, will increase the number of your own, by adding to them the crown of martyrdom.

Let us admit, however, that Jesus Christ has very few subjects who are as docile as the Magi. It is strange that, of so many Gentiles who saw the same star, they were the only ones to obey. But it is stranger still that, of the many stars that appear to us each day, none is capable of inducing us to imitate their obedience. By star I mean--with the Holy Fathers--all inspirations which invite us to fear God and to love Him. How many of these inspirations have you already had, without even mentioning the good impulses that God sends you either through prosperity or the misfortunes that come to you? How many preachers inspired by God have clearly indicated to you what you must do to please Him? Does your confessor not tell you these things every day? And, even if he did not tell you, can you fail to hear the voice of God Himself Who speaks to you in the depths of your heart? Can you fail to hear your own voice? For, St. Gregory the Great tells us that God sometimes makes use of our own inner voice to call us to Him:

Vocat per apostolos, vocat per pastores, vocat etiam per nos

(He calls through the Apostles, He calls through the shepherds, He even calls through us). Indeed, speaking for God, you have told yourself a thousand times all that God asks of you: No, in truth, I do not live as a true Christian should; one might think that I had been placed on earth for an eternity, or that I were not here to earn my eternity. Without doubt I spend too much of my money unwisely, and I do not give enough in alms. The time has come when I should withdraw from the world to give all my attention to my salvation. If I do not take heed, death will surprise me immersed in vanity or embroiled in a thousand preoccupations. Although people tell me that God is not offended by my amusements, my ceaseless chatter, my desire for entertainment and sumptuous meals, I know that I would be more pleasing to Him if I were willing to make better use of my life and my leisure. I am too greedy, too attached to vanities. I have no real love for my neighbor, and though I may deny it, that which I feel for those who have offended me is real hatred. How far I am from Christian perfection! Can I claim to follow the narrow path which leads to heaven,—I who refuse myself nothing, who make no effort to repress within myself the movements of anger, to stifle the love of pleasure and the desire for riches? Yet, these are the privations which God expects of me; He has been urgently asking them of me for a long time: Vocat etiam per nos (He even calls through us). These are the things that we say to ourselves every day.

What will we answer, Gentlemen, when God reproaches us

for our disobedience, when He uses our own testimony against us, when He produces our own thoughts which were used by Him to make known to us His intentions? The scorn that we show for these thoughts, while the world enchants us and our passions blind us--this scorn, I say--seems of little importance to us. But, believe me, our judgment in this matter will be completely changed at the time of death. We will feel strangely embarrassed to appear before Jesus Christ after having accorded so little attention to His counsels, after having so obstinately refused the things He asked of us with such kindness and such insistence. After such behavior, it would indeed be very brazen of us to ask Him for paradise.

But, let us follow our Magi to Jerusalem, and let us examine the effects of the power of this new King, whose name alone is enough to cause one of the world's greatest monarchs to tremble on his throne: let us do so in the second part.

SECOND POINT

In what I shall say next, I do not know which gives me greater cause for amazement: these foreign princes or King Herod; the determination displayed by the Magi in approaching the King of Judea to inquire about the King of the Jews, or the fear that seized Herod upon hearing of such an unexpected event. The Magi could not have failed to know what kind of man Herod was. He was known throughout the world for his

great actions and for his great crimes. He had usurped the throne on which he sat and, after having paved his way with lies and deception, he had filled his own house with murder because he feared that what he had stolen from others might one day be taken from him. He had already put to death his wife's father, mother, and cousin, to whom this kingdom rightfully belonged. The illustrious Mariamne,* despite her noble birth, her peerless beauty, and her admirable virtue, had not escaped the cruelty of her ambitious husband. He had her killed even though, as historians have recorded, his love for her was so great that the world had never seen an example of a greater passion. He did not spare the beautiful children that were his by this virtuous princess, for fear that some day they might claim the throne in virtue of the rights of their mother. This is the tyrant that our kings approached in quest of information concerning the legitimate king of Judea! This is the man to whom they brought the news that heaven had chosen another prince. It was in his capital city, it was in Herod's own palace that they dared proclaim the birth of this new King and declare openly that they had come from afar for the express purpose of rendering to Him the honors that were His due. This fearless attitude is a strong proof of the power of the Infant Jesus; it means that there is no risk in pledging ourselves to Him,

*Mariamne, favorite wife of Herod the Great (73-4 B.C.). She was a descendant of the Machabees, the Jewish dynasty which began with the rebellion of Mathathias and his five sons against the Syrian king Antiochus IV. Herod ordered Mariamne killed on the strength of calumnies contrived in court against her.

since He imparts a feeling of total security to His subjects, even in the court of such an evil prince.

Now, let us contrast this assurance with the weakness of Herod, who, in his state of fear, fails to find any reassurance in his guards, in his immense wealth, or in the reputation and arms of the Romans who favor him: Audiens autem Herodes rex turbatus est (Moreover, upon hearing this news, King Herod was disturbed). Upon hearing the name of the King of the Jews, he was immediately filled with fear; and, if we are to judge by the results, this fear was excessive. Apart from the anxiety that it caused this old serpent who, in the past, had used politics and money to extricate himself from difficult situations, let us see to what extremes he was driven by his fear. First, he vowed to put the new king to death and to accomplish this by treacherous means, as though he despaired of succeeding in an open attack. He assembled the Doctors of the Law, say the Scriptures; he asked them where Jesus Christ could be found; and, having learned that the Prophets had marked Bethlehem as His birthplace, he sent the Magi there and urged them to make a thorough search for Jesus and to notify him as soon as they had found Him. He pretended that he also wanted to go there to render homage. But, how can we explain that, after learning where He was born, he did not make use of the pretext of going to worship the Messiah or of keeping the three princes company to execute personally the barbarous plan that he had conceived? Why did he rely on strangers who might have noticed his anxiety, who knew him to be ambitious and blood-thirsty,

and who did in fact deceive him and ignore his wishes? Why the delay? Why neglect a matter which carried such grave consequences in regard to his peace of mind? How much anxiety, how many murders would he have avoided if he had followed this procedure? Was it not the shortest and surest way?

Yes, Gentlemen, there is no doubt that it was. But Herod feared that by accompanying the Magi he might find the Child Whose birth had alarmed him. He sensed that this Child was his Master; his heart revealed this truth to him as soon as His name was spoken; and he did not feel strong enough to stand in the presence of One Whose name alone had left him almost prostrate with fear.

Since he had made such detailed inquiries to learn at what time the star had first appeared, clam vocatis magis diligenter didicit ab eis tempus stellae (having secretly called the Magi, he diligently inquired from them about the time of the star), and moreover, since he had known--as it is believed--on what day Jesus was presented in the Temple, he could not have been unaware of His age. Why, then, did he sacrifice to his fears all the children who were two years of age or younger? It is because fear, when it reaches its peak, no longer reasons; it feels that it has never taken adequate precautions; it dreads even that which is in no way dreadful. It was this excessive fear that compelled him to order the massacre of such a great number of children so that he might be absolutely sure that the subject of his anxieties would not escape. For, if fear had allowed him the freedom to reason at all, would

he not have realized that this Child--Whose birth heaven had announced by a miraculous star, Whose greatness had been predicted by all the Prophets, and Who had been promised to the Jews by the same God Who had prevailed over Pharaoh and all of Egypt--that this Child, I say, would be beyond the reach of his cruelty, and that he would be better advised to seek His good graces than to begin persecuting Him from His earliest days? What, Herod, would you take up arms against the God of armies? Would you attempt to overthrow the plans of the Almighty and render vain all of His promises? Would the Prophets have been incorrect in their predictions concerning the Messiah's birth? Could you render false all that they predicted concerning His life and His miracles? Could you make the Lord go down in shame? Could your strategy overcome His Providence? Herod would have seen all of this clearly if he had not lost his power to reason, for, in truth, there was no prince alive more enlightened than he. But fear had deranged his mind. We could expect from him only the actions of an insane and frantic person. Even such a horrible carnage did not succeed in calming his spirit. He would willingly have spread throughout all the states the same desolation that he caused in the city of Bethlehem and its surroundings. He saw a threat even in his own son, and we are told by one historian, who was a pagan, that he himself sacrificed this innocent son to the same suspicions which had made him slaughter so many others.

How amazing that a Child only ten days old could cause

one of the most ^{crafty} and powerful monarchs in all of Asia to lose his mind. If, at least, this Child had been born to royalty and surrounded by an army of devoted servants! But He was born in a stable, and there was not a single servant attending His royal Person. It is true that there was something in His face and in His eyes capable of striking terror in the very soul of the tyrant. But Herod had not even seen Him; he had simply heard His name. That was enough: a good subject must show respect even for the name of his master; and a rebellious one must tremble at the sound of this same name. From the moment that the King of Kings was born, all princes had a sovereign and all wicked princes had a judge; and, as a consequence, all princes had to begin to bow before Him, and all wicked princes had to fear Him.

If Jesus in His cradle has already made the greatest monarchs tremble, how awesome will He become for all the world, once He has ascended the throne? This reflection is from the great St. Augustine in a sermon which he gave on this mystery: Quid erit tribunal Judicantis, quando superbos reges cuna terrebant Infantis (What will be the tribunal of the Judge, when the cradle of the Infant terrified the haughty kings)? That Jesus Christ is not loved does not astonish me; I see that most men love only themselves. What does astonish me is that in their susceptibility to all kinds of fears, there is only God Whom they do not fear. Yet, it is very true that there is nothing to fear in this world except God. For, how can any power on earth harm me if I am under the protection of

the Lord? And, if the Lord pursues me in His anger, what power can protect me from His? What great evil can men inflict on me that I could not turn into a good if I so desired? What possessions can they take from me, the loss of which would not enrich me and benefit me in the eyes of God? Whatever disgrace may befall me, if I save my soul, nothing is lost. But my soul is not subject to the injustice or the violence of men. On the contrary, however great may be my successes, all is lost if the soul is lost; and it is in God's power to damn it. Come here, timid and disheartened men, you whose souls are always in agitation over vain doubts and fears; you who willingly make yourselves the slaves of other men's fortunes, of their passions, of their speeches, and even of their ideas: Ostendam vobis, quem timeatis (I will show you Whom you should fear), I wish to teach you Who it is that you must fear. Fear the One Who can take your life at any instant and then cause you to be unhappy for all eternity. Tell me, where is the power, be it on earth or in heaven, that can take from the tomb the body of that lord or that lady that God placed there a few days ago and which He has made the prey of worms and corruption? What king, what ruler can snatch from the devil's grasp the soul of this other person whom the Lord has perhaps just now thrown into hell? Here is the One Whom you must fear. Yes, says the Lord, here is the One Whom you must fear: Timeate eum, qui, postquam occiderit, habet potestatem mittere in gehennam. Ita dico vocis, hunc timeate (Fear Him Who, after He has killed, has the power to send you to hell. So I say to you, fear Him).

Perhaps you will say that it is indeed sad if one must always tremble, always live in fear. There is a distinction to be made here, Christian Listeners. The fear of a wicked man or, to use the example of St. Augustine, the fear of a woman who is living an evil life; who is always apprehensive of being found out, of being stabbed or poisoned by her husband; who never sees him come into the house that she is not seized with fear; who thinks she has been discovered with each sign of his displeasure or anxiety--I grant that this fear is a most cruel one. But the fear of an honest woman who fears to displease her husband because he is a good and worthy man, because she loves him and she knows he loves her in return--this fear, if I am not mistaken, is not only very reasonable, but also very sweet. So, unless we are completely without hope, we cannot help but fear God in one of these two ways. See to which of these two fears you would prefer to give your heart. If you do not fear to offend Him, you must fear that He will punish you. He can do so at any hour; your body and soul are in His hands; there is but one step between you and the grave; and, if you are God's enemy, to die and to be damned is one and the same thing.

What, then, shall I always see that horrible hell open beneath my feet? Will I never hear thunder without thinking that it is against me that heaven roars? Will I never be alone that I will not be haunted by the thousands of ghosts and phantoms of my troubled imagination? Every time I stumble, will I imagine that the earth is about to open and

that it is the hand of God that pushes me into the abyss? With the coming of each night, will the horror of my crime be re-enacted in my mind and the slightest noise, the faintest shadow, cause me to swoon with fear? Will I never be able to sleep without dreaming that it is in the devil's arms that I sleep and that from my bed I will probably be carried onto beds of fire and into pools of burning brimstone? Confige timore tuo carnes meas (Pierce our flesh with Your fear). Ah Lord, fill me instead with Your fear and let me be fully penetrated by that loving fear which provides the heart with its sweetest pleasures, and which fills it with joy, as affirmed by David: Timor Domini delectabit cor, et dabit laetitiam et gaudium in longitudinem dierum (The fear of the Lord will delight your heart and will give joy and gladness to the length of your days); by that fear which, far from troubling us, comforts and calms our spirit; by that fear which dispels all other fears, which renders us fearless, which makes us scorn death, and even desire it. Permit that I may fear to offend You, O my God; that I may fear nothing so much as this; that I may fear nothing but this; for, in truth, there is nothing else that deserves to be feared, since it is only in this regard that fear can be beneficial and can deliver us from the evil that we fear.

We have seen, Christian Listeners, some very convincing proofs of the authority and the power of the new King over other kings. Let us now say a few words about His Royal Majesty, and let us examine to see if it is true that He has

only to be seen to be respected. Gentlemen, you are no doubt aware that when the Eternal Word united Himself with the holy humanity of the Savior He brought to it all His infinite perfections; that, from that time, this Man became as powerful, as immense, as immortal, as wise as God, because henceforth He formed but one Person with God. But, in addition to His divine perfections, the Creator filled the soul of Jesus Christ with created qualities, both natural and supernatural, which were, in a sense, proportionate to the divinity with which He was united, so that, even if we consider only the human side, He was good, wise, holy, and learned in a manner that was totally divine and quite different from other men. Even His body was affected by the divinity which dwelled within Him. We can say, to a certain extent, that He was divinely beautiful, that He had a divine majesty, that not only had God united Himself to that earthly and corporal part, but that He had, as it were, become corporal and sentient in it. Such is the interpretation given by some Doctors to these words of St. Peter: In quo inhabitat plenitudo Divinitatis corporaliter (In whom lives corporeally the plenitude of the Divinity).

Indeed, says St. Jerome, writing to a holy young girl named Principia, there had to be something divine on the face and in the eyes of the Savior; otherwise, the Apostles would not have been so eager to follow Him on His first invitation. These men, one remembers, were still very rough and could not as yet be reached except through their senses. When Jesus, by order of the Priests, was being sought to be turned over to

Pilate, the Scriptures say that it was at night, and that they searched for Him by the light of torches. The soldiers were dazzled, nevertheless, by the brilliance of His face, and some of the Fathers maintain that it was the surprise produced by this great brilliance that made them fall to the ground. But today's mystery, the event which occurred in Bethlehem on the arrival of the Magi, should convince us more than any other mystery of the august and majestic beauty of Jesus Christ. For these kings had no sooner seen Him in Mary's arms than they were struck by some mysterious rays emanating from His Person, and forgetful of their rank and their own majesty, they knelt before His manger and worshipped Him with all the marks of the deepest respect: Et procidentibus adoraverunt eum (And prostrating, they adored Him). If the majesty of Jesus can create such a marvel at an age when that quality could only be faintly discerned, what will it be when His features are more clearly formed and have attained their perfection? But, how great it had to be, even at that young age, to overcome the condescension with which one naturally regards childhood and to inspire feelings that are directly opposed to this condescension? How great it had to be to make such a deep impression on the minds of the Magi, despite so many unfavorable circumstances that might have opposed this strong effect!

Majesty, Christian Listeners, is most often, in the case of the greatest kings,--regardless of what flattery says--nothing more than false privileges which they owe to our pre-

conceived ideas and to the error of our senses. Their palaces, their guards, the number and quality of their officers, the lofty and mysterious manner in which they are served, the throne, the crimson, the crown--all of these help to deceive us in their favor and to persuade us that we see in them something which distinguishes them from other men. It cannot be said that a similar illusion influenced our kings to humble themselves in the presence of Jesus. The stable and the manger, the poverty of Joseph and Mary, were hardly of a nature to impress the eyes of men; these were more likely to hide a true majesty rather than to suggest a false one. Nevertheless, the majesty of Jesus did not fail to shine forth, to pierce all the clouds which covered it, to make itself felt in the depths of the soul, right from the first moment. The Magi had seen the son of Herod while passing through Jerusalem and had not adored him. Although this prince was of royal birth, was lodged in a superb palace, was dressed and served in royal fashion, they had not, on seeing him, been impelled to genuflect before his cradle. St. Fulgence says that they showed only scorn for him, that they did not even deign to salute him. Jesus, on the contrary, though devoid of all the trappings of grandeur, gained, from the first moment, all their respect; He obtained, by His truly royal majesty, what others vainly seek by the ostentatious display that surrounds them: Ille natus in palatio contemnitur, iste natus in diversorio quaeritur: ille a magis nullatenus nominatur, iste inventus suppliciter adoratur (That one born in a palace is scorned, this one born in a stable

is sought after; that one is deemed of no significance by the Magi, this one is suppliantly adored).

How indebted we are to God for having brought these great men to His Son's cradle! Although the visit of the poor shepherds edified us greatly, it has been immeasurably more useful for us to see Him adored by the Magi. For, besides the fact that they represent the beginnings of nations and that they open for all of us a road that had hitherto been closed, if, to sustain our faith, we had only the testimony of the shepherds, our faith would always have been weak and wavering; it might have been alleged that these good men had mistaken a dream for an apparition and that, influenced by the idea that an angel had spoken to them, they had found in this Child all that their imagination could invent that was grand and lofty. But from the moment that the Magi entered the stable in Bethlehem, there was no longer any room for the doubts or the mistrust of unbelievers. They were neither shepherds nor fools; they were kings who would be unwilling to expose themselves to the ridicule of the whole world by coming from so far to humble themselves before the son of a poor craftsman, unless they were very sure that this Child was more than He seemed to be by His earthly birth.

Besides, they were scholars and, it seems, the most learned men of their nations. They were especially well versed in astrology. They had seen a star and there were three of them who saw it. They had not merely seen it once, nor had they seen it for a moment only; but it had appeared to

them in their countries, where they had all the time necessary to examine it before setting out; and there it was again, conducting them to the stable. Besides, they were so convinced of what they believed that they did not hesitate for a moment; they boldly inquired in Jerusalem where the King of the Jews was born; and although no one had heard of Him in that city--despite its being the capital of the kingdom--they did not fear that they had been mistaken. They finally found this King in poverty and in the arms of a poor and obscure mother; yet they were not at all surprised by these conditions. They were, however, so surprised by the beauty and the majesty of His face that they fell at His feet and, prostrating themselves, they adored Him: Et intrantes domum invenerunt Puerum cum Maria Matre ejus, et procidentibus adoraverunt eum (And entering, they found the Child with Mary His Mother, and prostrating, they adored Him).

After this example, Christian Listeners, I do not believe that any of us will fail to acknowledge the Son of God even in the womb of Mary, even in the manger where He was born. But, before we all go together to perform this duty, you will allow me to give a word of advice on the manner in which He wishes to be adored. Venit hora, et nunc est, quando veri adoratores adorabunt Deum in spiritu et veritate, et Pater tales quaerit, qui adorent eum (The hour comes and it is now, when the true adorers will worship God in spirit and in truth, and the Father seeks such to adore Him). Jesus is seeking true worshippers, that is, persons who adore Him in spirit.

If He were satisfied with bows and external ceremonies, if all He wanted was to be offered incense, to have His stable inundated with the blood of victims, He would not have called from such a distance these princes whom you see kneeling before His cradle. The Jews were better prepared than any other people in the world to render Him this type of worship. But ever since the Lord made Himself visible to men, He has demanded an interior ^{devotion} and spiritual sacrifices whose practice was unknown to the Jewish people.

Let us be on guard, Gentlemen, lest our whole religion, like that of these people, consist of nothing but external and physical practices. To attend mass, to hear sermons, to fast, to receive communion, to say countless vocal prayers--these are all holy and Christian actions; they honor God, of this we have no doubt. But if this were all God required, we can say that He would not have to look very hard to find true worshippers. He is looking rather for people who will sacrifice for Him their desires, their inclinations, their repulsions--who choose as their victim the idol of their heart, what pleases it, what it loves, what it adores. This greedy woman willingly gives up her adornments; this vain woman is charitable towards the poor. These sacrifices are very imperfect; the true sacrifice demands that the one who is inclined to vanity dress very simply and that the one who is greedy give alms. This man who is irascible and vindictive by nature may avoid the tender passions; another who loves pleasures may easily forgive the injuries done to him; if the vindic-

tive one strove to hate only himself, and the voluptuous one strove only to love God, they would both be perfect worshippers. Such is the kind of worshipper that God is seeking, Christian Listeners: Et Pater tales querit, qui adorent eum (And the Father seeks such to adore Him). He finds but few, even among persons who believe themselves to be pious and who are considered so by the world; but, when He does find them, it is wonderful to see how He sets them apart from all others, how fondly He caresses them, how much He loves them; it is wonderful to see to what lengths He will go to show that their sacrifice is agreeable to Him. I would not venture to invite you all to undertake an exercise which is aimed so directly at the destruction of self-love, although I would be pleased to see you all engaged in this exercise. But with all my heart I exhort those who feel called to piety to take no other course than this one. Let them examine themselves in order to discover their passions and all the movements of their hearts; then, let them strive to repress them. Let them resolve to give to the Lord what nature would like to reserve for itself. Believe me, Gentlemen, all other routes are not only extremely long, but they are also dangerous, whereas, on this one, you will go very surely and very far in a short time. It is true that this road is rough and thorny; yet it leads quickly to Jesus, and, the moment that we find Him, all the thorns are changed to roses, all the pain to pleasure. We begin to enjoy, even in this life, a perfect felicity and are assured of an eternal one in the next. Amen.

SERMON X

SECOND SERMON FOR EPIPHANY

Et intrantes domum invenerunt
Puerum cum Maria Matre ejus,
et procidentibus adoraverunt eum.

On entering the house, the Wise Men found the Child with Mary His Mother, and prostrating themselves before Him, they adored Him.

(Matt. 2:11)

The rich and powerful of this world must be always vigilant and constantly engaged in the work of their salvation, because of the obstacles which they encounter in their situation, and because of the advantages which this situation provides to attain the highest virtue.

Of all the mysteries which the Church celebrates throughout the year, none gives me greater comfort, in the work which Providence has assigned to me, than the one which is solemnly feasted today. I am unable to find words to express my joy as I watch the Wise Men enter the stable of

Bethlehem, kneel before the crib, lay their crowns and their treasures at the feet of the Child Jesus, and give all the signs of a heroic faith and devotion. From what had already occurred--the Savior of the World's choice of obscure parents; His birth amid great indigence or, so to speak, in the very bottom of poverty; the shepherds being notified by angels of the Messiah's birth and invited to come render Him homage, to the exclusion of the rest of the world--it might seem that He had not been born for all men, and that salvation was reserved for the poor.

But, the Lord be praised and eternally blessed! Jesus will be the Savior of both the poor and the rich; the star which shines for Him in the East is a sure sign that His Gospel will be taught throughout the world, and the obedience manifested by the Wise Men at this first sign of His will is an indication for those who will be sent to preach even in princely Courts that their efforts and their zeal will not be expended in vain. With this firm hope, I present my talk today to the great and the rich of this world to exhort them to commit themselves fully to the work of their eternal salvation. I shall show that they should not lose heart over their favored condition, but, especially, that they should never become neglectful in this respect; that they have more reason than other men to devote themselves without reserve to the care of their soul, and that all indications point to the need for an extraordinary vigilance on their part. Divine Spirit, "You Who have promised to give Your Apostles an elo-

quence and wisdom which even kings and princes could not resist, impart to my feeble words a strength before which the great and the rich who hear me will be compelled to surrender. I ask this grace by the merits of Your Spouse, whom we now address in these words spoken by the Angel. Ave Maria.*

When we stop to ponder the declarations that God has made concerning the rich in the Old and the New Testaments, it is difficult not to be terrified by the threats and maledictions which He uttered against them. He told them openly that they were damned; that they were enjoying their paradise on earth; or, in short, that it would be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for them to enter the kingdom of heaven. Facilius est camelum per foramen acus transire, quam divitem intrare in regnum coelorum (It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven). This is indeed a terrifying thought, Gentlemen. Even without being numbered among the great of this world, one would have to be very hardened to hear such words and not feel pity for the danger to which their wealth exposes them. It does not surprise me that these fulminations caused so many sovereigns, so many people of wealth and quality to embrace a life of poverty and obscurity. If the peril had been as fully understood by all the others, I do not doubt that everyone of them would have followed the same course, and that a condition which is so greatly envied by most men of this world would have become for all

Christians an object of horror.

However, all the Fathers and all the interpreters assure us--and this is an article of faith--that these comparisons and these strong expressions should not be taken in a completely literal sense; that the Holy Spirit did not mean that it was impossible for the rich to be saved, but only that it would be extremely difficult for them to accomplish this, and that they have good reason to be frightened. In truth, we cannot deny that the very condition of wealth offers much resistance to salvation, and, for this reason, it is only right that the rich be reminded of the need for fear and vigilance. It is true that this same condition also provides them with excellent advantages for attaining heaven. But, I believe that this thought, far from giving them a cause for confidence or apathy, should render them even more fearful and alert. Yes, the rich and the mighty of the age should attend to their salvation with special care and determination; first, because of the obstacles to be found in their state of life; and, second, because of the resources with which this state provides them for attaining the highest virtue. This topic will be dealt with in two parts: The rich must be ever-vigilant, and they must work incessantly. Why? Because they have great battles to wage: this is my first point; and because they have great accounts to render: this is my second point.

FIRST POINT

It is generally accepted that ignorance and weakness are the two most deadly wounds inflicted upon us by sin.

Since Adam's fall, we have become blinded, we have no eyes to discover truth; we are weak, and even when we do perceive truth, we lack the strength to pursue it. But, I ask you to note, Christian Listeners, that in addition to this blindness which is within us, and which makes many things invisible to us, there are also outside of us certain veils which serve to obscure our view; besides the weakness that prevents us from progressing towards the good, we often find on our way what appear to be walls blocking our passage. Grace, which gives light to our mind and strength to our appetites, would easily vanquish our natural infirmities and ignorance, but it is itself often vanquished, or at least rendered useless, by these external obstacles. And I say that these obstacles are greater and more invincible in proportion to the greatness of our possessions and the loftiness of our position.

In regard to the mind, nothing is more essential for us than to gain a true knowledge of who we are and a realization, first, of our misery, so that we may view ourselves with the proper humility; and, second, of our vices, so that we may see them in all their horror. Such knowledge is virtually impossible for the great ones of this world; their manner of dress, their courts, the splendor of their surroundings, the honors bestowed on them, and the deep respect in which they

are held, make it most difficult for them to see that they are not different from ordinary mortals; that, save for these external trappings, the lowly menials at their service resemble them in every way; that only fools find any difference between them, only because they have allowed themselves to be dazzled by the brilliance of gold and precious jewels--to wise men, no difference exists; that in death they will be intermingled with the lowliest of men; and that God Himself, for Whom no error in judgment is possible, does not distinguish them from other creatures in the care He bestows on mankind: Quoniam pusillum et magnum ipse fecit, et aequaliter est illi cura de omnibus (Since He Himself made both the great and the small, He equally cares for all).

This light, if it were accessible to the rich, would pave the way for humility and Christian charity; it would lead them to the love of justice and clemency. But, how difficult it is to accept as equals those who, in a sense, have been assigned to us by Providence to be our slaves and who, in turn, honor us as their god! Added to this lack of understanding of our essential nature, there is also the ignorance of what happens to us because of our vices and our sins. Vice, says St. Augustine, is a thick veil which we place over our own eyes. And, once our eyes are veiled, we not only fail to see even the most visible objects, but also the blindfold which keeps these objects hidden from us. Just as, after we have sinned and have contracted some vicious habit, there develops in us a blindness which even hides the vice which was its cause.

But, in this respect, there exists a great difference between the poor and the rich. For the poor, who are valued only for their virtue, who have no wealth other than their friends and their reputation--the poor, I say--have no sooner abandoned themselves to a life of sin, than they immediately lose the esteem and the friendship of everyone and become objects of contempt; and this reaction makes them instantly aware of the change which has occurred in them. But, the rich are honored only for their high birth and their wealth, and since a change in their moral life brings no change in their fortune--however vicious they might become--they lose none of the honors and gracious courtesies to which they are accustomed. Thus, it is easy for them to convince themselves that people esteem them as before and that they are no less worthy of that esteem. It was in this way that David--albeit the holiest and the greatest of kings--after having committed crimes which cried out to heaven for vengeance, took so long a time before he could see himself as he really was and experience any remorse. I sometimes wonder whether he would ever have rallied from his state of torpor if Nathan had not been sent by God to rebuke him for his injustice and cruelty.

It would be well if there were people generous enough to render this same service to the rich who are not leading Christian lives, to the powerful who neglect or have forgotten their duty, in whatever way that might be. But, this is another benefit that is lost to them because of their high station in life. Those who lead a life that is simple and

obscure are soon notified of these mistakes: superiors and friends do not hesitate to remind them of their obligations, and if they should fail to fulfill them, they are soundly reproached. You know, Gentlemen, that unpleasant truths, however useful they may be, very seldom reach those persons who occupy high positions of honor and dignity. Flattery, by which they are habitually surrounded, has rendered them, for the most part, so sensitive and delicate that it might even be unwise to take the liberty of correcting them, even if some of them were strong enough to accept a rebuke. Where will we find people zealous enough to tell them in all honesty that which they would agree to hear without resentment? The rich will find loyal servants who are ready to warn them against any dangers which threaten their life or their fortune, who will serve them with blind devotion, and who will manage their temporal affairs with perfect fidelity. But, sincere friends who are willing to advise them about their behavior, at the risk of losing their good graces--examples of such a selfless attitude--are almost never seen. One can be certain to please by dissembling, but the best one can expect from telling the truth is to avoid giving displeasure. And, where is the man strong enough to overcome that inclination, so natural to all of us, of wishing to be agreeable to those who can control our happiness? The only persons from whom the rich can expect such an important service are those who have been assigned by God, in some capacity, to care for their souls; and even when these persons, impelled by the voice of conscience, dare to take the

liberty of speaking to them, they feel that they have already done a great deal if they have said only that which must be said. Even then, every care is taken to soften this unpalatable truth: they would never think of affirming it with the force that would make it triumph over the most rebellious spirits; they would not venture to present it in the true light of day; nor would they dare show vice as it appears to all others, in a manner which points up its full ugliness. I admit that one must approach the mighty of the world in this way for a number of Christian reasons. But this necessity, however reasonable it might be, does not alter the fact that it does the rich a great disservice and deprives them of one of the most fruitful aids capable of leading the sinner to conversion.

And, if it is unfortunate that the rich have no one to remind them of their duty or to unmask their faults, how much more harmful it is for them to have false friends--flatterers who disguise their defects and even praise these failings or pass them off as virtues; who attempt to show poverty in the most ridiculous light: as a condition that is most unsuitable, particularly for persons of superior intellect and quality, and one that is ~~for~~ them absolutely impossible! Who will deny that the Courts are overrun by such pests, by such vile spreaders of poison, who attach themselves only to large fortunes. They dispose of countless artifices which enable them to ingratiate themselves with those in power and to control the minds of great men.

What does all this mean, except that the higher one's

position in the world, the more need there is to probe and examine oneself before God to acquire that self-knowledge which is so necessary for salvation. The little people may rely partly on the zeal and charity of others; but it is necessary that the great ones perform this entire duty themselves, that they become their own censors, and that, in this respect, they look with suspicion upon all who approach them. They must uncover within themselves those things which others see and secretly resent. They must compare themselves often with other men; compare themselves with persons who have a reputation for moral excellence, as well as with those whose conduct is generally condemned as un-Christian and far from upright; they must examine themselves seriously in regard to the virtues of the first group and the vices of the second; and they must become convinced that the shortcomings that they decry in the least of their servants are more blameworthy in their own conduct and are, in effect, more severely blamed. In a word, because the rich are lacking in friends to show them the blemishes which disfigure them, they are obliged to hold a mirror constantly before themselves by meditating on the life and maxims of Jesus Christ and by reading books which outline the duties of their state. And if, by these means, they manage to overcome the obstacles which conceal the truth from them, they are still faced with the difficulties involved in following this truth, difficulties which can be conquered only by great courage and much diligence.

It is certain that when Christians are considered

merely as members of the same civil body, wealth and fame can establish marked differences between them; but when they are considered as members of the same Church, all such differences disappear. In this respect, we are all brothers; and, since we have all pronounced the same Baptismal promises, we all have the same essential obligations. Whatever your social standing, whatever position you hold, in Court or elsewhere, humility, gentleness, disdain for the world, detachment from riches, self-denial, and a love of the cross are all virtues which you must necessarily acquire; you have promised to practice them all through your life by the most solemn of all vows.

I am not unaware, Gentlemen, that, because of their status, most rich men are obliged to wear clothing, possess furnishings, and maintain stables and attendants which inspire pride and vanity. I know that they must have sumptuous tables

laden with choice foods, that they must possess great wealth, and that they must partake in the gatherings and often the pleasures and merriment of high society. But, this luxury is precisely the crux of the difficulty of which I speak; for, since these worldly obligations do not release them from their Christian duties, they must remain humble amid honors, mortified in their pleasures, poor in the possession of the greatest treasures, and detached from all things, even while enjoying the use and abundance of all things. They should feel for this world, which they must suffer and abide, a horror equal to that which they would feel for a corpse to which they were forcibly tied; and they should look upon their obligation

to participate in all the world's pleasures as a cruel enslavement. I leave it to you to decide whether it is an easy task to maintain in the midst of a life at Court those sentiments which an anchorite preserves only with great difficulty in the sanctuary of his desert.

If it were only that the rich find it difficult to practice the greatest Christian virtues, this would be a small matter; but it must be remembered that, for them, it is even difficult not to fall into the most debasing and shameful vices. We are all beset by enemies--both inside and outside of ourselves--which are constantly engaged in an attempt to lead us into sin and which never let us rest. But in regard to the poor, these enemies have been considerably weakened by constant exertions and hard labor, as in the case of the flesh; or completely disarmed, as in the case of the world; or rebuffed by the small profit to be gained by a victory, as in the case of the devil. The rich, however, must defend themselves on the inside against a flesh that has been nurtured in idleness and soft living; against an internal fire which is constantly being sustained by elements which serve only to fan its flame and cause it to blaze always more fiercely. And, on the outside, there is the world which keeps before their eyes all kinds of attractive objects; and which, moreover, secures these objects for them, on their simple wish, by placing them, so to speak, in their hands without exacting from them the effort which would serve as a hindrance to so many others. Doubtless, there are few men who do not, at some time, suffer

the passionate pangs of love, greed, and revenge; and we know that these passions, from the outset, serve to blind those in whom they reside. In most cases, before the person of little power or little wealth has found the means of indulging his passion, the danger which confronts him, or the efforts he must exert, or even time itself, may open his eyes and calm his agitated soul; but, on the other hand, the rich man, because he has so readily available the means of fulfilling his desires, has no sooner conceived an evil plan than he carries it out. All things are so easily accessible for the execution of his designs that he is not given enough time to reflect; he has only enough leisure to see the most attractive side of his offense.

And, to this handicap, add the fact that the devil's interest in tempting men is proportionate to the greatness of the power they wield and the influence that their fortunes have gained for them. It may be that he takes pride in being served by the greatest of men; or that, in his desire to spite God, he attempts to sow rebellion in the very ones who have the strongest reasons to be faithful to Him; or that, because he knows that the example of great men is particularly pernicious, he hopes to gain many souls by conquering an important one. Or, finally, that, being dependent on human means to spread his empire, he seeks out those who have the most possessions; those who can shake the constancy of good people by their threats and their influence; those who can corrupt the integrity of judges with their money, and overthrow modesty and chastity



by their magnificent gifts and their even more magnificent promises. Whatever his reasons may be, we can rightly say about him on this occasion that which the Prophet Habakuk said in another context: Cibus ejus electus (His is a select food). He is a monster who eats only choice morsels and exquisite foods, who desires the cream of the herd and the most precious of earth's fruits. Cibus ejus electus (His is a select food).

After we have accepted these truths, should it surprise us that a Sage dared to say that it was all but impossible for a man of means to preserve his innocence? Si fueris dives, non eris immunis a delicto (If you have been rich, will you be exempt from crime)? Should it surprise us that Jesus Christ Himself, when reporting the torments of the evil rich man, has no other crime with which to reproach him than that of the great riches which he possessed on earth--as if this was enough to imply that he had committed a multitude of crimes. Mortuus est dives, non eris immunis a delicto (The rich man died and was plunged into the depths of hell). But, then, does this mean that all those who live amid honors and wealth must despair of their salvation? No, but it is imperative that they work at it with fear and a great dedication. It is necessary that, by fervent and constant prayer, they attempt to win from heaven the great assistance which they need to avoid the dangers which surround them; and that, by the frequent use of the sacraments, they never cease to fortify themselves against their formidable enemies. They must never feel themselves completely excused from the practices of penance and

mortification. We have heard of queens and other high-ranking persons who, when compelled to attend certain gatherings which held some measure of peril, were not content simply to prepare themselves for these encounters by lengthy prayers, but who went there armed with sack cloth and hair shirts. It is most important that the wealthy, because of their need to wear rich clothing, to live in superb dwellings, to be served in an exquisite manner, and to partake in the vain pleasures of worldly people--it is imperative, I say--that in this necessity, they take special care to avoid extending these dangers beyond what is absolutely necessary, that they may truthfully say about all the splendor which surrounds them and all the pleasures which envelop them that which the incomparable Esther said to God about her crown and her royal cape: Domine, tu scis necessitatem meam, et quod abominer omne signum superbiae et gloriae, quod est super caput meum in die ostentationis meae

(Lord, You know my needs; namely, that I abhor every vestige of pride and glory, and that which is placed upon my head on the day of a public appearance). Lord, You know with what motive I adorn my person on the days when I must appear in public or when I am presented to the King, my spouse. You know the aversion I feel for these signs of vanity and pride; that I wear them the least possible, and only when duty will not release me from doing so! When you make a similar use of the signs of worldly vanity, it is then that you can justly say that if you are in any danger of being lost, it is Providence Itself that has placed you in such a situation, and it is

Providence Who must save you.

But what can be said of those worldly persons who, far from remaining within these limits, far from sensing any danger or making use of any safeguards, move in the highest circles of society and amid very great abundance with a serenity which might indicate that they had every assurance of being saved; who, besides the dangers inherent in their condition, expose themselves incessantly to all possible occasions of offending God; and who do so little to earn heaven that one would believe that they had never heard of this oracle which came from the mouth of the Incarnate Word: Dives difficile intra-bit in regnum coelorum (It is with great difficulty that the rich shall enter the kingdom of heaven). It is with difficulty that the rich will enter paradise, that is, that without an extraordinary determination to flee from evil and to perform all the good that is possible to them, they will never share in this reward. But if they are negligent in all things, if they never stand guard against temptation, if they run in all directions seeking out their enemy and the snares he sets for them, who can doubt that their salvation will not only be difficult to achieve, but utterly impossible? What is most astonishing here is that, however perilous their condition may be, it will not serve to excuse them or to protect them on the day of retribution, because the obstacles to a life of virtue which they encounter in their situation are offset by very great advantages. Although they may have more battles to wage in this life than the average Christian, this disadvantage will

not prevent them from having to render an even stricter account in the next. This will be my second point.

SECOND POINT

St. Ambrose, in Book Eight of St. Luke, wisely warns the rich that the evil of wealth is not in the wealth itself but in those who make use of it; and that although wealth is an impediment to virtue in the wicked, it is for the virtuous a remarkable help in achieving sanctity: Discant autem in facultatibus crimen habere, sed in iis qui uti nesciunt facultatibus; nam divitiae, ut impedimenta improbis, ita bonis sunt adjuncta virtutis (Let them learn that crimes lie not in riches but in those who do not know how to use riches; for as wealth is an impediment for the wicked, so is it a help to virtue for the good). I am not referring here to the facility which they have of erasing, through almsgiving, the sins which others must, in a sense, wash away with their blood or, at least, must expiate by fasting and practicing austerity; but I do say that after they have undergone such a purification, their very station in life opens before them an admirable road to the highest perfection. In the first place, it inspires them with a natural disdain for the world of high society which they see from the inside; consequently, they are far more able to recognize its vanities than the rest of us who know it only from the outside. When one has very few possessions, it is easy to believe that he could find happiness if

only he had more; and this thought gives rise to the many desires which torment the poor. But when one has known the highest levels of human happiness, and his heart is still empty and searching, he realizes that no created object can ever satisfy it; thus, he is led quite naturally to seek the sole object capable of filling it. If Solomon is saved, he owes ~~his~~ salvation to this thought. When he was still quite imperfect, he was blinded by earthly happiness; but when he was, to all appearances, at the pinnacle of his glory, he came to recognize the error of his ways, and his frantic pursuit of pleasure was transformed into feelings of disgust which completely restored his senses and caused him to speak once more as the wisest of all men. It is in this way that wealth can inspire men with the desire to seek God.

In the second place, I say that wealth provides one with ample leisure to do this. You can have no doubt, Gentlemen, that it is God's Providence which has ordered our world, and which is responsible for the great variety of states and occupations which compose it. It is Providence, also, which has bestowed on the rich such a profusion of gold and silver; which has directed that the poor shall work night and day to serve them; which has assigned to the rich a large number of officers and servants who care for all their needs and who free them from all material concerns and even the lightest work. But, why do you think that God acted thus in their regard? Do you believe that He did so in order to provide them with more time for merriment and vain pursuits? In your opin-

ion, would such a goal be worthy of the wisdom of the Lord and the Creator of all things? Would such a motive warrant His making such an inequitable distribution of the world's goods and exposing Himself to the grumblings and curses of the dissatisfied? It is quite obvious that His intention was to secure for Himself servants with the freedom to devote themselves exclusively to Him, while all the world was occupied in serving them. It is certain that He would not have taken so much care to give them complete liberty over their time, unless He meant to demand of them a most rigorous account of it.

One might say that it is in vain that this time be given them to practice all the virtues, since their weak and sensual training has deprived them of the strength needed to do so; that mortification, which is so essential, is hardly compatible with their fragile state; that the slightest mortification could be detrimental to them and could damage their health. It is true that rich people are often quite fragile. But, to compensate for the lack of strength that results from their education, their noble birth has inspired them with a courage that enables them to undertake the greatest endeavors and to withstand the strongest opposition. Witness their performance during times of war when they have demonstrated their ability to adjust almost instantly to the work demanded of them and have given proof of an untiring spirit; witness also the large number of princes and princesses who have embraced the cross of Jesus Christ, and then pushed their austerities to greater lengths than even the solitary monks who had, from

their earliest years, been hardened in the desert by the practices of mortification. Oh, what a great talent is this kind of courage! How well it predisposes the great for the highest sanctity! And how sad it is that they make such poor use of it by pursuing empty honors and an ephemeral glory! It is this kind of courage which prompts me to say that it is often easier to convert a poor man than a rich one, but that when each of them has turned away from evil, it is the rich man who will more quickly reach an eminent virtue. Perfection can only be achieved by violence. For that reason the weak can never aspire to it. It takes determination to declare open warfare on the world, to engage in an unending battle against oneself, to scorn the opinions of men, to purify all interests and pleasures which might oppose one's desires of pleasing God alone. This endeavor is certainly not suited to the timid and irresolute soul. Success can only be achieved by those strong souls to whom great things seem small, and for whom the presence of difficulties is motive enough to undertake the most daring projects.

Finally, besides time and courage, the rich also have at their disposal the means, both easy and effective, of rendering to God the most important duties. By their influence, their wealth, and their example, they are able to corrupt the whole world; but they are also able to sanctify it. All that is accomplished by an apostle through his travels, his earnest efforts, and his preaching can be done by them with a minimum of effort and very little care. All that is required is that

they profess openly that they will admit to their service and honor with their friendship only those persons who themselves profess to live virtuously; that they reserve their favors, their blessings, and their affection only for those who show themselves worthy by their piety; and that they make it known that to accomplish one's duty towards God is a sure way of earning their good graces. Money, which is said to accomplish all things--could it not become in their hands an instrument of zeal by which they could lead to God all those miserable ones whose souls, though redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, are so often neglected? Initially attracted by gain, these persons could later be led by purer motives to a practice of patience and submission, to prayer, to a frequent use of the sacraments, to reconciliation with their brothers, to the correction of vices, such as profanity and slander; good advice that is accompanied with a gift can deeply affect the soul. But even if they were to accomplish no greater good than that which flows, even without their knowledge, from the splendor and the good odor of their saintly lives--who can estimate the fruit that might be reaped in this way? I know that libertines may well remain untouched, but at least the rich are assured that, by their example, they can sustain the weak, give courage to the timid and wavering soul, invigorate the tepid, inflame the fervent, comfort the virtuous, and confound the wicked.

These are the advantages by which power and wealth help those who possess them to acquire virtue and to attain

the highest perfection. They are without doubt remarkable advantages, Gentlemen, and it is only just that all who occupy the loftiest positions in life should be expected to give a much stricter account than that demanded of those in more obscure positions. Audite reges, discite iudices finium terrae, praebete aures vos qui continetis multitudines et placetis vobis in turbis nationum (Hear, O kings; learn, ye judges of the lands; lend your ears, you who rule the multitudes and take pleasure in the adulation of nations). Listen, O powerful of the earth, who have been chosen by God to rule over other men, who have been elevated above nations, and who delight in being constantly surrounded by a host of servants and courtiers: Exigo conceditur misericordia, potentes autem potenter tormenta patientur (Mercy will be granted to the small; however, the powerful will suffer great torments). Mercy is granted to the humble; but for you, because of your power, none of your failings will be overlooked; on the contrary, your punishment will be much more severe. If it were a poor man or a disgruntled courtier who had pronounced these words, one might say that he was seeking comfort in his misery or revenge against the fortunes of the rich, of whom he was envious. But besides the fact that these words come from the Holy Spirit Himself, they were spoken by the richest and the happiest of all kings and, consequently, by one who could have no reason to make such a pronouncement against himself other than a desire to express the truth. This text alone was at one time powerful enough to silence Jovinian and his followers, who

were propagating the idea that in hell all sufferings were equally intense. Yes, Gentlemen, the powerful and the rich of this world must be ready to face a more rigorous account than the common people: Fortioribus autem fortior instat cruciatio (Moreover, a stronger suffering awaits the stronger). And, why must they?

First, because of their ingratitude to God Who--having enriched them with a multitude of goods and having, it would seem, made all other creatures for no other reason than to serve them--did not find in them the gratitude one should expect from such blessings. Second, they will suffer more than the poor, who will already have expiated some part of their sins on earth by the difficulty of their lives, whereas, the wealthy, who have spent their lives surrounded by luxury and have not yet paid any part of the debt exacted by God's justice, will find themselves owing everything. And, third, since there were never any barriers to block their passions and it was always extremely easy for them to do as they pleased, it is quite reasonable to believe that the sins committed by them will greatly surpass in nature and in quantity those committed by persons of lesser means.

And to this argument, add the fact that it is not only for their own misdeeds that they will be required to give an account, but also for those of others--either because they failed to protect the persons in their care, or because, by their example, which is generally considered to be very infectious, they initiated or sanctioned vice and vanity, or,

especially, because they were destined in a particular way to honor God and to help others to do the same. For this purpose, He placed in their hands all the world's most effective means to further this plan.

But, Gentlemen, if in hell there are torments which are more cruel and more refined for the rich who are wicked, who can describe to what extent the rewards in heaven destined for the rich who are virtuous surpass those of the ordinary saints! If there are crowns for a humility that was scarcely known or noticed; for a spiritual detachment that was greatly aided by a state of actual poverty; for a moderation that was always linked to the inability to do harm or seek revenge; for a captive chastity, if I may speak thus, that was always bound in sack cloth and hair shirts, always protected by walls and grills--in a word, for an innocence that was, to some degree, forced or involuntary--what thrones, what triumphs are not in store for the heroic virtues which were sustained, and even made greater, in the midst of the most corrupt Courts? What praise will not be heaped upon that humility which will have prospered amid honors; that spirit of poverty which was maintained in the midst of the greatest luxuries; that failure to pursue pleasure by the person whom all pleasures seemed to pursue; that inviolate purity which prevailed in so infected an air, in a world which sought only to destroy it, or to persecute and revile it--a world, in short, which glorifies in-continence? Beatus dives qui inventus est sine macula, et qui post aurum non abiit, nec speravit in pecuniae thesauris

(Happy the rich man who is found without blemish and he who does not seek gold or place his hopes in the amassing of treasures). Happy a thousand times over is the rich and prominent man whose heart has not been sullied by the possession of treasures, who has lived an innocent life in a world that is so depraved. Quis est hic, et laudabimus eum; fecit enim mirabilia in vita sua (Who is this man, and we shall praise him, for he did wonderful things in his life). Let him come, will exclaim the angels at his death, let this beautiful soul approach! It is only right that all heaven should resound with his praises. There is no need to wait for miracles to place him among the saints, for all of his life has been one continual miracle. Qui probatus est in illo, et perfectus est, erit illi gloria aeterna (He who has been tried and found perfect will have eternal glory). Because he was able to sustain such great trials and not be corrupted by prosperity--but rather be purified by it--he deserves to be elevated to the highest degree of glory. Qui posuit transgredi, et non est transgressus, facere mala et non fecit (He who was able to transgress and did not transgress; to do evil and did not do it). What a marvel! What a miracle of fidelity and confidence, that having full liberty to do as he pleased, he always remained within the narrow confines of God's law. Having had the power to do evil, he did not do it; but, to the contrary, he did much good and caused many others to do the same! Ideo stabilita sunt bona illius in Domino (Therefore, his riches have been established in the Lord). For this/^{reason,} his riches are now

placed in God and death will not take them from him; his greatness will follow him beyond the heavens; he will not have over him those who for so long felt privileged to be at his feet. In short, he will remain among the saints what he has been on earth among men; he will live amid great abundance and great joy and will reign there eternally.

Amen.

SERMON XIII

FIRST SERMON FOR EASTER

Surrexit, non est hic.

He is risen; He is no longer here.

(Mark 16:6)

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ has been well established, and it establishes marvellously well the truth of our beliefs.

It must be admitted that there has never been a joy more justified than that which is reflected today on the faces of all the faithful. Without mentioning their reconciliation with God through the Sacrament of Penance or the close alliance which they have contracted with Jesus Christ through the Eucharist, the simple remembrance of the Resurrection of the Savior should be for them a cause of eternal rejoicing. Yes, Christians, you have all the reason in the world to rejoice on this day. This is not only the greatest of all feasts, it is the

beginning of a feast which will never end. We are told by the great St. Athanasius that the risen Christ has made of man's life a continual celebration. Neither pain nor fear should trouble our peace any longer; our hope is no longer vacillating or uncertain. Since our Master is reborn never to die again, we can no longer die except to be reborn; since He triumphs over sin and hell, we can no longer be reborn except to be eternally blessed.

But how does the Resurrection of Jesus strengthen the hope of Christians so forcefully? That, Gentlemen, is what I propose to explain to you in this discourse. It is because this mystery is in itself well established, and because it establishes marvelously well the Christian faith. I will show you, first, that one cannot doubt the truth of the Resurrection; and, second, that by this Resurrection, one can no longer doubt the truth of our beliefs. In a word, nothing has been more fully proved in our religion than the Resurrection of the Savior; and nothing is a better proof of our religion. These points will constitute the two parts of my sermon. O blessed Mary! for it seems to me that it is only today that you are the most blessed of women; and I doubt if before this day you have ever known a single moment of unmixed joy or have ever fully experienced the glory of your divine maternity. But certainly nothing henceforth can deprive you of this great joy. Seeing Jesus in His glory, you may well say, as His Father did: It is on this day, my Son, that I have truly given birth to You, whether I consider the pains I have just endured or

the untold delight that follows such pains: Filius meus es tu: Ego hodie genui te (You are my Son; on this day I have begotten You). Allow us, O holy Virgin, to express our participation in your happiness and to request, at the same time, the grace of truly understanding our own. Ave Maria.

FIRST POINT

The Church of Jesus Christ was in a very sad and deplorable state during the three days He spent in the tomb; for, in addition to the pain the disciples experienced because of His death, and the shame they felt because of their cowardice during the Passion, they had also lost all hope of ever seeing Him return to life, and they wondered whether he Had deliberately misled them into expecting a prompt reappearance, or whether He Himself was the One Who had been deceived. The Shepherd was dead, the sheep were dispersed, and the same disloyalty which had detached them from their Leader now separated them from one another. Mary's faith was still alive, but the memory of her Son's torment rendered her unable to revive that of the Apostles. She wept in solitude and, at each moment, suffered in her spirit all that Jesus had suffered in His body during the space of three days. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of St. James, and Salome--with as little faith as the others, but with a little more love--thought only of embalming the body to preserve it from corruption, so far were they from believing that it would be restored to life.

In a word, the state of desolation was complete: all had been shaken, all was tottering, disorder prevailed, and they were ready to recant. O Lord, the time had come to fulfill the oracles of Scripture and Your Own prophecies; the time had come to depart from Your tomb and go to the aid of Your sheep who were straying farther and farther away and who were being pursued by a relentless enemy who wished to lose them beyond recall: Tu, exurgens, misereberis Sion (Rising; You will take pity on Sion), or, according to another version: Misereare Sion, quia tempus miserendi ejus, quia venit tempus (Have compassion on Sion, because the time has come, the time of her forgiveness). I have no doubt, Gentlemen, that this motive prompted Him to advance the moment of the Resurrection. The third day was just dawning when His glorious soul, departing from Limbo, accompanied by all the saints of the Old Testament, sped to the sepulcher, re-entered His body, and removed it from this somber place, fully alive and gloriously resplendent.

There was felt, at that same moment, a great earthquake, similar to the one which had occurred at the time of His death. Its purpose was to awaken the soldiers who guarded Him, so that not one of them would fail to witness His triumph; for, it was then that an angel appeared from heaven and before their eyes rolled back the stone which had been placed at the entrance of the cave; and either by this action, which displayed a formidable force, or by the beauty of His face, which was like a flash of lightning, Erat aspectus ejus sicut

fulgur (His countenance was like lightning), he so frightened the guards that they remained as if frozen in place. A few women who had come laden with perfumes to anoint the body of Jesus were at first seized with the same fear. But the angel quickly reassured them, saying: Nolite timere vos, Jesum quaeritis crucifixum; surrexit, non est hic (Do not fear, you seek Jesus crucified; He has risen, He is not here). Do not fear, O women; I know that you seek Jesus Who was crucified; He has risen; He is no longer here.

And this, Gentlemen, is the first proof of the Resurrection of the Savior of the world; the angels came down from heaven to announce it, just as they did at an earlier time to proclaim His birth. Their testimony cannot be refuted since, as God's ambassadors to man, it is in His name that they speak. The second proof is, in a manner of speaking, the testimony of the tomb itself; for, when the angel invited the women to enter the tomb so that they might be convinced by their own eyes, they found nothing there save the cloth in which their good Master had been bound for burial. This discovery explains why they departed full of joy and fear and ran to Jerusalem to carry the good tidings to the disciples. The Evangelist remarks--and to me, this seems quite significant--that their countenances revealed at the same time both fear and joy. The fear resulted, no doubt, from the scene they had witnessed, and the joy was a very natural and convincing proof of their statement that they had found nothing in the cave. Their word, however, was not immediately believed, and the

others wished to assess for themselves the truth of such an amazing claim. Thus, they ran to the tomb and, upon their return, confirmed all that the women had reported. But it is not enough that the angels and the tomb itself have given testimony to the truth of this mystery; Providence has secured for us a much more authentic proof, drawn from the mouth of our greatest enemies.

You know, Gentlemen, that, out of jealousy, the High Priests had taken all possible care in avoiding any cause for the spread of false stories of the Resurrection of Jesus. They were not content with the knowledge that they had deprived Him of life, that His body was enclosed in a tomb hewn out of the rock and secured with a huge stone which required the combined strength of many men to roll into place. To assure themselves that His body would not be stolen, they ordered that the stone be sealed and that a company of soldiers be assigned to guard the tomb throughout the night. But how feeble is our human prudence, O my God! and how blind it is when it attempts to thwart Your plans! What were the results of all these precautions, Christian Listeners? They revealed to the whole world the prediction of Jesus Christ that He would rise on the third day and that, to verify His resurrection, He would produce proof that was irrefutable and witnesses

who were beyond reproach. As a result, the guards, having recovered from their initial fright, ran into the town and reported with great accuracy all that they had seen. All of the Synagogue was deeply alarmed by the accounts that they were

giving. The Priests assembled their council, summoned the guards, and learned from them at what hour and under what form the angel had appeared; how the earth had trembled at his arrival; how he cleared the entrance to the cave without the slightest effort; how he had invited Magdalene and the other women to enter the sepulcher; what he had said to them; what they had found in the cave; and what they themselves had seen there after the angel had disappeared and their fright had vanished, allowing them the opportunity to examine all of these things more carefully.

Would it not be reasonable, Christian Listeners, to expect that these obstinate minds would yield before the known facts? For, indeed, the case is clear; there is no further room for doubt; and one is forced to see the truth amid so much light. But alas! how true it is that the heart governs the mind, and that we are almost beyond the lights of faith when some passion has taken over our will! Libertines demand miracles before they will affirm their faith, and the proofs which convince men of virtue are looked upon by them as mere fallacies or weak arguments. But even if it were given to them to witness the healing of the blind and the raising of the dead, they would remain obdurate in their incredulity and would continue in their lives of sin: Neque si mortui resurrexerint, credent (Nor will they believe if the dead rise).

In the case of these Jews, we find a startling example of this attitude. Instead of recognizing the Messiah from such a manifest sign, they thought only of stifling the truth

I which was being revealed to them in spite of themselves. They gave a large sum of money to the soldiers and forced them to announce publicly that, while they were asleep, the Apostles had removed the body of Jesus Christ. These sacrilegious ministers of the living God, who had already used money from the sanctuary to repay the treason of Judas, felt no compunction about making use of these same funds to purchase this new calumny. But could they have given us any stronger proof of the Resurrection than they did by resorting to such a vile ruse to suppress it? This removal of the body would have seemed more believable if they had shown a little less fear of its happening. But in view of all their precautions to prevent it, no story could be less plausible than the one which they invented.

What are we asked to believe? That these timid disciples who had so cravenly abandoned their Master while He was alive, in order to give some value to an empty imposture, would come, after His death, and place their lives in such imminent danger? That Peter, who had been completely devastated by a few words from a servant girl, would confront an entire company of armed men? Even assuming that the entire garrison was asleep, how could one penetrate into the garden, dislodge a stone of such enormous weight, remove the body, and flee, without making any noise or awaking anyone? Furthermore, in the sepulcher were found the shroud and the winding cloths which had enveloped the body. Is it likely that robbers who were forced to work hastily and had not a moment to lose would

I

have taken the time to unwind and remove all these cloths? What were you thinking of, says St. Augustine, when you offered us these sleeping soldiers as witnesses to the theft of the body, which you imputed to these disciples? In truth, it is you who were asleep and who gave no thought to what you were saying: Dormientes testes adhibes; vere et tu obdormisti (You bring as witnesses those who are sleeping; truly it is you who sleep). Impostors that you are, he says to the soldiers in another context, either you were watching when the disciples came to perpetrate this act, or it was done while you were asleep. If you were watching, why did you not repulse them? If you were asleep, how could you know that they had come? And I believe we could also add: If you were watching and you made some compromise with the guilty ones, how is it that the Priests have not punished your treachery? If you were asleep, how is it that they have even rewarded your negligence? We know that upon your return you were in possession of a considerable sum of money. Pecuniam copiosam (A large sum of money). Would you have us believe that it was because you performed your assigned duties badly that this money was given to you? And you, O wicked Priests, if it were true that the disciples of Jesus had stolen their Master's body, this theft would have constituted a serious crime. The public seals had been broken, the authority of the Prince had been visibly violated, and the sanctity of the tomb desecrated. How is it that you did not demand justice for so many criminal acts? Could you have found a more desirable opportunity to erase forever the

memory of this Man Whose name was so odious to you, by destroying all who were in some way linked to His person? Furthermore, where is that zeal which caused you to view with such apprehension the results of such a deed, when you believed it could be prevented? How can you explain your present calmness as you claim that the crime has been committed and that you know who is responsible for it? O wretched people! Is it possible that you allowed yourselves to be taken in by such a ridiculous plot? Is it possible that in this deception you failed to see the indisputable proof of the Resurrection of your Redeemer?

But it is not enough, Gentlemen, that the dead body of Jesus has disappeared. If He is truly risen from the dead, then He must be seen alive and, as in the past, conversing with men. Why seek out the testimony of angels, of holy women, or of His enemies, when He is able to make His Own appearance and dispel all our doubts by His presence? He did appear, Christian Listeners, and I urge you to consider with me all the circumstances surrounding His appearances to decide whether, after all the evidence which He gave, the most stubborn unbeliever could still remain unconvinced.

Dressed as a gardener, He showed Himself to Mary Magdalene, and almost simultaneously, to the other women who had come to embalm Him. But because the natural inclination of women towards piety may sometimes tend to make them overly credulous, and because their testimony, for that reason, might have been discredited, Christ appeared to St. Peter, to the disciples on the way to Emmaus, to all the Apostles together, and

finally, He appeared to all the disciples—a gathering which represented more than five hundred people, most of whom were still living when St. Paul wrote his first Epistle to the Corinthians, that is, approximately twenty-four years after the Ascension of the Savior: Deinde visus est plusquam quingentis fratribus simul, ex quibus multi manent usque adhuc (Afterwards He was seen by more than five hundred brothers at once, of whom many are still living).

If He had shown Himself only once or twice, we might have believed that there could be some possibility of mistake, and that these good fishermen, who were still quite naive, had allowed themselves to be hoodwinked by some worker of false miracles. For this reason, says St. Augustine, He desired to be with them during forty days, lest this great wonder be mistaken for some cheap trick if they were not given enough time to examine it: Ne tam magnum Resurrectionis miraculum, si eorum oculis cito subtraheretur, ludificatio putaretur (Lest this great miracle of the Resurrection be thought of as a mockery if it were withdrawn too quickly from their eyes).

During those forty days He allowed Himself to be seen and touched; He spoke, He walked, He ate with them; He worked miracles in their behalf; He reviewed all that He had told them in the time preceding the Passion; in effect, He gave them so many signs of His Resurrection that there was not a single one among them who was not totally convinced of the truth of this mystery. This is indeed a strong statement, Christian Listeners, since the Apostles, before receiving the Holy Spirit, were quite

different from the men who appeared after Pentecost. They were, for the most part, men whose minds were weak and cautious and who believed only when all possibility of doubt had been removed. Logical reasoning, the prophecies, the miracles which they had witnessed--all of these factors would have made an impression on more rational minds. But these men were guided only by their senses; they conceded only after they had seen, and they only truly believed what they saw if they could touch it. There were among them some who pushed their incredulity beyond all bounds. We know that St. Thomas for a long time scoffed at all that the others told him, even accusing them of being visionaries. I will not believe, he said haughtily; I will believe nothing that I have not seen with my own eyes. And that is not all: I must touch that body to see whether it is made of flesh and bones like other bodies or whether it is a ghost. Furthermore, this could be a different man from the one whom we saw nailed to the cross; if it is the same man, He will have retained the holes made by the spear and the nails. You tell me that you have seen them, but I wish to feel them for myself. It is possible that I may be able to place only one finger in the opening of His feet and His hands; but, since the wound in His side is much larger, I intend to plunge my whole hand deeply into it and reach into His heart to the wound through which He shed the last drops of His blood. Nisi videro in manibus ejus fixuram clavorum, et mittam digitum meum in locum clavorum, et mittam manum meam in latus ejus, non credam (Unless I see the imprint of the nails in His hands, put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe). If

one as incredulous as this can be satisfied, do you not believe that all others can be equally convinced? Behold him kneeling at the feet of the Savior of the world; after having received all the assurances he desired, he adored Him, exclaiming: Yes, Lord, I believe that You are truly my Master and my God: Dominus meus et Deus meus (My Lord and my God). O true flesh, says St. Augustine, flesh truly risen, flesh which can be touched and pressed, on which the markings of one's hand remain imprinted, and which still carries the marks of its agony! It submits itself, so to speak, to all forms of testing: Offert se examinandum, probandum, diligentius considerandum (It offers itself to be examined, tested, and carefully scrutinized). Because the eye is easily deceived, this flesh agrees to be tested by the sense of touch, which is less susceptible to illusion, so that persons may assure themselves of its solidity, and so that no trace of doubt will remain: Accedit et curiosa manus, ut corpus contrectaretur solidum, et omne tolleretur ambiguum (The curious hand probes to feel the body as something solid and to remove all doubt).

Blessed are the eyes which had the advantage of seeing so frequently our risen Master! Blessed, and a hundred times blessed, are the hands which Jesus allowed to touch Him and which He Himself directed into the opening of His heart! I do not doubt, Gentlemen, that the thought of such a remarkable favor leaves you deeply touched. For my part, I admire it as much, as you do, but my admiration is devoid of envy, and I even consider myself fortunate because I have not seen what I believe.

This sentiment is based on the words of Jesus Christ Himself. I am content to believe what others have seen. Beati qui non viderunt, et crediderunt (Happy are those who did not see and believed). It was for us that these words were spoken, and they seem so consoling to me: Blessed are they who have not seen and who have not failed to believe! Blessed are they who have placed their faith in My promises without demanding more tangible evidence! Blessed are they whose credence is not based on the testimony of the senses, but who have believed that I am risen because the Prophets have foretold that I would rise, and because I have foretold it Myself: Beati qui non viderunt, et crediderunt. We belong to this group, Christians, by the mercy of God; and if our faith is as strong as that of the Apostles, we are even more blessed than they.

But on what can we base our belief in the Resurrection, we who have neither heard the prophecies of the Son of God nor seen His risen body? On what can we base our belief, Christian Company? On the account given by more than five hundred persons who have seen Him and who have proclaimed it far and wide; on the word of twelve disciples who, for a long time, strongly resisted this belief, and who later became so convinced of it that, poor, ignorant, and timid as they were, dared to announce it before all the powers of the world and did not hesitate to give up their lives to sustain their teaching; on the example of the whole universe which was won over by the proofs presented by these new preachers; and, finally, on the testimony of eleven million martyrs who, basing themselves on this same evidence,

have signed in their blood the truth of the Resurrection. I repeat, "the truth of the Resurrection," because, as St. Augustine has so aptly said, of all the points of our faith, this is the only one that the pagans have disputed, since they found that all the other points showed some conformity, or at least less opposition, to the natural sciences which they had acquired. Finally, all peoples have agreed that most of the Apostles performed more miracles than had Jesus Christ Himself. But all these miracles were performed to give proof of the mystery which we solemnly celebrate today. This ^{proof} could easily be given by citing several passages from the Acts of the Apostles. Here is one in which it is stated explicitly; it is from the fourth chapter. The Apostles performed many great miracles to confirm the truth of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, Our Lord: Et virtute magna reddebant Apostoli testimonium Resurrectionis Domini nostri Jesu Christi (And with great courage, the Apostles were giving testimony of the Resurrection of Our Lord, Jesus Christ). It is thus true, Gentlemen, that in the Christian religion, there is nothing that is more firmly substantiated than the Resurrection of the Savior. We could not hope for any proof less open to doubt than the testimony of His Own enemies, one more tangible than the very presence of the risen Lord, one more certain than the voice of God, which made itself heard through His miracles and the general consent of all peoples. Let us now see if it is true that nothing gives a stronger proof of the Christian religion than this mystery: this is the second point.

SECOND POINT

Although the divinity of Jesus Christ had been sufficiently well established, both by the supernatural works performed by Him during three years, and by the oracles of the Prophets which all conformed so perfectly to the various circumstances of His life and death, it was still necessary that He rise from the dead to place this important truth beyond the reach of any attacks of calumny. First, He had predicted this Resurrection, and His prediction had spread among the people; it had reached the ears of the Priests and the Doctors of the Law, who communicated it to others in foreign lands, and even to the Governor of Judea. Jesus had predicted that He would not be subject to corruption, that He would roam freely in the land of the dead, and that, finally, His tomb would become the source and the theater of His glory. Second, the Resurrection was one of the most emphasized points in Scripture in its tracing of the prophetic history of the Redeemer. Thus, if Christ had not fulfilled this mystery in His person, there would have been something seriously lacking in the events of His life by which He was to manifest that He was truly the promised Messiah. But, also, with this last prophecy fulfilled, all doubts were dispelled, all reasons for doubt were nullified, and the world was compelled to exclaim with the Centurion: That man was truly the Son of God: Vere filius Dei erat iste (Truly that man was the Son of God)!

Who else but God, Gentlemen, could have raised Himself from the tomb and restored to Himself a life that He no longer possessed? How could He have acted upon Himself to draw Himself from the tomb unless death, which destroys in man the principle of all action, had found present in this Man an inalterable principle; that is, the Person of the Word Which remained united with His body after the soul had left it.

The Holy Fathers, when explaining this verse from Psalm forty-four--Accingere gladio tuo super femur tuum Potestissimo (Gird Your sword beside Your thigh, O most powerful One): Gird Your sword, all-powerful Lord--have said that by this prayer the Prophet was urging the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity to hasten to put on our flesh in order to free the human race from its servitude to the devil. Indue carnem, pugna contra diabolum et libera genus humanum de inferno (Put on flesh, battle with the devil, and free the human race from hell). This is how St. Jerome paraphrased the words of David, and some theologians considered this a proper analogy to explain in familiar terms the mystery of this day. For the humanity which the Savior put on at the Incarnation was, in effect, like a sheathed sword with which He armed Himself to combat our enemies. He unsheathed the sword, so to speak, on the cross when, by an act of His will, He withdrew His soul from His Body, the latter being the scabbard of this mystical sword. After having destroyed both death and sin --and since the divinity had remained unaffected by this battle and had not abandoned either scabbard or sword; that is, had remained united with both the body and the soul--he was aban

to re-sheath this sword, to reunite this soul with the body from which it had been separated. He had the power to leave His soul and then reclaim it: Habeo potestatem ponendi animam meam, et iterum sumendi eam (I have the power to put aside my soul and to take it up ~~again~~). Such is not the case with other men. Death, which separates the two parts of which we are composed, entirely destroys the person whose power of action emanates from both of these parts and leaves nothing within each part that would be capable of reassembling them. Even God Himself, Who is able to raise all the dead by His power, and Who will, in effect, raise them all one day--God, I say--has not the power to make a man raise himself from the dead, because to restore one's own life is to act, and action presupposes life.

Thus, Gentlemen, by itself the Resurrection of the Savior proves His divinity and proves it in an irrefutable way. All the other ~~marvels~~ that He performed during His life could well indicate that He was sent by God; but this one reveals conclusively that He Himself is God. Having been pressed many times by the Pharisees to perform some miracles which would dispel their doubts, He referred them to His Resurrection. This accursed race demands miracles of Me. I wish to give them no other miracle than that of Jonas; for, just as this prophet remained for three days in the belly of the whale and came out of it full of life, so the Son of God will be buried in the bosom of the earth and will arise on the third day. Behold! this is the miracle of miracles, and it is in

this way that I intend to distinguish Myself from the other prophets. Elias restored life to the son of the widow of Sarephta; Eliseus, to the child of the Sunamite woman; but no one has ever restored life to himself.

You want a miracle, He told them on another occasion, as proof that I am truly the Messiah. I could tell you that I have already performed miracles of all sorts and that, if only you were willing to follow Me, you would see Me restore sight to the blind, health to the sick, and life to the dead. But you are not the kind who will be convinced by these wonders. You claim that it is in the name of Beelzebub that I do all these things. But here is something that no man can do, unless He be God; and that even God Himself is unable to do in man unless He be joined to him in an ineffable way: Solvite templum hoc, et post triduum reaedicabo illud (Destroy this temple and after three days I will rebuild it). Take away My life and I will rise from the dead. Notice, Gentlemen, that He does not say: I shall die. But, to remove all suggestion of fraud, He says: Take my life yourselves in any manner you choose: Solvite. Destroy this flesh which is given over to your fury; reduce this body to any condition you choose; do not cease to exercise against it all forms of cruelty, until you are well assured that you have drawn all life from it: Solvite templum hoc. Do not leave within it a single drop of blood; continue to strike it even after its death; none of this will prevent me from raising it from the dead and from restoring it, after three days, to the same state in which you see it: Et post

triduum reaedificabo illud (And after three days I will rebuild it). There, Gentlemen, is the argument by which Jesus wishes to confound all who dare to doubt His divinity. In effect, even His most malicious adversaries have never found any way to discredit His claim; they found it to be so powerful that, in order not to remain completely silent, they had to resort to denials, some claiming that He never really died, others that He had not truly risen, but all in agreement on one point: that if His Resurrection were proven, no one could refuse to worship Him as God. The Priests, among others, were well aware of this truth, and when they demanded that guards be placed at the tomb, they told Pilate that they feared that He might be carried away during the night and that the people might be told that He had risen. And they added, Erit novissimus error peior priore (The last deception will be worst than the first), this fraudulent miracle would leave a deeper impression on minds than all the others that He had performed during His life. In vain would we have condemned Him as a criminal; this announcement would restore all His glory. Until now He has been thought of as a great prophet; but, if this event came to pass, no one would doubt that He is in fact the Son of God. Et erit novissimus error peior priore.

I was once quite surprised to see that the Evangelists had taken such care to give us all the details of the Passion and that, instead of passing quickly over this dreadful part of His history, all four of them strove, as if vying with one another, to leave us a very accurate picture of it. They did

not fear to portray Him moaning, overcome by sadness, praying, sweating, and trembling with fear. On the contrary, one could believe that they took pleasure in revealing to all posterity that He was treated, not only as a common man, but as the meanest of all men,—now as a slave, now as a fool, and throughout the ordeal, as a notorious evil-doer; that, in His torments, He was stripped even of His human form; in a word, that He lost His life. They knew how important it was that men be fully convinced of His death, lest some way be found to cast doubts on it and thus weaken the truth of the Resurrection. They were fully aware that they had in hand the means of erasing all this shame; the means, even, of using this shame to spread His glory. Whatever one might think of Jesus Christ when picturing Him disfigured and covered with blood, the truth remains that He rose on the third day, and this single fact saves everything. If, when seeing Him on the cross, you had some doubt about His being simply a man, then when seeing Him leave the tomb—unless you have lost your reason—you cannot doubt that He is God.

But what need have we to multiply reasons, when a single reason can replace all the most conclusive proofs, to convince us that nothing confirms more strongly the divinity of Jesus, and, consequently, the religion which He established, than the mystery of His Resurrection? It suffices to say that this is the proof which conquered for Him the whole universe, and perhaps the only one used by the Apostles in all their preaching. Throughout his first sermon, the one by which

St. Peter converted three thousand Jews--throughout that sermon, I say--he spoke of nothing but this mystery. The death and Resurrection of Jesus were again the only theme of the sermon which this Apostle delivered in the Temple after he cured the lame beggar. This Jesus, he said, Whom you have delivered into the hands of the Gentiles, this Jesus is risen; and we have witnessed this marvel: Hunc Jesum resuscitavit Deus (God has raised this Jesus). It was for this reason that the Priests arrested Him and His colleagues: Dolentes quod docerent populum, et annuntiarent in Jesu Resurrectionem ex mortuis (Bewailing the fact that they were teaching the people and announcing in Jesus the Resurrection of the dead), being unable to tolerate that they were proclaiming, in this way, the resurrection of the dead in the person of Jesus. St. Paul preached in Athens and attempted to reform this city which was plunged in idolatry. He spoke to them only of the Resurrection; he spoke of it to the people, and he spoke of it to the Senators in the midst of the Areopagus: Et resurrectionem annuntiabat eis (And he announced to them the Resurrection). Finally, all their concerns, all their efforts in founding the early Church, were centered on proclaiming openly the Resurrection of their Master: Et reddebant Apostoli testimonium Resurrectionis Jesu Christi (And the Apostles were giving testimony of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ). Much more, they thought of themselves only as: Witnesses of the Resurrection of the Lord: Oportet testem Resurrectionis nobiscum fieri unum ex istis (It is fitting that one of these be made

a witness with us of the Resurrection). Brethren, said St. Peter, while proposing the election of an Apostle to replace Judas, we must select one among these who will give witness with us of the Resurrection. It would seem that this was their only message, that all of the Gospel was contained therein, that the whole ministry of an Apostle consisted in preaching that Jesus Christ has risen and that the whole world must be won over by this sign of His infinite power. Indeed, Gentlemen, all of the world did acknowledge it. It was this marvel which conquered the minds of our fathers and, as a result, it is to this mystery that we are indebted for the faith that has been transmitted to us.

Why are you so obstinate, O faithless Jews, accursed and rejected nation, as to close your eyes to such great and numerous lights? What can remain to trouble you and prevent you from recognizing your Redeemer? Can you doubt His death, you who caused it? Can you doubt His Resurrection, you who were the first to witness it and who, by the pains you took to guard His tomb, removed from us all possible doubt concerning this event? O stulti et gravi corde ad credendum (You whose hearts are foolish and slow to believe)! O foolish ones, O sluggish and intractable souls, who will be able to cure your infidelity and the hardness of your hearts! You await another Liberator, but when he comes, by what sign do you hope to recognize him as the true Messiah? Do you expect a miracle more outstanding than that of restoring one's own life and of emerging immortal from the very bosom of death? And you, unfaithful

Christians, profligate and audacious in spirit, who presume to place in doubt the truth of your religion, and who persistently demand clarification of truths which shine a thousand times more brilliantly than the light of day,

O stulti et gravi corde ad credendum! is it not very foolish of you to believe that you have more wisdom than all the wise men who have lived for the last sixteen hundred years? Can you indicate any period in history, be it modern or ancient, which has been established as the time of the Resurrection of the Savior? Or, if you believe that we are celebrating this event today--a belief that was held in the past by Rome, by Athens, by Jerusalem, by the people, the philosophers, and the emperors--how is it that you are still vacillating? Are you not satisfied with a proof against which no pagan or idolator saw fit to argue with the faithful?

But, Christian Listeners, let us leave these unhappy ones who are retained in their incredulity by their debauchery or their pride. Let us celebrate the joy that is ours because of our belief in Jesus Christ, in that Man Whose Resurrection has been confirmed by so many signs that are so clearly founded, and Whose doctrine has been so strongly proven by His Resurrection. Let us rejoice that we have the privilege of walking in such a bright light and of knowing that we are on the right road. Let us rejoice that we have the happiness of serving a Master Who is alive, glorious, and immortal; Who sees our needs; Who hears our prayers; Who is capable of rewarding us for

our services; Who can show compassion for all our infirmities, since He has endured them all; and Who can liberate us from them, since He has overcome them all. Finally, we have a Master Who vanquished death in His person for the sole purpose of showing us what He could do and what He planned to do in our favor.

Yes, my Lord and my God, I believe that You are risen from the grave, and I hope that you will also raise me from the grave some day. I believe that You have appeared full of life to all Your disciples, and I hope that I will see You with my own eyes in this same flesh which You ordered me to crucify on earth by penance: Credo quod Redemptor meus vivit, et in carne mea videbo Deum Salvatorem meum (I believe that my Redeemer is living and that in my flesh I shall see my Savior). Yes, my lovable and glorious Redeemer, we believe that You are living in heaven, and that we will live there eternally with You; we know that death will soon destroy this body, under whose burden we moan; but we also know that You will form it anew to render it similar to Your Own, glorious like Your Own: Reposita est haec in sinu meo (This hope is deeply rooted in my heart), and this hope is deeply entrenched in our hearts; before we would give it up, we would prefer to have our lives taken from us. It is this hope which sustains us in all our adversities; which softens all our sorrows; which helps us face death without fear; and even makes us desire it with some degree of eagerness. It is this hope, O my Savior, which strengthens us in the battles

which each day we must wage against the world and against ourselves in order to observe the commandments. It is this hope which stimulates our desire to follow Your divine examples, to embrace the Cross and attach ourselves to it, to wish to die upon it for love of You, so that we may one day, and for all eternity, reign with You. Amen.

SERMON XI

FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI

(First Sermon on the Holy Eucharist)

Cum dilexisset suos, qui
erant in mundo, in finem
dilexit eos.

Jesus, having loved His
Own who were in the world,
loved them to the end.
(John 13:1)

Jesus Christ demonstrates in the institution of the holy Eucharist the ardent desire He has to be united with us; His love forces Him, in a sense, outside of Himself in order to live only in us; His love makes Him forget Himself, as it were, to live only for us.

Among the arguments used by our adversaries to combat the Eucharist, I find none less plausible than those which attack the change in the substances, the multiplication and the reduction of the Body of the Savior. If anything could shake my faith in this mystery, it would not be this show of infinite power by God that I should question; rather, it would be the extreme love that He hereby manifests. How does bread become flesh without losing the appearance of bread? How can the body of a man be in several places at the same time? How can

it be contained in a space that is almost indivisible? To all of these questions I need only reply that God can do all things. But if I am asked how it can be that God loves a creature as weak, as imperfect, as miserable as man; that He loves him with passion, with rapture; that He manifests toward him an eagerness that even one man would not extend to his fellow-man--I confess, Gentlemen, that I have no answer and that this is a truth which surpasses me. It cannot be said, it seems to me, that this love is a result of His infinite goodness, since goodness and love have no essential relationship: their objects are totally different; also, one can be good and not love, and one can love ardently without being good. Weakness, misery, even sin can be objects of goodness: it supports the weak, it comforts the miserable, and forgives the sinner. But love attaches itself only to that which is good, that is, to that which is perfect, to that which seems excellent. For this reason one wants to be good to everyone, but wishes to choose the object of his love.

However, if one accepts the teachings of the Faith on the holy Sacrament, one cannot doubt that the Son of God has love for men, for whom the other mysteries have shown that He has great goodness. Sacramentum altaris est amor amorum (The Sacrament of the altar is the love of loves), says the pious St. Bernard. The sacrament of the altar is the love of loves, that is, the result of the greatest of

all loves. May it please God that I might give you the intelligence of this proposition as easily as I can prove it. But, what you cannot expect from me, you must hope to obtain from the Holy Spirit and you must ask it through the mediation of His spouse. Ave Maria.

All those who have compared friendship with love have found a thousand differences between these two passions. But it seems to me that either there is but one, or that they might all be reduced to one. It can be said that friendship is a love that is more gentle, more peaceful, more moderate; and that love is a friendship which goes as far as rapture, as far as ecstasy, which knows no measure, which feeds only on excess, according to the words of Richard of Saint Victor: Amor excessibus vivit (Love thrives on excesses). A friend enjoys the company of his friend, he welcomes each encounter with joy. But a lover cannot bear to be separated from the one he loves; he languishes if she is absent; and in her presence, he is dumbfounded, abashed, even beside himself. A friend gladly shares his possessions with the person to whom he has vowed friendship; a lover gives all, forgets his own interests, forgets himself, consumes himself for his love. Thus, to define love, I believe one might say that it is a passion which makes us live within another and for another: within another, by the ardent and constant desire to be united with the object of one's passion; for

another, by the zeal with which one devotes oneself, and even sacrifices oneself for that object.

It is by this definition that I intend to show you that the Eucharist is a mystery of love and that Jesus Christ performs in it all the actions of a truly passionate lover. I will show you, in the first point, the extreme desire that He hereby expresses to be united with us; and, in the second, the perfect unselfishness, the devotedness with which He gives Himself to us. His love, in a sense, forces Him outside of Himself, to live only in us : His love compels Him to forget Himself, as it were, in order to live only for us. This love is the whole subject of our talk.

FIRST POINT

In all the circumstances surrounding this mystery, there is not one which does not furnish a proof for the first proposition which I have submitted. Jesus Christ demonstrates in the Eucharist an extreme desire to be united with us, since, at the time that He comes to us through this sacrament, all the motives which had caused Him to put on our nature have ceased to be. There are no longer any needs on our part; the work of the Redemption is accomplished; our chains have been broken, our enemies vanquished, the gates of hell closed, those of heaven opened; Jesus has re-ascended to His Father. Why, then, does He return each day invisibly to the earth, if it is not because He cannot bear to be sep-

parated from men and that it is His delight to be among them? Furthermore, it is from the highest point of glory to which

He has been elevated that He dreams of coming to lodge in our hearts, as if His happiness were incomplete while He is away from us. Is it not true, Gentlemen, that a desire must be very violent to subsist in heaven, which is the very fulfillment of all desires? When I consider Jesus Christ on our altars, in the humble and obscure state that He has willingly chosen, and I further reflect on the immense glory that He enjoys since His Ascension, I seem to see a great prince who, having achieved by his merit and virtue the highest crown of the universe, retains on the throne the inclinations he had conceived in his earlier state; who each day steals away from the large and beautiful court that surrounds him, and in clothing which completely disguises him, goes without retinue or fanfare to the person he loves.

An even stronger sign of the ardor of His passion is that there is no particular time or place which He considers appropriate for this meeting: He is ready at all times; He awaits His bride sometimes amid gold panelling and at other times in a simple barn; He seeks her out in thatched cottages and even in hospitals; He is repulsed neither by the poverty of her clothing nor the squalor or inconveniences of her home. But, consider, I beseech you, to what He exposes Himself by returning in disguise among men. How much contempt, how many insults He is obliged to endure each day from both bad Christians and unbelievers! How many libertines, how many heretics

consider Him on our altars a ridiculous divinity, accusing of either idolatry or weakness those who adore Him in this contemptible form, and renew all the outrages that He suffered in His Passion in regard to the royalty which He attributed to Himself!

I speak not of the bad priests who inflict upon Him today a persecution no less bloody than that which He sustained under the pontiffs and the doctors of Jerusalem. I do not mention how, in seeking out a holy soul, He falls each day into the hands of His enemies who cause Him to endure a second passion much more cruel than that which He suffered to save us. None of this stops Him, and His resolution reminds me of a famous hero in ancient history, who, after having left his desolate country amidst the dangers of iron and fire, covered with blood and wounds, noticed that his beloved spouse had stayed behind and resolved, in order to rejoin her, to expose himself anew to all the perils he had already suffered. Stat casus renovare omnes, omnemque reverti per Trojam, et rursum caput objectare periculis (He resolves to renew all misfortunes, to return all the way to Troy and again risk his head to dangers).

What have You come to find, beloved Master, in this accursed land? Do you not know that Your enemies prevail everywhere, that they retain all their venom, that they still thirst after Your blood? Have You no remembrance of the cruel treatment that You received while You were among us? Are You not

yet surfeited¹ with opprobrium? It is true that You will have the joy of being intimately united with Your chosen ones. But how often will You be constrained to show reprobrates and devils the same graciousness that is due only to holy souls? It is indeed a very agreeable sojourn for You to reside in the bosom of a chaste and fervent person. But how many of these do You expect to find among the crowds of Christians who approach communion on great feast days? Will You not be in horror of the mouth or the stomach of that blasphemer, that slanderer, that drunkard, or that lewd person? O God of love and purity! You Who will not suffer anything soiled to enter Your kingdom; You Who pour Your gifts only into souls that are pure and innocent, You will submerge Yourself entirely in this filth?

Imagine, Gentlemen, if it is possible to do so, how great is God's hatred of sin. It is infinite, it is irreconcilable. And yet, in some ways, it is lesser than the desire He has to reside in us, since He prefers to abandon Himself, so to speak, to the sacrilegious embraces of the most infamous sinners, rather than renounce the delights He derives from the company of those He loves.

This desire is reproduced admirably by the sacred species under which He gives Himself to us. For, if it is

¹ The Venerable Father wrote saoulé (intoxicated) which was often used by Bossuet in this sense but which has been archaic for some time. [Editor's footnote]

true, as theology teaches, that the matter of the sacraments is a visible sign, much like a tacit word telling us the design that God had in their institution--if this is so, I say--what would Jesus Christ have us understand when He presents us with His Body under the appearances of bread? As bread has no other function but to be eaten, so also is He on the altar but to be our meat; as meat has no other aim than to be united with our body, no other passion were it capable of sentiment, no other desire were it endowed with reason, so also does He have no other desire but to be united with us, and He desires this union with the same ardor, the same eagerness and, if I dare say so, the same violence with which each object tends toward its end and its natural felicity.

Do you wish to know what Jesus Christ is telling us through these mysterious species? He is incessantly repeating that which He told His Apostles when He instituted the Eucharist, and which the physical bread itself would tell us if it could speak: Accipite et manducate (Take and eat).¹ Take and eat. You are mistaken, surely, whoever you are, who preach only respect and reverence for this daily bread. It is not my role to examine your intentions, but certainly your language is not in accord with the language of Jesus Christ.

¹ Invitation to frequent communion, strongly attacked at that time by the Jansenists.

When God descends on Mount Sinai, clad in fire and lightning and speaking only through the awesome sound of trumpets, I understand that His purpose is to inspire terror in this un-submissive and seditious people: Ut enim probaret vos, venit Dominus, Et ut terror illius esset in vobis (For the Lord comes to test you and to instill in you fear of Him). But here, my lovable Master, if all You ask of me is homage, permit me to say that Your intentions are stated rather obscurely. What do I see in this host that might teach me Your will, if it is Your wish that, through respect, I remove myself from Your table? This bread might well awaken my appetite, but I do not see how it can inspire in me sentiments of fear. It is true that we erect thrones for You in our churches, and, by the glow of a thousand torches, we light up around You that which is most precious in nature. But all of that is man's invention; it is his voice, and not Your Own that I hear from these devices. It is men who have placed You on the altars; but it was Your Own wish to be hidden beneath a small piece of bread. This bread would be better placed on a table than on a throne, and better in the stomachs of Christians than simply exposed for their adoration.

But why is it necessary to make use of signs and conjectures, since we have in the Gospel words that are so explicit? In how many ways has the Son of God shown us the desire He has to unite Himself with us by this sacrament! He did not content Himself with presenting it to us as food so that

the love we all have for life might invite us to receive it. But, to stimulate our hunger even more, He declared that all other foods, including even manna, could not compare with this one; that manna had not prevented the Israelites from dying, but this bread would render immortal all those who used it: Qui manducat hunc panem vivet in aeternum (He who eats this bread will live eternally). Even that did not suffice. The hope of becoming like God had incited Adam to eat of a fruit whose use had been forbidden him: Jesus Christ promises all those who receive Him at the altar that they will be elevated to that rank which the first man strove unsuccessfully to attain: Sicut misit me vivens Pater, et ego vivo propter Patrem; et qui manducat me, et ipse vivet propter me (Just as the living Father has sent Me, and I live for the Father, so he who eats Me will also live for Me).

In addition, He entreats all His disciples to renew this mysterious supper often. He explains that in this way they will be giving Him signs of their remembrance and their love. He does not overlook the motive of fear, which exercises such great power over most minds; He threatens us with death if we refuse to take His flesh as food: Nisi manducaveritis carnem Filii hominis, non habebitis vitam in vobis (Unless you have eaten the flesh of the Son of Man, you will not have life in you). In short, He employs all means possible to kindle in us a great desire to go to Him, so that nothing be allowed to oppose His desire to come within us and be closely united with us.

Assuming this explanation to be valid, and that love is a passion that impels us to live outside of ourselves by the desire which it inspires in us to be united with the object of our love, am I not justified in saying that the title of lover applies to no person better than it does to the Savior of the world, and that He has never more completely lived up to that beautiful title than in the mystery of the Eucharist? It is true that in the Incarnation God united Himself perfectly with our nature. But I pray you to consider that this hypostatic union was not the aim of the Incarnation, as sacramental union had been the aim of this Sacrament. God clothed Himself in our flesh, not precisely to be united with us, but in order to have a body susceptible to the sufferings that He wished to endure for us. He became man to save mankind through zeal, kindness, compassion (a type of love, if you wish), but certainly not through tenderness or the taking of delight in another, the love that characterizes lovers on earth.

It is easy to recognize the difference that exists between the two passions by the diversity of their objects. The Son of God became man only for sinners: Non sum missus, nisi ad oves, quae perierunt (I have not been sent except to the sheep who are lost). But sinners cannot be the object of His delight, only of His compassion, whereas He instituted this sacrament only for the just: Vere panis filiorum non mittendus canibus (Truly the bread of the children must not be given to

the dogs). And the just can only be the object of His tenderness. ^{reason,} For this, Jesus Christ, visible in His flesh, was pleased to be among sinners, whereas under the sacramental species He is horrified by them. The Incarnation was their deliverance, the Eucharist was their judgment and their death: Qui manducat et bibit indigne, judicium sibi manducat et bibit (He who eats and drinks unworthily eats and drinks judgment unto himself). Also, we do not see that the desires of the Son of God to be incarnate were as ardent as those that He showed to give Himself to us in this sacrament. The Scriptures are filled with the wishes of the patriarchs and prophets; everywhere there are sighs and tears to appease heaven and call down the Redeemer. This Redeemer is called the Awaited of Israel, the Desired of Nations, the Desired of the Eternal Hills; but the Eternal Word is far from showing a similar impatience. The world had been groaning beneath the tyranny of the devil ever since the fall of Adam. The Liberator had been promised ever since that time, and from that moment He had been incessantly called for and awaited; and yet, far from hastening to grant our desires, He waited without anxiety until a midway point in time had been reached, allowing four thousand years of hard and cruel servitude to roll by. But in the Eucharist, He proceeded in a totally different manner. He resisted men's pleadings and their entreaties to come into the world for a period of forty centuries. Now, He is pleading with men, entreating them, even forcing their wills to oblige

them to receive Him. Force them, He says in the Gospel, force them to partake of the banquet that I have prepared for them: Compelle intrare, ut impleatur domus mea (Compel them to enter that My house be filled). This Love is extremely impatient. The other movements of the soul do not agitate us with such violence; they are gentler and slower; they do not deprive us of our liberty, and we can, as it pleases us, either repress them or follow them. But this one is hostile to all delay; it does not know what it means to stop; it throws over in a single moment all obstacles; it surmounts all difficulties. There is nothing impossible, nothing difficult when it means getting close to the object of one's love, in whom one lives much more fully than in oneself.

It is also for this same reason that Jesus Christ, having wished that the other sacraments be conferred only once, as in Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders, or at least infrequently, as in Matrimony and Extreme Unction, has left us complete freedom in regard to the Sacrament of the altar and that of Penance, which disposes us for the former. We can receive Jesus Christ in the Eucharist every month, every week, every day. And it must not be said that in this matter He was less concerned with satisfying His love than in relieving our weakness which is in frequent need of being strengthened by this heavenly nourishment. For, if this nourishment had been principally destined for the appeasement of the weak, it would not be called the bread of the strong and we would not be justified in forbidding its frequent use to those who are imperfect.

However, we see that it is the more robust who are invited to eat it more often, and that God has inspired a greater hunger for it in those who have attained greater sanctity.

After all these reflections, does it not seem strange to you that most Christians have such distaste for the Body of Jesus Christ, that they display so little eagerness to receive it? Jesus is in an unbelievable state of impatience to come to us, and we must be forced to go to Him, we must be menaced with the anathemas of the Church to oblige us to receive communion once a year. My God! how is it that our desires are so opposed to Your Own? How is it that You wish to be united with creatures who are so imperfect and that we are so reluctant to be united with You, Who are our unique and supreme Good? I know, Gentlemen, that it is customary to use as an excuse our feeling of unworthiness to approach the Holy of Holies and the respect that we have for such a high Majesty. But this alleged respect, if I am not mistaken, is but a false pretext.

Here is the real reason: Those who do not receive communion, even when they are obliged to under pain of mortal sin, are for the most part libertines with no religion or, at least, those in whom faith has begun to languish and die. They keep away from the holy table for fear, they say, of profaning it because of the sinful habits which they retain. But why do they not release themselves from these sinful habits to avoid at the same time a sacrilege and a disobedience, to demonstrate

their respect for the Church of which they are members, as well as for the Savior Who is their Leader? What respect is this, my amiable Redeemer, that chooses to be deprived of the holy mysteries rather than renounce sin in order to approach You with purity! O wretched impure man, you prefer the body of a prostitute to the Body of your good Master, and you dare say that you have respect for that holy Body! Admit that you have a horrible attachment to your infamous pleasures and that your love of sin has reached a state of fury..

There are others who communicate less infrequently with the spirit of truth but who forbid themselves to do so every week, every fortnight, though they are not, thank God, bound by any mortal sin; these, I say, can invoke the pretext with a little more likelihood, but not with more truth. Humility is virtue. But, since all virtues are so interrelated that they cannot be separated, whoever turns away from the altar through a genuine feeling of humility would, by the very consideration of his own indignity, infallibly have all the virtues which render us worthy to approach the altar daily. But what is it that keeps this category of people in a state of such great indifference to this sacrament of love? It is not precisely that they believe themselves unworthy to partake of it; It is that they fear doing that which might render them worthy of it; or it might even be that they fear becoming worthy of it while partaking of it more frequently. Let me explain.

They believe that, if they multiply their confessions and communions, it would be necessary to moderate their pleasures, place limits on their luxuries, greatly restrict their dealings with the world; that the frequent practice of the sacraments would of necessity demand this reform, would cause it to happen unconsciously, almost despite themselves. They foresee the battles they would have to wage against God, the reproaches they would have to endure from their conscience, if they attempted to reconcile a lukewarm and worldly life with such frequent communions; they are convinced that the presence of Jesus Christ marks the soul which receives Him with an interior respect which moderates, at least for a time, vain joys and which prevents one from surrendering himself completely to his customary pleasures. Moreover, we are aware that Jesus never enters a heart to remain idle; that He never fails to invite it to renounce vanity, even to renounce itself if possible; that He urges this and solicits it with each visit that He makes. All of this frightens a cowardly soul which has attached itself to creatures; it prefers to deprive itself of its right to the bread of angels rather than to commit itself, by receiving it, to live a more Christian life. What convinces me that I am not wrong in this judgment is that, in actual fact, we have found that humility has never turned from this holy practice those persons who are truly mortified and cured of self-pride. It results in their taking extraordinary care to purify themselves and prepare their hearts; it leads them, notwithstanding all their preparations, all their care, to approach the holy table

with great embarrassment and all penetrated with fear; but they go, nevertheless, with a saintly confidence, because they feel within themselves a sincere willingness to please God and a veritable horror of the same faults that constitute their fear and embarrassment.

If, however, a truly humble person was about to withdraw from frequent communion, frightened by this terrible sentence, "He who eats and drinks unworthily eats and drinks his condemnation," I beseech him in the name of the Lord not to take for himself what does not apply to him: Quid habes, Esther? Ego sum frater tuus: poli metuefe; non morieris; non enim pro te, sed pro omnibus haec lex constituta est (What is the matter, Esther? I am your brother: do not fear, you will not die; for it is not for you but for everybody else that this law has been formulated). What do you fear? said King Assuerus to Queen Esther, when he saw her prostrate at the foot of his throne. I am your king, but I am also your husband and your brother. No, you shall not die, on that I give you my word; it is a capital crime to come in here without being called, but it is not for people such as you that this law was made.

O Christian soul! holy soul! Jesus Christ today speaks to you in the same way from this altar: Quid habes? Ego sum frater tuus (What is the matter? I am your brother)! What do you fear from your brother and your spouse? Why do you dread a majesty that I have chosen to veil here for the

sole purpose of providing you with full liberty to come to me? I have said that to communicate unworthily is to incur the guilt of death; but it was not my intention to include you in that warning. Even though you are not worthy of receiving Me, it is not unworthy of Me to be received by you. You do not deserve it, if one takes note of your faults, but be assured that the wish you have to become less imperfect is as acceptable to Me as a very high merit. Dispel, then, that vain fear which opposes My most ardent desires; since I have invited you to approach, you should rather fear to displease Me by your refusal and to offend Me by an excessive respect: Noli metuere; non morieris (Do not fear; you will not die). Once again, have no fear of One Who loves you with such passion. How could I bring Myself to let you die, I Who, besides having no life outside of you, have no life except for you?

I have shown you, Gentlemen, how Jesus Christ, in the holy Sacrament, lives only in the Christian soul, by the desire He has to be united with it. Now let us say a few words about the second part, and let us show that He lives only for that loved one, by the complete sacrifice which He makes of His life and His glory.

SECOND POINT

It is quite difficult to decide whether the Son of God showed greater love for men when He took on a human life

in Mary's womb, or when He lost that same life on the Cross. But it is very evident that in the Sacrament of the altar He does for us more than He did either at His conception or His death, since, by this sacrament, He receives both life and death at the same time, and He is both produced and sacrificed for our love. Yes, Gentlemen, Jesus Christ lives on our altars, since He Himself is the priest of the sacrifice that is offered; and He dies there, since He is also the victim of the sacrifice. If the Eucharist is an extension of the Incarnation, as St. John Chrysostom has said, then, in a sense, it is true that God becomes man in this mystery; and, if it is an effective symbol of the Passion, as faith teaches us, there can be no doubt for us that He is here crucified again. The words of the priest produce a second birth, by giving Him the form of bread and wine; they produce a second death, by separating His body from His blood. In a word, He is alive in the Eucharist, since He exists there as He exists in heaven, that is, He is immortal and glorious; and He is dead in the Eucharist, since He is deprived of feeling and is, in a sense, buried in the species; and, finally, since it can be said that He is eaten by worms, when the Eucharist becomes our food.

But, for whom does He desire to live and die once again in this sacrament? It cannot be claimed that it is for Himself that He lives and dies in the sacrament, for in it He makes no use of His life and He derives no advantage from His death. When He was on earth, He was not without enjoying

some pleasure from the sight of heaven and earth, from the company of His good Mother and His friends, and especially from the admirable motions of His mind and heart, which were incessantly occupied, the one in knowing God and the other in loving Him in a perfect manner. But, in His Eucharistic life, He is not susceptible to pleasure, because the indivisible space in which His whole body is concentrated renders Him incapable of any function; it is as if He were, as regards Himself, effectively dead; He has only that amount of life which He needs in order to die continually for our love.

The death He endured on the Cross was the price of our Redemption, but it was also the source of all His glory. It was necessary for Him to die to establish the universal empire that was destined for Him and which was to be the reward of His humiliations. But, since, upon His arrival in heaven, He possesses a grandeur that is complete and incapable of growth, He can derive no fruits from His sacramental death other than the joy of immolating Himself completely for the object of His love.

On further thought, I admit that it was strange for God to take on the form of a human body. But, besides the fact that there is nothing more beautiful in visible nature, the Body of Jesus was, among all others, beautiful and perfect: Speciosus forma prae filiis hominum (The most beautiful body among all the sons of men). This was an artifice that He consented to use in order to be loved

by men, who respond only to physical beauty. If He was disfigured in His Passion, His wounds and bruises evoked the compassion of His judges and caused them to admire His patience. Consequently, it can be said that although in those mysteries He sought our advantage, He also found in them advantages for Himself. But here He does nothing to further His own interests; the state to which He is reduced can attract for Him neither veneration nor love; the appearances of bread and wine can evoke only scorn and disbelief.

Add to what I have just said that the most painful and humiliating among the Savior's other mysteries have been accompanied by such glorious circumstances, by miracles and wonders of such splendor that it is easy to see that, while caring for our interests, He never completely neglected His Own glory. But how can we explain that, while renewing each day on our altars the mysteries of His birth and death, He does not reproduce the marvels which accompanied each of them? How does one explain that, having once placed Himself in such a humiliating state, He does nothing to offset its lowliness, if it is not because His love occupies Him completely and makes Him forget all else.

I am mistaken, Gentlemen, there have never been any greater miracles than those which are performed each day on this altar. The bread and wine are here annihilated on the word of the priest; the same body is present simultaneously on earth and in heaven; the flesh is endowed with the privileges of the spirits, since it is invisible and occupies no space;

the accidents are separated from the substance; Jesus Christ withdraws, and by the corruption of the species a matter is created from nothing to replace the one which was destroyed by the consecration. These are indeed great miracles. To create, annihilate, multiply, and spiritualize bodies--these are acts that surpass by far the closing of wounds or even the opening of tombs. But to demonstrate that all of this is done strictly for us, He does it all quietly, with no external display. All of this comes to pass in such a way that the glory of the Savior is not enhanced by it before men, nor is our faith even strengthened by this miracle. It is enough for this perfect lover that these great things are of profit to His beloved, even if they remain unknown to her.

Thus, it is true that Jesus Christ lives only for us in this sacrament, since by means of it He even dies for us and He dies only for us. He goes further: He becomes useful to us even after His death, by giving us His Body to eat. I said at the outset of this discourse that the Savior gave Himself to us in the form of food in order to be more perfectly united with us. I now add that it is His purpose to be entirely consumed for love of us. Death does not so fully destroy man that it leaves nothing which could serve either as fuel for fire, or food for worms and carnivorous animals. Thus, Jesus would not have been satisfied that the sacrifice of Himself were perfect in the Eucharist if, after being subjected to death, He had not also given Himself to be eaten. We are justified in speaking of mother-love as the strongest and most tender to be

found in nature; God Himself even chose it as a picture of the love He has for us. But how weak this love is, how imperfect, when compared with that which Jesus Christ displays in the Eucharist! There have been cases of women who, rather than die of starvation, have eaten their own children after cruelly slaughtering them. Behold to what extremes we can be driven by our love for life, for this short, miserable life! But we have never seen any who, to save their children's lives, have given them their own flesh to eat.

There is none but You, lovable Savior, Who could have pushed love to this excess in order to be completely consumed for Your creatures! You have wished to be all things to us, our God, our king, our master, our brother, our treasure, our bail, our victim--and finally, our bread and our drink, to convince us beyond a doubt that You were our lover. O Jesus, the perfect and most passionate of all lovers! O love, divine love, unsurpassed love, ineffable love, unintelligible love! Forgive us, my adorable Redeemer, if we are sometimes hesitant to believe in the mystery of the Eucharist. It is not for lack of submission that we find it difficult to accept this belief; our lack of faith is an almost direct consequence of Your utmost goodness. On Your word, we believed in the mystery of the Trinity, however impenetrable it was for our reason; we believed it, I say, because in it we found nothing incompatible with Your greatness, nothing which did not make You even more worthy of veneration. But here, Lord, we fear to attribute to You that which is unworthy. What! a God displaying tenderness, pleasure, even eagerness in regard to man!

A God desiring to be united with me and desiring it to the point of annihilating Himself daily, of immolating Himself daily, of agreeing to be my food daily! My God, however infallible, however explicit Your words, and despite the miracles which have lent them authority in all ages, we cannot help being surprised, terrified, troubled, and confused in the face of such astonishing truths.

But, however unbelievable may appear the love which the Son of God displays for us in this sacrament, there is something which is even more amazing: it is the ingratitude with which we repay so great a love. It is surprising that God would desire to love a man, but it is strange that a man would be unable to love God, and that no motive, no kindness, no extraordinary love is able to inspire in us a vestige of gratitude. God might still have some reason to love men: they are His work and His likeness; in them He loves His Own gifts; He loves Himself by loving them. But can there possibly be a reason for our failing to love God? Speak, ungrateful man, unfeeling man. Is there anything in Him to repel you? Perhaps He has not yet done enough to merit our love? Alas! He has done more than we could dare to wish for, more than we can believe, and in a sense, more than was to be expected from His divine Majesty; and we continue to deliberate about whether we will respond to these remarkable advances or whether we will continue to spurn them. A miracle, exclaimed William of Paris, but a diabolical miracle! Man is surrounded, man is overwhelmed by divine gifts; each day God kindles new fires around our hearts

to warm them; but these hearts remain cold amid such an ardent fire! Homo, tot congestis carbonibus, miraculo diabolico friget ad Deum (After so many heaped-up fires, man, by a diabolical miracle, is cold to God)!

What will you do, Lord, to conquer this extreme hardness of heart? You have exhausted Yourself in this mystery of love; You have gone, say the Fathers, to the very extent of Your powers. If the sacred contacts with Your Body have been unable to destroy this infernal spell, we cannot expect that any other remedy will have more power. I can see only one resource in such great evil: You must, O my God, You must give us a new heart, a tender heart, a sensitive heart, a heart which is not made of marble or bronze, You must give us Your Own heart. Come, O lovable heart of Jesus, come to my breast and kindle there a love that fulfills, if this is possible, the obligations I have to love God. Love Jesus in me as much as You have loved me in Him; grant that I may not live except in Him, that I may not live except for Him, so that I may live with Him eternally in heaven. Amen.

SERMON XXI

SECOND SERMON ON THE HOLY EUCHARIST

Probet autem se ipsum homo;
et sic de pane illo edat,
et de calice bibat.

Let man prove himself, and
thus let him eat of this
bread and drink from this
chalice.

(Cor. 1:11)

The Eucharist is a sacrament of faith and love; it must be approached with faith and love; the little care we take in preparing ourselves for it proves that we approach it without faith; the little fruit we derive from it proves that we have approached it without love.

It is with great justification that St. Augustine admires the goodness of God in the precept He gave us to love Him. It would already have been great, O my God, says this saint, for You to permit us to raise our hearts to You. But what fullness of mercy is there in Your desire to force us to love You, as if You had something to gain from making us happy, even in this life! It seems to me, Christian Listeners, that during this season,¹ Holy Church gives us a proof of her

¹ Paschal season, 1677 or 1678.

affection which is very much in keeping with that infinite goodness of our God. She is not content simply to present us with that adorable Body of Jesus Christ; she commands us to receive it, as if it were to her advantage, and not ours, that this perfect nourishment be given us. She would have reason to exclude us from her table as impure persons, but, instead, she forbids us to abstain from it, even out of respect. She is a good mother who, having noticed in some of her children a distaste for food which might eventually bring on their death, exerts all her power to make them eat. In this regard, she is guided solely by our needs and her own tenderness; and just as our passions blind us and prevent us from seeing our need of this blessed food, it would seem that she too is blinded by her zeal which hides from her the imperfections which make us unworthy of such nourishment. I do not believe that there is, in this assembly, anyone so wretched that he would disobey her on this occasion.

Here is where you see that love plays a much greater part than authority, since this is a commandment which, far from imposing on us an unbearable burden, contains, on the contrary, a most significant benefit. No, Gentlemen, I have no doubt that all who are here present are firmly resolved to receive communion on these feast days. But alas! how much cause there is to fear that all are not properly disposed to do so fruitfully! I dare say that these holy

dispositions are to be found in very few Christians; and if you allow me to present my reasons for making this judgment, I believe you will see that it is only too well founded.

Perhaps the care I shall take to point out the defects which must be avoided in this action--perhaps, I say--this care will not be in vain, especially if the spirit of God, Who must prepare your hearts to receive the Body of Jesus, will deign to prepare your minds for the reception of His message. Let us ask Him for this grace through the mediation of Mary. Ave Maria.

Gentlemen, the Eucharist is a sacrament of faith and love. It is a sacrament of faith, since it can be said that it contains all the mysteries which most engage our belief; it is a sacrament of love, since it renews for our benefit all the greatest things ever done by God to make Himself loved by men. It is a mystery of faith, since it not only transcends our senses, but even contradicts them; it is a mystery of love, since it is the legacy of Jesus Christ, and He has given it to His children as an assured pledge of His paternal tenderness. Finally, it is a mystery of faith, since the Church, especially in the early centuries, made of it a secret to be revealed only to the true Christians; and it is a mystery of love, since, even today, the Church reserves participation in it solely to the friends of God, to those

who are already united with Him.

Thus, having assumed that the holy Sacrament of the altar is a sacrament of faith and love, it is easy to conclude that faith and love are the two essential dispositions that one must have to receive it. Faith, to excite in us that respect and supernatural hunger without which the bread of angels is useless to us; love, to purge our souls of their crimes which are like evil humours that could even render this bread harmful to us. Therefore, if I can demonstrate that most Christians approach the holy table without faith, that they approach it without love, I will have proved that they approach it without the proper dispositions. But on what evidence can two propositions of this nature be founded? I admit, Gentlemen, that it is not easy to give absolute proof in this matter, but I shall base my arguments on two suppositions which are, in my opinion, so strong and so convincing, that no reasonable mind can resist them. I say, then, that there are few people who receive communion with the faith and love which this sacrament demands because I see that few people prepare themselves for communion, and few people derive any profit from it; I have cause to believe that many are lacking in faith since they scarcely accord one moment of thought to this sacrament before receiving it--this will be my first point. That they are lacking in charity, since one moment after receiving it, they no longer think of it--this is the second point. Yes, Christian Company, the little care we take to prepare ourselves indicates that we approach it without faith;

and the little fruit we derive from it indicates that we have approached it without charity.

FIRST POINT

I do not know, Gentlemen, if you have ever reflected on what happened in the Church in regard to the Immaculate Conception of Mary. A few doctors, though very learned men and professed servants of our good Mistress, having believed, on I know not what grounds, that she shared in the sin of the first man, taught this doctrine and upheld it for some time as a matter which seemed to them quite probable. But what a tumult this opinion produced among the faithful! Was there one among them who did not consider it bold and audacious, not to say scandalous? Was there a single part of the world which did not rise up in protest against this dogma? Was there a doctor, an academy, a city, a kingdom which did not arm itself to combat it? How many books, how many decrees, how many pronouncements, how many edicts/^{were there} to wipe out its memory? How many solemn vows? How many public festivals, how many altars, monuments, magnificent churches dedicated to the Immaculate Virgin to combat the base suspicion formed by a small number of persons against her Conception? What! they said, Mary, the Ark of the New Covenant, the sanctuary of the Word Incarnate, the mother of God, tainted by original sin!

Jesus, the Holy of Holies, holiness itself, would have resided in the womb of a sinful woman, a slave of the devil! This proposition was considered so contradictory, so absurd, and so indecent that it has always been rejected as false, as having not a shadow of truth, and as containing within itself something repellent to the faithful.

These sentiments are without doubt worthy of high praise; but from them, I think, we can draw conclusions that speak strongly against our faith in regard to the sacrament of the Eucharist. For how can we reconcile this great outburst, this great zeal of the faithful with the negligence with which these same faithful purify their souls before receiving communion? Indeed! this Christian would judge Mary unworthy of carrying in her womb the Eternal Word if she had shared in the sin of Adam, and this same Christian is not appalled to have Him enter into his own breast after having soiled himself by a thousand crimes! He is alarmed; he is indignant; along with the whole Church, he believes that an outrage has been committed against God's holiness if it be said that He entered a body whose soul had for one brief moment been sullied by an involuntary sin, regardless of the space of time or the number of years that have elapsed, regardless of the care taken to beautify this soul, to fill it even to overflowing with grace and virtue. And I see this Christian, who has spent all of Lent in mortal sin, on the day

following a fresh fall from grace, as he leaves the confessional where he has just vomited into the priest's ear all that is most foul and shameful; I see this Christian approach the holy table to receive the sacred host in the same mouth which has just spewed forth such foulness and then pass it on to a stomach which has yet to digest the forbidden meats with which he may have gorged himself the preceding day! In truth, can this be the God of greatness and purity Whom we have always held in such high esteem! Fifteen years of holiness, and holiness of the highest order, would not be sufficient to expiate Mary's heart for a single moment of infection. This sentiment is a universal one, and to assert the contrary is to expose oneself to the anathema of the whole Christian world. And this man, or this woman feels properly disposed to receive so great a Guest one moment after casting off mortal sin, a state which horrified the sinner himself?

Who could fail to see how far from that purity we would consider ourselves to be if we were truly convinced that communion is a second incarnation of the eternal Word, as it was called by St. John Chrysostom, and that the One we eat is the same One Who could be conceived only by a virgin mother, and a virgin who was immaculate; if we did believe this, I do not know whether anyone would ever dare approach the holy table. But at the very least, far from waiting until the very day of our communion, we would find Lent all too short a time in which to prepare for this action. How exact we would be

in observing the ecclesiastical fast! Would there be a single man who, in anticipation of his Paschal communion, would design to touch any illicit meat with the same tongue which was to be consecrated by the touch of the body of the Savior? But, rather, by how many acts of self-denial and how many good works would we not attempt to blot out the last traces of past sins? When would we feel we had given sufficient alms, shed enough tears, or drawn enough blood from our veins to attain the purity that this mystery requires? Would we believe that in the space of a moment we could adequately prepare for the Savior a soul which for so long had been the home of Lucifer?

Certainly this has never been the opinion of the Church, nor that of the Holy Fathers. For many centuries a custom was observed whereby the deacon, before giving communion, turned to the people and said aloud: Sancta Sanctis (Holy things are for holy people). My brothers, holy things should be reserved for holy people. This word, says St. John Chrysostom, is like an invisible hand pushing certain people away from the holy table and drawing others closer to it. It is as if he were saying: If someone among you is not holy, let him withdraw. Notice, continues this Father, that he does not simply say, "If someone is not free from crime," but, "if he is not holy." For holiness, in addition to avoiding sins, demands the fullness of grace and a great many good works; it is not enough, he says, not to be covered with mud; I want to

see in you a whiteness and a sparkling beauty.

St. Ambrose, in the fourth chapter of the fifth book of A Treatise on the Sacraments, while explaining the phrase from the Lord's Prayer "our daily bread," says that the life of a Christian should be one continual preparation for communion; that even if he were to receive communion only once a year, he should nevertheless spend each day as if, on that day, he were to receive it, and that he would not be worthy to receive it at the end of the year if all through the year he had not lived in such a way as to be worthy to do so each day: Sic vive, ut quotidie merearis accipere; qui non meretur quotidie accipere, non meretur post annum accipere (He so lives as to be worthy to receive daily; he who is not worthy to receive daily is not worthy to receive after a year).

You know, in the past, how many days, or even years, of penance and preparation were required of a public sinner before he was allowed to participate in the holy mysteries. Tertullian was shocked, though falsely, by the fact that the Sovereign Pontiff did not proscribe the usage of communion for all times to simple fornicators, feeling that no satisfaction, regardless of its nature or duration, could ever render them pure enough to return to this Sacrament. No one who is truly convinced of the real presence of the Body of the Savior in the sacrament of the Eucharist can be astonished by these sentiments. He is astonished, on the contrary, that

some persons, having lived in sin for an entire year, would dare to approach the altar without having reserved a single day to prepare themselves, without bringing to it any preparation other than a confession that is mandatory, a confession that is cold, a confession that often becomes matter for a future confession, a confession that could bring damnation to both the penitent and the confessor.

Is it not true, Gentlemen, that if Jesus were to enter your home in a visible manner, if He came to share a meal, or simply to honor you with a visit, is it not true that you would be in despair if you had only been given one moment's notice? Would you be quite comfortable if, in your home, He were to meet the person who had been for you the cause of so many sins, if He were to see there that obscene painting, that scandalous statue, if he were to find all the instruments of your vanity spread out on your dresser, those books from which you have so often drunk the poison of impurity still open on your table? Would you wish to have Him surprise you as you were eating meat during this holy time and have His eyes fall upon the remains of a Huguenot meal? Would you not be mortally displeased to have to receive Him in an attire that was far from modest, in rooms filled with luxury, all adorned with the goods of the poor, rooms in which there was no crucifix, no holy picture, no holy water, or other signs of Christianity? Is it not true that you would sorely wish to have a few days in which to remove all that could offend the

sight of this holy Guest and to place there all those objects capable of pleasing Him and of calling down upon you the praises of His mouth?

Then why is it, Christian Listeners, that, knowing that you are to receive Him during these feast days, you take so little time and so little care to purify and to embellish your hearts where you have resolved to have Him lodge? How is it that you do not take at least a few days to dismiss from your mind that person who continues to rule it and who will not be banished on Easter Sunday by your small effort to form an act of contrition? Would it not be just and proper to erase, by reading the Holy Books and by meditating on our mysteries, those impure images which continue to fill your imagination; to mortify, to some degree at least, that body which can rightly be called a body of sin: Corpus peccati (A body of sin); to free it by fasting from that weight which is totally made up of the fat of meats forbidden by God's law? Is a period of one or two weeks too long a time to make restitution for money stolen, to make amends for that slander, to be reconciled with your brothers, to control your excesses, and to draw up your plan for a completely new life? I would like you to be firmly resolved to satisfy all these obligations without delay, so that your heart will not remain soiled by them: at least, Jesus Christ will find the lodging without ornament, without furnishings to please His eyes, without one virtue, one good habit, one holy affection, one supernatural desire, or even

a vestige of humility, mortification, or Christian charity.

Reflect a moment, Christian Listeners, on how you would spend the Holy Week if you were certain of dying eight days from now. How generous you would be in your almsgiving and your acts of mortification to prepare yourself for a passage of such consequence! I say you would do all these things if you really believed that the same God Who will be your judge at the moment of death will visit you on Easter Sunday. Thus, I reduce to faith alone all the pious practices ever proposed as preparation for this most holy action.

Do not complain, said St. Augustine in his comments on the first Epistle of St. John, do not complain that you have been too heavily burdened with precepts; you have been given only this one: Love, and then do as you please; you are left on your own. Breve praeceptum tibi praecipitur: Dilige et fac quod vis (A brief precept is being taught to you: Love and do as you please). I say the same thing, Gentlemen, if you ask me how you can prepare yourselves well to receive your Master. I will not burden you with a great number of methods. I have but one word to tell you: Believe; and, then, consult no one but yourself; be guided only by the lights of your own faith; I am certain that you will not be remiss in any of your obligations: Crede et fac quod vis (Believe and do what you wish). Believe that this is the Son of Mary Who is enveloped in these visible species just as He was in His tiny robes in the manger. Believe that this most

lovable Child, so often kissed and fondled by the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, ^{that} this man, so gentle and so charming, whose conversation so enthralled the woman from Samaria, whose presence inspired so much love and produced such ecstatic joy in Magdalene, whose power was so often felt by demons, by illness, and by death; believe, I say, that He is the one Who, transported by His love, comes to visit you, to console you in your troubles, to strengthen you against the perils of life, to caress you, and to transform you into Himself, so that you might become one with Him. Crede; truly believe all of these things; et fac quod vis, and do all that this belief impels you to do. Believe that the Creator of heaven and earth, the God Who is adored throughout the universe, before Whom so many prelates, so many kings, and so many nations bow down, before Whom a multitude of angels tremble with respect, and Whose beauty inflames and dazzles the Seraphim--that this God, I say, leaves His altars, His throne, and all His glory, to ^{to} come/reside in your heart, for the purpose of filling it with His graces and His most exquisite delights. Crede. Believe it, for indeed it is the truth; et fac quod vis, and I have nothing more to tell you. Your careful attention will go beyond all our instructions, and you will no longer be in control of your desires. Finally, believe that Jesus Christ, Who will judge the world; Who, in a few days perhaps, will judge you in particular and will pronounce the verdict which will decide your fate for all eternity; that this most terrible judge will place Himself into

your hands and, in a manner of speaking, at your disposal, offer you His favor, His friendship, give Himself to you as an unfailing pledge of the Paradise He has in store for you. Crede: Believe this as you should believe it, and then do whatever you please. I am wrong; if you are really convinced of this truth, if your faith is vital and sincere, be cautious in following all the fervent impulses that this faith will inspire in you; it could drive you to terrible extremes. Let yourself be ruled by the advice of a virtuous and enlightened director; you will need all of his lights, all of his authority to keep yourself within the bounds of discretion and Christian prudence.

Think of those pilgrims whose wish to see the grotto of Bethlehem and the mountain on which Jesus was crucified places them in such great peril; no sermon is needed to convince them to visit these holy places. Their belief that Jesus Christ honored these places by His presence replaces all the sermons that could be given on this subject. It is this faith which impels them to dispose themselves properly before embarking on such a holy pilgrimage; they do not delay their confession until they reach the gates of Jerusalem or the foot of Mount Calvary; they travel in penitential garb and strive to sanctify their journey by the constant practice of good works. But how impatient they are all during this very long journey! What joy is theirs as from afar they perceive the first outline of the Holy Land! Do they wait to be on the

Thabor or in the Garden of Olives before beginning to pray? As soon as they catch sight of these holy stations, they fall to their knees and adore them; they dismiss their carriages; some even remove their shoes; and all begin to sing various hymns in honor of Jesus Christ. When they finally arrive, there is no need for anyone to remind them to approach with reverence, or to propose thoughts to stimulate their devotion; the mere sight of this holy place is enough for them; they can be seen as, with a strong repentance, they prostrate themselves on the ground and, dissolving into tears, kiss over and over again the adorable traces left by the Savior of the world on this beloved land. What would be their feelings if Jesus Christ Himself were still present in Palestine, and in place of these rocks, which He covered with His blood and His tears, if it were Jesus Himself that one could see crying in the stable, praying at Gethsemane, and expiring on Calvary! But how wretched and unfaithful we are! It is this same Jesus Whom we shall receive during this holy time, and we would have no realization of our good fortune; we would do nothing to make ourselves a little less unworthy of Him! We would see these days approach without eagerness. Scarcely will we deign to give this action a thought on the very day of our communion! What proof could be more convincing to show that we receive communion with little faith! We think of it only at the very last moment. And if you desire a proof of the lack of charity which we bring to this action, it is the fact that

one moment afterwards we no longer think about it. This is the second part.

SECOND POINT

It is not only St. Madeleine Panzi who believed that a single communion was able to bring a soul to the very highest virtue. It can be said that this opinion is shared by all theologians, and especially by the great St. Denis, who says that the proper object of the Eucharist is to affix the seal on our sanctification, to complete what the other sacraments have begun; that it was instituted not only to communicate sanctity, but to communicate the full measure of sanctity. This opinion should not surprise you, Christian Listeners. For, if it is true that all the merits of the Savior are applied to us by this mystery; if it is true that it contains every grace and that, in this sacrament, the very Author of grace unites Himself with our souls in a union so perfect that it excludes any kind of division, an assurance given us by St Thomas, Datur ad omnimodam unionem (It is given for a perfect union), then, should we be astonished that this sacrament can elevate us to the highest pinnacle of purity and Christian holiness?

What should astonish us is that this transformation does not take place effectively, and that after hundreds of communions, most of us are still not only as imperfect but even

more imperfect, even more fault-ridden than those who have never made use of this divine food. It is no great source of surprise to us that a single spark can sometimes ignite a great blaze which ravages and consumes entire cities. But to know that young men in the midst of a furnace, such as that of Babylon, remain untouched by the heat--this is a marvel that goes beyond our power of praise. It is clearly the work of some mysterious and powerful cause which repressed the ardor of these flames; and, in a manner of speaking, split them in order to deprive them of their sting.

Are you well aware of the effect produced in the world by the Passion of our Holy Redeemer? This Passion enlightened the world, freed it from the tyranny of the demons, banished from the earth all vices, and caused all kinds of virtues to grow there; finally, it changed the face of the earth, and all the powers in hell and on earth have been powerless to oppose the virtue which brought about this change. But, Gentlemen, the same effect that was produced in the world by the Passion of Jesus Christ should also be produced by the Holy Sacrament in man, according to St. Thomas: Effectum quem Passio Christi fecit in mundo, hoc sacramentum facit in homine (The effect which the Passion of Christ produced in the world, this sacrament produces in man). Nevertheless, we see people return from the holy table with the same passions, the same vices, the same weaknesses. Am I not justified in concluding that some obstacle, stronger than any which creatures or hell itself could oppose, has rendered their communion powerless?

But what can this obstacle be which is stronger than hell if not sin which produced hell, and for which hell was created? You say you went to confession before your communion; but, after communion, you fell back into your sin with the same ease, the same coldness, and the same frequency as in the past. If you brought to the priest a truly contrite heart and a firm resolution of amendment; if you revealed all and all has been forgiven; in a word, if you received communion in the state of grace, what can be the cause of these relapses into sin? My Brothers, once said St. Bernard, who was preaching to his monks, if any among you has felt that the stirrings of anger, of envy, and of incontinence are neither as strong or as frequent as in the past, let him give thanks to the Body of the Lord; it is because the virtue of the Sacrament is operating within him: Gratias agat corpori et sanguini Domini, quoniam virtus Sacramenti operatur in eo (Let him give thanks for the body and blood of Christ because the virtue of the Sacrament operates in him). But if, in some of us, these passions are always as strong and violent as before, is it not very evident that the virtue of the Sacrament has not yet operated within us? But what is it that can prevent this infinite virtue from operating if not sin which, in some way, is itself infinite in its malice? Tell me, O impure man, why it is that after communion, when you have just left the holy table, you are already assailed by the same thoughts, attacked by the same temptations, burdened with the same crimes against which you have just been

given an infallible safeguard?

For, in effect, all the Doctors are in agreement that the Eucharist fortifies the soul and preserves it from mortal sin, and that this effect is as proper to the Eucharist as it is proper to meat to give nourishment. Will you say that the fires of concupiscence burn strangely within you? And this, even after communion? What do the Holy Fathers mean when they assure us that this sacrament has no less power to moderate the ardors of concupiscence than water has power to cool and refresh? This is the comparison used by Albert the Great: Sicut aqua refrigerat, ita istud sacramentum ardorem concupiscentiae mitigat (Just as water refreshes, likewise the sacrament appeases the flame of concupiscence). For ^{this} reason, says St. Thomas, manna, which was the symbol of the Eucharist, fell in the form of dew. St. Cyprian, St. Ambrose, St. Lawrence, the Patriarch of Venice, the two Saints Cyril, and St. Bernard all say the same thing. Are you well aware that, by participating in the holy mysteries, our flesh is changed into the flesh of Jesus Christ, that is, into the flesh that is the most pure, the most chaste, the most submissive to the Spirit which has ever existed on earth: This is the teaching of St. Gregory Nyssa, St. Augustine, and St. Leon. Also, St. Chrysostom assures us that this change is not simply a moral change such as that produced by love, but that it is, in a sense, a true change: Ut non solum per dilectionem, sed re ipsa in illam carnem convertamur, per hunc cibum efficitur (It happens that we are changed by this food, not

only through love, but also in fact into that flesh). How, then, do you account for that cruel tyranny which your flesh continues to exercise over your reason? Perhaps you will place the blame on the devil who is bent on your destruction and whose attacks against you are as strong as ever. But this excuse is precisely what I fail to understand, for all are agreed that the devil loses his power over a Christian who has armed himself with the sacred host. This host acts as a shield, said St. Ignatius the Martyr, which repels all the arrows of our adversary. He is horrified at the mere sight of lips made red by the blood of the Savior: Terretur adversarius, cum christiani labra videt Christi cruore rubentia (The adversary is terrified when he sees a Christian's lips red with the blood of Christ). These are the words of St. Peter Damian.

That the coat of Elias met resistance in the waters of the Jordan, that Eliseus' staff failed to resurrect the child of the Sunamite woman, these incidents should not astonish us. Even if Eliseus himself had failed to restore life to this young man by covering the corpse with his own body, I would find nothing strange in this. But that Jesus Christ enters into a man's body, that He nourishes this man with His flesh, that He gives him His blood to drink, that He performs almost as many miracles in one moment as He performed in His whole lifetime; and that His purpose in performing them is to cure him, to make him stronger, purer, more sober, more patient, and that all of this should be in vain--I admit,

Gentlemen, that this situation astonishes me, and except for the presence of some invincible and fundamental obstacle, I am at a loss to understand the cause.

How stunned and perplexed the Apostles would have been if Lazarus had remained motionless after the order given him by Jesus Christ to leave the sepulchre, if the devils had refused to depart from the bodies when they were ordered by Him to do so, if some leper had remained covered with leprosy after being touched by His all-powerful hand! And as for myself, Gentlemen, I admit that I would be even more stunned to see a man remain as weak, as imperfect after communion as he was before, if I did not know that mortal sin can render this sacrament completely ineffective. What! the shadow of St. Peter could, without even a thought from him, cure all sorts of illnesses; and the Body of Jesus Christ, touched, eaten, united with our bodies, would produce nothing for the salvation of our souls, although He gives Himself solely for this purpose, although this kind of spiritual cure is the very object of His mission, the object of His Incarnation and of all the other miracles He ever performed. Unfortunately, this is all too true, and yet, do you not admit that it would be incomprehensible if Scripture itself had not clearly enlightened us on this point? But St. Paul clears up all our doubts by teaching us the reason for such a strange happening: Ideo multi inter vos infirmi, et imbecilles et dormiunt multi (Therefore, many among you are weak and feeble, and many are asleep). Here is the reason, says the great Apostle, why

many of you persist in your lukewarm state and your old weaknesses, why many fall asleep in sin: It is because you receive the Body of the Lord without bringing to it the necessary purity, and with the same dispositions that you would receive a material food. Here, I urge you to notice that he attributes to the same cause both death and small infirmities, that is, those sins which deprive us entirely of God's friendship and those lesser imperfections which only cool God's friendship in our regard.

In fact, it is no less strange to say that holy communion is powerless to heal our minor illnesses than to say it lacks the power to restore life to the soul of those who have been so unfortunate as to lose it. On the contrary, in my opinion, it would seem to require less virtue to restore a health that is only slightly altered than to raise the dead. Let us reflect a little on this point, Christian Souls. We receive our God every fortnight or every week, and we are always unchanged, always vain, always irate, always negligent in performing good works, always cold in prayer, and always enslaved by our petty passions. St. Chrysostom says that all who do not benefit from the sacraments defame them, inasmuch as this is possible, and rob Jesus Christ of His honor and His reputation. For, what opinion are we to have of the power of the Eucharist when we see this woman return every Sunday from church, where she has received communion, return, I say, just as ill-tempered, just as easily disposed to fits of anger over

trivial matter, as if she had not received the God of peace and kindness? It is only a slight imperfection to which I am subject, someone may say, but how can it be explained that such a small disorder withstands so powerful a remedy? What! This bread of angels, this bread of life, this epitome of the marvels of the Almighty, this fruit of such great suffering and merit--in a word, the adorable Body of Jesus Christ--so frequently touched, so frequently eaten, is unable to stifle in your heart that small jealousy? And thus you remain just as dissipated in your thoughts, just as thoughtless in your speech, just as attached to your possessions, to your small comforts and your trifles as you were before! So many communions have not strengthened you, nor have they caused you to progress in sanctity! What does ^{all} this mean, Gentlemen! What is the horrible indisposition which can nullify so effective an aid?

I do not want to be the cause of scruples nor do I wish to trouble your consciences, but I know not what to tell you; if you receive communion in the state of grace, then I am faced with a strange set of alternatives, for it seems that we must concede that either the blood of Jesus Christ lacks the strength to produce in us the very weakest effects of grace, or that very small obstacles can prevent the effect of a force which, in itself, is infinite. Be careful in this matter: confessions can be made with such

negligence, such little care can be taken to excite true sorrow and to form a firm purpose of amendment that people who would generally be far from committing mortal sins might nevertheless commit sacrileges.

Besides, one who lives a very lukewarm life is in danger of forming a false conscience which dissimulates and condones in himself grievous faults and serious omissions which he fails to confess and which become permanent burdens on his soul. But the very least we can believe of a Christian who derives no benefit from communion is that he is in a state which is very displeasing to God and that, if he is not actually in the state of mortal sin, he is not very far from it. It is certain that he has some strong attachments to creatures, a great scorn for the adorable Sacrament, and performs this action with extreme nonchalance; consequently, he will not fail to call down upon himself the malediction pronounced against those who do God's work with negligence.

This terrible judgment of which St. Paul speaks threatens not only those who approach holy things with soiled flesh and an impure heart, says St. Basil; he who eats of this food and partakes of this drink without deriving any profit eats and drinks his own judgment: Judicium sibi manducat et bibit (He eats and drinks judgment unto himself). And, this holy Father asks, how could God fail to exact an account of an action of such importance from those who make use of it vainly, He Who will punish even useless words?

But if this statement is true, would it not be better to stay away from the holy table? Would it not be particularly right for those who are steeped in bad habits and who have gone to confession repeatedly and received communion many times without ever giving evidence of improvement in their lives; that those, I say, stay away from this formidable Sacrament, since there is a strong possibility of their committing a sacrilege each time that they receive communion? My reply is that this advice might be fitting at some other point in time, but for the present time, there is no other course to take than to become reconciled in good faith with God. Theologians have asked when it is that we are bound under pain of mortal sin by the precept of Penance. St. Bonaventure believed that, from the first moment that we became aware of the bad state of our conscience, we incurred yet another sin simply by delaying to change this state. The other Doctors do not concur with him in this regard; but there is no doubt that this obligation is indispensable at Easter time, since it is a disobedience to the Church if one fails to receive communion during this period, and it is a sacrilege to receive it in the state of mortal sin. But if one who did not feel disposed to amend his life kept away from the holy mysteries through fear of profaning them, would this person be guilty of a crime? This person would commit a mortal sin. It is better then to commit a sacrilege? What a conclusion! It is necessary then that he amend his life

once and for all and renounce all his disorders. This conclusion follows necessarily from my reply. For who can fail to see that it is because of a horrible attachment to sin, and not out of any respect for God, that one would remove himself from ecclesiastical communion. Is there not some middle course to be found between violating the precept and desecrating the Body of Jesus? Is it not possible to avoid both of these evils by a sincere conversion? There are bad Christians who sometimes believe they can resolve the problem by saying that it is better to refrain from communion at Easter time than to receive it unworthily. Perhaps so, but it does not prevent both courses from being unnatural abominations. It is a great crime to receive communion in a sinful state, but I doubt whether it is a lesser crime to neglect to change this state in order to receive communion at Easter; for, besides the contempt he shows for the supreme authority of the Church, the sinner necessarily forms at that time a new determination to persevere in his sin and to persevere in it for a long time--a resolution taken in cold blood with full knowledge and complete deliberation; a resolution formed at the very time when he is being reminded of his duty, when he is urged, entreated, even threatened with excommunication if he fails to do it, at a time when the example of all his brothers invites him to acknowledge his situation. What darker malice, what more diabolical obstinacy than this which makes one choose to disobey his good Mother,

to risk losing his place among her children, to prefer being a source of scandal to the whole world, to deprive himself of the happiness of having Jesus reside in his heart, to deprive himself of all the treasures that would be heaped upon him by this visit, rather than to give up his disorders and become the friend of God!

He sins mortally who, through simple negligence, fails to receive communion at Easter. Would then he who omits communion through an invincible attachment to his filth be guiltless of any violation of the ecclesiastical law? It is as if one were to say that the lord who is detained at court by his laziness when his Prince calls him to battle is guilty of grave disobedience, but that the one who refuses to leave so that he might continue to dishonor the royal bed by his adultery had done nothing that merits reproach.

No, Christian Company, there is no possibility of retreat; the coming feast imposes on you the sweet necessity of amending your life and making your peace with God. This could be your last opportunity to do so. But surely you could not wish for a more favorable one. Ecce Rex tuus venit tibi mansuetus (Lo! your king comes to you merciful). Here is your king who comes before you to invite you to repent and to accept your repentance. He is fully disposed to forget all your failings and to shower you with new blessings: Venit tibi mansuetus (He comes to you merciful). He comes full of mercy, not only for the holy souls who have always been

faithful, but even for you, O sinner. Tibi. For you, I say, who have so often covered Him with outrage, who have so often betrayed Him, so often crucified Him. Now is the time for goodness and mercy; it is the time when He receives the treacherous Judas and his kiss of peace, when He offers paradise to the thief, when He sheds His blood for those who put Him to death: Venit tibi mansuetus. Can mercy of this magnitude leave you untouched? This mercy has melted the heart of His judge, transformed into respect and love the insolence and the rage of His torturers, softened the very rocks and stones. Is it only your heart that it cannot sway? Ecce Rex tuus venit tibi mansuetus.

Let us, Gentlemen, go forth to meet our good Lord, and may these eight days be used by us to prepare a reception for Him. Let us examine ourselves seriously to uncover everything that might displease Him, and at the sight of the pains which our sins have inflicted on Him, at the sight of that Cross to which we have nailed Him, at the sight of that death which was needed to expiate the disorders of our lives, let us conceive so great a sorrow of our sins that we will spare neither almsgiving, nor fasting, nor any form of penance to erase them, to abolish them completely. Ecce Rex tuus venit tibi mansuetus. He comes to us full of kindness; full of love, the most ardent of loves. Let us not go to Him with coldness and indifference; let us try to evoke within ourselves that hunger, those violent desires which

have caused holy souls to languish. He comes to us laden with graces and treasures to enrich us; let us not go to Him with empty hands: on each day of this holy week, let us do some external act worthy of being offered to Him. Today, almsgiving; tomorrow, a spiritual reading, a visit to the hospital, a meditation, some corporal austerity. But, above all, let not a moment pass, if possible, that is not sanctified by some interior act of contrition for our sins, of compassion for the sufferings of Jesus Christ, of strong promises to serve Him better in the future, of desire to receive Him as soon as we can, and in the holiest dispositions possible. It is thus, Gentlemen, that you will prepare yourselves to receive communion in a worthy manner, and, as a result, sanctify yourselves by that communion. Amen.

SERMON XXII

THIRD SERMON ON THE HOLY EUCHARIST

Qui manducat hunc panem
vivet in aeternum.

He who eats this bread
will live eternally.
(John 6:52)

It is possible to practice frequent communion without showing disrespect for the Body of the Savior and without rendering this action ineffective.

Although Christian doctrine contains many truths which test our faith, I believe that, among these truths, there are none more incredible than the mystery of this day and the extreme love which Jesus displays for us in this mystery. If, prior to the Incarnation of the Eternal Word, in those centuries called the Iron Age, when the Lord was known as the God of Armies, the God of vengeance, when He spoke only in peals of thunder and kept His people cowering beneath the yoke of a rigorous law; if, back in those times, the Prophets had been more explicit in predicting what is now unfolding on our altars; if they had said that a God, so great, so majestic, and so terrible would abase Himself to the point of loving us with tenderness--that, in

order to give proofs of this love, He would divest Himself of all majesty and give Himself entirely to each of us; that in order to be more closely united with us, He would become our food and our drink, would actually descend into our stomachs and there establish His home, His throne, His place of great delight, do you think, Gentlemen, that such a prophecy would have found any believers among the Jews?

And if the Prophets had added that instead of welcoming these proofs of an overwhelming love, men would show only aversion for the true bread of angels; that it would be necessary to resort to force and threats to make them approach the holy table once a year; that the God of Israel would not only go unrecognized by the Jews when He appeared in the form of a man, but that He would also be rejected by Christians, though they well knew of His presence beneath the veil of the Sacrament, what surprise these predictions would have produced!

Yet, today, we see that all of this has come to pass. It is true that Jesus gives Himself to us in an ineffable manner, and it is only too true that we pay little heed to His gift. We could receive Him daily, but we put it off until we are commanded to do so by an express order which binds us under pain of grievous sin. We offer as an excuse the claim that our lives are not holy enough to warrant frequent communion, but here is what astonishes me: that by living good lives we have the power to force our God to come down into

our hearts daily and reside truly and bodily within us; and yet, we prefer to deprive ourselves of such a great blessing rather than to prepare ourselves for it by reforming our lives.

It is not my intention here to urge those who are plunged in lives of sin to make frequent use of this awesome sacrament, since they would find there only judgment and condemnation. Neither will I attempt to convince them to reform their lives in order to be worthy of receiving Jesus more often; such a motive would hardly affect those who have so little faith in God and so little love for Him. But I shall direct my appeal to virtuous souls or to those who have already felt a genuine desire to live as Christians should, and I shall urge them, as strongly as I know how, to make their communions as frequent as possible and to turn a deaf ear to all the false reasons which may be used to deter them from this practice. O Jesus, Whom I firmly believe to be enclosed in this tabernacle under the species of bread, if it is true that for You heaven holds no delight greater than that of residing in pure hearts, inspire me with the motives which will induce these hearts to approach You with confidence. I ask this favor in view of the benefits You will derive from it and I appeal to the power of Your holy Mother to obtain it.

Ave Maria.

I believe that no one is unaware of the controversy that has arisen these past years, even within the Church, concerning the frequent use of the Eucharist. Although those who

condemned the practice have rendered their own faith suspect by the books they wrote on this subject, I do not propose at this time either to combat them or to condemn them; I will not try to determine whether it was their intention to banish from the holy table all types of persons, or what possible motives could have prompted such a plan. But since the reasons on which they base their doctrine might persuade all persons to abstain from this mystery of love--even if this result were not their intention--it seems quite right for me to point out that these reasons have no weight in regard to people who are living good lives. And I believe that such a discussion will prove edifying to every group.

The reasons most commonly cited to keep people away from frequent communion can be reduced to these two: the first is the apparent contempt one shows for so awesome a mystery by approaching it with such ease; the second is the risk one runs of actually developing such feelings of contempt and of deriving very little fruit from this mystery as it becomes habitual and overly-familiar. We should receive communion less often in order to show a greater respect for the Body of Jesus Christ, as well as to prepare ourselves properly to receive a greater abundance of grace when fi-

¹ This passage alludes to attacks made by Jansenists against frequent communion. The books referred to in the text are Frequent Communion by Antoine Arnaud (1643), as well as those which were to follow, supporting the same doctrine.

nally we do approach the sacrament. These are, in general, the most plausible arguments raised against frequent communion, and these are precisely the reasons which I say do not hold for people who live good lives. I affirm, to the contrary, that virtuous people should adopt this practice for the very reasons put forth to dissuade them. Not only is it possible to receive communion very often without showing any lack of respect for the Body of the Savior and without turning this into a futile act, but also I propose to show you that the results of repeating this action often are, first, greater glory for God, and, second, greater benefits for man; that the more frequently we receive communion, the more we honor the sacrament, and the more benefit we derive from it; in a word, far from depriving ourselves of this sacrament for motives of respect for God and zeal for our souls, we should approach it frequently for precisely these two motives, each of which will constitute one part of my two-fold discourse.

FIRST POINT

We cannot deny, Christian Listeners, that Jesus Christ, Who instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist and Who is Himself hidden in it, has often invited us to receive it, and that He did so in a very forceful manner. He promised immortality, eternal life, and even a divine life to those who received this sacrament; He uttered threats of death and repro-

bation against those who stayed away from His holy table; it was His wish that all people be called to it, and that even the lazy and the disinterested be summoned to it by force. It is common knowledge that, in order to comply with these wishes, or with the precepts of the Gospel, the early Christians received the Body of the Savior every day, a fact that is recorded in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles; and that very soon afterwards this holy custom became a type of ecclesiastical law, through an order of the Apostles which stated that anyone who entered the church and refused to partake in the holy mystery would be separated from the other members. This order was confirmed by St. Anaclet, the fifth Pope after St. Peter. Thus it was that for a long time those who, by scandalous acts, had become unworthy of receiving communion, or those who, for any reason, did not wish to share in this joy, were forced to leave the church after the reading of the Gospel. All who heard Mass were required to receive the Body of the Savior.

From these facts, I believe we may conclude that God is highly honored by frequent communion; that it is better to approach the holy table often out of love than it is to abstain from it out of humility, lest we imply that the early Christians and the Apostles themselves, who had received the plenitude of the Holy Spirit, had cast aside a means of worship and respect that was superior to the one which they practiced and which they established, superior to the one which, in

all probability, they set up as a precept for the faithful of their time, according to an opinion held by St. Thomas and many other theologians.

Furthermore, those who were most strongly opposed to frequent communion and most ardent in praising the modesty of others who, for long periods of time, stayed away from this mystery, those were the very ones who acknowledged that all the Fathers of the Church without exception had exhorted Christians to receive frequent communion. It is true that all of these Fathers spoke very forcefully against sacrilegious communion, but never against frequent communion; that they often urged us to approach the altar with a deep respect, but never to stay away out of respect; and I would venture to say that it is not possible to cite a single one who advocated this form of humility. We find in the teachings of the Councils, particularly the Councils of Basel and Trent, that the Church has no greater wish than that of knowing that her children hunger for this bread of life and are disposed to receive it each day. All of these authoritative sources teach that the reverence due this adorable sacrament consists entirely in the care with which we purify our souls by true repentance beforehand; but nowhere in these writings is there mention of the kind of veneration which would impel us to excommunicate ourselves, an attitude which some would present to us as highly virtuous.

Is it conceivable that Jesus Christ would have shown us on so many occasions and in so forceful a manner that He

wished to give Himself to us through the Eucharist; is it conceivable that, at the very beginning of the Church, daily

communion would have been introduced and continued as a practice for a very long time; that all the Fathers would have exhorted us to make frequent use of this sacrament; that the Councils would have manifested their great desire to see this practice re-established among the faithful, if there were more virtue, more merit, more honor for God in our keeping away from the holy table than in approaching it; if there were even the slightest irreverence involved in presenting ourselves for communion; if those who go less frequently were indeed the more respectful ones? What kind of virtue is this that was never recommended to us by our good Master, and of which we find no examples in the most beautiful years of Christianity? What kind of virtue is this that the greatest lights of the Church have not yet revealed to us, and that the Church itself has never deigned to teach her children?

Some may agree (for how could they deny it?) that nowhere in Scripture, or in Canon Law, or in the works of the Fathers, or in the history of the Church can there be found traces or any examples of that respect which would keep us from the holy table. We find in these sources only exhortations, strong invitations to draw near it and, if possible, to do so daily. But these invitations, they say, are not addressed to poor sinners like us; they are meant only for

those special souls whom the Gospel likens to eagles and which, it predicts, will assemble wherever the Body of the Savior reposes, according to the interpretation given by the Fathers to the following passage: Ubi erit corpus, ibi congregabuntur et aquilae (Where His Body will be, there will the eagles flock). These invitations are meant only for those holy souls who have purified themselves from the slightest flaws, whose only desires and thoughts are for heaven, who subsist only on the purest love of God. To this, Gentlemen, I reply that if it were a proof of true humility and virtue to abstain from receiving the Savior's Body, the greatest saints would have taken the lead in setting this example for us, just as they did for all other virtues. It is certain that those who attained the highest peaks of holiness are not those who believe themselves to be the most holy; on the contrary, humility becomes progressively deeper as charity becomes more ardent; and, consequently, if only saints could do justice to this celestial feast, it is quite evident that the average person would be excluded from it, and the saints themselves would not have the audacity to present themselves at this table, since they not only consider themselves to be far from holy, but, in most cases, even great sinners.

However, Gentlemen, read the lives of all the great heroes of Christianity and you will find that not only those of the early Church but also all those who have become eminent in these last centuries have praised frequent communion, have

tried to bring it into common usage, have practiced it themselves, and have not felt they were dishonoring the flesh of the Savior by eating it, either daily, as in the case of St. Teresa; or, almost daily, as in the case of St. Catherine of Sienna; or, several times a week, as in the case of St. Elzear and all others without exception. It is very important to note that those who looked most carefully through history in search of support for their doctrine against frequent communion could cite, from among the large number of saints who have lived since Jesus Christ, the example of only three or four who, because of some slight imperfections, had refrained from saying Mass for a single day, or at most, for a few days, never more than once in their lifetime.

But if it were true that frequent communion should be reserved strictly for the purest of souls, how do we explain that in the early Church, all of the faithful were obliged to receive daily communion? I realize that this period was a kind of Golden Age of Christianity; that the blood of Jesus Christ, recently shed on Calvary, and the fire of the Holy Spirit, received by the Apostles in its plenitude, filled the hearts of Christians with a remarkable fervor. But, even so, the number of Christians was growing each day, and in the second century--during the reign of Pope Anaclet, when the practice of daily communion was revived and Christianity had spread throughout the world--in that century, I say, we have no evidence to indicate that there were as many saints as there were Christians. St. Basil and St. Epiphanius, who lived in

the fourth century, declared that, on three or four days of each week, all the people of their dioceses had to receive communion. Are we to believe that the dioceses of these holy prelates comprised only souls that were perfect and filled with the highest virtue? All the founders of religious orders foresaw that their communities would, at best, be composed of both the perfect and the imperfect, the tepid and the fervent, and that there would always be too many who would retain in the cloister the spirit and the inclinations of the world. This foresight did not prevent these founders from establishing frequent communion and from making this practice binding on all who would follow their rule.

And yet, are we to extend the usage of frequent communion even to those who are tepid and evil? No, Gentlemen, this grace is only for those who are virtuous and for those who wish to become so. It is not my intention to prevail upon all persons, without discrimination, to approach regularly the God of purity. But I do say that from the moment one renounces the habit of mortal sin; from the moment one no longer has any affection for it, but rather fears it and tries to avoid the occasions that lead to it; from the moment that one experiences a genuine desire to work out his salvation and to live as a Christian--I say, Gentlemen, that from that moment--one has the proper disposition for frequent communion and that, far from showing a lack of respect by engaging in this practice, one could find no better way to honor God. Thus far, I believe I have proved my point by

citing all sorts of examples and authoritative sources; but, to these proofs, I shall now add an argument that is absolutely basic.

Communion is, in itself, a holy action, an act of religion, as related to the person who receives it; for, by this act, one gives proof of his faith and a public manifestation of his union with the faithful, a union in which the holy bread has always been the most precious link; and, finally, he who receives communion completes and consummates the sacrifice of the altar which is, without doubt, among all acts of religion, the greatest and the most nearly perfect. If we have accepted this thought, on what grounds can we then maintain that to stay away from the holy table is to give the Lord proof of a greater respect and a deeper veneration? Is it through omission or through holy actions, particularly through those actions which were meant to distinguish the children of the Church of Jesus Christ and to acknowledge the grandeur of the divine Majesty, that we should honor God and give visible proof of the respect we have for Him? If it is by receiving the Eucharist that a Christian gives to God the greatest glory that can be given Him by a simple follower, how can anyone affirm that it dishonors Him when this sacrament is received frequently?

Prayer glorifies the Lord; it is an acknowledgment of our dependence and of His sovereign power; of our indigence and of His wealth, His goodness, and His infinite liberality.

Still, it is an audacity on our part to approach God and to appear in His presence to speak of our misery. Has anyone ever seen fit to suggest that, in order to show greater respect towards God, it would be better to pray only on rare occasions and to cut short the practice of meditation? St. Teresa believed such restraint to be valid at one time; she abstained from prayer on the assumption that there were in her life too many imperfections which made her unworthy to speak to God. But, on many later occasions, she expressed remorse over these feelings, saying that such humility would certainly have brought on her ruin if she had not been enlightened; that the devil could not have laid for her a more dangerous trap. If, then, it is both false humility and a real temptation to leave off praying because one feels unworthy of speaking to God, is it not also a delusion to withdraw from communion for similar reasons, especially if this withdrawal occurs often and persists over long periods of time? Where is the logic in saying, on one hand, that God's honor is increased in proportion to the number of holy actions performed in His name; and, on the other, that there is a lack of respect on the part of those who would perform regularly the act which, among all others, gives God the greatest glory?

Let us assume that communion was not the holiest of Christian acts or, considered solely as the act of a Christian receiving the Body of Jesus Christ, was not the act which gives to God most glory. When it is considered as the action of

Jesus Christ Himself giving us His Body, however, then we are certain that nothing, after the sacrifice of the Mass, could give more glory to God, and, as a result, be more worthy of being performed over and over again. Why do you think that the Church has so increased the number of priests? And why has she allowed each of her priests to celebrate daily? Does she believe all of them to be as holy as the Apostles? Is she unaware that many of them are no purer than the layman? No, Gentlemen, she knows; but it is because the honor which is given to God by Jesus Christ, Who immolates Himself on the altar, is so great that she feels she should allow nothing to prevent this honor from being offered to God as often as possible and by as many priests as she has consecrated.

Why would we not speak much in the same terms about holy communion, since by this sacrament Jesus completes the mystery initiated by the hands of the priest, fulfills the plan which He conceived when He instituted this sacrament--that is, to nourish the faithful with His Own body--renews and extends, in the words of St. John Chrysostom, the great gift of His Incarnation, but also sacrifices Himself anew by losing in our stomachs the sacramental life which was given Him at the moment of the consecration? You are not worthy of receiving communion often? Are all priests worthy of saying Mass often? Are there many who deserve to say it every day? Is there a single one who deserves to say it even once?

It is wrong, Christian Listeners, to think that our God would be dishonored by our miseries and our weaknesses. If

this were so, He would never have united Himself so closely to our nature, and the Incarnation would not be the greatest and most glorious of His works. He achieved, by this ineffable union, a glory that is all the greater because of the vileness and lowliness of the object to which He has joined His grandeur. That ^{union} is why, between two natures, the reasonable and the angelic, He chose the more imperfect, for it provided a greater opportunity to display His infinite goodness and wisdom: Nusquam angelos apprehendit; semen Abrahae apprehendit (Nowhere did He assume the nature of the angels; He assumed the nature of the seed of Abraham). It is true, Gentlemen, that all of us are far from worthy of receiving frequent communion. But if our unworthiness constituted an obstacle to receiving Jesus Christ, not only should we avoid receiving Him often, but we should not receive Him at all, for it will never be possible for us to become worthy. If we should stay away from the holy table because we are unworthy to approach it, we should also be absent from the Mass and from the sermon. We are not worthy of one or the other. The angels do not attend the sacrifice of the altar without trembling; and one of the Holy Fathers once said that it required no less purity to hear the Word of God than to eat the Body of the Savior.

But I find far more reasonable the sentiments expressed by one holy and enlightened person who lived not so long ago. Experiencing simultaneously a strong desire to receive the Body of the Savior and a deep shame because of her infidelities, she would say to God: "I hear you, Lord, and I understand the mean-

ing of these ardent desires; I have no doubt that they come from You: You wish to show the length and breadth of Your unsurpassed goodness by giving Yourself to the most unworthy of all Your creatures. You are right in wishing to come into my heart, for nothing could give You greater honor than this act of remarkable abasement. I would not think of staying away from Your table by reason of my misery for, the more miserable I am, the more glorified You will be before the angels and the saints, for having bestowed on me such tremendous mercy."

I have already stated that I speak only for those souls who are no longer attached to sin and who strive sincerely to live good lives. As for those others, who are attached to the world, who are determined to continue to live according to its maxims, I do not blame them if they approach communion very infrequently, but I am not so credulous as to believe that it is humility which keeps them away. How can we believe that a person who is filled with vanity and whose sole desire is for praise and false glory could at the same time be filled with true humility? How can we believe that those who show only contempt for the holy rules of Scripture and who, in their pride, may even scorn the commandments of the Church, or even those of God Himself, how can we believe that they would show such respect and veneration for the Eucharist? Jesus Christ is in the Holy Sacrament, it is true; but God is everywhere, and I do not think that the same respect which would depict such a fearful Lord on the altar would not prevent us from offending and insulting Him

everywhere.else.

How can we believe that you have put off communion for reasons of your unworthiness when we see that with each day you make yourself less and less worthy of this act by constantly repeating the very sins which have caused you to stay away? If, indeed, you were animated by sentiments of such deep veneration for the adorable Body of Jesus, would you not make greater attempts to become worthy of receiving it often, rather than deprive yourself of it by reasons of your unworthiness? If you are truly resolved to reform your life, you deserve to receive communion no later than tomorrow; but if you wish to continue living as you do, can there be any doubt that, in a year, you will be even less worthy than you are now to partake of this holy mystery? Either begin immediately to purify your heart for that first communion with greater reverence or cease insisting that your delay is based on the inner respect you have for the Body of Jesus Christ. How strange is this desire of ours to pass off as virtue our attachments to evil habits and our love for a false liberty, which would be disturbed by frequent communion. The sinner fears having to look so frequently into his impure conscience; he fears the humiliation of confession; he fears that his pleasures may not only be disrupted for a day, but may even be troubled for a long time by the virtuous thoughts which usually accompany holy actions; in a word, he is faced with the necessity either to withdraw from his sin or from the holy table, and he prefers to sacrifice the latter than to be forced to

live a good Christian life.

These, I believe, are the hidden attitudes underlying the specious reasons of respect and veneration for the Eucharist. They are sometimes presented in still another light, which is no less false and no less misleading: We would have others believe that we are motivated by a zeal for our spiritual growth when, in fact, this attitude is so obviously an effect of our tepid state and our reluctance to amend our lives. It is dangerous, some say, to receive communion too frequently, for this practice might breed a familiarity that would rob it of its desired fruit. Let us admit that our real fear is that these frequent communions may well produce more fruit than we actually desire. For nothing is truer than this: the more one receives communion the more benefits one derives. This will be my second point.

SECOND POINT

Even if all Christians had not been told of the remarkable effects produced by the Eucharist in the hearts of those who receive it, I need only remind you that this sacrament contains that adorable Body whose presence, whose sacred touch, whose clothing, whose shadow alone, were powerful enough to cast out devils and illness, a Body which exercises a greater power over hearts, for their sanctification, than over anything in nature. Who could hope to combine in a single dis-

course all that has been learnt by faith, all that is dictated by reason, all that has been said by the Fathers, and all that has been taught by experience about the power of this sacrament? Do we know of any method that is surer, more rapid, or more efficient in moderating the passions, in uprooting evil habits, in strengthening the soul against temptation, in encouraging it to undertake the most difficult enterprises, in rendering it firm and indomitable in the practice of virtue, in setting it aflame with the love of God, than this holy mystery which unites us so intimately with the King of virtues, with the Author of grace, with the holy of holies, with the source of all holiness and all blessings? It is a natural property of water to cool and refresh, but this property, said St. Albert the Great, is no more natural to water than is the power to appease the fires of concupiscence to the holy sacrament of the altar. The devil trembles, thought St. Peter Damian, at the sight of a Christian whose lips have been reddened by the blood of the Savior. The Eucharist is a powerful remedy, declared St. Cyprian, which penetrates all parts of the soul, and even the body, to cure and purge it of all ills, and to leave it completely renewed. And, finally, in the words of St. John Chrysostom, we must be resigned to die if we refuse to take this holy nourishment; it is the strength of our souls, the blessing which unites our spirit to God, the basis for our confidence, our hope, our salvation, our light, and our life.

If we concede the validity of these arguments, how can we then imagine that a sacrament of such virtue could become ineffective for those who receive it often? It is possible for an antidote, a remedy, which is very good in itself, to be rendered completely ineffective through over-use; but meat does not suddenly lose its property of nourishment because it is eaten regularly. Each day we eat food, especially bread and wine, the species under which Jesus Christ gave us His body and blood. Their benefit is all the greater because the stomach has become accustomed to them and never tires of them. But even if we could imagine such distaste in regard to material food and drink, the Holy Spirit long ago predicted the opposite in regard to this celestial bread: They who eat Me will desire to eat again: Qui edunt me, adhuc esurient (They who eat Me will still be hungry).

I am well aware that for some it is possible to receive the Eucharist in such a manner as to draw no benefit from it, but I maintain that this weakness is not because communion is received too frequently. I say that those who receive communion every week without becoming better for it would definitely become worse if their communions were less frequent; that no poor disposition, save only mortal sin, can block the effect of this sacrament, which is to sanctify the soul, to give it the strength to do good and avoid evil; and, since each communion brings an increase of merit and habitual grace, it follows necessarily that each communion should prepare us to benefit more fully from the following one, and, as a consequence,

the more we receive, the better disposed we will be to benefit from those to come.

I realize that it is a defect (into which most men fall) to esteem more highly those things which are less common and to neglect or to perform thoughtlessly the most important actions when they become too ordinary. But if fear of falling into such weakness were our reason for abstaining from frequent communion, then this fear should also be our reason for abstaining from frequent prayer, which would be in direct contradiction with the commandment of Jesus Christ. Since it is by praying often that we eventually learn to pray well, it is also by receiving Our Lord often that we experience the inner growth of fervor and hunger required to receive Him fruitfully. If we neglect our preparation for communion, this act will never reap any benefit, even if it is done only once a year; but if we bring to it a special care, it is certain that the more numerous we make our communions, the stronger will be our habit of performing this act properly. For, it is not simply because an action is done often, but because it is done badly, that we develop the habit of doing it badly.

If these reasons are not sufficient to prove the benefit of frequent communion, I will now call upon experience as an added argument. Fervor was never greater in the Church, nor sanctity more widespread, than at the time when the faithful received communion daily. It has been noted that in the last century, when moral corruption gave rise to the many heresies which swept over most of the Christian world, the frequent

use of Penance and communion had been entirely abolished; but from the moment when the practice was re-established, through the effort of several holy persons inspired by God, there was a general rebirth of piety, and the course of error was arrested in those very areas where it was doing most harm. But why look so far away for examples of a truth which has been confirmed by personal experience? You say that it is a delusion to receive communion every month, or every fortnight, or every week; and that we would derive more benefit from receiving it less frequently. This reasoning will no doubt prove persuasive to those who receive communion only twice or three times yearly. But what possible impression can it make on those who have personal knowledge of the advantages attached to frequent communion? How can we give any credence to this doctrine when it was only by means of this practice that we managed to extricate ourselves from our sinful habits, after having tried all other means without success? In those periods when we neglected frequent communion, we were weak and lax in serving our God; we were besieged by temptations, against which we could muster but little resistance; Christian piety frightened us, and we believed its practice to be nigh impossible. But since we began to approach the Eucharistic table more frequently, we have found that our enemies are not invincible and our passions not unconquerable; we have a little more knowledge of goodness and much more ease in practicing it. We observe that all bad Christians have found it extremely easy to follow your advice; that even before being urged to receive

communion more rarely, they had already withdrawn as far as possible from the sacred mysteries. We know that whenever a fervent person grows lax, he loses the desire for frequent communion, he is tempted to abstain, and, in fact, he does abstain, if this downward course continues.

It cannot be said that all who receive communion frequently are saints, but I dare say that the saints receive communion very often, and that they attribute to this sacrament both their progress and their perseverance in the virtuous life. As my communions increase, if I observe myself becoming more irascible, more vain, harsher in my attitude toward the poor, more attached to worldly goods, more vulnerable to my passions, more impatient in my troubles, more avid for pleasure and false honors, then I will believe, not that I must stay away from communion (for nothing can convince me that I will be weaker or less perfect for having approached the source of sanctity and grace), but I will believe that I am approaching it with a lack of faith, a lack of confidence, and a lack of preparation. I will seek within myself the cause of such serious trouble, and I will try to uproot it; to do this, I will consider that nothing can be of greater help to me than to continue receiving often the Body of the Savior. And when I notice that I have made some progress in virtue, that my passions are more controlled, that I feel a greater strength in resisting temptation, that I no longer fall into my past sins, that I fear sin and the occasions of sin, then I will definitely not abandon the practice which was the cause

of all these blessings.

I will end, Gentlemen, by addressing those who, until now, may have believed in good faith that it was more virtuous and more beneficial to receive communion less frequently; I urge them to put my teachings to the test so that they may make a decision with greater knowledge. For, if they are, as I suppose them to be, men of good will, I am certain that they will reverse their view and will soon find themselves filled with strength, courage, light, and a sweet fervor; that their dispositions will be far more favorable than they were until that time. I speak also to those who are already engaged in the commendable practice of frequent communion, and I urge them, in the name of Jesus Christ, Who has displayed such great love for them by abasing His Majesty to their level and nourishing them with His flesh, I urge them, to order their lives in such a way that they will never be an object of scandal for the weak or give anyone cause to blame frequent communion for what is undoubtedly the effect of a bad usage of the sacrament. Ut beneficientes obmutescere faciat is imprudentium hominum ignorantiam (As well-intentioned people, you should act in such a way as to silence the ignorance of imprudent men).

Should it surprise us that God's name is profaned and that so little effort is made to approach the holy table frequently when we see certain men who receive communion each month, and certain women who receive it perhaps each week but who are just as vain, just as irritable, just as slanderous,

and just as irresponsible in their actions and their speech as if the priest had given them no more than a material bread, or as if we belonged to one of those new Churches which offer, for the nourishment of their members, only the shape and shadow of the Eucharist. You may point out that the defects I mentioned do not constitute major crimes. I agree, but it is precisely conduct of this kind which scandalizes the ignorant, leading them to believe that such small ills can withstand a remedy as powerful as the Body of Jesus Christ--this Body which cured so many mortal illnesses by touching, just once, those who were afflicted, but which now seems powerless to rid you of these small imperfections.

Finally, I cannot exhort strongly enough those who have received from God a sincere desire to begin a life of solid devotion, or to persevere in such a life; I repeat, I cannot exhort them strongly enough to continue to receive their Redeemer often. Let them recall these words from the Council of Basel:

It is not only useful and salutary to receive often the Sacrament of the altar, but absolutely essential for those who do not wish to backslide, and for those who wish to progress in the service of God, on the road to virtue and perfection.

Let these persons look upon the divine Eucharist as a shield, a universal remedy, a refuge in all their perils, a help in all their needs, a base that will render them steadfast, the guiding principle of their spiritual life, and the pledge

*Council of Basel, 1431.

of their immortality. Let them come to this bread of angels in their darkness, in their perplexity, in their fears, in their temptations, and in their greatest weaknesses; may they never, under any circumstance, cease to make frequent use of this sacrament. Jesus Christ has given us His word that he who eats this food will never die; we cannot say that this word applies to all who receive communion, even with the required dispositions, since we have seen far too many die unrepentant, though they had, for some period of time, partaken of this adorable mystery; neither can we see in His word an empty promise or false assurance of maintaining the fear of the Lord or a state of fervor. We must then conclude that this promise concerns those who are not content with having received communion once, or even several times, but who persevere to the end of their lives in the practice of frequent communion. Yes, we have the promise of Jesus--a promise I dare to guarantee--that those who maintain their determination to live as Christians and to receive communion often, those, I say, will never die in a state of sin; they will never die through sin; they will never lose the life of grace in this world, and they will infallibly attain a state of glory in the next. Amen.

SERMON XXIII

FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

Domine, bonum est nos
hic esse; si vis, facia-
mus hic tria tabernacula.

O Lord, it is good to
be here. If thou wilt,
let us set up three tents
and let us remain here
eternally.

(Matt. 17:4)

Christians should expect from the exercise of virtue the same advantages that attract them to sin, since virtue does not hinder their temporal interests, but rather favors them greatly; and far from being the enemy of pleasure, virtue is an abundant source of it.

There has always been, in ancient schools, a wide divergence of opinion on the subject of man's felicity. It is said that the Greeks, having once assembled philosophers of all sects to examine this question, found that there were not two who were in agreement, each one equating happiness

with some object which the others had never considered. What is even more surprising is the fact that, among so many different opinions, there was not a single true one. The adherents of Epicurus were for the pleasures of the senses and said, as reported by St. Augustine: Mihi frui carne bonum est (It is good for me to enjoy my flesh); the disciples of Zeno were for the actions of the spirit: Mihi frui mea mente bonum est (It is good for me to enjoy my mind); then, St. Paul, a single voice opposing all these others, proclaimed in the center of Athens this new doctrine: Mihi adhaerere Deo bonum est (It is good for me to adhere to God). You are all in error; for my part, I attach myself to God as my sovereign good. To be happy, one must strive not to flatter the flesh or to satisfy the spirit, but to content Him Who created both. Non est in corpore, non est in anima, sed in utriusque Creatore (It is not in the body, it is not in the soul, but in the Creator of both).

I do not doubt, Christian Listeners, that it was with the same feeling that St. Peter cried out on Mount Thabor: Domine, bonum est nos hic esse (Lord, it is good to be here). Lord, here we are at the source of true happiness; we have no interest in seeking it elsewhere. My plan in this discourse is to establish this truth, no longer to oppose the pagan philosophers, but to oppose certain Christians who are even less reasonable. For it is no longer between the satisfactions of the body and those of the spirit that there is division: it seems to me that all is worldly, that all is corporal in the felicity that we seek today. Some have given themselves over

completely to voluptuousness, while others seek only to make a fortune. As for me, Gentlemen, I am for piety. It is my sentiment that there are no happier people in this world than the true servants of God; and of this sentiment I propose to convince both those who hunger most strongly for the goods of this world and those who pursue most avidly the pleasures of the senses. Let us salute Mary whose happiness was based less on being the Mother of God than on being the lowliest of His servants. Ave Maria.

In attempting to detach men from their love of the world, it is futile for us to represent it as a powerless and unfaithful master, capable of producing only false goods and false pleasures. These pleasures, these goods, are of a sensual nature, and nothing more is needed to attract those souls who judge all things by the senses and who find no appeal in invisible things. To attract men to the side of piety, there is no surer method than to extend to them the hope of obtaining in virtue the same advantages that attract them to vice. I dare to promise even greater advantages, Gentlemen, and I maintain that those who draw away from God for reasons of gain or pleasure do so for the very reasons that should attach them to Him irrevocably. These are the two principles which I plan to establish in this discourse. I wish to show that whoever devotes himself to piety possesses more good things, even of a temporal nature, and enjoys purer and more solid pleasures, even of a sensual nature, than those who do nothing

but apply themselves to the satisfaction of their avarice and their sensuality; that virtue, far from harming your interests, greatly favors them: that will be my first point. That virtue is no enemy of pleasure; that, on the contrary, it is a very abundant source of it: that will be my second point.

Pardon me, Lord, if in my effort to draw men to Your service, I make use today of motives that are base and imperfect. I do not ignore the lofty reasons that we have to love You without self-interest and with purity of devotion, but this method is necessary to make Christians understand that they have no reason to depart from a holy and Christian life, and to show them how completely inexcusable such conduct would be. It is necessary to draw them gently into a life of virtue by attracting them, as You Yourself did in the case of Adam, by the enticements of a temporal felicity. Later, You will know how to purify these inferior motives by substituting for them stronger and more precious ties and You will thereby complete the work that we have but roughly delineated.

FIRST POINT

Gentlemen, a very absurd view was the one held by the fanatical philosopher Manes who, in the third century of the Church, saw fit to proclaim that in the world there were two principles of created things, and that God was the author only of the spiritual and invisible ones. In my opinion, it

would be an even greater illusion to believe that He Who is the Creator of all things, even the visible and temporal, is not their absolute master, that He is not their sovereign distributor, or that it is within our power to acquire or keep these goods independently of His good pleasure. Quis vestrum, Jesus Christ asks us in the Gospel, cogitando potest adjicere ad staturam suam cubitum unum (Who among you, by force of meditation and searching of your spirit, can find the means of adding to your stature the height of a single cubit)? Is there a man to whom this does not appear absolutely impossible? Then, know that it is even less in your power to amass a fortune, or even to put aside what is necessary for your maintenance: Si ergo neque quod minimum est potestis, quid de caeteris solliciti estis (If, therefore, you are powerless in the smallest things, why are you solicitous about the others)? If it is not possible for you to achieve that which is much less difficult, are you wise in wishing to undertake the rest?

Notice, if you please, Christian Listeners, that in this passage of the Gospel the Savior compares all the care that we expend in achieving temporal happiness to the vain efforts of a foolish man who attempts to grow suddenly the height of a cubit, and that He not only considers both of these enterprises to be folly, but He implies that the second one, however absurd it might appear, is an easier task than the first. It would be nothing for you to increase your stature or to embellish it, however lowly it may have been. But

even if it were in your power to do this, it does not follow that you could increase or preserve your temporal possessions. Si ergo neque quod minimum est potestis, quid de caeteris solliciti estis? In effect, Gentlemen, it is quite clear that we can do nothing by ourselves. To be as successful as we wish in this type of affairs, it is not enough to devote great care, great tenacity, much intelligence, and natural common sense; it would take the power to command the winds and the tides, to control the sun and the stars, to master the wills of men, and to direct hundreds of things whose direction God has reserved to Himself alone. How advisable it is for us to become thoroughly convinced of this truth: that riches, honors, health, employment, the esteem and friendship of men are things which belong to God; we can receive them only from His hands; and it is as impossible for us to obtain them without His help as it is for a blind man to restore his own sight.

Having assumed that God alone is the master of your fortune and that it is from His hand only that you can receive the possessions that you believe bring happiness, would it not be a third error, as ridiculous as the preceding ones, for you to think that you can force Him to provide you with these possessions by neglecting His service or even by offending Him? You know, Gentlemen, how a similar delusion affected Jeroboam, the king of Israel. He feared that his subjects, making frequent trips to Jerusalem to adore God according to the law, might gradually become attached to the king of

Juda. To allay this danger, he had a temple constructed in his capital city and tried to keep the Israelites there by the cult of idols. This impious plan cost him the crown that he had feared to lose and was the cause of the total destruction of his race. A similar policy brought about the ruin of the Jews, along with that of all of Judea. They feared that by following Jesus Christ they would incur the anger and the arms of the Romans: Venient Romani et tollent locum nostrum et gentem (The Romans will come and take over our land and our nation). Based on this false fear, they condemned Him to death; and it was precisely to vindicate His death that the Romans laid their siege on Jerusalem, rased it to the ground, slaughtered its citizens, and then imposed on the whole nation a shameful servitude.

Is it necessary, Christian Listeners, to prove to you through logic that if you wish God to make you partakers of the goods that He has created, whose disposition He reserves to Himself alone, the surest method is to render yourselves very obedient to His law, very submissive to all His desires, and very zealous in promoting His interests and His glory? Omnia haec manus mea fecit, et facta sunt universa ista, dicit Dominus; ad quem autem respiciam nisi ad pauperculum et contritum spiritu, et trementem sermones meos (My hand made all these things; in fact, the whole universe has been made by that hand, says the Lord; moreover, whom shall I favor if not the humble and contrite of heart and him who fears My words)? All that you see in heaven and on earth is the work of My hands,

said the Lord; I am the Creator of it all and, therefore, it is My right to distribute these goods according to My will. But, whom shall I favor in this distribution, if not those humble souls, who, touched with repentance for their sins, remain in awe of My commandments? In the New Law, Jesus Christ promised all that is necessary for the maintenance and the commodity of life to those who devote themselves to piety. He guaranteed these promises in an explicit and forceful manner, and He told His disciples that it would be an outrage to His Father and a denial of all religious feeling if we were to concern ourselves about storing up even the basic necessities or if we were to doubt that God is bound to furnish them in abundance. Quaerite primum regnum Dei et haec omnia adjicientur vobis (Seek first the kingdom of God and all things will come to you). See that God reigns in your heart, and with open hands He will shower all of these things on your houses. If you are charitable enough to donate a portion of your goods for love of Me, to release some part of your interests for the interest of your soul, I will repay you a hundredfold even in this life, without counting that which I reserve for you in the next.

But how is it that we sometimes see good people in distress? I reply that, in the first place, such distress does not often befall people who are totally good and who make use of prosperity in such a way that they never give God reason to be dissatisfied with their conduct. He afflicts them sometimes because they are not always as grateful as they

should be, because gradually they allow themselves to be filled with pride, to become attached to worldly goods and to place their confidence in them. In the second place, He sometimes permits them to be distressed temporarily to have the opportunity to display His power by raising them up and showing the world that they are under His protection. It is in this way that He allowed Joseph to be sold and thrown into prison so that He might have him ascend the throne of Egypt; that He allowed the people of Israel to be mistreated by Pharaoh so that He might have them triumph over the tyranny of this prince in the most glorious way of this world. David, Daniel, and Suzanna--all suffered persecution, but God delivered them in a manner so striking that they could only bless Him for having exposed them to it. Finally, the Prophet-King, who so often spoke of the suffering of good people, declared that although he saw them suffer, he never saw them abandoned in disgrace, and that he always observed that God blessed them, even in their posterity: Nec vidi justum derelictum, nec ejus quaerens panem (I have not seen the just abandoned, nor his offspring in search of bread).

I will not take time to point out how totally different His conduct is in regard to men of evil--how He abandons them and permits that they be abandoned by all the world; how He confounds their false prudence and overthrows their best-laid plans; how He seems to raise them up for a short time only to hurl them down and render their fall more visible and more shameful; how He curses them, and often their whole race along

with them; how He shortens their days; how in a single moment He destroys them; how He annihilates even their names; how He makes of them horrible examples which spread terror everywhere and draw down upon them the compassion of those who most envied their good fortune. It is certain that there are among them few, if any at all, who, at least at the hour of death--which is often sudden, or tragic, or premature--do not make reparation, in full view of the world, for the scandal that might have been caused by their false prosperity: Suscipiens mansuetos Dominus, humilians autem peccatores (While the Lord looks favorably upon the merciful, He, on the other hand, humbles the sinners).

But I do concede, Christian Listeners, that after God, men may also, to some degree, contribute to your fortune and your earthly happiness. I say that the more piety you have, the more possessions and honors you will derive from this second source. You know, Gentlemen, that even the most dissipated men cannot help liking good people. It would seem that the more enslaved men are by vice, the more they admire in others the virtue which allows them to surmount it; they regard as divine that quality which makes easy for others that which seems impossible for them. Thus, Joseph was favored by the King of Egypt, Daniel by Balthazar; Moses was feared as a god by Pharaoh; and Herod respected in St. John the Baptist even the liberties he took in censoring his King. Is it not already one of the benefits of life to be loved, admired, and honored by all? The very rich, those who are most influential because of the

positions they hold in the world, if they are not good, cannot guard themselves against hatred, scorn, and, most of all, against slander. Although we honor them in public, in our hearts we disavow all marks of honor given their position; we praise them reluctantly in their presence and, as soon as we are free, we take pleasure in finding fault with them, and we rage against their disorders. A virtuous person is assured that either everyone speaks well of him or that no one believes the evil that is spoken of him.

It is usually said that, of all the world's possessions, friends are the most precious and the most useful, and that he who has a single enemy cannot flatter himself on being completely happy. Now, it is certain that no one has more friends or fewer enemies than the persons who fear God. People are eager to share their friendship because they know it will be sincere and constant, because they can expect from them only disinterested advice, because they can safely open their hearts to them to confide their most important secrets, knowing they need not fear betrayal. We make enemies when we harm others or when we seek to revenge the harm done to us by others. Virtuous people harm no one; they hide, they pardon the offenses done to them, and, by this prudent and Christian conduct, they prevent those violent and immortal enmities that weary and ruin both fathers and children, those dissensions that fill life with bitterness, expose us each day to new sorrows, and are so harmful to our business affairs and our reputations.

Let us come, if you will, to that which deals more di-

rectly with personal gain and the amassing of a fortune. To whom, I ask you, does one assign most willingly those duties and posts of importance, if not to those who, one foresees, will discharge them with justice and fidelity, will make of their duty an inviolable law, will devote themselves unflinchingly to it, and will never allow themselves to be deterred from it by laziness or debauchery? This type of person will always find supporters and protectors; one may even feel that one is performing a service to those to whom one presents him and to whom one pledges oneself in his name. If those on whom you depend are God-fearing persons, they will always choose virtue over license; and if your fortune depended on the greatest libertines, even they would reject their own kind in favor of the virtuous. No one wishes to deal with vicious people, except when seeking vice itself. A debauched person might choose for a mistress a girl who is vain and coquettish, but if he is considering marriage, do not doubt that he will attempt to choose the most modest and the most retiring young lady; a drunkard favors the company of those who like to drink, but, whenever possible, he will confide his personal affairs, his house, his own person only to people who are sober; finally, a gambler will habitually seek the company of another gambler, but it will not be to him that he will give his daughter or his inheritance. Such are the real reasons for the existence of so much hypocrisy and so many hypocrites in the world. One might say that a hypocrite is nothing more than a good man motivated by self-interest, a man who is good only

because he stands to gain by being so and who has found no shorter or surer road to attain his ends; he is a pious man who, instead of looking toward the reward he might expect in heaven, looks only at the worldly advantages that accompany a life of piety. He thinks that in order to succeed, to get ahead, one must be good or at least pretend to be. But, since it costs little more to be good than to pretend to be--not to mention the danger of being unmasked--and there is, to the contrary, much care and strain involved in continually assuming a pose, in unceasingly playing a role, one must be very miserable to prefer wearing a mask or an uncomfortable disguise, when one might have, for the same price, a beauty that is natural and without artifice.

One might add, Christian Listeners, that the same piety which opens up the springs of temporal goods also sustains its flow. This point alone could be the subject of a long discourse. An ambitious man brings about his downfall by his own underhanded maneuvers; a miser, because of his inordinate desire to amass wealth, risks losing all and does, in fact, lose all. Gambling, intemperance, and voluptuousness will exhaust even the largest fortunes. These indulgences make it impossible to sustain one's accustomed quality of life, establish one's children, pay one's debts, or supply even the necessities of life, let alone provide those pleasures that have consumed everything in such a short time. Virtue preserves and multiplies without worry all that it has acquired without dishonesty; it enjoys, in a long and happy tranquillity, the legitimate goods

that God has given, as well as the legitimate pleasures that He allows.

It is then true, Christian Listeners, that the very reason of temporal advantage enjoins you to live in a Christian manner. I do not intend to speak to you today about eternity, about that great value that we must protect during the few days that we spend here below, where it is a question of our soul--that immortal soul which God has not created for a passing felicity; where it is a question of a happiness or an unhappiness that will never end; where it is a question of gaining or losing God, and of losing Him beyond recall. O my God! does this not touch You! A bit of mud colored by the sun, or I know not what flimsy illusion of honor, can replace heaven in the minds of people who pride themselves on being rational; who even pass themselves off as men of wisdom! But, Gentlemen, what a misfortune it is to disdain this eternal felicity in order to secure happiness on earth, and then to be deprived of this earthly happiness which we have preferred to paradise! What blindness to cut ourselves off from God in order to pursue possessions which we can receive only from Him! What a horrible disgrace it would be to sacrifice our soul for our fortune and to lose both, when we could so easily save both! What a mistake, and who can deplore it enough! Temporalia perdere timuerunt, says the great St. Augustine, speaking of the Jews, aeterna non cogitauerunt, ac sic utrumque perdiderunt (They feared to lose their temporal possessions, gave no thought to the eternal, and consequently lost both). They were afraid of losing their temporal goods, they had no consideration for the eternal ones, and thus

they lost everything.

Oh! how just it is, Lord, that the reckless soul who has valued some object more than You should be deprived of You, O my God, and of all the things he has had the audacity to prefer to You! How just that he who has consented to be eternally unhappy in order to be happy on earth should also be unhappy in this world for which he has formed so great an attachment! O Sovereign Good of our souls, grant that this should always be so; that all who stray from You find only misery, only confusion. Confundantur, et pereant, et cognoscant, quia nomen tibi Dominus; tu solus Altissimus in omni terra (May they be confounded, may they perish, and may they realize that Lord is Your name; You alone are the Most High in all the earth).

While those who serve You, who disdain personal interest and pleasure out of love for You will be blessed, not only with greater temporal goods than those of the miser, but also with pleasures that are purer and more solid than those of the idolaters of voluptuousness. This is the second point.

SECOND POINT

There is a very pernicious illusion on the subject of a Christian and pious life, and it is one, I believe, which is held by the majority of the people in the world. They cannot be persuaded that this life of virtue has its joys and pleasures. To embrace it, they think, would be to be plunged into

a melancholy abyss; one might just as well be buried alive. But if this were so, Christian Listeners, how could we account for so many persons of all conditions, of all ages, of both sexes, who have attached themselves so strongly to this life which to you seems only useful and melancholy? Are you aware that they can only be drawn to such a life by the joys that they find therein; that they can remain in it only because they find there greater pleasures than they could hope to find elsewhere?

It is the statement of a pagan, albeit approved and to some degree consecrated by St. Augustine, that each person allows himself to be won over by that which pleases him, trahit sua quemque voluptas (each one's voluptuousness attracts him). Each is attracted by his own voluptuousness, has said St. Gregory; and pleasure, if we are to believe St. John Chrysostom, is the universal lever that moves all men to act. Then, there must of necessity be pleasure in serving God. But you may ask me in what this pleasure consists. I say, Christian Listeners, that it consists in the love of the greatest and most lovable of objects, Who is God, in an exquisite and lasting enjoyment of what one loves, and in the firm hope of enjoying it eternally. It is not my intention to speak to you today of those three great sources of celestial and ineffable delights. Besides the fact that this love could only be explained in a very long discourse, there is no discourse that could explain it adequately to someone who has never experienced it. But what follows can be understood by everyone, and it is sufficient

to show that the pleasures of men of good will greatly surpass those enjoyed by men of evil.

First, evil pleasures are abandoned in favor of good ones. And who does so? The very people who have experienced both kinds. This fact proves, then, that, in the practice of a good life, one must find more sweetness than in all the joys of the world; for there has never been a person who knowingly chose a lesser good. Nemo dat fontem pro gutta (No one gives up a spring for a drop), has said St. Augustine; one does not abandon a gushing spring to seek after a single drop of water.

Second, we have noticed that those who plunge themselves most deeply into earthly pleasures have an unabated hunger and thirst for more pleasures; they never have enough, and there is always in their soul a void which nothing can fill. But, one moment--yes, Gentlemen, a single moment--of celestial consolation fills the soul with such sweetness that it is, in a sense, intoxicated with joy. Superabundo, exclaims St. Paul, superabundo gaudio in omni tribulatione mea (My joy is overflowing, overflowing in my every tribulation). Behold! I am full of joy, my heart is overflowing with it. The joy that the world provides has never given rise to this kind of talk; on the contrary, the man who has tasted it most fully is impelled to say: Vidi in omnibus vanitatem et afflictionem animi (I saw in all things vanity and affliction of the mind). There is nothing but emptiness and pain, emptiness even in the pleasure itself, which, in a moment, is followed by pain and repentance.

Furthermore, what could be the reason, in the greatest pleasure-seekers, for that terrible inconstancy which makes them flit from one pleasure to another, from one object to another with such shallowness and anxiety? You will perhaps say that it results from the weakness of man's spirit which is by nature very fickle and which no attraction can hold for long. However, Gentlemen, we have not observed such changes in virtuous men. We can watch them for forty or fifty years as they return each day to the same prayers, the same exercises of mortification and works of charity without ever tiring of or losing their taste for these practices; on the contrary, with each passing day, they experience a joy that is all new and a pleasure that is more and more exquisite. The longer they persevere, the stronger their wish to continue and even to increase these practices. Thus, he who started out with fifteen minutes of mental prayer might be presently consecrating to it as much as four or five hours. Believe me, Gentlemen, it requires very powerful joys to offset the tendency toward constant change that we all share, and to fix our heart, which is naturally so restless and inconstant. And not only do people of vice pass incessantly from one pleasure to another, but they also pass quickly from joy to sadness; there is nothing more restless than a pleasure-seeking soul.

We have said that all the delights of this world can never fill a heart with satisfaction; and, in fact, the slightest disgrace, a mere trifle, can fill it with melan-

choly and chagrin. What, then, is the nature of those heavenly consolations, holy Souls, that give you a joy that nothing can alter, that lighten the greatest trials and render you so insensible to them? What is the greatest source of affliction, says St. John Chrysostom, for those who are favored with spiritual consolations? It is but a spark of fire that falls into the ocean and is quickly extinguished. If I said that adversities even become agreeable to them, that they take pleasure in that which torments the body and humiliates the spirit, you might find such a statement difficult to believe. But if that is true, how great must be the excess of spiritual consolations that can produce such a prodigious effect!

For this reason Isaias, speaking to the people of Israel in the name of God, said: Utinam attendisses ad mandata mea! Fuisset utique quasi flumen pax tua (Would that you had listened to my commandments! Your peace would have been like a running stream). Ah! how I wish to God that you had directed your energies to the observation of my precepts! Your peace, your happiness would have resembled a stream which is always full and which never runs dry. The joy of evil ones is more like a torrent, not only because it is impetuous, dissolute, unjust, harmful, and nearly always taken to the detriment of others, but also because it is short and fleeting, because the heart which overflows with it one moment will find itself empty the next, filled only with mud and thorns. And one cannot deny these effects, because the face

gives its own evidence. It is a pity to see a man who one day is in a sparkling mood that enlivens everyone, and the next in a mournful silence that freezes the conversation and inspires sadness in those who see him. Visit him at one time and he will greet you with every sign of welcome, he will show you a thousand civilities, and he will say hundreds of agreeable and gracious things. One hour later, all is changed; now there is an outburst of melancholy that makes him brutal and insufferable.

Utinam attendisses ad mandata mea! Fuisset utique quasi flumen pax tua. Oh, how different it is for those who fear God and who are devoted to His service! Theirs is a joy that is constant and even; a joy that is modest, in truth, because it is full and continuous and resembles those great rivers which flow with greater majesty because their depth and the constancy of their streams have, as it were, created for them a comfortable bed.

Finally, Gentlemen, the joy of the good man is in the heart: Dedisti laetitiam in corde meo (You have placed joy in my heart), at the center of the soul which is the proper place for the true sentiment of real joy. That of sinners is only in the body which it ruins and destroys by a thousand disorders and excesses--excesses which nature corrects in animals but which reason is unable to control and moderate in sinful men. St. Augustine, after a sad experience with the joys of evil (having tasted those of good men), said that sinners have no genuine joy: Peccatores non proprie gaudent sed gestiunt (Sinners have no real joy, but they long for it).

There is, in effect, a similarity between the joy of evil men and the sadness of good men: they are both on the surface; as a consequence, men of evil fear to enter into themselves, because they find there only a sea of bitterness that in one moment can engulf all their joys. It is in vain that they affect a gay countenance, a laughing face, a happy heart. There is no virtuous man who, beneath those laughs, that cheerfulness, and that false exterior of apparent felicity, fails to uncover their anxieties. Because the good man is aware of what lies at the bottom of all evil hearts, their apparent joy and satisfaction evoke his compassion without winning over his heart. Let them believe, these evil ones, that the mortified exterior of good men, that the calm and quiet that they display amid the fiercest afflictions is nothing but show. The men of virtue know their own feelings and the sweetness that they experience, whereas the evil ones judge blindly and without knowledge; they experience the same sorrows as good people but they have never shared their joys.

Gustate et videte (Taste and see). Sinners, you may examine all I have said in the light of experience. Better than all my reasons, this light will convince you that there can be no true joy, no lasting pleasure outside the service of God. It is said that the yoke of holiness is unbearable. Who says this? A libertine, a man without faith, without law, without credibility? Even if he had authority and integrity, should you, Christians, believe him, since Jesus Christ has stated the contrary: Non est pax impiis; jugum meum suave est

(There is no peace for the wicked; my yoke is sweet). Do you still have doubts? Consult all the Holy Fathers who render this same testimony to the mercy of God. The simple desire to serve Him--for it has not gone beyond a desire--fills me with a happiness that I would certainly not exchange for the greatest enticements the world has to offer. What would it be if those desires were effective! Jesus Christ has promised a hundredfold; and for myself I can say I have never done anything for which I have not received a hundred times, nay a million times, more than I had given up. Quam bonus Israel Deus, his qui recto sunt corde (How good is the God of Israel to those who are upright of heart)! O Israel! if only you knew how good is your God, and how liberal! He is thus toward His enemies, but for those who serve Him there are profusions, caresses, and delicacies that one cannot describe, that one must express, and that one can hardly endure.

Alas! my God, what will be left for You to reward! Yet what rewards you have in store for us in heaven! Trust no one in this regard; make your own test, for the stakes are well worth your consideration. What can you lose by such a test? Either I am deceiving you or I am not: If I am deceiving you, if you do not find what I have stated, you will at least have assured your salvation, your eternity; and, at most, you will have earned paradise with difficulty, much like those little children who are led to believe that the pill they take is a sugared fruit. They swallow it and are deceived, but they are cured and are well rewarded by good



health for this small inconvenience. If you are not deceived, if, in the practice of virtue, you gain more treasures, more joys, will you not be blessed for having enjoyed even in this life a kind of paradise and having found in this earthly paradise the road which will lead you infallibly to heaven? Amen.

PART II

SERMON II

SECOND SERMON

FOR

THE FEAST OF ALL SAINTS

Vidi civitatem Jerusalem
novam, descendentem de coelo.

I saw descending from heaven
the holy city, the New Jeru-
salem.

(Apoc. 21:2)

Paradise is the holy city of the blessed, where there
will be no sin, no punishment due to sin, and no limits
to the rewards promised to virtue.

Since it is about Paradise that preachers usually
speak on this very solemn day, it does not astonish me to see
that Christians come in such great numbers to listen to

a discourse which must be very pleasing to them. It is quite natural for poor exiles to derive pleasure from hearing a speaker tell them of their homeland and depict for them the region which will one day be their domain; it is also natural that this speaker should attempt to ease their present sufferings by reminding them of the eternal blessings which this land holds in store for them. There is greater cause for astonishment, Gentlemen, in the thought that anyone would venture to speak to you of this incomprehensible happiness. How logical is it for one to draw up a plan, and to relate the beauties and riches of a place that he has never seen and of which he has no first-hand knowledge? And yet, this attempt should not surprise you. It would be even more difficult to speak of Paradise if one had seen it with his eyes or experienced all its delights. We might say that it is precisely because Paradise is unknown to us that we are able to speak of it; and that St. Paul, whose brilliant lights have clarified the most obscure points, whose eloquence could embellish the dullest of subjects, St. Paul, I say, was silent on this matter only because his knowledge of it was too precise.

Holy Spirit, I do not ask that You favor me today with the divine clarity that is enjoyed by the blessed; this would only serve to dazzle my sight and to deprive me of the power of speech. I ask for lights which I can communicate to my listeners. I ask for that knowledge which the saints had of Paradise while they were still on earth, those views which ignited in their hearts such an intense desire to reach heaven, which made them moan and yearn impatiently for the moment of death, which

inspired in them so much contempt for all that we prize here below, and which prompted them to do and to suffer such great things for Your love.

How happy I would be if, by what I shall say today about the happiness of the saints, or even by all the sermons I shall preach this year, I might be responsible for the making of one saint! For, if it is true that God derives more honor from ~~one~~ Christian who is truly a saint than from a million Christians who are weak and imperfect, what greater good could I possibly achieve in life than to have contributed something toward placing one soul on the road to sanctity?

I know, Madam, that when Your Royal Highness commanded me to speak from this pulpit, you had no other intention than to provide all those who would hear me with a means of sanctification; and I firmly declare, in the presence of Jesus Christ, that, in obeying your orders, I will have no other objective than that of working toward the sanctification of my listeners. But, however good the intentions of Your Royal Highness and however great the care I vowed to second these intentions, I could hope for very little fruit from all of my efforts if I did not know that they would have the support of your good example. Bad Christians might reject all too quickly the reasons which I shall propose to convince them of their obligations. But what possible rebuttal can they use against the example of a Princess who, in the very prime of her life, occupying a rank where most men believe everything is allowed, and blessed with all the qualities of body and spirit which

usually inspire love for the world, declares herself strongly in favor of piety and practices all its devotions so faithfully and so fervently? Besides, Madam, speaking in the presence of a person whose conduct is as irreproachable as yours, I will not feel obliged to observe the many reservations that are sometimes dictated by prudence in the presence of princes whose lives are sinful and dissolute. There is no vice which I cannot attack openly, since there is none that is not already condemned by your conduct. I shall be free to utter even the harshest condemnations that the Spirit of God deigns to inspire in me against all the disorders of our century; no one will believe that these reproaches are directed against Your Royal Highness, and, thus, Madam, no restraint will be placed on the word of God by your presence; there will be no need to dissimulate before you the sinner's wounds, rather they will be made all the more shameful in contrast with your virtue. In addition to this help which I shall certainly derive from the piety of Your Royal Highness, permit me, Madam, to take the liberty of requesting the aid of your prayers to obtain from the Holy Spirit the assistance which together we will implore, if it pleases you, through the intercession of all the saints and especially that of the Blessed Virgin, who is their queen and our great advocate.

Ave Maria.

Of all the terms of praise used by the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures to describe Paradise, the one which in my opinion gives the best understanding of it is the name "holy city," or "city of saints," which is found in the twenty-first chapter of the Apocalypse. St. John neglects nothing in this same passage to paint a favorable picture of this celestial Jerusalem. He makes use of all of nature's most precious objects, and all that art and the imagination can add to nature. Even the foundations of this great city are made up of emeralds and sapphires; all of its buildings are of crystal and pure gold; gold glistens even beneath the feet of its inhabitants; the streets and public squares are adorned with it. The city is intersected at various places by a canal of running water, and bordering this canal are trees which are always in bloom, always green, and which produce new fruits each month. Finally, a heavenly body, infinitely more beautiful than the sun, casts over everything a light that is both soft and bright and which, without blinding the eyes, captures and reflects the brilliance of so much wealth. This luminous body produces an eternal day, a day that is ever-serene and ever-calm; it is never shrouded in clouds; it never sets to make way for the night. Nox enim non erit illic (For there will be no night in that place), for in this wondrous place there will be no night, no darkness.

This is without doubt an admirable place to live, and I fail to see how we still retain any affection for the earth, for this somber and polluted home, for this sewer of

the universe, after having cast our eyes on a region which is so delightful and so joyous. However, it is not this aspect, Gentlemen, which makes me yearn most for heaven. However beautiful it may appear to me in the vision given to us by St. John, I say that I can form an idea of it that is infinitely more magnificent when I consider that Paradise is the holy city of the blessed. And I base my assumption on this: Paradise is a city or a type of republic which is composed entirely of saints. Thus, in Paradise there will be no sin, none of the punishment that is due to sin, and no limits to the rewards that have been promised to virtue. Sin is in itself a great evil; it is without doubt the greatest of all evils. It is, therefore, a great good that sin is absent from Paradise, as I will show in the first point. It is sin which calls down on us all the other evils; all other evils will then be banished from Paradise along with sin: that will be the second point. Sin places limits on God's liberality; it prevents it from spreading itself with profusion over mankind; but, since in Paradise this obstacle will be lifted, God's liberality will know no limits: what I will demonstrate in the third point. And here is the whole outline of my discourse: in the New Jerusalem there will be no sin, no punishment due to sin, no limits to the rewards of virtue.

FIRST POINT

There is no consideration more capable of inspiring a great desire for Paradise in a person who is filled with the fear and the love of the Lord than that perfect innocence, that freedom from all weakness and imperfection which we will experience in heaven. Those truly Christian souls who fear no evil in the world except sin, who weep so bitterly over faults which seem inevitable in our state of weakness, who seek in the most terrible solitudes a refuge from temptation, to whom even death seems agreeable for the sole reason that it frees them from the peril of offending God--those holy souls, can they find in Paradise anything which touches them more deeply than the unfailing assurance that they will never again commit a sin?

But alas! how few are the men on earth who can delight in this thought! How little it will affect those sensual souls who pass their lives in sinful pleasures and who believe that it is impossible to be happy and virtuous at the same time! However, it must be said that no matter how fond of pleasure a sinner may be, it is not precisely the sin that he loves in the pleasure. St. Augustine reproaches himself in the Second Book of his Confessions, stating that, at the height of his debauchery, he was driven to such an excess of fury that he loved that which was forbidden simply because it was forbidden. But, then, he protests vehemently against this sentiment as one of unspeakable bestiality; he fails to understand how his heart could

possibly conceive it. O monstrum vitae ! O mortis profunditas !
potuit-ne libere, quod non licebat, non ob aliud, nisi quia
licebat (O monstrosity of life ! O depth of malice ! It was
possible for me to indulge in that which was forbidden for
no other reason than because it was forbidden). O monstrous
life ! O chasm of malice ! How was it possible for me to take
pleasure in things that were not permitted simply because they
were not permitted? I assume I am addressing Christians, per-
sons who believe in a God and in an eternity. This being as-
sumed, I say that there is no man who would not find greater
pleasure in pleasure itself if it could be separated from sin.
As long as there is a ray of faith left in your mind, try as
you may, and in spite of all your efforts to drown out the
reproaches of your conscience, you will never succeed in pre-
venting the thought of God Who sees all, or the thought of
death, or the fear of hell, from sometimes troubling you in
the midst of your pleasures. To enjoy pure pleasure, to attain
perfect felicity, it would be necessary to unite the greatest
pleasures with a perfect virtue.

And this alliance will take place in Paradise. The
saints are immersed in delights, in comparison with which all
our own joys are nothing but bitter sorrows. But this blissful
life does not degrade them; it is neither sinful nor dangerous;
it is even more saintly than were their earthly penances; and,
consequently, it is subject neither to the fear which accom-
panies worldly pleasures, nor to the confusion which follows
them, nor to the remorse which is the usual fruit and a kind of

natural torment attached to the pursuit of sinful pleasures.

But even if our own innocence were not the great blessing that it actually is, one could not deny that, at least in others, this quality is extremely desirable. There are all too many people who love evil, but there are few indeed who do not hate evil persons; one takes great pains to avoid them; one wishes, as far as possible, to deal only with people who are irreproachable and of known virtue. Indeed, how pleasant it would be to live permanently among people of model behavior, people who are incapable of doing anything that is not in keeping with the highest virtue! If there was a city on earth where all the inhabitants lived in such a state of innocence, simplicity, and unselfishness, with the gentleness and moderation which Jesus Christ demands of His followers; a city where there existed none of the disorders condemned by the Gospel, where mutual affection was practiced in such a way that each man loved his neighbor as sincerely and with as much tenderness as he loved himself, would this city not be, Christian Listeners, the most charming place in the universe? But alas! not only are we far from finding entire cities where such an admirable order prevails, but it is difficult to find even one family where such order is perfectly observed. We all inflict pain on one another, either because our characters are different, or because our moods are inconstant, or because our personal interests are almost always in conflict with those of others.

These differences, then, are the sources of most of

our hardships and sorrows. It is because we live among men who are highly imperfect and even, for the most part, quite evil; it would never be possible for you to avoid all the people who trouble your peace. A child will be disobedient, a member of your family will humiliate you by his conduct, a husband will be dissolute, a woman will be imprudent or licentious, a friend will betray you, a neighbor will quarrel with you, a servant will be insolent and unfaithful; you must be ever watchful, ever on your guard; you must examine all your words and suspect even those whose very role it is to watch over your goods and your life.

And, even if this were not so, one cannot restrict his life to his immediate household. It would be pleasant to establish contacts with other men, but where is one to find companionship which provides pleasure without danger? Where is one to find persons who are neither ignorant, nor inflated by their learning; persons who are truly rational without being either blinded by their passions or obstinate in their beliefs; men of piety who are not lacking in discretion; men of politeness and simplicity who know when to speak and when to be silent, who are neither aloof nor tiresome, who are agreeable and stable, who have wit, good sense, and sociability?

We must add that, however happy, however wise you may be, and however hard you may try to subdue your passions and to inconvenience no one, you will still not prevent the world from being full of people who are imperfect, whose intentions are evil and dishonest. There will always be violent men who

will lash out against reason and even against justice, envious men who need only know that someone is irreproachable to judge him completely unbearable, slanderers who will undertake to blacken the most nearly perfect virtues, malicious minds who are only too happy to cause harm to others, who will strive to place in a bad light even the most innocent actions, and to give an unfavorable interpretation to the best intentions.

Heu mihi, exclaimed David at this sight, heu mihi, quia incolatus meus prolongatus est! Habitavi cum habitantibus Cedar

(Alas for me, alas for me, because my sojourn has been prolonged, and here I am still living among the inhabitants of Cedar).

Alas! How miserable I am! My period of exile has been prolonged, and here I am still living among the inhabitants of Cedar, that is, among men who are impious, miserly, proud, and inhuman. Against my will I am forced to listen to their blasphemies, to witness their sacrileges, to suffer each day their cruelty, and to endure their proud and brutal moods,

quia incolatus meus prolongatus est! Habitavi cum habitantibus Cedar (because my sojourn has been prolonged! I am still living with the inhabitants of Cedar).

O Jerusalem! Holy and celestial Jerusalem! Blessed citizens of Paradise, among you none of these complaints will ever be heard. This is the hour, says the Prophet, when you must wear your most magnificent clothes and give all the outward signs of perfect joy, since the Lord will never admit among you any person who might cast dishonor on your group or alter in the slightest way the peace you now enjoy:

Induere vestimentis gloriae tuae, Civitas Sancti, quia non adjiciet ultra, ut pertranseat per te incircumcisis et immundus (Don your vestments of glory, O City of Saints, because no pagan and no defiled will pass on to the other side to mingle with you). You will never again have among you any mind that is disordered or any soul that is impure; far from ever committing sin with premeditation or malice, not one of you will ever fall even through weakness or ignorance. No longer will there be proud men to despise you, ambitious men to trouble you, miserly men to persecute you, envious men to spread calumnies about you, jealous men to suspect you, rash or audacious persons to injure you, bothersome ones to annoy you: Nemo laedetur, says the Venerable Bede, irascetur nemo; nemo invidet, cupiditas nulla exardescit, nullum ibi desiderium honoris pulsat, aut potestatis ambitio (No one will be hurt, no one will be angered; no one will envy, no cupidity will be kindled, no longing for honor will throb there, no ambition for power will exist). Your group will be totally composed of saints, men completely reformed in their minds and in their morals, enriched with all the virtues, cured of all passion, free from all error, full of light and charity. Those ranking highest in merit will be the most affable and the most humble; those whose glory is lower than our own, far from harboring resentment, will consider our elevation to be part of their own happiness and will render to God for us eternal acts of thanksgiving. Each will be content with his own lot and with that of his brothers. Only then can it truly

be said that we will have only one heart and one mind, but a heart that is pure and sincere, a mind that is intelligent and enlightened; we will have the same feelings, the same inclinations, but inclinations that are all honorable, and feelings that are all rational; we will always be pleased with everyone, everyone will always be pleased with us, and we will never have any cause for self-reproach. My God! how eagerly I await the many pleasures that will be mine in such a beautiful and holy society! If I find such charm in conversing with an honest man who is endowed with a sensitive mind, good judgment, and high integrity, what will it be to live exclusively with persons of this caliber, and to be forever assured of their esteem and their affection?

It is indeed a great blessing, Christian Company, to be in the city of saints, since sin is banished from it, since all its pleasures are innocent, and since all its members are impeccable. This first advantage calls forth a second, to which men are usually more responsive: In this holy Jerusalem, not only will there exist no disorder and no sin, but we will suffer none of the punishment which is due to sin. This is the second point.

SECOND POINT

This part of celestial happiness is not beyond our human understanding. We have nothing here below which gives us a true idea of the ineffable blessings enjoyed by the saints. But, as for the ills of which they are exempt, alas! we know

them all too well from our own experience. Therefore, just as we have judged that, to form some idea of God there was no better way than to consider Him as a Being exempt from all the defects that mar all other beings, to understand, in some measure, the happiness of the next life, the surest way, I believe, and the one which presents the least danger of illusions, is to think of it as completely free from all the miseries of this life. Sorrows, sickness, and death were only introduced into this world as a punishment for its disorders; all of these ills came to us with sin. But, since sin will never gain access to heaven, all of these evils will be banished from it forever.

Suddenly, we are relieved of a heavy burden. Who would ever be able to count all the miseries which besiege this wretched life? All that afflicts the body, all that wounds the heart, all that brings us shame, all that causes us anxiety; in a word, all pain, be it spiritual or sensual—all of this, I say, will not approach the paradise of the blessed. How numerous are the natural defects, both of body and soul, which are like crosses on which we are nailed at birth and from which it is impossible for us to detach ourselves!

All of these defects will be corrected in Paradise. All postures will be straight and graceful, all features pleasant and regular, all limbs healthy, all dispositions even, all minds penetrating and delicate. Poor people, you who on earth are rejected by all, and who are, in a sense, the slaves of the rich, have a little patience; the situation will have a totally different aspect in the holy city. Your humble

birth will not be held against you, and the powerful ones who hold you in contempt will, for the most part, occupy positions greatly inferior to your own. At least, you will no longer suffer from the cold, or thirst, or lack of sleep, or fatigue; the cold that you withstand with so much difficulty, the heat that renders your work so arduous, the poverty which is an endless source of all sorts of misery--all of this is excluded from heaven for all time. Daytime and springtime are eternal there; no object is displeasing to the eye and no sound is offensive to the ear; all the scents are fragrant; the air one breathes is always perfumed; there are no needs, no anxious desires, no memories of the past, no fear of the future to trouble your joy. Bless your God, holy city of Sion, says the Prophet David, for He was not content to close and fortify all your gates; He has erected around your most far-flung frontiers a kind of rampart, a wall of peace, under whose protection you may feast on the finest wheat, that is, on the purest delights of heaven, without being subjected to the fears or the fatigues which are the common lot of all men in this life: Lauda Deum tuum, Sion, quoniam confortavit seras portarum tuarum: posuit fines tuos pacem, et adipe frumenti satiat te (Sion, praise your God because He fortified the bolts of your doors: He brought peace to your territory and supplied you with the best of grain).

Tell me, Gentlemen, what causes you the most unhappiness today; reflect a moment on all the reasons you have to be afflicted. You have no possessions; you are treated with contempt; people do not recognize your worth; you have debts, legal suits, enemies; your health is poor, you suffer from acute toothaches,

headaches, kidney disorders, stomach pains. It is not in my power to promise an end to these ailments during this life; you may have to endure pain until your death. But, lift your eyes to heaven; that is where you will be relieved of all these crosses; that is where, infallibly, you will have immense treasures of which no one will challenge your ownership; that is where you will be loved and respected by all; you will be beyond the reach of all illnesses. At the present time, you are either unemployed or your work does not please you; it is either too dull or too arduous; it requires too much attention or too much constraint. Well, in Paradise you will only be occupied in doing pleasant tasks; you will enjoy an honorable leisure, which will be accompanied by untold pleasures; centuries will pass as quickly as moments, and pleasures will each day have a new and different appeal. Christian Woman, you have lost your child, your husband, your best friend; you will find them all in Paradise; they await there to embrace you, to share with you their bliss; you will see and love there all that you have loved here below with a reasonable and legitimate love. Finally, you have reached your declining years; life holds no more delights for you, and yet death frightens you. In the heavenly Jerusalem, you will live a life that never ends, a life that is glorious and immortal: Et mors ultra non erit; neque luctus, neque clamor, neque dolor erit ultra (And there will be no death beyond; no grief, no lamenting, no pain on the other side).

If even in this life,--and this is a reflection of the admirable St. John Chrysostom--if even in this life, however miserable it may be, there are people who enjoy perfect peace; if, despite the sorrows and the other adversities by which Divine Providence is sometimes pleased to try virtuous men, there are those who succeed in retaining deep in their souls, and even in displaying outwardly, an inalterable joy, what will it be when all sorrows, all trials, have come to an end? What will be the greatness of your joy in heaven, O holy souls? We know that you perform the most arduous tasks with joy; that you take pleasure in all that is opposed to human nature; that you find some savor in the greatest austerities and the most cruel mortifications, because a small amount of love has made them palatable. What will it be when this love will have reached its pinnacle and the time for penance is over? What will it be when you will have within yourself the power to sweeten the most terrible evils and all of these evils will have vanished?

I urge you, Christian Listeners, to reflect a moment on what I have said: that not only all the evils of this world, but also that death itself will never be allowed to enter into heaven. It is an advantage that is well worth a little more consideration, especially by the rich and the powerful of this century. It is said that there are few men, however miserable their lot in life, who are not sorry to die; but, for those who have been spared most of life's difficulties by means of their fortunes and their qualities, who can say what sadness they feel in the presence of death? How happy you would be, O powerful

men of this world, and with what increase of pleasure would you not enjoy the honors and delights which accompany you everywhere if they were meant to last forever; if there were no grave for you; if you did not know that one day death will deal with you as it deals with the most wretched slaves; that it will rob you of all you own, that it will disfigure you and make you the prey of worms and corruption, just as it will the lowliest of your servants? The world considers you very fortunate, but what summit of felicity would you attain if this thorn could be removed from your crown? Even if Paradise were to add to your present good fortune only the privilege of this glorious immortality, once and for all, do you not believe that Paradise would be worthy of all your desires? To be a king, to be a prince, to be among the leaders of a great kingdom and never to grow old, and never to die--I believe this to be the full extent of your ambition.

But, I say, in heaven this ambition will be fully satisfied. Pardon me, Lord, if, in speaking of the glory of the saints, I compare it to that of the kings and princes of this world, but we have no picture more striking than this one to portray to men this incomprehensible glory. I realize that the grandest courts of the universe are nothing in comparison with the heavenly court. But, I say, in heaven, with all that our imagination can conjure up of greatness and pleasures, we will never have to fear, never have to see, the end of this happiness. The sun which shines in Paradise is not a body which moves into the distance or hides itself after a few hours, and which, by its revolutions, marks the passage of days or years.

It is a fixed light which makes only one day, a day which never ends. However advanced in age we may be, we will in all certainty be rejuvenated, and this second youth will not fade away; in a word, we will be blessed with eternal health, and we will never again hear of old age or of death. Et mors ultra non erit (There will be no death beyond).

This promise is an article of our faith, Gentlemen. But is it not true that most people either do not believe it or do not give it any thought? For, if we believed it, or if we gave it some thought, imagine what efforts to reach heaven would be made by those people who strive by countless restrictions and artificial means to preserve I know not what flower of youth, which will be swept away by time despite these efforts! What would they not do to get to heaven, those who have such a strong fear of dying, those who, in order to live a little longer, impose upon themselves such stringent regulations and who renounce almost all the sweet things of life? My God, You offer us a life that is blissful and eternal; and, behaving as if we had no trust in Your promises, or as if we had lost sight of our most natural desires, we continue to live as if there were no life to hope for after this one!

Let us proceed, if you will, to the third point, which is the third advantage of the holy city: Since in Paradise, there is no sin, and, consequently, there are no punishments due to sin, there can be no limits there to the rewards that have been promised to virtue. That is my last point.

THIRD POINT

It is certain that nothing is more natural to God than the will to do good. We can say that it is at least equal to His power and that, if there were no obstacles to restrain His goodness--and, since nothing can withstand His power--He could not stop Himself from spreading His treasures among us in an unbelievable profusion. But sin opposes this generous impulse at every turn. There are good people in the world, that is true; there are even many more of them than we think; but, everywhere they are intermingled with evil ones; and, just as it takes only one saint to keep God from striking out against sinners with all the severity of His justice, so, also, it takes only a single sinner to shut off the sources of His liberality toward His most faithful friends. The prayer of Moses held back the arm of the Lord at the height of His fury. But, how often has the sin of a prince, or even that of a simple soldier, obliged Him to suspend the effects of His protection over His beloved people!

And, not only are there always sinners among the good people, but in most of these good persons, while they are on earth, there is always some small stain which spoils their virtue, or some slight imperfection which tarnishes it, so that, not finding in them a purity proportioned to the excellence of His gifts, God is, in a sense, forced to moderate His wishes and to restrict within very limited boundaries the passion He

has to communicate Himself to His creatures. For this reason the great St. Teresa, a highly discerning and enlightened saint, lamented the fact that, even among the most pious people, among those who gave much to God, there were very few who did not hold back something for human nature; that almost all were attached to this earth, at least by a thread; and that it was impossible to tell the number or the value of the blessings to which this small attachment, this scent of self-love, had barred the entrance.

But, Gentlemen, in Paradise this obstacle, which here below opposes divine liberality, will be totally removed. The separation of the good from the bad will have taken place, all the weeds will have been thrown into the fire, and penance or purgatory will have consumed in the souls of the saved even the slightest sins. Imagine, if you can, with what impetuosity and what abundance this tumultuous torrent, this divine liberality, will pour over the blessed. It is strange to see with what rigor God exercises His justice in regard to the damned: all sorts of torments, all the evils united together; no vestige of good, no consolation, no refreshment, not a drop of water, not a moment of respite, always burning; and all of this to last forever! God of love and of goodness, what can force You to such great severity! Christian Listeners, it is because in hell God sees only objects of hatred, only pure sin; His anger finds no obstacle, not a tear, not a single movement of real sorrow: everything irritates Him and provokes Him to vengeance. If, then,

our God, Who avenges Himself only with great regret, and Who in Himself has no inclination toward severity, Who is not even just in His essence, according to St. Augustine, but only through the necessity for punishment which is imposed on Him by our malice; if, I say, He does make use of such rigor when there is nothing to halt His justice, I leave it to you to imagine how magnificent He will be and with what profusion He will distribute His favors when nothing opposes His liberality, His natural and infinite desire to do good.

I have said that in heaven nothing will oppose the liberality of God; I add that all things will encourage Him in this munificence and that, on this point, justice will be in accord with His goodness. This consideration gives me an excellent idea of Paradise, and it seems to me that it must have the same effect on all others.

You have heard many times of the grandeurs of ancient Rome; it is true that the world has never seen anything to equal the majesty of its Senate, the magnificence of its buildings, the splendor of its victories, or the luxuries of its games and public festivals; it is impossible to say how many provinces were plundered to embellish this one city; rare and precious objects were brought there from all parts of the world; Her citizens had achieved such a high degree of power that they considered themselves to be greater than kings. St. Augustine confesses that it would have satisfied one of his most passionate desires to see that capital of the universe while it was in this flourishing state. But why all this glory, all this wealth,

why so much prosperity? All of this, if we believe the same St. Augustine, was to reward I know not what moral virtues of which a few Romans had given some examples. I do not say that these virtues were mixed with an unbelievable number of horrible vices, that these virtuous pagans were nonetheless proud, ambitious, and idolatrous; I do say that these virtues were, for the most part, nothing more than vices in disguise; that, not being animated by grace, they were, at best, only the shadows and ghosts of virtues. However, the Lord did not let them go unrewarded, and you see with what an abundance of temporal goods He repaid actions that were so imperfect and in which He had no part. What, then, can we expect when He wants to reward true virtues, virtues that are supernatural and heroic?

Imagine, if you will, the horrible torments which twelve or thirteen million martyrs endured for the love of Jesus Christ. Recall to mind the many princes, the many great lords and ladies who sacrificed their fortunes and their hopes, and even their lives, because of their desire to please God: how many young Christian girls preferred a cruel and shameful death to all the honors and worldly goods that passion, together with the false zeal of tyrants, could offer to seduce them; how many mothers exhorted their own children to let themselves be torn to shreds or burned alive; how many presented their own children to the executioners who were seeking them out to slaughter them. Cast your eyes over the vast solitudes where as many as fourteen or fifteen thousand hermits, clad in their hairshirts and peni-

tential belts, spent sixty or eighty years in such terrible penances that the simple account of it is enough to frighten us. Review briefly in your mind those remarkable examples of strength and constancy with which the lives of all our saints are filled: the legacies sold and distributed to the poor, the crowns and empires abandoned to embrace an obscure life; virginity preserved in the midst of the most corrupt courts, preserved even in marriage, and even in the royal bed; so many remarkable victories won over the most violent passions; so many sacrifices, exacting a high price from human nature, where the heart had allowed itself to be, in a sense, torn asunder in order to obey the will of God. None of all this has been rewarded on earth: it is in Paradise that the Lord has chosen to crown virtues that are so nearly perfect and so difficult; it is there that He fulfills the desires of those great souls who have shown only distaste for all the world's most charming attractions, who could never be satisfied by all the possessions and the pleasures of the world, who would not have taken one step to acquire complete dominion over the universe. It is in heaven that He recognizes the faithful servants who have loved Him unfaithfully, who have consumed themselves for His glory, who would have given a thousand lives rather than cause Him the smallest displeasure. This God, so rich, so kind, Who has been so liberal in rewarding the false virtues of the infidels, Who does good to His mortal enemies, what will He do for His chosen ones, for His saints, for His beloved souls? What will He do, Gentlemen?

It can be said that He will observe no limits in rewarding them; that He will not only share with them all His goods but will also give Himself to them without reserve. "I will offer Myself as your reward," He has said through His Prophet: Ego ero merces tua magna nimis (I shall be for you a tremendously great reward). This communication by God to the blessed souls will be effected through knowledge, a knowledge so perfect that it will produce in the saints a perfect resemblance to the Divinity: Similes ei erimus, quoniam videbimus eum sicuti est (We shall be like unto Him because we shall see Him as He is). Since we shall see Him just as He is, we will become like Him; we will be impeccable, immortal, and impassible, just as He is; free, powerful, happy, just as He is, and with the same happiness; and ours will last as long as His: Similes ei erimus, quoniam eum sicuti est. What is more, this sight of God will produce in the soul ecstasies, raptures of joy and love, of which no human eloquence can express the violence or the sweetness.

We can surmise some part of it with the help of the following considerations. When it pleases God to bring a little solace to His servants in the difficulties of this life, He endows their minds with certain lights which reveal to them one of His divine perfections or some Christian truth. These lights, however brilliant they may be, are always shrouded in much darkness: these are graces which strengthen faith but which do not change its nature, which is to be dim and obscure. Despite this darkness, these divine illuminations provide such great pleasures

to the soul that, even if there were no paradise to hope for, all those who have experienced them insist that they would not hesitate to prefer them to all the pleasures of this life.

St. Francis Borgia, who turned his back on such great riches and such great expectations, said that one half-hour spent in the oratory repaid him with the interest of usury for all that he had left behind him in the world, so that it was always with regret that he left the oratory, and only after seven or eight hours of mental prayer. Let us observe the great St. Anthony in the middle of the desert: When the sun restores joy to the rest of the world, after he has spent all night on his knees, he complains that it troubles his happiness by interrupting his conversation with God. St. Teresa, in Chapter twenty-eight of her Life, stated that she had searched hard and long to find the expressions that would explain something of what was happening in her soul while she was receiving these favors, but that she had finally accepted them as indescribable: that all she could say about them was that they caused her to lose her taste for all other pleasures; that, since the time when Jesus Christ deigned to reveal to her some of the causes for the brilliance which surrounds Him in heaven, all other heavenly bodies, even the sun, seemed to cast only shadows over the earth, and to her eyes men seemed to be phantoms; that she suffered from a deadly languor whenever these delights were removed; and that when she was again immersed in them, she came very close to dying of pleasure.

What will it be then, O my God, when all the shadows have been dispelled and all the veils drawn, and we shall see You just as You are, just as You see Yourself? What a torrent of delight will be unleashed when You unfold all Your treasures, when all your beauties appear in their full light, when we shall be struck at the same instant by the brightness of all Your infinite perfections! What felicity to contemplate this Being Who is immense, eternal, and incomprehensible, this Being Who is the source of all others, Who contains them all, Who is elevated infinitely above all things; to see in Him, clearly and without fear of error, all truths natural and supernatural, the causes of every effect, the reasons for all events, all the designs, all the resources of Divine Providence! But what sweetness there will be in penetrating the depths of the heart of God and finding there the loving thoughts, the tender emotions that He deigned to have for us during all eternity! What joy to be convinced by our own eyes that we are loved by this heart and to read there the immutable decree that He has made to love us eternally!

My God! how can we be so cold and so cowardly? Are these the kinds of advantages that we should ignore? What! this lovable, this peaceful innocence; this company of persons who are so reasonable, so spiritual, so accomplished; this absence of every kind of misery; this precious immortality, this fullness of goods and pleasures, this great profusion; these ultimate efforts of the infinite power and liberality of God? Paradise is the masterpiece of One Who, by a single word,

produced the sky and the stars; Who, without the slightest effort, made the dawn and the sun. Paradise is the Palace of the Creator, of the One Who adorns the earth, the home of His enemies; Who adorns it, I say, in the Spring with such care and such munificence. Does all of this not merit a little more ardor, a little more eagerness than we have shown thus far? St. Gregory the Great, in the fourth book of his Dialogues, the Venerable Bede, Cardinal Bellarmine, and many other great Doctors assure us that in purgatory there is one particular section in which the only suffering is an extreme desire to possess God, and that this section is reserved for the souls who, while they were on earth, did not sufficiently aspire to this great blessing. If this is so, if there is a purgatory for those whose yearning for heaven was lukewarm, to what torments will be condemned those who do not even deign to think of it, those who do not wish to exert any effort to achieve it, those who regard it with contempt, those who treat all that is said on this subject as mythical and visionary, and, finally, those who would prefer with all their hearts to live eternally on earth rather than acquire the countless goods and pleasures in this eternity of bliss? For, we must admit that there is truth to the charge that the world is full of people who would willingly renounce all their claims to heaven if they were assured that they would not go to hell. As for you, examine yourself just a little on this point. Would you exert great efforts to see God if you could remain as you are eternally? Is it not true that, in such a case, Paradise would not hold strong attractions for you? This truth is without doubt very strange, but this

one is stranger still: not only would we prefer to live eternally on earth rather than to live eternally in heaven, but we prefer this small portion of life that we have on earth, which is extremely brief, extremely fragile, to eternal life and eternal felicity. Confronted with the choice between enjoying a few days of uncertain unhappiness, and beginning in a few days a life of happiness that will never end, we choose with cool deliberation the vain and transitory felicity, we readily agree to lose the one which is not subject to death, we are fully determined never to live in Paradise. As it is written, Pro nihilo habuerunt terram desiderabilem (They held as nothing the longed-for land). They have scorned the Promised Land, the land of benediction, the heritage of the children of God, the reward for all their struggles, the object of so many tears and desires: Pro nihilo habuerunt terram desiderabilem.

Great Saints, who are already in the state of glory, what have you to say about this deplorable blindness? Does it not evoke in you a great pity? For, in truth, you see and possess now that which we might share with you; and yet, you know what keeps us tied to the earth, what makes us disdain your happiness. Yes, Gentlemen, the Saints gaze down on us with pity, and they cannot sufficiently deplore our madness. Poor fools, they say, alas! if only you knew what you are losing, if you knew what you could acquire in the short time that God gives you and what you are squandering aimlessly; if only you knew what you could purchase with the money which is gathering rust

in your coffers. If only you knew, ah! if only you knew into what royal court, into what brilliant company you could gain admission by a little retreat and solitude! If you could see, as we do, what feasts are given here as rewards for a few fasts, what musical concerts and perfumes repay a little mortification, what treasures are received for a small charitable donation! You call us blessed and you are justified; we are, in effect, more blessed than you would believe, more than we could say, infinitely more than we could have hoped. But how wretched you are to renounce such happiness for so little! It rests entirely with you to decide whether you will be what we are, and even more than we are; you hold in your hands the key to heaven; you have, in a sense, gold and diamonds without limit at your disposal; you can place yourself as high as you like; you can make yourself a crown as rich as you please; and you do not benefit from your advantage! What would we not do if we could be in your place! But, as for you, what would you not do if, with the time that is left to you, you had the knowledge that is ours!

Take courage, holy souls, whose lives are a continual practice of penance and austerities. Let, yes, let the world, in its false joy, feel for you a vain and false compassion. Do not become weary of your tears and your sufferings; you can never do too much to arrive where we are! Non sunt condignae passionibus hujus temporis ad futuram gloriam, quae revelabitur in nobis (The sufferings of this life are as nothing compared with future glory which will be unveiled before us).

And you, poor afflicted ones, whom Providence has, in a sense, given as prey to persecutions, sickness, and poverty, ah! may you never utter a complaint. The Lord could find no better way to demonstrate His love for you. We see here the triumphs that have been prepared for your perseverance. How numerous the delights, how great the glory, for a little suffering and humiliation! Gaudete et exultate (Rejoice and be glad), for it is very little to suffer in silence, no matter how great your pains may be. You have cause to rejoice and to exult with joy, at the sight of the immense happiness that these same sufferings will obtain for you: Quoniam merces vestra copiosa est in coelis (Because your reward in heaven is abounding). Great Apostles, glorious martyrs, invincible confessors, holy virgins, illustrious anchorites, charitable protectors of men who are still in peril, it is not enough for us to hear your counsels or see your examples, we also need your prayers. You know our weakness and the strength of our enemies. Obtain for us the grace of keeping always before our eyes what you have done for God, and what God is now doing for you, so that your good examples might teach us how we should live, and the sight of your reward might encourage us to live as we should. Amen.

SERMON XVII

FIRST SERMON
FOR PENTECOST DAY

Expedi vobis, ut ego vadum;
si enim non abiero, Paracletus
non veniet ad vos.

It is expedient for you that
I go away; for, if I do not go
away, the Paraclete will not
come to you.

(John 16:7)

The Holy Spirit applies the last touches to the
Christian to make him holy, adding understanding
to faith, zeal to charity, and fortitude to grace.

It would be difficult to say anything more favorable
about the Holy Spirit than the words of St. John that I have
just cited. They appear, even, to be greatly exaggerated and
totally beyond belief. For, after all, what possible blessings
could the third Person of the Most Holy Trinity bring to man
which would surpass, or even equal, those brought to us by the
Eternal Word when He assumed our human flesh? The Holy Spirit

will not be given to us until Jesus has left this earth; it is, therefore, necessary for Jesus to ascend to heaven, regardless of all the benefits that we might derive from His presence. It is to our advantage to lose Him; we should even wish for His departure to make place for the Paraclete. Can you bring yourselves to believe this truth, O Blessed Disciples, you who experience so much sweetness and so many blessings in the company of your good Master? That the Holy Spirit could console us in our grief over this absence, and that we might even find in Him all that we have lost in the person of the Son of God--both claims may not be impossible; but to say that He brings us more blessings than we have ever received, or new blessings not yet received, seems to contradict that other text which the Holy Spirit Himself dictated to St. Paul: "How can it be that He Who gave up His Son for love of us has not also given us all things with this Son?" Qui etiam proprio suo non pepercit, sed pro nobis omnibus tradidit illum, quomodo non etiam cum illo omnia nobis donavit (How is it that He Who did not spare His Own Son, but surrendered Him for all of us, did not also give us all things together with Him)?

Nevertheless, Gentlemen, it is true that the descent of the Holy Spirit on earth is a new blessing from God--and it represents the fullness of his blessings. But it is also true that without this new grace, all others, including the Redemption, would have been useless to us. Today, I wish to examine the nature of this precious gift and what it adds to all the other

gifts previously bestowed on us. We shall learn, at the same time, how to recognize by perceptible signs whether we have had some part in this gift, and what must be done, either to attract it into our hearts, or to keep it there once we possess it. Come down, divine Spirit, on each one of the faithful gathered here in Your name. For, how can I possibly speak of the effects which You produce in men, unless I experience, deep in my heart, that of which I speak? And how would my listeners understand what I have to say on this subject, unless they, themselves, experience that which they are about to hear? St. Augustine has said that the Holy Spirit will not become known to all unless He resides within us, but how will He be drawn there, Holy Virgin, except by your prayers? We ask these prayers of you by means of the one which the Church offers you so often. Ave Maria.

Among all of His creatures, none has received from God more assiduous attention, or has cost Him a greater price, than has man. The three divine Persons worked for a long time, and at various times, on this endeavor. They made great efforts, as if vying with one another, to perfect man, to make him worthy of admiration, and to be Themselves admired in this masterpiece. We might say that the Father sketched or formed man by creating him; the Son did the bulk of the work during the thirty-three years He spent on earth; but we must concede that it is the Holy Spirit Who completed man. The Father,

when forming man, endowed him with reason to know, an appetite to love, and the freedom to act and love with merit; the Son, when reforming this same man, gave him faith to direct his reason, charity to rectify his appetite, and grace to fortify his liberty; and the Holy Spirit, to put the finishing touches on this work, adds understanding to faith, zeal to charity, and force and magnanimity to grace. The Father gave us reason to make judgments on everything we see; the Son added faith to reason, that we might believe even that which we do not see; and the Holy Spirit joins understanding to faith, that we might believe what we do not see as if, in fact, we did see it. It is from the Father that we have received this will which impels us toward the good; it is the Son Who added to our will the habit of charity in order to lead us to the supreme Good; and it is the Holy Spirit Who adds zeal to charity, so that we might also bring to this supreme and eternal Good all that surrounds us. Finally, the Father gave us the liberty to act in conformity with nature; the Son added grace to our liberty to make it possible for us to perform actions which are above nature; and the Holy Spirit adds to this grace the gift of fortitude to make it not only possible but even ~~easy~~ to perform those acts which are most ~~contrary~~ to our nature. Thus we can say that the Father has made us human, that it is through Jesus Christ that we have become Christians, but that it is the Holy Spirit Who makes us saints. Gentlemen, if you will, let us examine how this great mystery operates in us, and let us attempt to explain, in the

three points of this discourse, the nature of this understanding which the Holy Spirit adds to faith; this zeal by which He inflames charity; and this fortitude by which He animates grace. These points constitute the subject of my talk.

FIRST POINT

You know, Gentlemen, that the disciples of our Savior, having been made orphans by the departure of their good Master, retired to Jerusalem where they awaited in solitude and prayer the Paraclete Who had been promised them. They had already been at prayer in this holy retreat for ten days when a violent wind, coming from heaven, suddenly surrounded the room in which they were enclosed, and, amid the greatest noise and violence, entered it from all sides. At the same moment, a powerful gust of fire, following in the wake of this tempestuous wind, enveloped them. Having at first filled them with fear--without, however, having burned them even slightly--this fiery breath separated into a thousand tiny flames which finally came to rest above their heads in the form of tongues. It was then, Christian Listeners, that the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles and that they became completely filled with Him; this fire, this whirlwind, this thunder were but symbols of what was happening invisibly within them; and I would venture to say that these symbols were very weak ones.

Jerusalem was at that time filled with a great number of Jews who had come from all parts of the world to celebrate

the feast of Pentecost. These visiting Jews joined those of the city, and all came rushing toward the place from which the noise had come; the Cenacle was quickly besieged by a great multitude of people from many different nations. The Apostles came out to address them, and to the great amazement of all, these humble fishermen mingled with the crowds and made themselves understood, not only by those of their own country but also by the Romans, the Greeks, the Africans, the Egyptians, the Medes, the Persians, and the Arabs; and they spoke all these languages with as much ease and force as if they had been speaking them from infancy. This feat, however, is not what really amazes me most. St. Peter, having noticed the great astonishment produced in their minds by this miracle, raised his voice to be heard by all and began to unfold before them the mystery which was taking place. The discourse which he gave them is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. He spoke especially about the divinity of the Savior, and he did so in the most forceful and solid manner imaginable. He used every argument capable of convincing even the most incredulous; he omitted none of the proofs; he established this divinity by citing the testimony of the Prophets; he traced in Holy Scripture the entire Gospel story up to the descent of the Holy Spirit. And from this same source, he pointed out all the circumstances that surrounded this present mystery; he enlarged upon the passages he cited, explaining obscure meanings, and basing his explanations on the strongest and soundest reasoning. To hear him, one would believe that he had grown up in the study of the Holy Books and

that he had been trained, by a long practice, in the art of public speaking and oration.

There, Gentlemen, you have the first effect which the Holy Spirit produces in the soul of one who receives Him: He gives him the understanding of supernatural things; that is, He enlightens him, gives him the conviction of the things he believes, and renders him capable of convincing others. The Son of God had concealed nothing from His disciples of all that His Father had taught Him: Omnia quaecunque audivi a Patre meo nota feci vobis (Whatever things I have heard from My Father I have made known to you). And yet, it is incredible how coarse they still remained at the time that Jesus left them. After three years of almost continual instruction and conversations, they had still not understood the reason for which Jesus had come among men; they did not believe that the world had been saved by His blood; they still expected Him to liberate Judea from Roman domination and reclaim the throne of David; they were still in this error on Ascension Day. I make no mention of the moral virtues of which He had given them innumerable examples and lessons; these were far easier to comprehend than were the other truths He had tried to impart; and yet, they had understood them no better.

How many times had He told them that He had come to establish a new order among His subjects; that he who is first must always seek the last place; that the one who would be master among them must serve all his brothers; that the lowliest



would be the greatest; that one could be elevated only through humiliation! He had told them all these things; and yet, we know that at the Last Supper, in the presence of their Master, on the eve of His death, they engaged in an argument over precedence, with each of them claiming superiority over the others. More than anything else, he had tried to instill in them a contempt for death, and a love for the cross and for persecutions. "Have no fear," He said, "of those who can harm only the body; he who lavishes too much love on his life will lose it; blessed are those who weep, those who suffer, and those who are persecuted for love of Me." None of these lessons had permeated their minds; nor had they served to make them less cowardly at the time of His Passion. It was necessary that the Holy Spirit descend upon them to give them the understanding of these beautiful maxims. That is why the Savior had promised that this Spirit of Truth would teach them all truth. "He will teach you," said Jesus, "all that I have taught you;" that is, "He will say nothing that is new, but He will give you the understanding of what I have already said." Ille vos docebit omnia, et suggeret vobis omnia quaecumque dixero vobis (He will teach you all things and will bring to your mind all that I have said to you).

We might say that the Holy Spirit adds to the knowledge of faith what light adds to form and color. When the sun came into this palace* today, it did not gild the alcoves, or

*The Palace of Saint James in London.

embroider the counterpanes, or carve the silverplate, or produce the paintings that enrich these quarters. All of this was accomplished before the sun's appearance; it added neither lines nor color. But although all was present before, none of it could be seen; and to our eyes, it was as if all of these beautiful furnishings did not exist. It was light from this heavenly body which made them visible; it is this light which allows us to admire both the substance and the workmanship. The same holds true in matters of religion and Christian morality. We know about all there is to know, for we have been instructed in these matters since our childhood. Preachers and books have left out none of the facts. But often it is as if all of this had become extinguished in our minds; and it is present there as if it were not present. And though many truths adorn our intellect, not one of them touches our will. It is because these truths have not been enlightened by that supernatural ray which seeks them out and causes them to shine as it enters our minds; it is as though these truths had been painted in our memory, but had gone unnoticed by the soul. Whenever the Holy Spirit comes within us, we are surprised to see all at once things that we had failed to see until then, although, in a manner of speaking, we had touched these things many times and had had them frequently before our eyes. We are astonished to find that we could have had, along with the most exact knowledge of the truth, a gross ignorance of that same truth. It

seems as if, until then, we had believed only in a dreamlike fashion, so great is the difference between the full light of day which presently surrounds us and the shadows from which we have emerged.

In addition to what I have said about the Apostles, there exists another beautiful example in those who listened to the preaching of St. Peter. No sooner had he told them that this Jesus, Whom they had crucified, was the Redeemer, than three thousand of them threw themselves at his feet broken-hearted and eager to do penance for so hideous a crime: Viri fratres, quid facere debemus (Brothers, what should we men do)? "Brothers," they said, "what do you order us to do?" or "what do you advise us to do?" How marvelous that these hardened hearts who, for three years, had withstood the eloquence, the sanctity, the miracles, the gentleness, and all the charms of the Savior of the world, would now surrender--on hearing the first discourse of a man who had neither reputation nor learning--and that, in a manner of speaking, they would surrender unconditionally! Jesus Christ, in His entire life, attracted only five hundred disciples, and these--it must be said--were still, for the most part, very imperfect when He left them. And now we see three thousand persons who in a single day renounce the Jewish faith; and, what is more surprising, who divest themselves of their goods, which are placed in a common trust and distributed to the poor!

There, Gentlemen, you see what impression truth makes

on men when the Holy Spirit gives them the understanding of this truth. I notice that those who are uneducated tend to blame their ignorance for their lack of faith, while the learned ones blame the obscurity of our mysteries and demand to see miracles before they are convinced. Both are definitely wrong. Human knowledge, bereft of the lights of the Holy Spirit, would produce more atheists and more heretics than true believers, and miracles would only serve to blind us and to harden our hearts even more. But let the Holy Spirit descend on earth and twelve fishermen become masters of the world, and the greatest enemies of Jesus Christ, those who had persecuted Him because He had performed miracles that were too startling and too numerous, these men, I say, then believe in Him on the simple testimony of His disciples.

Now, do you really wish to know whether you have received the Holy Spirit? You have only to observe yourself to see what effect is produced on your mind by the word of God and the truths of our faith. Take two Christians who believe that Hell exists and that, for a single mortal sin, one could be unhappy for all eternity and lose God beyond recall. The one who has not received the Holy Spirit will not cease to commit mortal sins or give in to even slight temptations; the other will fear sin a thousand times more than death. He will be astonished that there are men capable of offending God; he will not understand how, in the past, he himself could offend Him and know any peace after having done so. A

person who has received the Holy Spirit believes in the Holy Sacrament of the altar. Believes in it, I say? Nay, he relishes it; he perceives Jesus Christ hidden there; he has no less desire to receive Him, is no less happy after receiving Him, and is no less charmed by the excess of His love, or less repulsed by the love of creatures than if he could see with his own eyes all that faith teaches him about this mystery.

What would you do, you who are perhaps vacillating between heaven and earth; you who are on one side attracted by God and on the other chained to the world; you who feel stirring within you the desire to become holy, but who have too little courage for so beautiful an enterprise? What would you do if, this night, when you have retired to your room, Jesus Christ appeared to you, as He appeared to St. Paul, and beseeched you to persecute Him no longer in your heart, where He wishes to establish His dwelling, where He wishes to rule and to shower His most precious blessings? What would you do if the Blessed Virgin brought her Son to your oratory, placed Him in your arms, begged you to care for Him, and not to refuse Him as your Spouse? Would you hesitate any longer to embrace a life of holiness and perfection? What mortifications you would embrace, if your guardian angel were to conduct you this night, in body and soul, to the gates of hell, and were to show you the various torments suffered there; or if one of your deceased friends, enveloped in flames, came to your bedside to warn you to beware of the misery into which he had

fallen? A person who has received the Holy Spirit, without having seen any of these things, serves God with as much fervor as if he had actually seen them. He has no need for such startling graces to confirm him in his faith; he does not even desire them and does not envy those who have received them. What would I learn from such visions, he asks, that I do not already know? What need is there for clarification when one has no doubts? Why would I not live as perfectly as do those persons to whom God has granted these most remarkable favors, since I believe all that ~~they have~~ seen as if I had seen it myself? Am I any less convinced that paradise exists than if I had been transported to third heaven with St. Paul? Will the Lord be any less pleased with my services than if I had been, in some way, forced to serve Him without reserve? Does He not speak clearly enough in the depths of my heart? Do I not hear Him as He offers me His love and asks for my own?

How fruitful it is to preach to people who reason thus! How easy it is to convince them, and how favorably they receive our message! For them, our words always seem so reasonable, so eloquent, so strong and convincing! When the Holy Spirit descends into a soul, it sometimes takes only a single word to bring about a change from a life of sin to one of mortification, from a mediocre piety to a desire for the most sublime perfection. ^{This person} / discovers in the words of the preacher mysteries that even the preacher himself does not understand. He will feel himself all aflame over some-

thing which has left the speaker completely untouched and which was said with hardly any idea of touching this soul. Super omnes docentes me intellexi (I have learned more than all those who are teaching me). He can say with David: "I have learned much more than my masters taught me, much more than they themselves knew." These, Christian Listeners, are the dispositions of one who, added to his faith, has received from the Holy Spirit the understanding of the things he must believe. Now, let us examine the effect produced in us by the zeal which this same Holy Spirit adds to our charity. This examination will constitute the second part, which, like the third, will be brief.

SECOND POINT

I believe, Gentlemen, that of all the passions, love would be the sweetest and most delightful, if it could be separated from the pain that comes from within us when we feel that we are not loved enough, as well as from the pain that comes from others when we are loved to excess. But since it is very rare to find a great tenderness that is not accompanied by jealousy, we are, in most cases, tormented either by the strong emotions that we are experiencing, or by those that we have caused in others. If the love that is offered you is weak, your own love is dissatisfied; but if you are loved to excess, this love becomes

importunate. We are therefore justified in saying that of all the passions, love is the most cruel, since it always tyrannizes either the person who loves or the person who is loved. The love of God is not subject to this misery or to these base weaknesses, and that is why it imparts to the soul pleasures that are so pure. Far from degenerating into jealousy, in the measure that it increases, it generates zeal, which is an emotion completely opposed to jealousy. When we deeply love some creature, we wish to be the only one to love it and we wish to be the only one to be loved by it; but when we love God properly, we have no greater desire than to cause Him to be loved by the whole world and to cause the whole world to be loved by Him.

Thus, when Jesus Christ appeared to St. Peter after the Resurrection on the banks of Lake Tiberius, He asked three times if Peter loved Him. To which the saint always gave the same reply: "Yes, Lord, I love You; You Who know all things, know this well." "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep," replied the Savior. Pasce agnos meos, pasce oves meas. It was as if He were trying to say: How is it that you have no concern to reassemble for Me that flock which I earned with My blood and which is now dispersed throughout the world? You love Me, but you do not think of making Me loved by your brothers! You love Me, but it does not disturb you that I am an object of aversion to the Jews and of scorn to the pagans! It is strange that these words, so powerful

and so often repeated, failed at that time to awaken the charity of this Apostle. There is even cause for astonishment in the fact that all the disciples did not leave Jerusalem on the very date of the Resurrection to conquer the incredulity of the Jews by those proofs, so visible and so striking, which they had of the divinity of their Master. It was not that they did not love the Son of God; it was that the Holy Spirit had not yet come to inspire them with that zeal which is like the ardor of love. But once they had received the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, the charity that was in their hearts, like an excellent perfume stirred by the warmth of this divine fire, began to spread its fragrance on all sides; and the charity itself began to spread like a liquid that has been brought to the boiling point by fire and that, having risen little by little, finally spills over the sides of its container which is no longer large enough to hold it.

Let us observe the Apostles, who until this day have been hiding in fear and who now suddenly throw open all the doors of the Cenacle; who all at the same moment, like inspired men, stride out to make the whole city of Jerusalem resound with the name of the risen Savior. Their preaching is so eloquent and so full of fervor that the multitude of Jews assembled around them stand bewildered by the ardor that transports them and question one another as to what could be its cause. Some of the more malicious among them

believe that they are drunk and that the fumes of wine which have risen to their heads have caused this strange furor which possesses them. Alii autem irridentes dicebant: Quia musto pleni sunt isti (Others laughingly said: Because these are filled with new wine). But the impact made by their words on the people quickly silenced these slanderers.

I do not intend to report here all that the Apostles, led by this zeal, continued to do for the conversion of the Jews and the pagans. Let me just say briefly that they recognized no limits short of the universe; that they brought their fire everywhere; that no force, no power, no obstacle was able to stop them; that they proclaimed the Kingdom of Heaven with their last breath; that, even after their deaths, their blood continued to preach the faith of the Savior; and that their ashes gave rise to Christians and martyrs. These twelve simple fishermen had no sooner received the Holy Spirit than they conceived a plan to bring the whole world under the rule of Jesus crucified. Their project was vast and full of danger; but they undertook it, nonetheless, and never abandoned it until it was executed. No, there was no region, however wild and uncultivated, where they did not bring the Gospel; no people, however ignorant or barbarous, that they did not civilize and subdue; no sect, however deeply entrenched, that they did not uproot; no religion, however ancient, that they did not abolish; no kingdom,

however powerful, that they did not submit to the power of their good Master; and they did all of this without help and without human aid, their ardent and unflagging zeal supplementing for all, overcoming all difficulties, and compensating for knowledge, strength, authority, eloquence, and wealth.

Gentlemen, those who have already received the Holy Spirit will quickly know it by this sign: Notice if you are aflame with that fire which seeks only to enlighten, to warn, and to consume all things. Are you touched by the tragic grief of the souls that are being lost? Have you ever shed tears over the blindness of unfaithful Christians? Do you suffer with difficulty the fact that God is so little known and so little loved by men? What are you doing to give them this knowledge, and to inspire them with this love? I do not ask if you have done anything comparable to the works of a St. Paul or a St. Thomas. I ask only if, among your friends or at least among your family, you have taken some pains to inject, to establish, and to keep alive, the life of piety? We must not delude ourselves about our condition or our works. Once the Holy Spirit is in a soul, He makes Himself known to all who approach this person, communicating His presence in one way or another. We might say He makes virtue contagious and transforms a simple Christian into an apostle. Effundam de Spiritu meo super omnem carnem, et prophetabunt filii vestri, et filiae vestrae (I shall pour forth My Spirit over all

flesh, and both your sons and your daughters will prophesy). I shall pour forth My Spirit, said the Lord, on all people; and those who receive it, whatever their condition, their age, or even their sex, shall, at the outset, become zealous preachers.

Every Christian, said St. John Chrysostom, should be, in the world, as the yeast which warms the dough into which it is mixed, and causes it to rise. But a Christian who has received the Holy Spirit performs this duty quite naturally. All his discourses and conversations are edifying; everything about him is a sermon, even his facial expression, his clothing, and his silence. He preaches by his alms, by his regular attendance and his modesty in church; he preaches by the fervent prayers which he offers to God for the conversion of sinners and the perseverance of good people. And not only is it true that by these means he is sometimes more fruitful than all the preachers combined, but often it is to his secret prayers that we owe all the fruit which is attributed to the most renowned preachers.

Who could record the numerous ways in which the zeal of a soul filled with the Holy Spirit will manifest itself, or the many occasions this soul will find on which to exercise such zeal! It is because of this zeal that he takes pains to conceal and keep secret all that might scandalize the weak; that he delights in making public, and proclaiming openly, all that could inspire in others the love of virtue.

It is for the same motive that he is happy to praise those persons who live good lives, to honor them before the world, and to show preference for them in any favors he may bestow. Far from him is the thought of causing any pain to those who are given to lives of piety by speaking of their conversion, by seeming to watch them too closely, or by opposing them in their holy desires. To the contrary, he tries to be pleasant and even serviceable to them; he helps them and strengthens them as much as possible in their resolutions. His generosity, his kindness, the friendships he forms, and the services he renders, all tend toward the conversion and the sanctification of souls; he attempts to draw them to him that he may lead them more easily to God. The poor, the sick, all who suffer (whatever the misfortune by which the Lord has afflicted them), are objects of God's love, and when He strikes them, it is only to make them good or to make them better. A zealous soul strives to make God's plan succeed; he seeks out the afflicted who are shunned by most of the world; he attempts to console and support them when they are assailed by suffering, and to sustain them against the temptation to despair; he tries to teach them to know and adore the Author of their misfortunes, to benefit from these ills for the next life, and to seek happiness that is lasting and perfect. I repeat: Effundam de Spiritu meo super omnem carnem, et prophetabunt filii vestri, et filiae vestrae. And we need have no fear that they will be disheartened by the painful efforts required for these acts of zeal; for, in addition to the grace of Jesus

Christ, they have also received the gift of fortitude, which the Holy Spirit adds to grace. This is the third point.

THIRD POINT

Although sin had not completely stripped man of his liberty, it is certain that it had left him in such a weakened state that he would almost necessarily have been driven to evil, if he had not received, in the grace of the Redeemer, that which he had lost through the crime of his father. This grace was given to strengthen within us the controlling force of our reason against the assaults of our lower appetites; as well as to create a balance whereby the will could not be overpowered by either side, and the strength of the will to submit to the law would be no lesser than its tendency to disobey. The gift of fortitude which the Holy Spirit communicated to man places us in a position that is even more favorable. Grace did nothing more than balance the scales between good and evil; but the grace of fortitude even helps tip the scale on the side of good. Grace represses cupidity; fortitude, in a sense, stifles it and even gives rise to, shall we say, a holy cupidity, which allows us to find in virtue the same appeal which makes it natural for us to love vice.

This effect is so visible in the Apostles that it would be vain for us to look elsewhere for evidence of it.

Never has the world witnessed such firm resolve following upon such great weakness, or a greater indifference toward death following upon such abject cowardice, or, finally, a more sincere and ardent desire for suffering following upon the strongest aversion for the slightest pain. We could say that the Spirit Whom they have just received has not simply reformed them, but has transformed them into new men. It is not strong enough to say that they fear nothing; they now love all that they had once feared. In the Garden, they had fled at the sight of a few soldiers who were no threat to them; on this day, they appear before a large populace which has been lying in wait for them, and they dare to reproach these people openly with the most horrible injustice, the greatest crime ever committed. St. Peter, who had not had the courage to confess Jesus Christ before a lowly servant girl, today preaches Him in the middle of public squares, and even in the Temple of Jerusalem itself. The Doctors of the Law are scandalized by these ^{actions} and order these new preachers to be dragged before the Judges and punished for their sedition. They go gladly and return full of joy because they have been found worthy to be insulted for the love of Jesus Christ. Are they threatened with the cross? It is, rather, the object of their greatest desires. When they fail to find this cross in their own country, they will go to the farthest ends of the earth for it; and when, finally, they will be attached

will
to it, they/almost expire from joy before their torments
can claim their lives!

All those who have received the Holy Spirit share these same dispositions. The difficulties they encounter in the practice of virtue does not frighten them. They find pleasure in all the work and all the austerities of penance. To be insulted, to pardon an injury, to mortify a desire, to renounce some vanity, to be silent, to concede, to obey, these are all victories which, at one time, had seemed impossible to them; today, these victories are won almost without a battle. St. Basil tells us that these souls triumph over all sorts of enemies, and it is but child's play for them. Omne genus bellorum ipsis ridiculum existit (Every kind of war appears ridiculous to them). Let us assume that we accept all that has been said. If, today, we were asked the same question that St. Paul once put to the Ephesians: Si Spiritum Sanctum accepistis credentes (Faithful souls, have you received the Holy Spirit)? What would we have to answer? What strength, what fortitude do we experience when the occasion arises to do or to suffer something for Jesus Christ? Alas, we are, for the most part, still so very weak! We take so long to forget an injury! It is such an ordeal to draw from us a sincere pardon! How many battles must we wage to gain even one triumph over our pride, to renounce some gain unjustly acquired, or to give up some of the luxuries and the vanities in our attire! We occasionally form

good resolutions: we are, for a few days, totally disenchanted with worldly things, totally convinced of the happiness that comes from serving God; we may even take some steps in the right direction. But it takes so little to tempt us, to win us over, to make us forget these feelings, and to reinstate us in the worldly life for which we had seemingly felt such aversion! We can barely hold out against one request, one example, one object, or one thought. I repeat: Si Spiritum Sanctum accepistis credentes? No, we certainly have not received the Holy Spirit. Perhaps we have never truly known that there was One Who communicated in this way with just souls, and who produced the effects that we have described: Neque si Spiritus Sanctus est, audivimus (Nor have we heard whether there is a Holy Spirit). In any event, I am quite certain that if we have not received Him, it is for lack of asking, because Jesus has given His word that the Father will grant this gift of the Spirit to our prayer with the same facility that a man gives bread to his children in need, upon their request.

Let us then ask for this Spirit of truth, this Spirit of love, this Spirit of fortitude, this Spirit Who produces the saints and the truly devout, and Who renders the devout life so easy and so stable. Let us repeat often with the Church: Veni Sancte Spiritus, et emitte coelitus lucis tuae radium (Come, Holy Spirit, and send forth from heaven a ray of Your light). Come, Holy Spirit, send us

from heaven a ray of Your light, that light which fills the soul with clarity and, in a moment, rids it of all the errors of this age; which teaches the soul all that it should love, and makes it love duty above all things. Veni, Pater pauperum; veni, Dator munerum (Come, Father of the poor, come giver of gifts). Since You are the Father of the poor, could You find anyone more suitable on whom to shower Your bounties than on us, who are not only devoid of all virtue and all spiritual blessings, but who also live in a region of darkness, where piety is so little known and so little practiced, where we lack both teachings and examples, and where one finds so little freedom to love You but such great freedom to do all other things? Veni, Lumen cordium (Come, Light of hearts). Come, divine Light of hearts! All other lights can but illumine our minds or produce a cold and sterile knowledge; You alone can disperse the shadows formed by our passions and make our love clear-sighted and reasonable: Consolator optime, dulcis Hospes animae, dulce refrigerium (Most gracious Comforter, sweet Host of the soul, sweet refreshment). Come, admirable Paraclete, Who not only lightens our troubles, but Who even makes them agreeable by showing us how they can serve us.

How happy we will be when You have established Your dwelling within us, since all is calm where You reside, and because You never fail to bring with You hope and joy. Lava quod est sordidum, riga quod est aridum, sana quod est saucium

(Wash what is soiled, water what is dry, cure what is wounded).

It is true that we are not worthy to receive You, but it is only by receiving You that we will become better than we are. You alone can purify hearts which the world has totally corrupted and cure wounds that are so deep, and so often reopened.

Flecte quod est rigidum, fove quod est frigidum, rege quod est

devium (Bend what is rigid, warm up what is cold, straighten what is crooked). It is Your role to conquer our obstinacy,

to inflame our lukewarmness, and to correct our deviations.

Da virtutis meritum, da salutis exitum, da perenne gaudium.

(Grant the reward of virtue, grant the grace of perseverance, grant everlasting joy). It is Your role to engage us, by an

attraction that is both strong and sweet, in the practice of

virtue; to give us perseverance; and, finally, to reward Your

own gifts in us and to crown all these graces with a glory

that is infinite and eternal. And all these gifts I wish for

you, Gentlemen, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the

Holy Spirit. Amen.

SERMON XXXIV

SECOND SERMON FOR
THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

Quomodo potest homo nasci,
cum sit senex.

How is it possible for one
who is already advanced in
age to be born anew?
(John 3:4)

There are three things to observe in the mysterious birth of the faithful: the careful preparation which precedes it, the wrenchings which accompany it, and the joy which follows it.

It is not for lack of material that I put aside today the mystery of the Birth of Our Lady, in order to speak to you about the mysterious birth of Christians. But, since everything that I might say about the former could equally apply to all other feasts of the Blessed Virgin, I have resolved to discuss the latter inasmuch as I am not sure of finding a more favorable occasion to do so. By the term

"birth," Gentlemen, I mean the beginning of a life of purity and perfection, undertaken by a soul which has been touched by God after several years spent in sinfulness or lukewarmness. At these beginnings, there are certain developments which are well worth noting and which, I hope, can be of some usefulness to most of my listeners. Divine Spirit, since You alone are the author of the mysteries that I shall attempt to develop, You alone are capable of providing me with the lights I need to speak of these mysteries in a fitting manner. I ask for these lights. Ave Maria.

To cover all aspects of spiritual rebirth, that is, the conversion of a Christian soul, I believe it is necessary to consider three different periods of time: the time which precedes the conversion, the time when it actually takes place, and the time which follows it. In the period which precedes the conversion, great care is taken: first, by the soul who is about to give birth, so to speak, to the holy resolution of serving God; and then, by God, Who forms in this soul that holy resolution and helps him to bring it to life. During that period in which the soul actually undergoes conversion, when he resolves once and for all, and without reserve, to live a Christian life, there are battles and there are pains greater than any suffered by mothers in childbirth. In the period following the conversion, not only does one forget all the pain one has suffered, Jam non meminit pressuræ, quia est homo in mundum (Already, she has forgotten the pangs, because a man

has been born into the world), but this ordeal is followed by a happiness which surpasses all happiness and which repays the soul a hundredfold for any joys it renounced for the love of God. It is necessary to explain all of these points a little more fully and to show, in the three points of this discourse, what precedes Christian rebirth, what accompanies it, and what follows it. In the first point, we shall see the careful preparation which precedes it; in the second, the wrenchings which accompany it; and in the third, the joy which follows it. These points comprise the content and division of my discourse.

FIRST POINT

One of the most pleasant activities of holy souls is to reflect on the manner in which God proceeded to draw them to Him. They discover in His actions such great love and such paternal kindness that they cannot find words strong enough to praise Him, and they must exclaim, as did St. Teresa each time she dwelt on this thought: Misericordias Domini in aeternum cantabo (I shall forever sing the mercies of the Lord). I wish to have no other occupation for all eternity than that of singing Your mercies. And though this transformation takes place in the most secret recesses of the soul and though, as St. Augustine reminds us, we may see a change in men's lives without being able to see the inner workings which have brought about this change, and though God has many ways of drawing us to Him and does not always follow the same methods, I never-

theless, propose to present here the way these changes usually occur.

God almost always begins by an external grace, which is so called because it comes through the senses and is by itself unable to prepare the soul to love God. St. Magdalene heard Jesus Christ preach and watched Him perform miracles. St. Augustine listened to an account of the life of St. Anthony and the conversion of two young courtiers who, though they had enviable stations at court and were engaged to marry two very wise and beautiful maidens, embraced the solitary life and took a vow of perpetual chastity. St. Elizabeth of Hungary, upon entering a church one day, adorned in a dazzling attire befitting a nymph, found her gaze resting by chance on a crucifix. St. Francis Borgia found the dead body of the Empress, who was also his mistress and one of the most beautiful women in Europe; he found her, I say, after three days, and the stench was so repulsive that no one could approach her, and she was so hideous that he was never able to swear to her identity. Someone else, by a happy chance, came upon a pious book and a chapter that was particularly suited to him; another witnessed the death of a famous sinner; and another heard an edifying discourse or witnessed an example of heroic virtue. All these illustrate the initial favor that divine Providence usually reserves for a chosen soul. This favor, as I have already said, is powerless in itself; it is but the channel through which a holy and salutary thought can reach the mind, and this thought serves as the seed of our sanctification. Et quae congregasti ejus

grunt (And these riches which you have amassed, whose will they be)? asks God, addressing the heart of the wealthy man who is perhaps attending a funeral service for another wealthy man; all that you have amassed, whose will it be? To the ambitious man who sees a person of influence cut down by an accidental death: Quid prodest homini (What does it profit a man) to have reached such heights? The voluptuous man who hears about hell may say to himself: This state is for eternity, while all my pleasures last only a moment: Momentaneum, quod delectat, aeternum, quod cruciat (Fleeting is that which gives delight, eternal is that which causes suffering). At a time when some young woman is particularly obsessed with her own beauty she may unexpectedly catch sight of the bald and ugly head of a dead person; and to her mind may come the thought that this head had perhaps at one time been more beautiful than her own is at present, and that one day hers will be no less hideous than the one she now looks upon.

This heavenly light, this good thought, is accompanied by a holy impulse and a natural warmth which inflames the heart and implants there a holy desire for conversion. All of this happens within us, says St. Augustine, but it happens without our participation and often even despite us. This light is in our mind, and this good desire is in our heart. Yet, we have so little control over them that we are powerless either to bar their entrance into our soul or to draw them there, although we are able to stifle them or to encourage them once they have been given to us. Thus, Gentlemen, how

important it is to enlighten those who, while remaining attached to the world and to themselves, believe that they are quite good enough simply because they experience many good feelings, and because they are often pursued by a desire to serve God. Instead of taking pride in these graces, they should hope to be deprived of them unless they intend to respond to them. These are talents for which a most rigorous account will be demanded of them. Far from providing them with a source of security, these graces will be the grounds on which they will be infallibly condemned. I grant that they are proofs of the Lord's love for them, but we also know that it is this same love, rebuffed and scorned, which will animate God's justice and anger against sinners.

If we were as docile and as zealous for our salvation as we should be, and as we could be, this grace, at whatever time it came to us, would suffice to persuade us to live a good life. But because we are beset by many enemies, and because we love ourselves so imperfectly, the Lord must take special care to accommodate Himself to our time and call on us when the circumstances are favorable to us; otherwise, this good desire would surely be aborted and we would be made even worse by the very method which was meant to sanctify us. But when God has decided to be master of a heart, it is marvelous to observe the loving wisdom with which he arranges all things to favor His plan, and the care with which He sweeps away all the obstacles which might oppose it.

For example, He will choose a time when the mind is most free of care or when it is filled with thoughts that are

most clearly related to the ones he wishes to inspire in us; He will catch us when a passion is in its decline, a passion which has long wearied us and has left our heart empty and bitter. He will seek us out in solitude, in darkness, in affliction, or on a sick bed where illness allows us little interest in worldly joys and where the idea of death reveals to us more clearly the vanity of these joys; He will wait upon, or even advance, the death of a husband who occupies the heart of his wife so completely that it would be useless to attempt to inspire her with a more spiritual love; He will take advantage of a man's disgrace and offer His friendship at the very time when adversity has alienated all his other friends; He will permit that a faithless confidant betray us, that some occupation keep us from the most dangerous occasions, that necessity or chance place us in contact with persons of great piety; He will make use of a religious feast, when everyone is called to do penance and when frequent sermons can strengthen this idea we have of living a good life; He will allow us to fall into the hands of a zealous confessor, one who is capable of bringing this holy resolution to life, of sustaining it at its birth, and of feeding and intensifying its fervor. Tu exurgens misereberis Sion, quia tempus miserendi ejus, quia venit tempus (Rising up, You will have compassion on Sion, because the time--the time of Your mercy --has come). O Lord, let it be under such circumstances that You send us Your grace, for a favor so carefully prepared will not fail to be effective and will produce in us the fruits

You expect of it.

Under circumstances such as these, a thought which had passed through our mind a hundred times with no results will now make on our heart an impression so deep that it will be almost impossible for us to resist it. It was in this way that the Lord dealt with David. He did not approach him in the first stages of his sinful passion; He waited until time had diminished the intensity of this passion; and then He kindled in his mind feelings of resentment against an imaginary injustice, in order to prepare him for a justified hatred of himself for the cruelty of which he was guilty. And, finally, He sent him a man who was able to counsel him and spur him on to repentance, able to deepen the wound that the grace of remorse would soon inflict on his heart and provide him with the means of appeasing God and preparing himself for the great hardships which God, in His merciful justice, would send to chastise him in this life. If God had chosen to confront this holy man at some other point in time, surely His efforts and His graces would have been in vain; but, by the same token, if this holy prophet had failed to respond on this occasion, it is very likely that he would have waited in vain for another opportunity to do so.

I mean, Christian Listeners, that just as it is necessary for God to accommodate Himself to our time when He inspires us with a holy resolution, so is it necessary for us to accept God's time in forming this resolution. There is a special moment when we are particularly well disposed to hear

God; but there is also a special moment, and perhaps there is but one for each of us, when God is favorably disposed to hear us. David referred to it as the time of good pleasure: Tempus beneplaciti (The time of good pleasure), and another prophet calls it the time of acceptance, the day of salvation: Ecce nunc tempus acceptabile, ecce nunc dies salutis (Behold, now is the time of acceptance; behold now is the day of salvation). If we allow this favorable time to slip by, it will never return, and it will be useless for us to try on the morrow, or at any future date, to bring about that change in our lives which God is perhaps asking of us today. The Bride, hearing a knock at her door, deliberated for some time about whether or not she would rise; when finally she decided to do so, it was too late: the Bridegroom had already withdrawn; she sought him in vain; she called him and received no answer: Quaesivi illum et non inveni, vocavi et non respondit mihi (I sought him and did not find him; I called but he did not answer me). Never had any remorse seemed more sincere than that shown by Saul of Antioch and Balthasar; they asked for forgiveness of their sin, and there were tears in their eyes; but they did not ask at the proper time, and for this reason, their request was not granted.

O wretched Soul, who in the past may have been the object of God's diligent pursuit but who now appear before me in a deadly lukewarm state, unable to rekindle in your soul those desires of sanctity which you once felt so frequently, who could contemplate the immensity of your loss without shed-

ding a torrent of tears and without saying with Jesus Christ: Quoniam si cognovisses et tu, et quidem in hac die tua, quae ad pacem tibi! Nunc autem abscondita sunt oculis tuis (If you had known, and indeed if you had known in this your day, what could bring you peace! Now, however, all these things have been hidden from your eyes). Ah! if only you had realized on the day I called you what could bring you happiness! But now, all of these things are hidden from you: Venient dies in te, et circumdabunt te inimici tui vallo, eo quod non cognoveris tempus visitationis tuae (The days will come when your enemy will surround you by a wall because you will not have recognized the time of your visitation). All the ills that will befall you in the future will be the result of your negligence; you will be the prey of your enemies because you did not recognize the time when I visited you or, in any event, because you refused to profit by My visit.

I beg you to observe, Christian Listeners, that because that which prevents us from listening to the voice of God is so unworthy of our affection and our esteem, the Lord, in His anger at being scorned for things so vile, will not be content merely to scorn us in return; but often He will also deprive us of that which we so cravenly preferred to the honor of His service. For example, He will permit that a woman who had feared to appear devout before others will be regarded by the world as a coquette, a fraud, and a hypocrite. The man who could not break his attachment at court will find himself banished from it in disgrace; the woman who feared to tarnish her

beauty by mortification will be disfigured by illness. This was the fate of the Jewish nation, according to a remark by St. Augustine: Temporalia perdere timuerunt et vitam aeternam non cogitaverunt, ac sic utrumque perdiderunt (They feared the loss of temporal goods and gave no thought to eternal life; thus, they lost both). They feared the loss of the vain and fleeting things, but they did not fear the loss of eternal things; and, consequently, they lost both. For this reason, if the Holy Spirit chooses to inspire you today with the thought of changing your life, in God's name, welcome that inspiration with respect and take the same care to realize it as God has taken to send it to you at the propitious time. Begin by taking this thought into a solitary place lest it be erased by other concerns; give it your serious consideration; nourish this spark by reading good books; communicate it to people who can help you to breathe, as it were, new life into it, and to produce a great blaze in your heart. But, above all, never cease asking God for more abundant light and for the strength to accomplish His will.

Those who treat their inspiration in this way soon become so convinced of the advantage and the necessity of belonging completely to God that, for them, all that is needed is to form the kind of firm resolution which is invariably kept. And, finally, they do form it. But at what cost to them in terms of pain and struggles! These are, in a sense, the wrenchings of their spiritual childbirth. And this is the topic of the second part.

SECOND POINT

We cannot deny, Christian Listeners, that the resolution to live a holy life requires great courage, and timid souls are unable to form such a resolution. Even the most stalwart have great battles to sustain before they can achieve victory. Human nature, the world, and the devil are strongly opposed to such a plan, and they exert incredible efforts to thwart it.

No sooner is the spirit fully convinced that it must deny itself, than human nature, alarmed by this imminent peril to itself, breaks out in open rebellion and revolts against its own destruction with such violence that, without God's infinite power to sustain it, the will would be infallibly vanquished in this battle. There ensues a kind of terrible struggle between grace and the created will, or rather between two opposing wills within ourselves; a struggle much like the cruel agony endured by Christ in the Garden of Olives, which was severe enough to wring blood from His veins. On one hand, grace proclaims that, in order to assure our salvation, we must make a complete renunciation of vanity; that God deserves this sacrifice; and that His rewards are more than adequate to repay those who make it. But how can man stifle all his passions and change, as it were, his very nature? It is no small matter even to commit oneself to such an undertaking; and how can one expect human frailty to persevere in this violent battle against self?

Since one is uncertain of reaching the goal, would it not be wiser to refrain from setting out at all? How is it possible, St. Cyprian asked, for me to rid my soul of the servitude which has plagued it for so long, unless I tear it from my body? How is one expected to uproot, so abruptly and with such ease, that which time and habit have made second nature? How can a man who has become accustomed to sumptuous and elegant meals resign himself to frugality or even fasting? How can one who has taken delight in the glitter of gold and crimson in his clothing become content with the most modest apparel? How can he who loves honor and splendor agree to lead a life of obscurity? And, finally, for one who is caught up in the seductive snares of vice, how can he conquer the intemperance which attracts him, the pride which swells him up, the anger which inflames him, the greed which troubles him, the ambition which consumes him, and the lust for pleasure which transports him? These, continued the saint, are the objections I faced before my conversion, when I was still afloat on worldly waves and burdened by the errors of my early life.

During this period of agony, it would be futile to preach to a soul about the sweetness of a holy life; it would be useless to tell him that the yoke of Jesus Christ is a light one, that His commandments are like honey, and that there is manna hidden beneath His most difficult counsels. For he sees only the thorns in God's law; he sees only the cross and none of the sweetness. He feels the force of concupiscence and fails to understand the force of grace, since he has never experienced it.° Picture

those poor Hebrews who were being pursued by the Pharaoh brandishing his sword; to escape him, they had no alternative but to plunge into the Red Sea! Imagine their anxious fears, Gentlemen, as they faced those great waves and the monsters which inhabited the sea! It was indeed through those monsters and those waves that they must pass. But they could not know that one moment after they set foot on the banks, the waters would part to provide them with a safe and pleasant passage-way. So it happens to one who resolves to give himself to God without reserve. The life he plans to lead is truly beyond the powers of nature, and this frightened nature will not allow him to believe that God must perform a miracle to facilitate that which seems impossible. You will perhaps not believe me when I tell you that I have seen some people at this stage who not only lost their sleep and their appetite, but who were feverish, prostrate with anguish, and were plunged for a time in a sadness which seemed serious enough to bring on death. Each time I reflect on these interior struggles, I think of poor Sarah and the complaints she uttered whenever she felt Jacob and Esau warring within her womb. Si sic mihi futurum erat, quid necesse fuit concipere (If this is to be my future, why was it necessary for me to conceive)? O Lord, why these many lights and holy impulses, if just as I am about to surrender myself to You, I am stopped by such powerful enemies? Have you inspired in me this wish to serve You only to have me sense my inability to do so? Would it not have been better to leave me in my darkness than to enlighten me only to show me my misery without

freeing me from it? Si sic mihi futurum erat, quid necesse fuit concipere? It is impossible to say, Gentlemen, how many good intentions and holy resolutions are aborted by these early difficulties. How many persons, having almost committed themselves, lose heart when confronted by these enemies and resume their lives of mediocrity, as did the infant Jacob at his birth, when he withdrew his foot from his mother's womb.

And, as yet, we have spoken of only one enemy. The world and the devil have also joined forces with nature, and sometimes they are more detrimental to us than nature is. When we take a closer look at what we actually fear when we stand in awe of the world's opinions and judgments, we are truly astonished to see how some people who are wise and rational in most matters allow themselves to be frightened by this phantom. It is indeed very odd to abandon our plans of serving God, with all our hopes for the next life, simply to please those who might find fault with our conduct; that is, to please complete strangers, libertines, people for whom we have only contempt, from whom we can expect nothing, who have never given us a thought and who probably never will, regardless of what kind of life we choose to live. Even so, it is true, at least in some cases, that these fears constitute the greatest temptation; but once we have conquered them, we are very close to a victory that is whole and complete. I will not speak here of those evil relatives and friends who sometimes attempt to stifle the fruits of grace and, while calling themselves Christians, even believing themselves to be good

Christians, oppose the sanctification of their loved ones, out of a false tenderness, and a spirit of friendship that is foolish and blind and a thousand times worse than the most deadly hatred. And is it not true that there are even some confessors and directors who, instead of aiding grace and seconding God in His designs, brand as presumptuous and foolish the fervor of a soul who has been called by God to sanctity; and who compel him to grovel, to subject himself to worldly laws, and to be content with a life of mediocrity, even when this person feels most strongly impelled to turn his back on all things and follow Jesus Christ to Calvary? In this regard, surely these leaders are even more wretched than were those Egyptian midwives who, when ordered to abort or to strangle all Israelite infants at birth, refused to execute so barbaric a command and continued to perform their functions faithfully and to serve the people of God in the manner expected of them.

Finally, the devil injects himself into all of these different attacks and makes use of both force and artifice to overthrow God's plans. It is true that he never sleeps and is always busy setting traps that will ensnare us ever more deeply into evil. But when he knows he is on the verge of losing a soul and sees him about to enter the road of perfection, where he will be virtually out of reach of all diabolical stings, and where he will give more glory to God than a whole nation of mediocre Christians, what troubles he attempts to stir up within that person! At times, he will

magnify in his imagination the difficulties which he already dreads; at other times, he will exaggerate the sweetness of the pleasures that must be renounced. He will attempt to kindle in his body the fires of impurity while striving at the same time to extinguish in his mind the lights of faith. He will present life as too long to be spent in continual mortification, and eternity as too uncertain to be preferred to the good things of this earth. And, finally, he will imitate that demon in the Gospel who was deaf and dumb and who, knowing that he was about to be expelled from the body he occupied, began to emit the most terrifying howls, casting the poor soul to the ground, tormenting him in a thousand ways, and causing in him convulsions far more frightening than any he had previously experienced. I am not sure whether my talk will be too long today, Gentlemen, but I cannot conclude this second part without mentioning St. Augustine since, at the time of his conversion, he had to wage all the battles which I have outlined today.

After God allowed him to see the error of his ways and the shame of his debauchery, He pressed him strongly to extricate himself from these sinful habits; the saint then began to reproach himself for his delay and his obstinacy. By that time, he found only bitterness in sin; he was charmed by the chaste life, and in St. Ambrose he found much to admire: impeccable virtue, a soul that was liberated from the world and elevated above the universe, a mind that was both solid and penetrating, combined with a profound doctrine and an

incomparable eloquence. He had veneration for the life of the solitary monks who, under the leadership of this holy Prelate, lived outside the walls of Milan. And miserable wretch that I am, he would exclaim, must I remain forever attached to the world, must I continue to wallow in the mud and filth! Ah, I have delayed long enough, he said; at last, I desire--yes, I desire--to renounce these false pleasures. But no, I am deceiving myself; I do not desire it, and even if I did, would I have the strength to do so? He had occasional doubts about whether there existed a God Who would demand that he give himself to Him in such an unreserved way; and once these doubts were dispelled, he had further doubts about whether this God was powerful enough to cure him of his sinful habits. On one hand, he visualized chastity, as exemplified in a vast number of virgins, who found so easy that which seemed impossible to him. But, on the other hand, pleasures would step forward and say in their seductive tones: Why, Augustine, you are planning to leave us; and you bid us farewell so early, in the bloom of your youth! Do you honestly believe you are able to do without us forever! Dimittis-ne nos, et a momento isto non erimus tecum ultra in aeternum (Are you leaving us, and shall we not be with you on the other side in eternity)? Ah, Lord, adds the great saint, do not permit that I should ever be reminded of all the filth which passed, at that time, through my mind. I resorted to prayer but I was fearful of having my prayers answered too soon. Timebam ne me cito exaudires, et sanares a morbis con-

cupiscentiae, quam malebam expleri, quam extinguere (I was fearful that you would answer me quickly, and that you would heal me from the diseases of my concupiscence which I preferred to have satisfied than extinguished). My God, I said, grant me the continence which I have been seeking for so long. But no, do not hasten to grant this wish; let it be some other day, if You please. But when will this day come? I desire it, yet I fear it; I await it, but I hope to wait a while longer. Et tu, Domine, usquequo? Quamdiu? Quamdiu eras et eras? Quare non hac hora finis est turpitudinis meae (And You, Lord, what is Your limit? As long as tomorrow? and the next day? Why not now? Why is this hour not the end of my baseness)? But You, Lord, how long are You prepared to wait for me and to allow me to waver in this way between the motions of Your grace and those of my concupiscence? How long will this exhausting battle last? How long? I ask. Will it end today? or tomorrow? Why not today, why not at this hour? Why continue any longer in my sin and my obstinacy? What did I not say against myself in those days, continues this great man! What reproaches I made to my soul! What spurs I used to urge it to follow You, O my God! But it always held back, pleading weakness. And even after I had convinced my soul and exposed the falseness of these excuses; after it had no more arguments to offer, it continued to remain in trembling silence and feared more than death the loss of those habits which were causing its deathly corruption: Remanserat muta trepidatio, et quasi mortem reformidabat restringi a fluxu consuetudinis,

quo tabescebat in mortem (A silent fear had remained, and in this state, it feared unto death to be restricted from its usual course of action, in which it was wasting away in a deadly corruption).

And that, Gentlemen, is a good example of what happens in the conversion of most Christians. It is amid all of those temptations, and at the cost of violent struggles, that a generous soul, assisted by the grace of the Lord, forms the stable resolution to belong to God and offers Him the perfect sacrifice of his heart. If you are still engaged in these struggles, the more violent they are, the more I urge you in God's name not to lose courage. If in losing you, Hell were to lose only a small prize, if God had destined you for just an ordinary sanctity, if it were just a moderate happiness that He wished to give you, the devil would not fight God so desperately for this conquest; he would ~~consent~~ to lose you with much less regret. I noticed that at the same time that St. Augustine was converted and in the same place Alypius also conceived a desire for a more ordered life. But since he was not destined to receive the same graces or to render the same services to the Church as his friend, he met almost no resistance from within himself or from the enemies of his salvation; he passed quietly and peacefully into the state to which he was called.

Esto igitur et praetiare bella Domini (Therefore, be brave and fight the Lord's battles). Have courage, then, chosen and beloved Soul. Remember that it is for God, for yourself, for paradise, and for eternity that you struggle; that the moment after you have overcome the major obstacle which stands in your path,

the moment after you have said these words with firm conviction: I desire it; it is settled; I belong to God--you will begin to savor an indescribable peace and joy. On this topic, I shall add but a few words in closing my discourse.

THIRD POINT

Gentlemen, I know of no better way to describe the state of the soul which has finally resolved to do all that God demands of it than to remind you of those legendary knights of old who, after waging many long battles against a thousand mythical monsters in enchanted caves, suddenly noticed that the spell was broken and found themselves enveloped by warm sunlight in a place of peace and solitude. For it is true that the thick darkness, the fears, and the sorrow of which we have spoken give way to a great tranquility, to sweet tears, and to a joy that is so sudden and so complete that past struggles seem no more than a dream, and that one is inclined to look for the difficulties which had frightened him and which have so abruptly vanished. St. Bernard, in explaining the following words from the Gospel: "Put on My yoke" and you will find rest," said that all souls who give themselves to God generously share the same experience as Abraham on Mount Horeb. This holy man who was ordered to sacrifice his only son had suffered for three days all the pangs of paternal tenderness that would be felt by the most loving father in the world under similar circumstances. He did not doubt that his son Isaac, who represented his total joy, would be slain by his own hand. He

was resolved to obey, and it is not difficult to imagine what tremendous self-mastery was needed to maintain that resolution. But behold his joy and the rapture of his soul when, at the very moment that he expected to immolate, in the person of his beloved son, all his delights and his hopes, he was stopped by an invisible hand and was told that, far from losing Isaac, he had gained by his obedience the promise of a large posterity; and that God would accept as a victim a ram which had become entangled in a nearby thorn patch. This is a good picture of what happens to all who definitely resolve to serve God. They find that, far from having to renounce all delights, as they had imagined, they have been plunged into a torrent of real pleasure; that they have renounced only trouble and sorrow; that they have all the merit that comes from a difficult act of obedience; and that, by obeying, they have done nothing but free themselves from all sorts of vexations.

We sometimes wonder by what sign we can know whether we have taken this genuine resolution, since each day we take so many which seem sincere to us. My answer, Gentlemen, is that once we have taken it, we will have no further need to look for signs. Once we have taken it, we sense that we are free, that all chains have been broken, and that our enemies have been overcome. We find that what had until then seemed impossible to us now seems easy; we are astonished at the obstinacy with which we opposed the inspirations of the Lord. We have no knowledge of how this miracle came about, but in the end we no longer have any doubt about the miracle itself. Nunc scio vere (Truly, now

I know), we can say with St. Peter, as he found himself outside the walls of the prison in Jerusalem, quia missit Dominus angelorum suum, et eripuit me de manu Herodis et de omni expectatione plebis Judaeorum (that the Lord sent His angel and snatched me from Herod's hand and from all my judgment by the Jewish people). Ah! It is truly at this moment that I am free and beyond the reach of my enemies! No, I am not sleeping, and this release is not an illusion; I feel that my freedom is the work of the Lord and it is a stroke of His mercy and His infinite power. Dixi: Nunc coepi; haec mutatio dexteræ Excelsi (I said: Now I have begun; this change is from the Almighty's right hand). It is then that the kind father receives the prodigal on his return with an incredibly warm and loving embrace. This is not simply a day of forgiveness and reconciliation; it is a day of feasting and rejoicing; this day is one long banquet, and the joyous sound of music fills the air.

But all that I might say in this regard is nothing compared to what I find in the Confessions of St. Augustine. I feel compelled to cite some part of it here, if only to inspire you with the desire to read all of it yourselves. This great saint said that from the moment that he made up his mind to abandon forever all that kept him attached to the world--that he surrendered, so to speak, to the grace that had been pressing him from within--he felt as if his soul were flooded with a torrent of divine consolations; and having retired to a solitary place in order to savor this new-found sweetness, he began to shed tears that were so sweet and so abundant that they wiped out even the slightest remembrance of the pleasures and

the sufferings of his past life. Up to this point, he had admired the pure, Christian life of those great servants of God about whom others had spoken. But then, it surprised him greatly to note how few there were who imitated them. He began to experience great compassion for all the poor, blind persons who made such faulty judgments about true piety, and to wish that all his companions in revelry could now witness the feelings in his heart. For, continued the saint, what I said then in the abundance of Your consolations, O my God, could have converted all the Manicheans, if they had been present to hear me: Quam subito suave factum est carere suavitatibus nugarum; et quas amittere metus fuerat, jam dimittere gaudium erat (How suddenly sweet it was to do without the sweetness of trifles; and it now became a joy to give up those things which I had feared to let go). How promptly, O Lord, did I find joy in renouncing all sensual delights! How happy I was in my first realization that I would henceforth lead a chaste life, I who a moment before had dreaded such a life as much as I dreaded death! Where had it been buried so long, this great liberty that I was only then discovering? From what deep abyss had it sprung up so instantly, to make me understand so easily that which had always seemed impossible to me?

No further prompting was needed to make Augustine abandon the vain projects of his ambition. He was, at that time, teaching rhetoric with great success and recognition, and he valued his position both for its prestige and its utility. But he resolved to leave it permanently as soon as the

school year was ended. There were only nine days left, but to him this period seemed ^{so} interminable that if God had not substituted patience for the passions which had previously sustained him, he would never have been able to see it through. He had suffered earlier from attacks of lung trouble, and this illness had filled him with great sadness. Now he began to rejoice in this condition, for he hoped it would provide him with a reason to withdraw into a life of solitude and meditation, which had now become his dream. And, finally, although there had probably never been a man so dominated by public opinion and so easily swayed by the speeches and judgments of men, Augustine suddenly found that these enemy influences had so weakened their hold over his heart that it became impossible for him to disguise his true feelings. The wound You inflicted on me, he said, addressing his God, was too wide and too deep to go unnoticed; there was blazing in my heart a fire too intense to be hidden; and all the speeches, all the opposition, had much more power to strengthen this flame than to diminish it in the slightest degree. Ah, Lord! concluded this great saint, glowing with love and gratitude and transported by the memory of this exceptional grace, let me recall Your mercies; may my bones rejoice and say: Lord, who is like unto You? You have broken my chains; I will sacrifice to You a victim of praise: Domine, quis similis tibi? Dirupisti vincula mea; sacrificabo tibi hostiam laudis (Lord, who is like You? You have put asunder my chains; I shall sacrifice to You a victim of praise).

This example is, of course, a very illustrious one. But if we were allowed to cite other cases which we have known, we could present more recent examples that are no less remarkable although they concern less prominent people. I shall say no more regarding the birth of the Christian. Perhaps God will provide me with some other opportunity to speak of the happiness of his life and death. But if it is true to say that man begins to experience a great joy from the first moment that he sets foot on the road to piety, why does Jesus Christ portray this road to us as one which is very rough, very narrow, and covered with thorns? Why does He speak to us only in terms of sacrifice, of the cross, of mortifications, and of death? Numquid adhaeret tibi sedes iniquitatis, qui fingis laborem in praecepto (Someone may cling to you, O seat of iniquity, because in good conduct you have shown only hardship).

Lord, permit me to say it: Is it not very unfair of You to frighten us in this way by false difficulties, and to turn us away from the road to heaven by leading us to believe that it is too demanding? Gentlemen, are we not displaying our incredulity by refusing to believe the testimony of all the saints who assure us that it is we who delude ourselves, and that the cross, the abnegations, and the thorns are not what they seem at first view; that beneath these frightening words and this terrifying exterior are hidden the indescribable delights which they themselves have enjoyed, and which are infinitely superior to all sensual pleasures? If they had found only disillusionment in these joys, how could they persevere with

such confidence? Why would they strive so valiantly to bring along with them all the people they love and cherish most in this world? But regardless of what we say or do, Lord, You have decreed that the knowledge of what You hold in store for those who love You will be given only to those who are willing to experience this love. It is certainly not our place to criticize any order which You have given; may Your will be done in all things. We ask only that You take into account our weakness and that You not allow us to be so strongly tempted as to be vanquished. Let nature revolt against Your grace, let the world oppose our pious plans, let all of Hell take up arms to prevent us from coming to You, provided only that You extend Your arms toward us, and that, in the end, You sweep away all obstacles. We are willing to earn, by all of these battles, the honor of a complete victory and the blessing of being with You without reserve, for time and for eternity. Amen.

SERMON XXXVI*

FIRST SERMON

FOR THE FEAST OF ST. JOSEPH

Jacob genuit Joseph virum
Mariae.

Jacob was the father of Joseph,
and Joseph was the spouse of
Mary.

(Matt. 1:16)

The alliance of Joseph with Mary was the fruit of the high degree of sanctity which he attained before his marriage; and it was the cause of an even higher degree of sanctity, to which he was elevated by this marriage.

We know very little about the life of the saint who is being honored by the Church today. The Gospels record only three or four of his actions, and, as an early author notes, not one of his spoken words has been transmitted to us. The

*Given in Lyon on March 19, 1674, in the church of
Trinity College.

reason may be that the Evangelists, so filled with the marvels which they had to relate about the Savior, found themselves almost unable to attend to other things; or that the Holy Spirit, in this way, wished to draw our attention to the silence and humility of St. Joseph, as well as to his love for solitude and the hidden life. Whatever the reason, it has resulted in a great loss for us. If the Lord had permitted us to have a detailed account of the life of this great saint, we would certainly find there a wealth of good rules and examples, particularly for those in the married state. But, although we have good reason to regard this loss with infinite regret, I believe it is one which affects our own interests only, without diminishing in any way the stature of St. Joseph. If the Holy Books had said no more about him than the words which I have chosen for my topic—Virum Mariae (The spouse of Mary)—these would be enough to indicate an extraordinary holiness, and to provide all Christian orators with a wealth of material.

For my part, far from complaining about the sterility of today's subject, I must admit that I find in these few words so much meaning that I feel overwhelmed both by the number and by the excellence of the thoughts they contain. If it were possible for me to reveal their full meaning, Christian Listeners, I have no doubt that this would prove to be the greatest eulogy ever given this saint. I know only too well that my explanation will be far from perfect. I hope, however, that the Blessed Virgin will take an interest in promoting the

glory of her spouse, and that she will obtain for you the lights that are needed to compensate for the weakness of my thoughts and words. We may ask her for this grace with confidence; let us do so by reciting the usual prayer: Ave Maria.

Even if there were no other reasons to praise Joseph, I believe we would be compelled to do so, simply out of a desire to please Mary. It is impossible to doubt that she takes full part in the homage that we render to this saint, and that she herself is highly honored by this praise. First of all, she cherished him as a true spouse, feeling for him all the natural sentiments of a virtuous woman in regard to the man with whom God had united her so intimately. Then, the manner in which Joseph exercised the authority he had over her and the respect in which he held her virginal purity inspired Mary with a gratitude equal to the love she had for this virtue, and, as a result, filled her with a great zeal for his glory.

Therefore, we should praise St. Joseph, if for no other reason than because he was Mary's spouse. And I will add that it would be right to do so even if we could say no more in his favor than that he was the spouse of Mary. His life can be divided into two parts: the period which preceded his marriage, and the period which followed it. We know nothing at all about the first part, and very little about the second. Nevertheless, it is my intention to show that both were periods of very great holiness. The first part was

certainly holy, since it was crowned by such a beautiful marriage. The second part was even holier, since it includes all the years spent in this marriage. What I am saying is that this glorious alliance was the fruit of the great sanctity that Joseph had already attained, and that it was also the cause of an even higher degree of sanctity to which he would be raised after the marriage. And now, if you will, let us examine, in the first part of this discourse, what level of sanctity he must have attained at the time of the marriage; and, in the second part, what level of sanctity he must have reached during the marriage. ^{examination} This will comprise my entire talk..

FIRST POINT

A virtuous woman is a great legacy, says the Holy Spirit in Ecclesiastes, Chapter twenty-six. In distributing the good things of this world, Providence intended that the good woman be part of the allotment assigned to the God-fearing man; she would be given him as the reward of his good actions: Para bona, mulier bona in parte timendum Deum; debitor viro pro factis bonis (A good inheritance is a good woman in the portion of those who fear God; she will be given to the virtuous man as a reward for his good deeds). Indeed, Gentlemen, does it not seem entirely reasonable that a girl who is sweet, prudent, and virtuous should be reserved for a man who is very honorable himself? Would it not be a double injustice if she were given to one who is vicious? Would this

not be an offense both against the good man who is deprived of the virtuous girl, and the virtuous girl herself who is turned over to an evil man? For, in truth, the honest man deserves to meet a woman who will bring him happiness, and the woman who is capable of doing so should not be joined to a man who will only make her life unhappy.

This principle held true when the time came to give Mary a husband, and it was the Lord Himself who desired to make the choice for her. It is unnecessary for me to describe this incomparable Virgin. You know that she is the loveliest and holiest creature who ever existed; that the Holy Spirit Himself had chosen her among all women to be His beloved spouse; that He had endowed her with the fullness of His graces and had rendered her worthy of being respected and admired by the angels; and, finally, that the Eternal Word had found no one on earth more deserving to be His Mother. If this marriage had been planned by men, there are those who would have chosen for Mary the most handsome of men; others, the richest among the Jews; and still others, the most powerful prince in the world. But it is from the hand of God that she will receive a spouse; and it is quite obvious that God will give her the holiest of all men because it is the holiest who is most worthy of her, and because she herself is worthy of the holiest among men.

I believe that this idea alone should give us a good understanding of the sanctity of St. Joseph. If a good woman is meant to reward the man who receives her, how great must be

the virtue which merited Mary as its reward; yes, Mary, whose merit is infinite, and who herself has been judged worthy of being the Mother of God! But leaving aside her excellence as a wife, let us concentrate solely on what God has in store for her. Gentlemen, the Redemption of the world was at last at hand, and it was through Mary that the Redeemer would come to us. A husband had to be found to veil this great mystery, to hide it from both men and the devil. Who is the blessed man who will be chosen by heaven over all others? I call him blessed and I truly believe I am justified in doing so for, after all, he will share in all the secrets of the Incarnation of the Eternal Word; he will participate in a very special relationship with the divine Persons; he will, in a sense, be taken into their confidence and will each day receive their orders and their advice, either directly from God or by the mediation of angels. Mary's spouse will be present at the birth of Jesus; he will adore Him with the shepherds; he will see the Wise Men kneel before His crib; he will receive their gifts and hear directly from them the whole account of their journey. At the time of the Circumcision, he will give the Savior His name and collect the drops of blood that fall from this painful wound; he will know the joy of saving the life of the Divine Child; he will carry Him off to Egypt; he will hold Him in his arms and fondle Him countless times each day for all the years of His childhood; in a word, he will assume the role of His father and do all that this role requires. Jesus will live under his roof, eat at his table,

converse with him, caress him, honor him, and render him a strict obedience; He will even assist him and keep him company in his workshop. And, finally, He will be present at the moment of Joseph's death to assist him in this last struggle, to hear his last gasping breaths, and to close his eyes. What graces, Christian Listeners! What consolations! How beautiful a life! How sweet a death!

Is it not perfectly logical that, if on earth there could be found a pure soul, a soul filled with the love of God, all these favors would be destined for him, and that this person would be given preference over all those who are less holy? I realize that very great favors, as well as external and fortuitous graces, are sometimes given to sinners, but the Lord usually reserves them for His friends. The Church, accordingly, in making inquiries regarding the canonization of saints, places great importance on miracles, revelations, and prophecies, when these have been established. And, we see in the Gospel that the mystery of the Incarnation was revealed only to a very few people, all of whom lived very holy lives. Zachary, Elizabeth, Anna, Simeon, and St. John the Baptist knew of the divinity of Jesus Christ; and they looked upon this advantage which they had over other people as a very great grace. Elizabeth declared that the honor was too great when she received the visit from Mary, for she knew that her cousin was carrying in her womb the Savior of the world. Anna could not contain her joy once her eyes had beheld Him Who had been promised to her

people; she revealed the news to everyone: Loquebatur de illo omnibus, qui expectabant redemptionem Israel (She would speak of Him to all who awaited the Redemption of Israel). Simeon was ready to die after having known the happiness of holding the Savior in his arms for a single moment. But what is all that in comparison with the happiness that was reserved for the spouse of the Blessed Virgin? Jesus allowed Himself to be caressed by one of His saints, to be seen, or perhaps only sensed by others, such as Zachary and his wife; and yet, this evidence would be sufficient to convince us without further proof that these people were very pleasing to God. How many times did Joseph enjoy the same privileges that these holy people experienced only once! And how many other privileges would be given him, privileges that other men have never known and will never know! Have we not, therefore, strong reason to believe that he had earned these privileges by a life that was very holy, and by the practice of the most sublime virtues?

But which virtues? And is it not possible to establish them in his life by more positive proof? It was necessary, first of all, for him to have acquired a very strong faith and a flawless humility; and here are my reasons: He had to be humble, for it is only to the humble soul that the Lord communicates Himself and reveals His secrets. He had to possess a great deal of docility and faith, in order to believe the seemingly impossible things that would be revealed to him and to undertake, on orders received only in a dream, projects as

difficult as those for which God would make him responsible. Reflect on this, Christian Listeners, and put yourselves for a moment in the place of this holy man. Mary had no sooner become espoused to Joseph than she conceived and he had had no part in this conception. He would be expected to believe that she was still chaste, even that she was still a virgin, and that it was through a miracle and the intervention of the Holy Spirit that this conception took place. She would bear a son, but he would not be the father; he would be expected to believe that this child was his God, and that it was his great joy to shelter Him, to nourish Him, to caress Him, and even to serve Him respectfully. These beliefs would be difficult for anyone to accept; but, for a husband, who naturally places a great importance on his wife's honor, who is very cautious and apprehensive in such matters, and who, despite all, is often hounded by a jealousy that is both unfair and unfounded--how could one expect Joseph to believe in this miracle, which seemed so improbable and for which there were no known precedents?

Later, it would also be on the faith of a dream that he would be told to leave his country and flee with the Child and His mother, without even waiting until daybreak to depart. He would be required to travel to Egypt, not knowing who would receive him in that strange land, or how he would support his family there, or when he would be allowed to return. He would live there for five, seven, or even nine years (according to various historians), always awaiting the arrival of the angel,

a special messenger from heaven, to notify him that he might return to Israel. If these events had occurred much later in his marriage, it is possible that, by living with Mary, he might have acquired, little by little, all the strength needed to face such formidable trials. But since it would be from the outset that he would be asked to sustain them, it is necessary for him to have entered this alliance with a virtue that was already strong and mature; otherwise, we would have to believe that the Lord, who knows His creatures so well and who does all things with infinite wisdom, had chosen for Mary a spouse who was neither willing nor able to carry out His plans.

And, finally, Gentlemen, there is no greater proof to me that St. Joseph had attained a very high degree of holiness, even before his marriage, than the willingness, which he displayed at the outset and effectively retained later, to live in chastity with his spouse. Mary had made a vow of perpetual virginity; yet, she was in need of a husband, either to veil the mystery of the Incarnation, as we have already mentioned, or to dispel any scandal that might have arisen from her pregnancy. For this purpose, all the men in the tribe of David were assembled; the choice fell upon Joseph, and he married this young virgin. As soon as the ceremony was over, he learned from Mary herself of the vow she had made and her desire to honor it. Joseph was not surprised by her announcement, nor did it cause him to waver in his decision. On the contrary, he approved of her plan, praised her courage

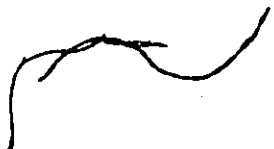
and determination, and consented without hesitation to live with her as chastely as she desired; and he felt within himself the strength to keep his word.

Christian Listeners, there is no need to elaborate here on the grandeur of this action. It is pointless to remind you that celibacy was not yet held in high esteem, and that examples of this kind were extremely rare. It should not surprise us that this miracle of chastity evoked so little admiration at a time when even the most ordinary chastity seemed impossible to observe; at a time when even the sanctity of the marriage bond often failed to keep incontinence within the limits set by the Lord; at a time when one hesitated even to mention this virtue, for fear of casting discredit on it even by one's praise. Thus, I shall be content to have you consider the great admiration you no doubt feel for such people as St. Henry, the Emperor; St. Edward, King of England; St. Elzear, Earl of Arian; Boleslaus, King of Poland; Alphonsus II, King of Castille; and others who, even within their marriage, maintained a chastity equal to that which can be found in the cloister and in the desert. Do you not agree, Gentlemen, that this conduct is most heroic and quite beyond the forces of nature? Indeed, this is a miracle which God performs very rarely; He does it only to teach us that nothing is beyond the power of grace and to condemn the cowardice of those who, pleading weakness, give in to all kinds of temptations without even attempting to resist.

Now, Gentlemen, it was from St. Joseph that these great

saints learned this lesson of sublime purity. St. Joseph received a wife from the hands of the priests. She was a young girl of about fifteen or sixteen years of age; and she was the loveliest, the most modest, or, in a word, the most accomplished person the world had ever known. He had no sooner become her master than he agreed to live with her as if he were already a widower or, to be more accurate, as if he were dead and deprived of all feeling. It is very praiseworthy to die a virgin after having been for thirty years the husband of the loveliest creature who ever lived. But do you believe that it is possible for anyone to carry out such a plan unless he has already had a long training in the practice of the highest virtues? In your opinion, is this the fruit of a weak and newly-awakened piety? How many previous battles had to be fought and won to prepare a soul for such a remarkable victory?

Thus, Gentlemen, we see with what degree of sanctity Joseph entered into marriage. If he had been less than holy, the Lord would not have chosen for him the holiest of women, and he himself would not have been chosen among all men to receive God's secrets and to witness His greatest marvels; to be the permanent host and provider of Jesus; and to serve as His father and teacher. If he had not been a saint, he would have been ill prepared for the harsh trials that would test his faith and patience in the early days of his marriage. Finally, if he had not been a saint, and a great saint, he



would not have been trusted to live with his lawful wife as an angel living with another angel.

I leave it to you to imagine the degree of happiness which resulted from this alliance, which was entered into with such holy dispositions by two people who were so holy and so visibly called by God to the state which they embraced. For, it is often true, Christian Listeners, that most marriages are unhappy only because they are lacking in these holy dispositions. They are often the result of a disorderly youth, or based on the non-Christian motives with which certain couples enter this state. We have said from the outset that a good woman is a gift from God, and we can say as much about a husband. Thus, it is necessary to be on good terms with God if one wishes to make a favorable match. A virtuous woman is a reward for a good life, according to the Holy Spirit. So, if one has not lived a good life, he should not expect to find a wise and holy wife any more than one should expect to be rewarded for his misdeeds. What do you think, Christian Listeners? In the case of a young man whose morals are corrupt and who, until the time of his marriage, has shown no respect for the Lord or for any religious practices, do you believe that he will be happy in his marriage? It is my personal belief that ^{happiness} this is not possible. I believe, to the contrary, that God, in His justice, will provide him with some kind of hell in that state, to allow him to expiate for his disorderly past. His own wife will be the devil who torments him until his death. And, as for the girl who is vain and coquettish,

how dearly she will pay, through a long and cruel servitude, for the sins she commits and for those she causes others to commit! She believes that it is by displaying her stylish clothes, by appearing frequently in society, by flaunting her beauty, and by attempting to charm and to please that she will more quickly find a mate. My feeling is quite the opposite; unless I am mistaken, these methods may well draw admirers to her side, but they may also delay her in finding a husband--if, indeed, she finds one at all. At any rate, these methods are certainly not the way to find a good one. Young lady, it is possible that, by your affected manners and shameful compromises, you may succeed in catching the man you have set out to trap, but little do you know into whose hands you will fall! You may have frequent cause to regret these efforts which will lead to your own unhappiness. You may even come to envy the fate of your servants, as you see among them some young girl who has been retiring in her ways, modest in her dress, and reserved in her speech, and who, because she prepared her future in peace and serenity, has earned a happiness free of anxiety.

The second factor which causes marriages to be very unhappy is the motives which prompt people to enter this state; and this point, which concerns not only the two persons who plan to marry but also their parents and friends, may well serve as a guide for all who are in some way involved in this matter. Some people marry for love, or ambition, or greed--in other words, under the impulse of some passion which has become for them the decisive factor in choosing a husband or

wife. But to marry out of passion, Christian Listeners, and to marry blindly, without reflection and without knowledge of what is involved, are one and the same thing. To marry out of passion is to select a wife in the dark, just as Jacob did, and to run the risk of finding on the following day that one has married a Leah and not the Rachel one had intended to marry. To marry out of passion is to set out on a long voyage in a raging storm with a pilot who is drunk or insane at the helm. I know that passion is a force which masks all kinds of faults and makes that which is displeasing to others seem pleasing to the eye of the one who is enthralled. But since all violent impulses are of short duration, this passion soon begins to wane and then one again sees clearly in the object of his passion those things which had been kept hidden. It is as if the spell was suddenly broken and one could see only filth and mud where before there were gold and precious jewels shining on all sides. For example, a man who has allowed himself to become entranced by the apparent beauty of some girl and who determines to marry her without first studying her character, her education, or her morals, and who does so against the advice of all his friends, this man, I say, has not come to realize that this beauty is not immortal and that he is committing himself to it for life. I ask only that she retain her beauty for ten years--but he has forty or fifty years to live with her! As a result, if there is nothing in her mind and soul to attract him after the loss of these passing charms, he will be unhappy for a period of thirty or forty years. She will be like a corpse that he is forced to keep in his house,

despite her ugliness and the stench given off by her vices. The same holds true for ambition and greed; they can only lead to unfortunate marriages. Young man, you may well come to possess some young woman's wealth; and you, young lady, you may share in the titles and honors of the illustrious family that you have joined. But, since the desire for honors and wealth only increases as one acquires them, you will never be satisfied with your possessions, and you will be very dissatisfied with the person you married.

Oh, how much wiser are they whose only aim in entering marriage is to work towards their salvation in a state that is more stable and more in keeping with their own weakness; who call upon the full power of their reason and upon their most clear-sighted and loyal friends--and even upon God--to help them; and who then receive from the hands of these prudent advisers the spouse with whom they will spend the rest of their lives! How well advised are they who, when considering eligible persons, give preference to those with genuine basic qualities rather than to those with only a handsome exterior, who choose those capable of helping them to face with patience the trials and tribulations of this state; those whose integrity places them above the sordid suspicions which often trouble even the best marriages; those whose known piety will serve as an example for the children and the servants; those, in a word, who, even after they have lost all their physical charms, will retain what is needed to nourish the heart with

a sweet and inviolate friendship, by their virtuous kindness, by a constant dedication to the performance of the duties inherent in their state of life, and by the avoidance of vanity and of all that might inconvenience their spouses or vex them in any way. They resemble those flowers whose value goes beyond their beauty; they do not lose all worth when they lose their bloom and freshness, for even after they are withered and dried, they are still cherished for the sweet scent and hidden qualities with which the Creator has endowed them. Those who proceed in the manner I have described, Christian Listeners, will find in their marriage the sweetness of life which everyone expects but which very few find; they will be free of the disillusionment which often follows very quickly upon the enthusiasm of an ardent pursuit; their love will grow stronger and, even more important, they will attain salvation with little difficulty and will sanctify themselves with ease in the married state. We have shown the degree of sanctity which St. Joseph had certainly brought to his marriage. Now, let us examine the sanctity which he must have acquired in that state. This is my second point.

SECOND POINT

I shall not attempt, Christian Listeners, to show in this second point of my eulogy to St. Joseph all the progress he made in holiness during the space of nearly thirty years

spent in the company of the most holy of all women; for this attempt would suppose an understanding of many truths which are beyond the capacity of the human mind. Without going beyond human comprehension, I believe that, in order to give you a good understanding of the benefits which Joseph derived from such a holy presence, I need only explain briefly that Mary's example, her zeal, and her influence with God were so many forces which were constantly at work to sanctify her spouse.

It would be too long here to elaborate on the strength of a good example or on the secret virtue inherent in sanctity, which enters the mind and then influences the moral values of those who spend time in the company of good-living people. It is an undeniable fact that we cannot spend a single hour in the presence of a person who is filled with the spirit of God without sensing some kind of change within ourselves and feeling, somehow, as if we had been perfumed in the good odor of his piety. St. John Chrysostom said that, in his day, if a man had spent only one day in solitude with the saints, even if he had gone there only through curiosity, his wife, his servants, and all of his friends would notice on his return that he had come from the desert and had spoken with these angels of earth. If such is true, what benefits St. Joseph must have derived from so many years of almost continuous conversation with the Blessed Virgin! The mere presence of so modest, so humble, and so holy a person; the mere sight of a perfect

and accomplished model--how could this fail to inspire a great love for all sorts of virtues and an ardent desire to attain them? Imagine, if you can, how many wonderful examples were witnessed by Joseph alone, and what impression these examples must have made in his soul. I have no doubt that even the silence of Mary was extremely edifying and that merely to see her was enough to make one love God and disdain all else. And yet, how inspiring it must have been to converse with a soul which housed the Holy Spirit, a soul on which God had bestowed the fullness of His grace, a soul which contained more love than that of all the Seraphim combined! What ice and coldness this fire could dispell! And what effect it produced in Joseph, who was so eminently disposed to receive this flame! The thoughts that we can formulate about the countless private conversations they held regarding the mysteries which were unfolding before their eyes and the graces which they received each day--these thoughts alone--are edifying and, I believe, conducive to a spirit of recollection and fervor. But who can imagine the fruits derived from these conversations by the person to whom Mary communicated her remarkable lights!

Saints inspire sanctity even without noticing it.

Theirs is a contagious blessing, if I may use this expression, which communicates itself imperceptibly. Thus, Joseph would have made outstanding progress by living with Mary even if she had not striven constantly to bring him closer to perfection. But it is certain that she was more zealous than all the Apostles, and if it had been fitting in one of her sex to leave her solitude, she would have departed and travelled all roads to convert

the whole world. But this great zeal, for all the time of her marriage, was occupied in sanctifying her spouse. The order of charity demanded that she make him the first object of her zeal; and, for all that time, he was its sole object. This great fire, capable of inflaming the whole world, was concentrated solely on warming and consuming Joseph over a period of so many years. Can you believe that Mary ignited this fire and tended it in vain? St. Gregory of Nazianzus, in speaking of the zeal of St. Gorgona for the conversion of her husband, said that its strength was rooted in her feeling that there was only one half of her soul that loved God while this man remained in the darkness of paganism. If Mary shared this view, if she believed that the heart of St. Joseph formed part of her own, what great efforts she must have expended to inflame it with the love of God! I do not doubt that it was her wish to inspire him with a love equal to her own and, to achieve this, she strove relentlessly, with all the ardor that one could expect from the most zealous of creatures.

Do not believe, however, that in her zeal, she ever lost sight of her role or ever forgot her duty toward the one whom she acknowledged as her lord and master. Although the perfect union which existed between them afforded her complete freedom; although Joseph, who knew her merit, showed her all the respect and veneration due to the Mother of his God, it is nevertheless certain that she never took the slightest advantage of the kindness and respect he had for her, that she never assumed a tone or a look of superiority as she revealed to him her vast

store of knowledge in spiritual things. This great zeal was joined to a simplicity and a modesty that made it all the more effective. She instructed by means of questions, she stimulated by her actions, she convinced by showing her own conviction. Such endeavors were more than enough for a soul as well prepared as that of St. Joseph; enough for a man who strove so ardently for perfection, who desired nothing more than to grow and progress, who observed all Mary's actions and stored up all her words, who studied her constantly and overlooked nothing in view of discovering in her those treasures which she so earnestly wished to share with him.

But, Gentlemen, the means she generally used for this purpose were her great influence with God and her all-powerful prayers. I will not discuss, at this time, the power which Mary had over her Son; everyone is convinced that He could refuse her nothing, and I do not believe that there is a single Catholic so unfortunate that he has not, at some time, experienced the power of her intercession. I need only say that Mary, in her role as a wife, was obligated to pray frequently for her husband; that the sincere affection she bore him made her even more determined and more faithful in accomplishing this obligation; and that, even in the absence of any of these motives, she would have been bound by gratitude to do everything possible to contribute to the sanctification of St. Joseph and to gain for him the highest place in heaven. For, let us remember, it was Joseph who preserved her honor,

who saved her Son's life, who accompanied her on all her journeys, who provided for her by his labors, who, in short, did everything for her and asked for nothing in return. Do you believe that the Blessed Virgin, who possessed all the virtues to the highest degree, would not be deeply grateful, or would fail to use her influence, when she knew that there was no better way for her to reward her generous helper? What graces she asked for him, and how generously Jesus Christ responded, especially since these favors were destined for a man for whom He had such great affection and, if I may be permitted to say so, one to whom He owed a debt of gratitude!

I will conclude, Gentlemen, by reminding you that this union is a beautiful model for all married people. I realize that no woman can compare with Mary, and that all men are not so holy as St. Joseph. But however imperfect the wife, and however sinful the husband, one can yet be sanctified in the state of marriage, since even sins can to some extent be utilized. If you are married to a wicked man, an ancient writer has said, you must either rid him of his defects or you must tolerate them. By ridding him of them, you will make your spouse a better person; by tolerating them, you will become a better person: Qui tollit, commodiorem conjugent praestat; qui fert, seipsum efficit meliorem (The person who erases the faults of his or her spouse makes the spouse a better person; but the one who bears these faults becomes a better person). And, I add, that by tolerating

these defects, you accomplish both of these things at the same time--you become a better person yourself, and you help your partner to improve.

Who can say, Christian Listeners, what power a woman can exert over the heart of her husband by her patience and constant kindness? And even if this man were the most head-strong, the most cruel, or the most intractable of men, who can say what power the prayers of a sweet and patient woman may have on the heart of God, Who is the master of all hearts? St. Peter says: Let a woman be submissive and docile towards her husband, for those who still resist the word of God will be won over to Jesus Christ by this conduct, which is more effective than all our sermons and all our miracles: Mulieres subditae sint viris suis, ut et sic qui non credunt verbo per mulierum conversationem sine verbo lucrifiant (Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, so that, in this way, he who does not believe in the word of God may, by the exhortation of women, be won over to Him without a word). This is the method used by the renowned St. Monica to soften the harsh and brutal character of her husband Patrick. She not only changed him into a good husband, but she also transformed him into a Christian, and a good Christian. A thousand similar examples could be cited, both from the present and the past. I daresay that one of the major effects of the conjugal blessing is the mutual power it imparts to those who receive it to help each other love God and achieve salvation, and that

the surest and most effective way--and perhaps the only way--that spouses have of accomplishing this mutuality is to keep silent regarding each other's faults, to conceal them from others, and to bear them with charity and humility. When two people share a modicum of love and genuine tenderness, is it at all possible to believe that at least one of them will not be saddened by the sins of the other; will not attempt to save that other from the precipice; and will show so little zeal as to accept the eternal loss of a person who forms half of one's being, thus consenting to see half of oneself damned? And, even in the absence of that affection which so strongly and sweetly knits hearts together and which makes it possible to bear with even the most imperfect people; even then, is it possible that some would prefer to live together in the manner of lions and tigers, biting and tearing away at each other, bringing about each other's damnation, and creating for each other a hell on earth rather than to make good use of their cross to achieve salvation and sanctify themselves by bearing their burden?

What I have said for married couples can be applied with benefit to almost everyone else, for, as a general rule, we live in society. God has made each of us responsible for the salvation of our brothers, and we should each regard it our duty to help procure heaven, at least for those with whom Providence has given us the closest ties. It is especially with these persons that we should avoid empty arguments and all that might disrupt peace and charity--by displaying a

humble acceptance of their feelings, by showing indulgence in regard to their weaknesses, by forgiving the small hurts inflicted on us by their carelessness, by fearing to provide them with the slightest occasion to offend God, and by overlooking nothing to draw them very gently to the love and practice of piety. It is certain that by acting in this way we will not only gain the affection of men and live among them in great peace and joy, but we will also win over the heart of God, which is worth more than all the wealth in the world, and even more than all that is most precious in heaven. Amen.

SERMON XXXVII*

FOR THE FEAST OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

Praebis ante faciem Domini
parare via ejus.

You will walk before the
Lord to prepare His way.
(Luke 1:76)

St. John the Baptist fulfilled the role of Precursor of Jesus Christ very well by going before Him to point out and travel the same roads the Savior would walk and would teach other men to walk. ↓

I do not believe, Gentlemen, that there has ever been a saint who received from heaven and earth any praise that was greater or more abundant than that which was accorded to St. John. The Prophet Isaiah had called him the Angel of the Lord: Ecce ego mitto Angelum meum qui parabit viam ante te

* Given in Lyon on June 24, 1674, in the church of Trinity College.

(Behold I send my Angel who will prepare your way before you). Gabriel, when announcing his conception, said that he would not only be esteemed by men, who are such poor judges of the greatness and smallness of things, but he would be esteemed by God Himself, Who is never wrong and in Whose eyes the greatest things are very small: Erit magnus coram Domino (Great will he be in the presence of the Lord). A few days before his birth, his father, who was inspired by the Holy Spirit, predicted that he would be the prophet of the Most-High and the teacher of his people in the science of salvation. The Jews, charmed by the holiness of his life, did not doubt that he was the Redeemer who had been promised to them; this feeling was almost universally accepted and was even approved by the Priests and the Doctors of the Law. He himself declared that he was the voice of the one who cries, that is, the herald of the Almighty. Jesus Christ, the eternal Truth, placed him above all the prophets, that is, above all men illustrious for their knowledge and their virtue that the world had known up to that time: Prophetam et plus quam prophetam (A prophet and more than a prophet). And much more: He declared that there had never been a man born of woman who surpassed him in merit or true greatness: Inter natos mulierum non surrexit major Joanne Baptista (Among the sons of women there has arisen none greater than John the Baptist). Finally, the Holy Fathers noted that St. John combined in his person all the holiness of both Laws of which he was, in a sense, the binding knot; that he possessed the

faith of the patriarchs, the light of the prophets, the purity of the virgins, the austerity of the anchorites, the zeal of the apostles, and the hope of the martyrs. After that, Christian Listeners, what can I say about this great saint which will be in keeping with the idea that you must have formed from such magnificent praise? Will it not come as a great surprise if I should abandon all these glorious titles to concentrate solely on the simplest and the most basic of these privileges, which is that of Precursor or forerunner of Jesus Christ? Such is, in fact, my intention, and, with this in mind, I have chosen as my theme these words from the hymn of Zachary: Praeibis ante faciem Domini parare vias ejus (You will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways): My Son, you will be the Precursor of the Messiah, that is, you will walk before Him on the same roads that He must walk: Praeibis ante faciem Domini parare vias ejus. You will see, Gentlemen, that this choice will in no way be detrimental to St. John the Baptist; that the eulogy that I will give him contains all those that I have cited; that it not only distinguishes this great saint from all other saints, but it also elevates him above them; and that, in praising him, it is difficult to find an expression that could say more things or greater things in a single word. Holy Virgin, you had too great a part in his sanctification not to take some part in the discourse which I will give on his sanctity; I could not hope to succeed without your assistance, and I ask it

through this prayer by which you have granted such great things: Ave Maria.

No one doubts that the Son of God came on earth to open for us by His examples not only the road to salvation, but also the one that leads to sanctity. And since Wisdom has decreed that there should be various roads leading either to heaven or to the highest virtue, Christ wanted to travel all of these roads Himself, though they might be extremely different and even in some ways opposed to one another. Thus, St. John, who was to be His Precursor, in order to fulfill his ministry in a worthy manner, had to precede Him on these same roads and, in a manner of speaking, show Jesus Christ all the routes that Jesus Christ Himself was to teach other men. He did so, Christian Listeners, and he did so in the most excellent manner. All the roads of salvation can be reduced to these two: innocence and penance. The Savior of the world embraced both of these since He was without sin and yet bore the punishment for all sins. I will show that the life of St. John was also one of innocence and penance: this will be the first part of my discourse. All the roads to sanctity can also be reduced to two, which are action and contemplation. Jesus Christ has marvelously combined these two elements, having divided all of His life between preaching and seclusion. I will show that the life of St. John was also divided between seclusion and preaching: and this will be the

second part of his eulogy. Praeibis ante faciem Domini parare vias ejus. He would walk before the Lord, he would begin to discover and explore the various roads that He must travel, and he would join an extreme disdain for all earthly things, however legitimate, to a complete estrangement from all things forbidden by God's law. And, second, he would combine an ardent and indefatigable zeal with a very great love for peace and solitude. In a word, he would be the most innocent of men, and yet the most austere of penitents. He would be the father of anchorites and, at the same time, the first of all the apostles. These roles will be the subject of my discourse.

FIRST POINT

After the birth of St. John the Baptist had been announced to Zachary by the same angel who a short time later would announce the birth of Jesus Christ to the Blessed Virgin, Elizabeth conceived this admirable Precursor at an age when she could no longer hope to become a mother, even if nature had not already set up invincible obstacles against this conception. St. Augustine says that God not only wished to have him born of a woman who was sterile, but He also chose for him parents who were old and feeble so that, with age having extinguished in them all carnal desires and all sensual pleasure, we could say that he had been engendered by faith and chastity. Permit me, Christian Listeners, to exclaim with the Jews who

were present at the circumcision of our saint: Quis putas
puer iste erit (Who do you think this boy will be)? What
 will be the innocence and moral purity of this child, since
 it took so many years to purify the womb which was to form
 him and since the Lord desired him to enter life in a way
 that was not only miraculous but also free from the slightest
 stains of incontinence?

That is not, however, the most certain sign that we
 have of the purity of his life. God, Who had delayed his
 conception for so long, did not wait until the time of his
 birth to communicate His special graces to him. We know that
 when Mary went to see Elizabeth during her pregnancy this
 holy woman felt the fruit of her womb tremble with joy at the
 first compliment received from her kinswoman. All the fathers
 say that St. John was sanctified at that moment and that it
 was then that Gabriel's promise to Zachary, his father, was
 realized--that this child would be filled with the Holy
 Spirit even before he saw the light of day. Spiritu Sancto
replebitur adhuc ex utero matris suae (He will hitherto be
 filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb). Do you
 think, Gentlemen, that God would have so changed the order of
 things, that He would have shown such haste to purify this
 soul if He had foreseen that it would ever be soiled by the
 slightest stain? Could we desire a more certain sign of the
 care He would take to preserve it from all sin than this im-
 patience to deliver it from original sin? But if this infusion
 of grace before the normal term is an augury of his future

sanctity, the abundance of this grace, conferred on him at that moment in its plenitude, is an infallible proof of it. Spiritu sancto replebitur adhuc ex utero matris suae. That is, he will be confirmed in grace before his birth. He will come into the world completely permeated with the spirit of God and, as a result, he will be beyond the reach of all the attacks of Satan.

Furthermore, no one has ever contested that St. John brought to his tomb the innocence that he had when he left Elisabeth's womb. If we had no other reasons to believe this, his lack of commerce with men should be proof enough to convince us. Where could this angel of the Lord, as he is called in the Scriptures, have been corrupted and have lost his purity of heart—he who from his earliest infancy had lived in the desert and had renounced the world before he could be infected by its breath, even before he could know it or fear it? I know that all of us are only too strongly drawn to sin; that, when we lack outside enemies, our own concupiscence tempts us and drags us into a life of disorder. But experience has shown us that this domestic tempter would be weak indeed if it were not abetted by enemies from the outside. It is evil conversations, evil books, and evil examples which ravish the innocence of all those who complain of losing it. We would all live the life of angels if we lived only among saints or wild beasts. Pure souls, who have up to this time preserved the precious grace of your Baptism, you have no choice but to withdraw from the world if you wish to preserve this grace to the end.

Flee the company of men, hide your treasure in some place which is impenetrable to their eyes and, if possible, even to their desires; keep company only with the most virtuous and, even with them, spend as little time as possible.

But it is not enough to say that St. John never lost divine grace. Some of the great Doctors maintain that he never weakened it by the smallest venial sin. For my part, Gentlemen, I should like to review some of the marvels which marked John's birth: An angel announced the event; his father doubted the divine message and as punishment for his incredulity lost the power of speech; John was conceived by a woman who was doubly sterile; he practiced the gift of prophecy before his birth and communicated the same gift to his mother; at his birth, Zachary's tongue was loosened and began to pronounce a flow of oracles. I recall the admiration and the joy that was felt by all of Judea at the moment of his birth. In addition, I consider the long and magnificent eulogy given him by Gabriel in the name of the Lord; I hear the Lord Himself Who preferred him to all the saints of the Old Testament and Who, on every occasion, spoke of him in terms that were so strong that they would seem greatly exaggerated if they came from any other mouth. When I remember all these things, I cannot help but form an idea of his sanctity which excludes even the smallest offenses.

It is certain, moreover, that John himself had to be strongly convinced that he was sinless and beyond reproach before he dared to undertake to reform all of Judea, as he did in his later years, and, more particularly, to confront

the Pharisees, who were the devout and the reformed ones of that time, and reproach them openly and in the strongest possible terms with the secret perversions of their souls. What is most admirable here and what provides an even greater proof of the purity of his morals is that these hypocrites, although they were touched to the quick by his bitter recriminations and although they were jealous of his glory, never found anything to criticize in him. On the contrary, after a thorough examination of his speeches and his actions, after having studied him with all the care that envy and hatred could inspire, they found him to be irreproachable and they adopted the opinion held by the people, who believed him to be the Messiah; they went to him for explanations, fully prepared to believe him on his word and to honor him as the Son of the All-High. It is certain that these Doctors, who had a perfect knowledge of the Scriptures, would never have formed such a favorable judgment of this saint if they had found in him the slightest weakness in his sentiments or in his actions.

It is doubtless for these same reasons that some of them believed that he had not only been exempted from every actual sin, but that he had also been preserved from all that we know as attraction to sin, that is, from all the disorderly and involuntary movements of our lower nature. If this is so, Christian Listeners, he is the most generous penitent of all times. Why else such an austere life, divine Precursor, at an age when even the most miserable children of Adam do not yet feel the rebellion of the flesh, and ^{else} why such mortification of

a flesh which, even at a more advanced age, was always so submissive to reason? Why else treat so harshly a body which had never sinned, a body which was never to sin, and from which you had no reason to fear violence or surprise? Yes, Gentlemen, notwithstanding this innocence and these privileges, St. John had hardly left the cradle when he cast aside all the comforts of his father's house to engage in the most rigorous penances which had ever been practiced, if we are to believe some Church historians. For a period of about thirty years, he had no other refuge than a dark cave, and St. Gregory of Nazianzus assures us that John spent all of this time exposed to the rigors of the seasons with only the sky for a cover and the ground for a bed. Habuitque domum versatile coelum, atque in humo dura corpus dabat ipse sopori (He had the ~~changeable~~ sky as a dwelling, and he himself slept on the ground). His clothing consisted of animal hair, that is, a long rough hairshirt; for the Gospel, which notes that he had a leather belt, states positively in two places that his robe was not made of skin but of camel's hair. Habebat vestimentum de pilis camelorum (He was clad in camel's hair and a girdle of rawhide). It may be said that his purpose in dressing was much less to avoid suffering than to add a continual torment to that which he endured alternately from the heat and the cold. Finally, he ate nothing but wild honey and a type of locust which St. Jerome says is a very common food in the East. In fact, there is mention of this locust in the Book

of Leviticus, among the pure animals which God allowed his people to eat. A little water joined to these simple foods gave him all the satisfaction he required, and, even then, he partook of them in such small quantities each day that we can say that his life was a perpetual fast. And why would we hesitate to say it since Jesus Christ Himself said that John neither ate nor drank: Venit Joannes, non manducans, neque bibens (John comes neither eating or drinking).

This was indeed a strange life, Christian Listeners, and I am not surprised that the Jews at first took this great saint for a pure spirit who appeared to them in human form. But what would they have thought of him if they could have seen him begin all these practices at the early age of four or five? What would they have said if, having finally realized that he was a man like themselves, they had known that he had never lost the grace of God and did not need these painful precautions to persevere in it until his death? That those who have lived a dissolute life divest themselves of their goods to expiate by voluntary poverty the bad usage that they made of those same goods; that, after having offended God a thousand times, one condemn oneself to fasting and solitude; that one inflict upon oneself all sorts of austerities--all this would appear strange only to those who have never understood the nature of sin or the punishments reserved for it in the next life. That a person, though innocent but fragile, exposed to countless temptations and in continual danger of succumbing to

them, arm himself with hair shirts and whips to keep temptation away and to preserve in his soul that beauty which delights the eyes and the heart of God--none of this will surprise us once we have understood what a treasure grace is. But that a saint, as pure as an angel and almost as incorruptible, spend his days in continual mortification, that right from the cradle he wrap himself in a penitential robe, that he bury himself in a cave, that he live as innocently as if he had no body and yet as harshly as if his body were immortal and without feeling--all this, Gentlemen, is what is known as a true love of the cross, a love which is as rare as it is heroic. Yes, Christians, love of the cross is rare, even after Jesus Christ was crucified and the cross became the instrument of our Redemption. How glorious for St. John that he loved it even before the Son of God made it sweeter, before he discovered the treasures and the delights which are hidden therein! If the Apostles have merited such high praises for having followed their Master along such a thorny path, what should we say about St. John, who preceded Him on this same path without the aid of a guide, and who went further than all those who have walked in the footsteps of the Savior!

For ourselves, Christian Listeners, it is a road that we must necessarily follow, if we wish to be saved. Penance is a remedy that is absolutely necessary for sinners; and for the just, it is an essential preservative. We must embrace it either to free ourselves from disorder or to prevent

ourselves from falling into it; and thus we can say that there can be no salvation except through penance, for there is no possibility of innocence without its aid. If this statement is true, can we doubt that the number of those saved will be very small even among Christians, since there are so few penitents? But with penance almost banished from the world, is it any wonder that innocence now seems so rare? This virtue has been attacked and sometimes even lost in the midst of the most terrible solitude and in bodies which were worn by age and consumed by austerities. Would you expect it to subsist in the world of high living, in the midst of the most mortal occasions where the greatest care is taken to nourish, to inflame, and to foment cupidity through the softness of clothing and the delicacy of meats?

The practice of austerities, it is said, is good for those persons who live in cloisters and in religious houses. Yes, austerity is good for them; in fact, it is even necessary for them since, without it, the walls and the grills would be weak ramparts against vice, which would not fail to find its way inside and cause a great deal of ravage. But if austerity is needed in these places of security, in these spiritual citadels, as St. Basil calls them, how can you do without it, you who live surrounded by the snares that the devil sets for all men, and who have before your eyes the enticements that lead to all sorts of sins? You say that you are an extremely delicate person, accustomed to a life of abundance and pleasures; that you cannot

deprive yourself of the luxuries and commodities of life, let alone resign yourself to mortify and torment your body. But if you cannot resign yourself to such deprivations, how can you be saved? When you are sick, besides the aches caused by the illness, which are sometimes very acute, you will consent to follow a very rigid and difficult diet because the doctor orders it. You will drink beverages that are very offensive to the taste, you will submit yourself to being pricked, burned, and cut with deep and painful incisions. Do we have more strength and resolution in sickness than in health? Or rather, is it not that we show a great concern for our health and very little for our salvation? If God's friendship had any value for us, if our soul were as dear to us as our body, if we feared damnation as much as we fear death, how strong and generous we would be in our struggle against self! How powerless would be the pretexts of our delicacy and our infirmities in stopping our fervor!

We have recently celebrated in this church the feast of a young prince, Blessed Louis of Gonzaga, who, even before entering the religious state, at the early age of fourteen or fifteen years, never removed his clothing that it was not stained with his blood; who used the penitential whip as many as three times each day; who, lacking a hairshirt, pierced his bare flesh with sharp spurs; who sometimes spent five or six consecutive hours on his knees; and who practiced such a rigorous abstinence that, for long periods of time, he was content to eat no more than a single egg each day. Yet, he had been brought

up in luxury, and, besides, had a very fragile constitution. What is more, he was so innocent that in his whole life it was believed he never committed a deliberate venial sin; finally, his body caused so little trouble to his soul that he never had a thought or feeling opposed to the angelic purity which he had vowed to the Blessed Virgin. We have noticed that all the saints, regardless of their station, their age, or even their temperament, felt themselves drawn to these practices of mortification; that they thirsted after them from the moment that God began to enlighten them. It seems as though grace by nature requires this help to be preserved and fortified, a little in the manner that nature seeks agreeable things to sustain itself. My God, how far we are from this holy disposition! If this is the road that one must travel to get to heaven, how great is our danger of never being admitted! And if we do arrive there, despite our negligence and our lack of courage, what distance will separate us in this blessed place from those generous servants of Jesus Christ! However, Gentlemen, the roads I have mentioned are those which lead only to salvation. To achieve holiness, we must travel roads that are even more elevated. The Savior of the world has traced for us two very different routes, which are the seclusion of solitary life and the fatigues of apostolic life--contemplation and action. St. John was His Precursor on both of these routes, which will be examined in the second part.

SECOND POINT

It is with great justice that St. Jerome says of St. John the Baptist that he was the father of hermits. But it seems to me that St. Gregory of Nazianzen was no less right to call him the child and the nursling of solitude. Solitudinis alumnum (A child of the solitude). St. Peter of Alexandria, in a work that was approved by the sixth Council, assures us that to escape Herod's persecution of little children, which threatened John because of the marvels surrounding his birth, Elizabeth took him to a desert in Judea when he was only six months old. Cedrenus and Nicephor, two of the oldest Church historians, added that after the death of this holy woman about the fortieth day of her flight, the young prophet remained in this desert under the guidance of an angel who took charge of his education. Finally, the Gospel teaches us that, from that time until the day that he appeared to preach penance, he never abandoned this place of solitude: Si erat puer in desertis usque in diem ostentionis suae (And he was in the desert as a boy until the day of his manifestation).

And much more: St. John Chrysostom says that during all this time, a period of about thirty years, John saw no one and was seen by no one. What is most admirable here is that he did not ignore the fact that Jesus Christ was alive at the same time; he was not tempted to seek Him out in order to enjoy

His conversation and His presence. All this seems to me, Gentlemen, to be proof of a remarkably solid virtue, which remains inviolably attached to God's orders, which is incapable of deluding itself whatever pretexts there may be to do so, which chooses to believe rather than to see, and which prefers the cross and mortification to the holiest and most spiritual delights. Thus, when the Savior came to the Jordan to be baptized, St. John declared that he had never seen Him before but that God had given him a sign by which to recognize Him: John had seen the Holy Spirit descend upon His head in the form of a dove: Et ego nesciebam eum; sed qui misit me baptizare in aqua, ille mihi dixit: super quem videris Spiritum descendentem et manentem super eum, hic est qui baptizat in Spiritu Sancto (And I did not know Him, but He Who sent me to baptize in the water, said to me: He upon Whom you will see the Spirit descend is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit).

But what was the occupation of this hermit during so many years? During all that time, he was engaged in prayer, says Origen, and in conversing with the angels. It is certain that he was favored with great communications from God, since he entered the desert as a child and at an age when he could not yet speak and left it the most enlightened of all the prophets, the most eloquent of all the preachers, and the master even of the Doctors of the Law. Of necessity, all of this knowledge had to come to him by inspiration, had to be drawn from the bosom of God, and had to be the fruit of the advanced state of

contemplation to which he had been raised. But, finally, the time had come for him to renounce this rest in order to enter a more difficult road; the time had come to begin the life of an apostle and to precede the Son of God, Who was preparing to come out of His Nazareth retreat to proclaim to the Jews the kingdom of His Father. St. John had no sooner learned that he was being called to this role than, emerging from the depths of his solitude, he suddenly appeared on the banks of the Jordan, which he soon caused to echo with these words which made up all of his discourses: Poenitentiam agite, appropinquavit enim regnum Dei (Do penance, for the kingdom of God is at hand). Hasten to repent, for the time is at hand when God will reign among men. It was without doubt a great surprise for all these people to see this prophet of whom no one had ever heard, so bronzed by the sun, so wasted by his fasts, dressed in a terrible hairshirt, as he taught in a loud voice that which he himself had practiced so rigorously.

Besides, never had they seen a zeal more ardent, more solid, more effective, or more selfless than his. In a short time, he travelled through all the countries which bordered the Jordan River, and there was no one in all that vast region who was not instructed by him in his duties, or baptized by his hand. His firmness was apparent in the strong and generous manner in which he attacked the pride of the Pharisees and in the reproaches that he never failed to make to King Herod in regard to this ruler's relations with his brother's wife.

The success of his efforts was so great that not only all the

inhabitants of Jerusalem, but also all those of Judea and of several of the surrounding regions, were touched by his discourses and received his Baptism, after having confessed at his feet the disorders of their lives: Et baptizabantur ab eo in Jordane confitentes peccata sua (While confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan). Soldiers, publicans, even Pharisees--all were shaken, all were won over by the force of his zeal. How pure this zeal was, how sincere, and how selfless! It was not to make himself known, Christian Listeners, that our saint came to preach to the Jews; it was only to make known the Savior of the world. As soon as Jesus Christ began to show Himself, John the Baptist declared frankly that he himself was only the Precursor, that it was reserved to Jesus to grant the Holy Spirit and to erase sins by a baptism that was far more excellent than his own. In addition, he invited all the disciples to listen to this new Master; he urged them, he exhorted them to attach themselves to Him as to the source of all knowledge and holiness. Finally, he proclaimed openly that this man was truly the Son of God: Testimonium perhibui quia hic est Filius Dei (I bore testimony because He is the Son of God). St. Peter later gave Jesus the same testimonial, and we know that he was instantly rewarded by being given supreme power over all the Church. But besides the fact that St. John had preceded Him, and that the confession of the Precursor was made publicly while the other was made in the presence of only a

few Apostles, St. John recognized Jesus Christ as the Son of God when people were willing to recognize John himself as the Messiah, when everyone was convinced that he was truly the Savior, and when he was being urged not to refuse this honor. We can say that no man has ever honored Jesus Christ as St. John did on this occasion. For this saint, having qualities that led men to believe that he was the Liberator, qualities which fully satisfied the expectations that people had of the Godhead, splendidly enhanced in men's mind the merits of the Messiah by showing them that, as great as he had appeared to them, he was nevertheless only the voice of the One Whom they awaited, that he was not even worthy of untying the straps of His sandals. This, Christian Listeners, is how he worked uniquely for the One Who had sent him, and how he made his own glory serve the glory of his Master. The only fruits that he derived for himself from his apostolic works were imprisonment and death, which Herod, in his hatred, imposed upon him. This glorious adventure was all that was lacking to earn for John all the crowns and all the titles of honor that the Church can give to the various saints which she honors as doctors, virgins, anchorites, apostles, prophets, and martyrs. But, most important, it was by his death that John brought to completion his principal function, that of Precursor--by dying for Jesus Christ, and dying for Him a short time before Jesus Christ was to die for us.

I shall end, Gentlemen, with a reflection similar to

the one I made in the first part of this discourse. I said that one could practice penance without being innocent, although innocence cannot subsist for long without the aid of penance. Likewise, I say that it is possible to become a saint by the road of contemplation without entering the road of action, but that it is not possible even to be saved by acting, if we completely abandon solitude. Yes, Christian Listeners, zeal itself becomes harmful and destructive for those who let themselves be dominated by it, and who do not pause occasionally in their arduous occupations. It is good to launch attacks against the enemy of mankind and to snatch from him as many souls as possible; but this must be done, so to speak, beneath the protective guns of a fortress, where one can withdraw from time to time to renew one's strength and where one can seek refuge from the devil's assaults whenever he places us in the position where we must defend ourselves.

But if the atmosphere of the world is infectious for those who go into it guided by the spirit of God, who enter it only that they might combat and sanctify it, what guarantee can there be for those who go there to imitate it, to partake of all its pleasures, to study its maxims, and to follow them? Interaction with the world is dangerous for apostolic men; how, then, can the people who are actually of the world hope to be saved? And when I speak of the world, I do not mean to limit this term to certain groups of people, such as the noble and the opulent, who live a life of idleness and pleasure, who move always in an atmosphere of luxury and pride. Besides

this grand lifestyle, which is only accessible to a small number of people, there is in every social condition a world to flee, one which is composed of people within that social condition who have the least piety and the least feeling for the things of God, and who love pleasure; in short, those who in their conduct follow proportionately the same rules that are followed in the grand life, just as it sometimes happens that some small states are governed by the same rules which are observed by larger monarchies. So I say, Gentlemen, that it is not only difficult to frequent this world without being corrupted, but I also say that to find pleasure in it is an unmistakable sign that one is already corrupt: Si delectat le mūdus, says the great St. Augustine, immundus es. Recedite, recedite, exite inde, pollutum nolite tangere, exite de medio ejus (If the world delights you, you are tainted. Leave, leave, depart thence, do not dally with the defiled, depart from their midst). It is God Himself, Christians, Who by the Prophet Isaiaes gives us such a strong warning. Retreat, retreat, as quickly as possible; leave promptly such a dangerous place; flee from such great corruption; do not stay in a place where the people are so soiled. Pollutum nolite tangere, exite de medio ejus (Do not dally with the defiled, depart from their midst). I know that most people fear this retreat, but I also know that when we ~~have~~ once tasted its sweetness, there is a greater hardship in leaving it than there was in embracing it; I know that those who enjoy solitude

believe that they are making a great sacrifice to God when they leave it in order to work for His glory. St. Gregory of Nazianz found such great charm in solitude that, according to his own account, he was reluctant to accept the episcopate only because it deprived him of this blessed solitude. St. Bernard, in the midst of the most flourishing courts of Europe, though he received there more honors than would be necessary to satisfy the vanity of the most ambitious man, did not cease to yearn for the forests of Clairvaux. It is with these sentiments that he so often repeated these beautiful words: O my beloved solitude, my only felicity, in all other places I have found only thorns and bitterness; only you can bring me happiness on earth!

O beata solitudo, O sola beatitudo (O blessed solitude, O unique blessedness). But do not take my word for it, do not even take the word of these great saints whose testimony I have cited; find the truth for yourself: confine yourself for a time to your house, restricting your outings to those which are imposed by business affairs or the duties of piety; use the time which you previously reserved for amusements and useless conversations, use it I say, to converse with God about your most important concerns, and to review in your mind the disorders of your life, the risks that you have taken, and the graces given to you by God. Examine, if you will, the solidity or the vanity of the goods you have cherished, that you have pursued, that you have possessed; give some time to the reading of those books of piety which are filled with feeling, which speak to the heart, such as the Gospels, the

Imitation of Jesus Christ, or The Devout Life by St. Francis of Sales. I do not simply say that you will soon notice a great change in your moral principles, that you will see a decrease in the number and the gravity of your offenses, and that you will begin to discover the road to heaven and to realize how far from it you had been until then. But I even venture to promise that, in a short time, you will lose the taste for all other delights, that you will regret having deprived yourself for so long of the greatest pleasure in this life, that in the future you will fear nothing so much as the necessity of going back into the tumult, and that you will have no other desire in this world than to pass from this temporal rest to that of eternity, which is my wish for you. Amen.

SERMON XL

FEAST OF ST. STEPHEN

FIRST MARTYR

Et cum hoc dixisset, obdormivit in Domino.

And when he had said this,
he fell asleep in the Lord.
(Acts 7:60)

St. Stephen was a perfect example of charity,
and the first example of perfect charity.

Behold, Gentlemen, how far Christian charity can go when pushed to its greatest perfection: to love among men, even one's enemies; to love Jesus Christ to the point of sacrificing one's life for Him. Love can have no greater scope or greater force than this. If it is true, as affirmed by the Venerable Bede, that Stephen is not a Greek name, as many believed, but rather of Hebraic origin, whose root means "rule" or "model," then we can render to

Stephen no honor more authentic or more appropriate than to say that he was the model and the ideal of Christian charity.

But what makes this honor even more special is that he was first among Christians to push this virtue to such a high degree of perfection. I know that it is not unusual among panegyrists to present the one they are honoring as a model of the virtue which he practiced, either for having possessed that particular virtue to a supreme degree, or for having been the first to practice it. But in regard to charity, no one can contest that these honors belong to our saint, since he has taught all Christians the depth and scope of this virtue before he could learn this lesson from anyone else.

This proposition contains two truths which we shall examine in the two parts of this discourse: the first, that St. Stephen was a perfect example of charity; and the second, that his was the first example of perfect charity. My pleasure in undertaking this eulogy is all the greater in that the basis on which I am working is a solid and unshakable one. No one will be able to accuse me of having presented a hero of my own making, or of having traced an idea of charity that is no more than an idea. I will say nothing which is not supported by the Holy Spirit; He is the very One Who has deigned to dictate the life of our saint, a life which is related at great length in the Acts of the Apostles. However unlikely my claims may appear, it will not even be permissible to doubt them. Let us first address ourselves to the Blessed Virgin, saying with the angel: Ave Maria.

FIRST POINT

Immediately following the descent of the Holy Spirit upon them, the disciples of Jesus Christ, with a success that defies description, began to spread everywhere the fire with which they had been filled. Never had the world seen conversions that were, at once, so immediate and so complete: a single discourse resulted in the conversion of four thousand people to Jesus Christ; and in submitting themselves to the Gospel, there was not one among these converts who did not immediately accept its most difficult counsels. As soon as they were baptized, these Christians sold all their earthly possessions, turned the money over to the Apostles, and placed themselves completely under their guidance. Thus, the Church at that time was one large, thriving family, where love and peace reigned, because cupidity had been banished from it and all who composed it had renounced everything, including the care of their own subsistence. There were, then, no poor among the Christians, because there were no rich. All goods were in common; those whose condition of birth was vile and contemptible had no need to be ashamed of their indigence, and the others, who had voluntarily divested themselves of all things, even took pride in their poverty. The only concern was to promote the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Each one was expected to retrace in himself His divine examples; and the memory, still very fresh, of

His life and death had inspired them with thoughts which were so opposed to those of the world that, for them, pain, scorn, and ignominy were sources of great happiness. O, where have you gone, blessed times, beautiful days of the glory of our Mother, century of graces and blessings! Alas! where will we find successors to the many saints you engendered? Why is it that we deteriorate as we multiply? Why is it that the service of Jesus Christ has become more neglected since the number of His servants has increased, and that almost no Christianity can be found in the world today, now that the whole world is Christian?

It was at that time, Christian Listeners, with the number of faithful increasing each day, that the Apostles found themselves overwhelmed with occupations and, therefore, resolved to free themselves of the administration of temporal goods and to confide to others the task of providing for the needs of widows, who at that time constituted one of the largest and holiest groups in the Church. There was no lack of very wise and virtuous members who could have performed these duties in a worthy manner; the seventy-two disciples had not yet dispersed and, among those who had followed the Apostles since the Ascension, there were, without doubt, many whose age and experience gave them a strong advantage over the younger ones. However, it was a young man who was chosen to fill this very important role. The stewardship and administration of all the possessions of the faithful, the guidance of all Christian widows was given to a young Greek, about thirty-three years old

who was thought to be the most perfectly formed youth of his time in Jerusalem--the most handsome one even, if we are to believe St. Augustine, that the world had ever seen since the time of the Savior, and one who, besides all these physical assets, possessed all the gifts of oratory.

Yes, Gentlemen, when St. Stephen was named first deacon, he possessed all of these qualities, which must have been as many obstacles to his election: Stephano Martyri, said St. Augustine, et pulchritudo erat corporis, et flos aetatis, et gratia sermocinantis (St. Stephen the Martyr was a handsome man in the spring of life and blessed with eloquence). He was a handsome man, he was eloquent, he was young; yet, he had such lights and such discretion, his virtue was so established and so renowned, that no one hesitated to choose him. It was by unanimous decision, on the testimony and the insistence of all the Church, that this charge was confided to him. In all of this multitude of the faithful, whose approbation was needed, there was not one who felt he was too young. His duties would require him to deal and converse almost continually, not only with married women, but also with widows--that is, with women who, in a sense, would be in his power and would depend on him for all the needs of their existence. Without exception, they judged him to be strong enough to perform these duties without peril. No one doubted that his virtue would place him beyond the reach of the enemy's assaults. And beauty, a quality which can often do much harm even when none is intended, was accompanied in him by such great modesty that, although he was to be exposed to the eyes

of so many people of the opposite sex, it was not believed that he would inspire in them any but chaste thoughts. I do not know your feelings, Gentlemen, but even if I had never learned anything about this saint except what I have just said, this would be sufficient in my mind to establish him as a saint of the first order. It was necessary for him to have lived in the most irreproachable and edifying manner in order to have, at that age, so strongly convinced everyone of his prudence and his invincible purity.

But all of this does not yet touch upon his charity, which is, after all, the principal point of this eulogy. Gentlemen, this virtue began to appear when he accepted those duties that we have just mentioned. This position was difficult, thorny, and delicate; it carried with it a thousand worries capable of confounding the most astute. It meant providing for the needs of an entire group of people comprising several thousand men and women of various nationalities, of every station, and of all ages. He accepted these duties, nevertheless, out of a desire to serve his brothers, and even out of the zeal he had for the glory of Jesus Christ. Yes, it was for the glory of Jesus Christ, as well as for the service of his brothers, that St. Stephen sacrificed his rest and the comfort that he might have enjoyed in a life that was less demanding.

The Apostles were diverted from the ministry of the word by the distribution of food and clothing; they could not henceforth divide their efforts between these two duties without placing themselves in danger of neglecting one or the other.

They even notified the Christians that they would be forced to abandon the preaching of the Gospel unless they were relieved of all other administrative duties. That is why they asked for deacons; for, it is not right, they said, that we cease to preach the word of God in order to serve at tables: Non est aequum, nos derelinquere verbum Dei et ministrare mensis (It is not right for us to put aside the word of God and to serve at the tables). Could St. Stephen have given a more solid proof of his love for Jesus Christ than to take on this difficult duty, so that the Apostles might be free to proclaim the resurrection and the divinity of their Master? If St. Paul stoned St. Stephen by freeing the hands of the Jews, by holding the robes that hindered these monstrous ones when performing this act, can we not say that St. Stephen preached Jesus Christ through the mouth of all the other disciples, since in relieving them of the dispensation of temporal goods, he delivered them from a burden capable of arresting their zeal?

Do not think, however, that, from this time, his charity was strictly limited to providing the faithful with the necessities of life. It is true that these duties could occupy a man's full time, since the Apostles did not feel in doing them that they would have had time for anything else. But love can never find enough effort or fatigue to satisfy it. It generates strength, and it finds time for everything. It feels compelled to appear in many places, to burst forth in a thousand ways. Yes, Gentlemen, after having performed his functions to the satisfaction of all, this holy deacon still found

the time and the strength to work in other ways for the glory of his Master and for the good of his brothers. He slipped into their assemblies, he mingled with the Jews, he never ceased to urge them to recognize their Liberator. He dared to defy the most learned and to engage in debate the doctors who came to Jerusalem from all the synagogues of the world. He even performed great miracles each day to give authority to his doctrine: Faciebat signa et prodigia magna in populo (He was working great prodigies and miracles among the people). What great results he would have obtained amid these masters of the Law if their pride had not impeded the effect of his zeal! He fought them with so many arguments, he exhorted them with such ardor, he answered them with such competence, that they were left speechless, they were confounded and forced to withdraw.

They could not resist, said St. Luke, the wisdom and the spirit which spoke from his mouth: Et non poterant resistere sapientiae et spiritui qui loquebatur (And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit who was speaking). But alas! they resisted all too well the spirit which spoke to their hearts and which invited them to repent. What more was needed to convert them? They were convinced, reduced to silence, and forced by their withdrawal to admit their weakness; they were at last undeceived. But how does one force proud persons to confess that they have actually been wrong and are less enlightened than those who bring them the truth? Seeing themselves unable to hold out against so much eloquence and knowledge, instead of surrendering to the known truth, they resolved to extinguish the

torch which revealed it to them against their will. To do this, they resorted to calumny, they bribed various accusers and false witnesses, they roused the people, they prejudiced the elders, and they transmitted to them all of their own venom. With the spreading of the first blasphemies against him, people came from all sides; he was seized and dragged before the judges for the pronouncement of his condemnation. His charity had never appeared more heroic than it did on that occasion.

Followed by an enraged mob, which included the most learned Jews, Stephen entered the Council room; and there, overjoyed at having an opportunity worthy of his zeal, forgetting the danger that threatened him, he thought only of making use of the attention centered on him to preach Jesus Christ crucified instead of planning his own defense. We have in the Acts of the Apostles the entire discourse that he gave on this occasion. Far from sparing his fierce listeners in an attempt to appease them, he began to relate the history of their betrayal and the ingratitude of their nation; he gave them a long account of the promises made to their ancestors, of the favors that they had received from God, and of the brutal and cruel manner in which they had treated His most loyal servants. And, having finally come to Jesus Christ, he raised his voice and addressed himself to this great assembly: Dura cervice et incircumcisis cordibus et auribus, Spiritui Sancto resistitis (You resist the Holy Spirit with your hard necks and your pagan hearts and ears). Hardened souls, pagan and intractable, how long will you resist the Holy Spirit? Sicut patres vestri, ita et vos (As your fathers were, so are you).

You are no better than your parents; your fathers persecuted all the prophets; they stained themselves with the blood of those who announced the Messiah to them--but it was left to you to soak your hands in the blood of the Messiah Himself and to crucify a God: Occiderunt eos, qui praenunciabant de adventu Justi, cujus vos nunc proditores et homicidae fuistis. (They killed those who were announcing the coming of the Just One, Whose betrayers and murderers you have become). In any event, it is in vain that you have hoped to protect yourselves by His death from the torments with which He threatened you; He is risen despite all your precautions; He lives, He reigns, and He will reign for all eternity.

Then, raising his eyes to heaven, he said: I see Him, the Man-God, standing at the right hand of His Father, arrayed in His glory and His omnipotence: Ecce video coelos apertos, et Filium stantem a dextris virtutis Dei (Behold I see the heavens opened and the Son standing in His glory at the right hand of God). This discourse provoked strange reactions in the minds of all who heard it. Each word pierced their hearts. The sacred historian relates that while he was speaking, the Jews were bursting with spite, that they seemed enraged, seething and gnashing their teeth against the saint. They were like a band of wild beasts that Stephen was trying to subdue by pricking them to the quick and by harassing them in a thousand ways; or like mutinous slaves that he was chastising with the flail of his eloquence, while he kept them enchained, so to speak, by his bearing and courage.

There, Gentlemen, you see the extent of his strength and his fearlessness. It is easy to see in his actions the greatness of his love for the Savior of the world, but perhaps it is not so easy to find in these actions his love for his brothers. To hear the harsh, insulting words that he spoke, who would not believe, said St. Augustine, that he was angry and that it was hatred that made him speak? Quis non crederet iratum? Quis non odiorum facibus inflammatum, quando clamabat: Dura cervice...

(Who would not believe him to be angry? Who would not believe him to be inflamed by the torch of hatred when he was shouting: By your hard necks, and so forth). But this anger was the result of the burning zeal that he had for their salvation. Complaints, reproaches, insults even, and all the verbal outbursts are common to both hatred and love, but the difference is that hatred makes use of them only when it is weak and fleeting, whereas love makes use of them only when it is violent. Yes, said St. Augustine, the gall which his heart spouted so abundantly through his mouth came from an inexhaustible spring of sweetness. He was greatly aroused because he loved greatly; he went so far as to use cruelty against them because he wanted to leave nothing untried to heal them: Ferox cor, lene cor clamabat et amabat, saeviebat et salvos fieri volebat.

(A fierce heart, a gentle heart was shouting and loving, was raging and was hoping to see them healed).

Yet, this is still not the perfect charity that we are seeking. One must die, Christian Listeners, to push love to its summit, and that is what Stephen is about to do with an

unbelievable constancy. Imagine for a moment that enraged mob which, when no longer able to endure the reproaches of this great saint, abruptly interrupted him by terrible screams and pounced upon him with fury, as if to tear him to pieces. They pushed and dragged him outside the city; and there, casting off their clothing and arming themselves with bricks and stones, they lashed out as one man and cruelly stoned him to death. It is not difficult to ascertain the number and the force of the strokes he suffered by the number of his tormentors and by the fury which animated them. But, can you truly believe that, having been struck by that dreadful hail, he was not knocked to the ground, or even slightly shaken by it. There he was, all bruised and broken, and covered with blood; he had but a moment left to live, he was dying; and yet, he was still standing. He maintained that position to show that his love was stronger than the hatred of his enemies, that it was even stronger than death.

In fact, what death was unable to do, love undertook and succeeded. Yes, Gentlemen, love finally forced him to bow down and bend his knees to obtain, by a humble prayer, grace for his barbarous persecutors: Positis autem genibus, clamabat voce magna, dicens: Domine, ne statuas illis hoc peccatum (Moreover, on bended knee, he cried in a loud voice, saying: Lord, do not hold this sin against them). Kneeling, he cried out in a loud voice: Lord, do not hold this sin against them; forget the injustice they have committed against me; do not punish them, Lord; on the contrary, give them added assistance so that they might be converted; cure their blindness; do not

allow them to be lost: Domine, ne statuas illis hoc peccatum (Lord, do not hold this sin against them). What a transformation, exclaimed one of the Holy Fathers! Can this be that dauntless young man who dealt, a short time before, so haughtily with both his accusers and his judges; that man who dared to confront the entire Senate and Synagogue, who lashed out against fathers and sons, who was aflame with ardor, not to say rancor and bitterness? How do we explain that he now appears so different from that other self; that he pleads; that he asks for grace on behalf of those whom he censured a short time before with such severity? Ubi est tuum illus: Dura cervice? Hoc est totum quod clamabat, hoc est totum quod saeviebat (Where is that old self of yours that shouted: By your hard neck? This is all he was shouting about; this is all he was raging against). What has happened to those strong words that you used to confound your adversaries? What! all that noise, all that anger has been transformed into a prayer for them? Here is the reason: earlier he considered the Jews enemies of Jesus, and now, he sees them only as his own enemies. In the Council room, it was the glory of his Master which was in question, and now it is only his life which is threatened.

I would ask, Gentlemen, that to understand the greatness of this action, you recall for a moment what happens in your heart when someone offends you. To pray, when we are calm, for someone who dislikes us, for a man who despises us, who thwarts us in our plans, who envies our happiness; to think of him at the oratory; to implore God in order to obtain special graces

in his behalf--my God, how beautiful that is, how magnanimous, and how worthy of a generous heart, of a heart that is truly Christian! But, to humble oneself before the Lord for an enemy who strikes you, who thrashes you repeatedly, who stamps out your life; and to do this even while you are receiving such inhuman treatment, at a time when your being is normally troubled, when all the passions are aroused, when reason is given no hearing, when the law itself is silenced and excuses your greatest excesses--do you believe that charity could accomplish anything more heroic than this? St. Stephen sees a thousand arms raised against him, he sees them as they furiously cast the stones which are their weapons, he reads in their eyes and on their faces the hatred and the fury of their hearts; he feels it even more keenly in the sharp pain of the stones as they hit him at once in the head, the chest, and the sides, from the front and the back, without pause, without interruption. If I were to say no more than that he remained calm amid the storm, that he expired in this torture with the same tranquillity that other men experience in falling off to sleep, Obdormivit in Domino (He fell asleep in the Lord), without feeling in his soul any desire for revenge, any resentment, any agitation, any anxiety, would there not be reason to admire his invincible constancy? But I say much more, Christian Company; I say that, at this same time, his heart was filled with a burning and sincere love, that he was moved to pity by the blindness of those who killed him, that he foresaw with pain the misfortunes which threatened them; finally, that he prostrated himself on the ground, raised his voice

to be heard by the Father of mercies, and asked His pardon for all the suffering they made him undergo. And, so that we may not think that this request was simply a grimace, or that his prayer was a cold one, we know that--without mentioning the others whom we ignore--St. Paul, who was the most zealous of his persecutors, the great and incomparable St. Paul, was the fruit of this prayer. St. Augustine said: Si sanctus Stephanus non orasset, Ecclesia Paulum non haberet (Had St. Stephen not prayed, the Church would not have Paul). If St. Stephen had not prayed, the Church would not have had a St. Paul.

Here, I believe, is a perfect example of perfect charity. To consecrate himself to a very difficult task in order to relieve the Apostles of Jesus Christ and to serve the faithful; to work with zeal, and even to endanger his life; to make the Savior known and to lead the nation out of its error; and, finally, to die for his Master, and, as He died, to pray for his enemies. Is it not true, Gentlemen, that it is not possible to go further than this in the double duty of Christian Charity? Is it necessary to show that St. Stephen is the first example given by Christianity of this sublime virtue? It will not be difficult for me to make you understand that he was. Such will be my task in the second part of this discourse, but I shall do so briefly.

SECOND POINT

Christian Charity, to consider strictly what it has added to the Old Law, has two essential parts: love of the

Savior and love of one's enemies. We have shown that St. Stephen has carried both of these loves to their perfection. It remains for us to examine if he was the first to be perfect in both of them. For the first part, there can be no doubt that martyrdom is the peak of perfect charity; and the Church has recognized St. Stephen as the first of all its martyrs. But I do not know if we have ever fully realized how much glory is due him because of that quality. It is quite easy to scorn death after ten or twelve million Christians have overcome it and have, to some extent; taken the edge off all the instruments of torture. It does not astonish me that there should be less apprehension about the torments after one had seen old persons, women, and young children as they endured them with constancy and sent up songs in the midst of their agonies. Who could not be ashamed to turn back at the sight of the Agneses and the Catherines? We learn, finally, from the experience of others that the most cruel torments are not unbearable. We can even come to make light of that which, at first, had filled us with horror. We admire the bravery of the first man to sail the Ocean. We say that he must have had a heart of oak or bronze. But today one would have to be a very great coward to fear to board a ship. St. Stephen had no examples to encourage him to give up his life for Jesus Christ. No Apostle, no disciple had as yet shown a resistance that went as far as the shedding of blood. We had not as yet seen the marvels that God would later produce to sustain the faith of those who suffered for His love, or to appease the rigors of their



torments, or even to preserve them from these torments completely. The magnificent temples which were later built to honor so many martyrs; the rich altars that were consecrated to their memory; the veneration shown for their ashes by the whole world--all of these, Gentlemen, have given to death a face that is quite different from the one which it must have had when St. Stephen exposed himself to it.

It is true that Jesus Christ had been crucified. But this fact only presented another difficulty--that of being stoned for a man who had been crucified and made infamous by this form of torture. It would have been less difficult to die for Him while He was still alive and while He still attracted a large following throughout all of Judea by His eloquence and the reputation of His virtue. Jesus Christ was dead, that is true; but His death, far from encouraging anyone to defend His divinity, had only served to scandalize the whole world; it had made people forget His greatest miracles; it had dispersed, shaken, and--let us say it openly--completely disrupted His disciples. It took great faith to be willing to die for the sake of a dead man, when no one had as yet dared to do it, and when His most ardent friends had, when the occasion arose, refused to give Him this proof of their belief.

As for the prayer said in favor of one's enemies, I am not unaware that this had been taught to us by Jesus Christ just before He died. I say only that our holy deacon was the first to put into practice such a sublime lesson. If he was preceded in this, it was by God; and Stephen proved that it was not impossible to emulate Him. For, Gentlemen, this example would

have remained extremely difficult for men to follow if St. Stephen had not taught that it was not impossible. The extreme aversion that we all feel so naturally for our enemies would have made us consider this action of the Savior as an action that was strictly divine; we would have placed it among His greatest miracles. It was, in fact, this action that convinced the most obstinate among the Jews of the Savior's divinity. These opiniated ones, who remained untouched by His curing of so many illnesses, untouched even by His raising of the dead, were won over by this proof; they thought that only God could extend His pardon so generously to such cruel persecutors:

Vere Filius Dei erat iste (Truly, that man was the Son of God).

T h u s, this example was much more apt to evoke admiration than imitation from men. Something which had only been done by God was, in our view, as if it had never been done; and, in this sense, we can say that St. Stephen has given us the first example of it, since he humanized, so to speak, in his own person, the example which had been given us by the Incarnate Word.

How glorious it is for you, Great Saint, illustrious Martyr of Jesus Christ, to have traced for us, by your life and your death, the first and greatest example of the perfect Christian virtue! How glorious to have gone so far, without a guide and on routes that were so rough and so elevated! But how shameful for us, if we should hesitate to enter into these same paths, now that they have been so well beaten and are still being travelled by so many others! I do not speak of martyrdom, because as long as we have princes as just, as gentle, as peace-loving, and as opposed to bloodshed and cruelty as those which

Providence has given us, there is no great likelihood that we will have the opportunity to die for our Faith. But, for loving our enemies, is there any excuse that we can validly offer, after so many people from all walks of life have demonstrated what great things we can accomplish with the aid of divine grace? How many generous confessors have kissed, have embraced the torturers who were slashing their bodies! How many virtuous mothers have protected the slayers of their children! How many truly brave people have been first to throw themselves at the feet of those who had cruelly outraged them? How many innocent ones have piled benedictions upon those who had oppressed them by their calumnies! How many miserable people, reduced to abject poverty, solicit each day from the divine mercy that He shower spiritual graces on those who have stripped them of all their temporal goods! Yes, my God, you know that even today there are such great souls, and you will never permit that they be lacking in Your Church: Ideoque et nos tantam habentes impositam nubem testium, per patientiam curramus ad propositum nobis certamen (And, therefore, having before our eyes so great a number of witnesses, let us through patience hasten to the challenge placed before us). Therefore, my Brothers, surrounded as we are by such a multitude of examples, which would one day constitute as many witnesses to reproach us before God for our hardness, let us run, with patience, along the route that they have opened for us. Let us imitate their facility in pardoning the small injuries done to us; let us oppose the hatred of our enemies only with a sincere love and fervent prayers; let us

remember that of all the methods which can assure our salvation, none is more infallible than this one. From the moment that you have an enemy, you are the arbiter of your own fortune and the absolute master of the heart of God. Sin has called down on you all of God's hatred, and since you are entirely in His power and subject to His discretion, you have reason to fear His terrible vengeance. But has someone offended you? Are you being unjustly persecuted? May the Lord be blessed for it a thousand times! It is as if a hostage had by some good fortune fallen into your hands and given you the power to control God's future conduct in your regard. Not only can you be delivered from the hands of divine justice as a form of exchange, but you can also call on His goodness to treat you with great gentleness, depending on how you deal with those who offend you.

How would you like the Lord to treat you in the future? Do you wish Him to overlook all your misdeeds? Do you wish that, instead of punishing your ingratitude, He shower you with added blessings? Do you desire more than just His pardon? Would it please you to have Him transform into love all the hatred that He had conceived? It all depends entirely on you. You have only to adopt these feelings for the person who has displeased you; it is an article of faith that God will do for you all that you have done for that person: Qua mensura mensi fueritis remetietur vobis (You will be pardoned in the measure that you have pardoned). Since that insult, that calumny, that violent act against you, God has established you as the judge of your own misdeeds, as St. John Chrysostom has said: Te judicem fecit in condonatione tuorum criminum (He made you

judge as regards the forgiveness of your own faults). It rests with you to draw up the plan of your own judgment: the Lord has placed Himself under the obligation of following this program down to the last point. Show Him, in the person of your enemy, how you wish to be treated by Him: Si pauca dimittis, pauca dimituntur; si plura, plura; si ex corde dimittis et sincere, eodem pacto tibi Deus dimittit; si praeter veniam datam etiam eum pro amico habeas, eodem modo erga te Deus afficietur (If you forgive little, little will be forgiven you; if you forgive much, much will be forgiven; if you forgive from a sincere heart, God will forgive you in the same way; if, after a given offense, you still hold the offender as a friend, God will then act the same way towards you). If you forgive little, you will receive little forgiveness; if you forgive more, you will receive more forgiveness; if you forgive without reserve and from the bottom of your heart, the Lord will forget all your infidelities and your vilest betrayals. Finally, if you go beyond the forgiveness of injuries to the point of loving those who are responsible for them, you can expect a most sincere love on God's part, and you can be assured that you are in His good graces: Eodem modo erga te Deus afficietur (God will act the same way towards you).

Why, then, am I so disturbed whenever someone offends me? What is the meaning of this sadness, these anxieties, this emotion, these outbursts, this despair into which I am plunged by the least word, the smallest offense imposed on me by my neighbor? Why do I lose my appetite and sleep over it, and feel that I can only find comfort in a cruel and swift

revenge? Why is it that I refuse to listen to any talk of pardon? That I consider as my enemies all those who refuse to flatter my passion, or even to serve it? Quare contristatus incedo, dum affligit me inimicus (Why do I go about sad while my enemy afflicts me)? If I had a modicum of true love for myself, if I placed some value on my salvation, if I feared the anger of my God as much as it deserves to be feared, what joy would be mine when I am offended, to know that I now have nothing to fear, save my own resentment; and that, if I can master that, I will be able to direct my own destiny according to my wishes!

Alas! Lord, I have never given this teaching enough reflection, but I am certain one cannot reject this truth without rejecting Christianity, and I am also certain, Lord, that in this matter Your Heart follows all the movements of my own. Lord, You see this heart, You probe even its darkest recesses; You are my witness that in it there remain no vestiges of gall or bitterness toward anyone. To obtain pardon for the many crimes of which I am guilty, to obtain it surely, beyond any doubt, I have but to forgive my enemy. I forgive him, my God, and in good faith, without guile, without reserve. You promise to love me as much as I love him. What! my good Master, as miserable as I am, as unworthy as I am of your love? Ah, Lord! How I wish I might love him a thousand times more than myself! Yes, I love this man who does not love me, this man who hates me, if You so desire, unto death. It would take but little to make me love his aversion which provides me with an opportunity to merit Your love. What proofs of this do you desire from me? That I wish him well? I wish for him all the goods that I wish

for myself. Do you desire that, after Your own example, I pray for him? Lord, forget the sin that he might have committed in offending me. Forget, as well, all the other sins of which he may be guilty. Repay him with a thousand blessings for all the harm that he has wished to do me. I exhort You, O my God! by the bowels of Your infinite mercy, by the blood that You shed for him on the cross, by the example of forgiveness You Yourself gave, by Your dying prayer for those who were responsible for Your death: Ignosce illis, quia nesciunt quid faciunt (Forgive them, for they know not what they are doing). Yes, I can truly say of those who persecute me that they know not what they are doing. They believe they are causing me harm, and they become instruments of my eternal happiness. If it is possible, O Master, grant that, in wishing to hurt me, they may not harm themselves; that they may not offend You; that the outrages that they perpetrate against me may become, for them as well as for me, a means of merit and of eternal reward. Amen.

PART III

SERMON XIX

FEAST OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

Mysterium quod absconditum
fuit a saeculis et genera-
tionibus, nunc autem mani-
festum est sanctis.

This is the Mystery which
God has hidden from all gen-
erations and which He now
reveals to His chosen ones.
(Col. 1:26)

Nothing is more obscure to the eyes of reason than
the Mystery of the Most Holy Trinity; yet, nothing
is more evident to the eyes of faith.

However great was the love shown by the Lord for
the Jewish people, and despite His having chosen them from
among all the nations on earth to favor with His greatest
graces; it must nevertheless be recognized, for our consola-
tion, that Christians are His real favorites. It is true
that He revealed Himself to the Israelites; He taught them
His Name, which was, until then, hardly known in the world;
but He revealed Himself to them in a very incomplete way, and

we can say that He taught them no more than His Name. They knew of Him only that which they could not ignore without deceiving themselves. God revealed to them that He existed and that He was all-powerful--a truth which is engraved, so to speak, in the soul of all men and which grows in our mind just as certain plants grow without having been planted or cultivated, or grow even where others have been sown. Quod notum est Dei, manifestum est illis (That which has been known to God has been manifested to these).

But the mystery which the Church honors today, this mystery so sublime, so impenetrable, was never revealed to them. They never knew what was most admirable in God, which is the Trinity of Persons joined to the unity of nature. This is a secret that was reserved for a people more cherished, the children of the new alliance. Mysterium quod absconditum fuit a saeculis et a generationibus, nunc autem manifestatum est sanctis (This is the Mystery which God has hidden from all generations and which He now reveals to His chosen ones).

And in this matter, Gentlemen, I feel that the love He has shown for Christians is all the greater in that He has revealed to us something that we could not discover for ourselves; and that He revealed it to us in such a way that we could not doubt it. We would never have been able to come to the knowledge of the Trinity if God Himself had not opened

His mouth to teach it to us, and we would never have been able to believe it if He had not explained it very clearly.

In this regard, therefore, we have a double obligation towards Him, which I shall try to explain in the two parts of this discourse, by showing, in the first part, that this mystery is utterly incomprehensible; and, in the second, that it is nevertheless indubitable. This will be the first point: that one must close one's eyes to believe it. This will be the second point: that one must blind oneself completely not to believe it. However thorny this matter may seem, there is nothing that I shall say that could not be understood by the most ignorant; and yet, from it, even the most learned can derive some benefit, provided that the Holy Spirit will deign to illuminate both categories, a grace we are about to ask of Him through the intercession of Mary. Ave Maria.

In my plan to show you that the mystery of this day is beyond all of our conceptions, I am favored, at least, in that I need not fear that a lack of learning could prevent anyone from understanding me. Since those who have the least lights are the ones who have the greatest difficulty in understanding things, they are also the easiest to convince that something is beyond comprehension. When forced to admit that we are unable to grasp a truth, we prefer to believe that the cause lies in the obscurity of the truth itself rather than

in our ignorance. And thus you see that what one usually fears most in a discourse on the Trinity, which is a lack of penetration and competence in the listeners, could even be a favorable disposition for my purposes. But it is not simply to the ignorant that this mystery is impenetrable; we can say that the most learned of men are as ignorant as the coarsest.

To be convinced of this truth, one has only to recall what faith obliges us to believe on this subject. Who can explain how a single divinity can exist in three distinct Persons without forming three Gods; how it is that the Son is not the Father, although He is one with the Father; how it is that the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son, although all three form a single Holy Spirit, quite indivisible and quite simple; how it is that the Son is not only as powerful as the Father, and the Holy Spirit as powerful and as wise as the Son, but that all three together have no more power, no more wisdom, than each has separately, and that each one occupies as much space by His immensity as does the Trinity all together? What an enigma, and who can boast of being able to solve it? The First Person produces the Second without having any ascendancy over It, either in rank or in seniority. The Third is produced by the Others, and He is the same age as They. There is more joy in giving than in receiving, according to the word of the Gospel; but in God, the Holy Spirit receives all and gives nothing without being, for this, less happy, nor less generous than the Father, Who gives all and receives nothing. Let philosophers meditate and discourse on this as much as they please,

they will never make me understand how it is possible that, there being in God only one Mind, only one Will without composition and without the least distinction, this same Mind is fertile in the Father and sterile in the other two Persons; that this Will is operative in the Father and in the Son, and that It produces nothing in the Holy Spirit. How is it that the Word is the Son of the Father, and that the Holy Spirit is not the Son of the two Persons Who produce It? It is in vain that theologians ponder this point, says St. Athanasius; we must ask God to reveal this enigma to His Church or wait for Him to explain it in heaven, for, until now, nothing has been said that can satisfy us: Petendum ut reveletur, aut expectandum ut videatur (One should ask that it be revealed, or wait for it to appear).

It is a perfection in the Father to engender; it is a perfection in the Son to conspire with the Father to produce the Holy Spirit; these two perfections are not found in the Third Person; and yet, He is no less perfect than the other two. There is more: paternity and divinity are one and the same thing in the Father; and yet, He communicates divinity to His Son and He reserves paternity for Himself alone. Finally, to be God it is not necessary to engender, nor to produce anything at all, since the Holy Spirit, Who is God, produces nothing in the divinity; and yet, if in God

there were not an infinite generation and production, there would be no God. Here, Gentlemen, is one part of what faith obliges us to believe about the adorable Trinity. But of what assistance can reason be in helping our mind to accept this belief? The other divine perfections are depicted in creatures; and if we but study the universe even a little, it is easy to find there the goodness, the wisdom, and the power of Him Who created it.

The seasons and the elements, says St. Prosper, are like open books where, from earliest times, man has been able to instruct himself concerning the grandeur of our God. The sky serves as a picture of that immense nature which contains all things, and which cannot be confined to any place. The earth represents His immutability; the sea, by its abysses, expresses the secrets of that Wisdom, which no mind can sound and which will engulf those who would venture to study it too deeply. The smallest flower praises His beauty and the most minute atom preaches His omnipotence. The reason that the saints see nothing here below which does not remind them of God, which does not increasingly inflame their love for Him, is that all things teach them that He is good, that He is infinitely lovable. Coelum et terra clamant, Domine, ut amem te (Lord, heaven and earth proclaim that I should love You), exclaimed St. Augustine. Lord, heaven and earth tell me that I must love You, and they say

this in a very loud and resounding voice; or rather, with a million voices they say that God is eternal, that He is beautiful, that He is kind, that He is filled with love for us. But, if we should ask them how many persons there are in God, and if it is true that their multiplicity does not destroy the unity of His essence, all these voices are either silent or deceptive; they are unable to inform us on this point; they might even lead us into error, if we were to listen to them. It is for this reason that the same St. Augustine, having explained this mystery to Consentius, added: When you read all these things, make sure that you do not seek images of them among living creatures; on the contrary, turn away, disown, renounce, reject, drive away, flee anything material that presents itself to your imagination: Quidquid tibi, cum ista cogitas, corporeae similitudinis occurrerit, abige, abne, nega, respue, abjice, fuge (Whatever corporeal likeness rushes to your mind when you ponder these things, deny it, disavow it, renounce it, reject it, chase it away, flee from it).

But how is it that all the other divine perfections appear in creatures, as in so many mirrors, and that there cannot be found in them the slightest trace of the Trinity, although the three Persons took part in the creation of all beings? The reason given by St. Thomas is that the divine Persons do not operate outwardly through the perfections that distinguish them from one another, but only through

those which are common to all three. The world is indeed the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; but it is not an effect of the paternity of the Father, or the filiation of the Word, or the active or passive aspiration of the Holy Spirit, to use the terms of the Scholastics. It is the effect of wisdom, power, beauty, and goodness --attributes which can equally be ascribed to all three.

Of all the qualities of a cause, we can know by its effects only those which contribute to the production of those same effects. It is thus that the picture of the sun, reflected in very clear water, does not represent the fecundity or the heat of that heavenly body, but only its light, since only its light has contributed to the making of this picture. We can know, by looking at a marble statue, whether the sculptor is versed in his art, whether he is dynamic and imaginative; but we cannot judge from his work whether he is of noble or common birth, whether he is cowardly or courageous, because neither the birth nor the courage of the sculptor has contributed anything to the making of this figure--he has employed only his knowledge and his hand.

In the same way, creatures can teach you that the Lord is wise, and that He can do all that He wishes, because it is through His wisdom and His power that they were created; but they cannot show you the distinction that exists between the Father and the Son, because the qualities which distinguish

these adorable Persons are in no way related to creation. How could our mind be expected to arrive at the understanding of this mystery, since among all creatures on which it has pleased God to paint His image there is not one which reflects this marvelous feature?

I know that, to help us understand the teaching of faith on the Trinity, the Fathers have sought symbols in nature, among both spiritual and sentient things. Consider your soul, said St. Augustine in the second book of his Confessions; there you will find being, knowledge, and will. Certain distinctions exist among these three, and yet they constitute a single essence, a single soul. In the sun, said Tertullian and several other Fathers after him, we can distinguish light, which is like the substance of the sun; brightness, which is like the beauty of its light; and warmth, which is like its effect and its virtue. The light corresponds to the First Person; the rays correspond to the Son, Who in Scripture is called the splendor of the Father; and the ardor is the true symbol of the Holy Spirit, Who is the love of the Father and the Son. St. Basil found another image of this mystery in the rainbow: it is a cloud, said this Father, that has been painted three different colors by a single ray. St. Denis of Alexandria compared it to the water of a spring, which, while flowing, forms a stream, which in turn finally produces a river; thus, the same water shares three different names. But, after having understood

all these similarities, be very sure, warned St. Augustine, that you do not think you have comprehended the mystery of the Trinity. Sed cum invenerit in iis aliquid, non jam se putet invenisse illud, quod supra ista est incommutabile

(But when you have found something in these objects, do not think that you have already discovered that which is above all unchangeable). In fact, in all of these created trinities, if I may be permitted to speak thus, either the distinction is not real, or the unity is only apparent: three names are given to the same thing or three things have only one name. But in God, the distinction and the unity are equally real. It is true that the Son is not the Father, and it is no less true that He is one and the same thing with the Father. So, Gentlemen, the comparisons that are used in this matter can indeed help us to learn what faith teaches us, but not to understand what we believe.

But what can we conclude from all of this? Should the obscurity of this great mystery weaken our faith? Should we allow ourselves to doubt what God teaches us because we are unable to understand this truth? That is not the feeling of the Holy Fathers, who maintain, to the contrary, that there can be no faith without shadows. What virtue would faith be, says St. Leon, and how could St. Paul have said that it is through faith that we are justified, if it consisted in believing what is evident to the senses or to the

mind? Would there be any sacrifice to God in following His judgment when it agreed with our own, in accepting truths that we could not reasonably deny? But would we not be treating the Lord in the most insolent and most unworthy manner if we were to demand of Him reasons for everything He says, if we were never willing to take Him at His word, if we were to mistrust His testimony, to the point of exacting tangible proofs for everything that He deigns to reveal to us?

This small mind, which can conceive only limited and short-sighted views, which is ignorant of the most ordinary things, which is uncertain and confused, which makes mistakes each day in discussing the simplest matters, which needs to be led, redressed, and corrected at every turn-- would this mind, I say, dare to examine the pronouncements of its Creator, and to deliberate on whether it should believe in His oracles? What temerity, what audacity, to wish to submit to the judgment of reason the very Author of reason, to wish to oppose this feeble ray of light which He communicated to us when He drew us out of nothingness to that infinite abyss of brightness which illuminates all, and which no eyes can sustain, not even those of the greatest intellects! How much more judicious and wise is the true Christian who, knowing that the Lord can neither deceive us nor deceive Himself believes blindly all that he is ordered to believe, who rejoices to find among Catholic dogmas some points which seem

to contradict all truth, so that He might have occasion to give Him proof of a more nearly perfect submission.

Speak, eternal and immutable Truth, speak to the most unworthy of your servants! Speak: I firmly believe, all that you say, even though I do not see it, even though my senses oppose my belief, even though my feeble intellect seems to war against it, even though I have no proofs for it other than Your word. You have revealed to Your Church the adorable mystery of the Trinity. You command all Your faithful to confess that there is but one God, although there are three divine Persons; that the Father is distinct from the Son and that the Father and the Son are distinct from the Holy Spirit, although all three share the same nature and the same divinity; that all three are wise, immense, and eternal, yet have but one eternity, one immensity, one wisdom; that they are not only equally powerful and good, but also that they have the same power and the same goodness; that we owe to all three of them an equal obedience and yet have only one master; that the Father has no beginning, the Son was engendered by the Father, and that the Father and the Son do not engender the Holy Spirit, but that He proceeds from Them--and that, despite the order of this procession, there exists no priority or preeminence among these divine Persons, that one does not depend on the other, although one proceeds from the other.

My God, I confess that I understand nothing in all of this, that it is beyond my intelligence, which is puzzled and confused by it; that when I consult my human knowledge, all of these mysteries not only appear highly improbable, but positively false, impossible, visionary, and opposed to all the principles of science, and even to all the principles of nature. And yet, I believe them, I adore them, and I am so convinced of their veracity that I find no difficulty in making this belief the basis of all my hope for eternal happiness. Even if I were to see with my own eyes, even if I were to touch, so to speak, these extraordinary things, I would still have doubts about them. What! say I, have doubts about them? I would still hold them to be completely false. No, I would not believe my own eyes; I would distrust even those senses which are the least likely to be deceived. No evidence would seem admissible to me in favor of these astonishing truths. But because You have spoken, Lord, it is of no avail for my senses and even my reason to revolt. There is not a drop of my blood that I would not gladly shed to subscribe to all that You propose, no matter how incomprehensible. It is necessary that this proud and haughty reason be bowed beneath the yoke that You deign to impose upon it; and I do not find that it requires much violence to bring this about. It is this very reason that teaches me that You are the supreme Reason, that it is absurd to wish to oppose Your infinite authority; that nothing is more reasonable than to submit

myself to You, my God, to You Who have formed us from nothing, to You Who know all things, to You Who love us so tenderly, and to You Who could not lead us into error even if You hated us with Your whole Being.

All this, Christian Listeners, is what we must believe concerning the Trinity, and we must believe it on faith. The mystery is incomprehensible, and we must adore it without heeding our reason which opposes it. Even so, I shall show you that it is not unbelievable and that, on the contrary, one would have to renounce all reason to doubt this dogma.

SECOND POINT

I realize that some people think that faith is completely blind, and that we believe without any reason for believing. But this charge is an error that libertines attempt to spread in the world to provide themselves with an excuse for their incredulity. However, faith does have eyes, says St. Augustine: Habet fides oculos suos, quibus quodammodo videt verum esse, quod nondum videt (Faith has its own eyes by which it somehow sees as true that which it does not yet see). It has a certain way of seeing the truth of the things that it cannot see. There are various motives which make even the most obscure mysteries believable; and, for the one which we are honoring today, I claim that it is its very obscurity

which renders it plausible and which makes it marvelously easy to believe.

The Church obliges us to believe that there are three Persons in one God. I concede that this truth is beyond our understanding. But because it is incomprehensible, must it necessarily be less probable? Is it not, on the contrary, very probable that the manner of God's being is quite different from that of His creatures, and infinitely above all of our conceptions? You are disturbed by the apparent contradiction which exists between the unity of nature and the multiplicity of Persons: you do not penetrate the mystery. If, in fact, what disturbs you is that you are presented with an impenetrable mystery as an object of divine faith, you will very quickly cease to believe in any of the Catholic truths, since there are none which can be comprehended by the human mind. Is there anything in God which is not beyond you? Can you understand how He fills all space, although He is indivisible; how past time and even future time are present for Him, and how He has made all things from nothing? He sets in motion all things that move, yet He is immobile. There is within Him an alliance of infinite justice and infinite mercy. He tolerates countless disorders in the world which He has the power to prevent, and yet this world could not be governed with more wisdom. Why should we be astonished if in God's being there are things which seem mutually destructive, since His very judgments are so profound that our mind seems to find in them

visible contradictions when it is so bold as to examine them? Have you ever understood why it is that God allows a saint to fall and be damned while He raises up a sinner and saves him; why, before all centuries, He resolved to illuminate certain peoples and to leave others in darkness, to shower on some Christians all His graces and to give others only enough to be saved with great difficulty? Has there ever been a doctor, however subtle or penetrating, who has not been lost in the consideration of all these things, if he has been so presumptuous as to attempt to penetrate them? Are we not compelled, at the sight of such a mysterious conduct, to close our eyes, to renounce all our personal lights, to admit our ignorance, and to exclaim with St. Paul: O altitudo divitiarum sapientiae et scientiae Dei! Quam incomprehensibilia sunt judicia ejus, et investigabiles viae ejus (O depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments, how unfathomable His ways)! O the depth of the wisdom and the science of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments and how unfathomable His ways.

But we want to understand God, we who have not yet understood the least of His works, we who do not understand ourselves? Who will tell me by which springs the soul activates the body which it animates, and how the body communicates to the soul, which is entirely spiritual, the passions which trouble it? How it is, Gentlemen, that you form an

idea and retain an image of it in your memory, that all the objects which have ever entered your mind through your senses have become imprinted on your imagination, that you can look for them when you wish, that you see them and judge them as if they were present? How it is that while you are asleep, you think that you are acting, speaking, hearing, and doing all the things that you do while you are awake? I open my eyes and instantly the pictures of all the persons in this church are traced on them, and there is no confusion among them, and no blurring of one upon the other, although the space in which they are all assembled is indivisible. I speak and my voice sounds first in your ears, and then brings my thoughts to your mind. Do you understand what that voice is? How it multiplies; how it makes itself heard; how, by touching the material organ of hearing, it informs you of my most secret feelings?

Examine all of nature: this study is of great usefulness and is accompanied by an incomparable pleasure. Examine all of nature, I say, and everything you find there will evoke your admiration, humiliate you, and make you realize your ignorance. How miraculous that a gnat contains within such a small space all the parts needed for its life functions, all the forces necessary to fly, to walk, to perform a thousand different movements of its head, its feet, its wings, and its whole body? How can we explain that from a tiny seed thrown into the ground will emerge a tall tree,

which will then cover itself with flowers and fruits? How is it that from a dried bulb planted in the dung there will come year after year sweet-smelling flowers in a thousand bright colors? What makes an egg transform itself into a chick? And what makes this chick develop imperceptibly and grow for itself all that it needs to cover itself and protect itself from the cold?

All the works of God are incomprehensible; they are produced, they subsist, they multiply in ways that are unknown to the most perceptive minds; and we would expect that in the Creator all would be similar and proportioned to the dim lights of our minds! Creatures are the steps that we can use to reach God. What presumption for one who is on the very first step to wish so soon to reach the top! Use your powers of discernment to discover the causes of the many marvels which occur in nature before you apply yourself to the contemplation of its Author. Study, at least, the leaf of a tree or an insect, and do not find strange that in God there are things that are incomprehensible until you have understood what is admirable in His creatures, for which you show so little respect.

For my part, Christian Listeners, I would distrust our religion if it ordered me to adore something which I could comprehend. Even if I had never heard any mention of the Trinity, I would still have believed that God's being is a mystery that no created intelligence can explain. So, when

I am told that it subsists in three distinct Persons, the plausibility of this dogma increases for me in direct relation to its being opposed to ordinary principles. The less I can understand it, the less I doubt it.

But it is not simply for this reason that the obscurity of this mystery should make ^{it} believable. Here is a second reason which is demonstrative in this matter. It is that, however obscure, however incomprehensible it may be, it has always been the common belief of the whole world. It was not only the Apostles who made it the principal article of their faith; all nations have held it to be indubitable. For over sixteen hundred years, the greatest minds in the universe have accepted this mystery.

I ask you to imagine how disturbed the Greeks were when first confronted with this proposition which overthrew all their philosophy. They demanded proofs and demonstrations. These were either given, or they were not; if they were given, they exist; if they were not given, what a miracle! We who have been reared in this belief find difficulty in accepting it, and our minds sometimes revolt; and these doctors, who until then had never professed any belief unless it had been imposed on them by reason, how far must they have been from the acceptance of a doctrine which was so new and which seemed to be so self-destructive? And yet, they embraced it; and not only one sect, but all sects, were in agreement on its acceptance. It had to be that God acted in this

matter, that He made Himself heard in the depths of human hearts, that He performed miracles to convince all peoples of something which they could not comprehend.

What incredulity would be ours, Christian Listeners, if, when philosophers, idolaters, and the rest of the world have believed blindly in the mystery of the Trinity, we allowed ourselves to be scandalized by the difficulties that arise in our minds? You demand reasons. Athens, Rome, Carthage did not demand any: they were ordered to believe this truth without examining it; in any event, no reasons were given, and they believed.

I know that there are theologians who have given some reasons, who have claimed that the Trinity could be demonstrated. Their reasons are too subtle to be explained outside of the School. I am not even sure that everything I have said will be understood by all. But so that no one will leave this gathering without deriving some benefit, those who are illiterate can easily find comfort in the thought that they know at least enough to believe, and that science is not a requisite for charity. If you do not love this God about Whom you have learned so many beautiful things, your knowledge is futile:

Et si habuero omnem scientiam (Although I will have had all the knowledge). On the contrary, if you have a great love for God, it matters little whether you have that sublime knowledge of Him which often causes those who possess it to be filled with pride rather than sanctity. But it is certain, Christian

Listeners--and this is very comforting for the common people,

and for all sorts of persons--it is certain that the most ignorant people¹ can achieve the highest level of charity.

Faith which, for them, is the root of this charity, this faith without learning, what advantages it offers! Unhampered by the confining subtleties of the Scholastics, inaccessible in some degree to the motives of human ambitions, it is freer, humbler, and more simple. Born from such a pure root, with what great strides this charity will grow! Thus, rather than demanding clarification of the divine mysteries, let us ask, in regard to our faith in these mysteries, for that child-like simplicity which, in the words of Jesus Christ, opens for us the kingdom of heaven. Let us love with this candor a God Who, by keeping Himself hidden from our minds, allows Himself to be reached by our hearts. We do not understand the superiority of His Being, but do we not see that since it is this superior Being Who becomes the reward of our faith and our charity, this reward must be superior to everything that we can see, superior even to anything that we can imagine? Let us adore our God in His incomprehensibility by subjugating to Him all the lights of our minds. Let us love Him in His infinite goodness by giving to our charity the full extent of its powers. Let us love Him on earth, where He hides Himself from our eyes, that we may aspire to see Him in heaven, just as He is. Amen.

¹The manuscript of Venerable Claude ended at this point. The part that follows is a conclusion added in the 1757 edition of his Works.

SERMON LV

ON HELL

Alligate ea in fasciculos
ad comburendum.

Gather it into bundles to
be burned.

(Matt. 13:29)

In Hell the damned suffer, during all eternity and at the same time, the pains of all times: the present oppresses them by the sentiment of their sufferings which cause them untold anguish; the past torments them by the memory of their crimes which provoke in them a bitter and sterile remorse; the future drives them to a horrible despair because they see it in its infinite duration.

Gentlemen, it is indeed strange that in order to prevent men from offending Him, God was forced to create a Hell. After the gifts that He planned to bestow on us and the knowledge that He intended to give us regarding what He is and what we are, He surely had to see in us a great reserve of pride

and ingratitude to believe that we would be capable of revolting against Him if He did not menace us with a punishment, and a punishment that is eternal. But what is even stranger, and what must astonish heaven and earth, is the fact that even such punishment is powerless to halt our madness. There is a Hell, and there are sinners! There is a Hell, Christians know this, and this Hell is filled with Christians!

Is it really true, O my God, that for some miserable souls, this issue is settled, that, at this very moment, they are completely surrounded, completely penetrated by these fires? Is it really true that there are some, even among us, who will one day be buried beneath them? Alas! most of us would already be there, Christian Listeners, had God considered only our merits. But, thanks to His infinite mercy, the pronouncement of our condemnation is suspended for a time, and it is still in our power to avoid it. Let us profit by such a great favor; let us enter those eternal furnaces where the sterile trees of the Gospel have been thrown. Let us try to get some idea of this eternity, what one suffers there, and what one will suffer eternally in that place. Perhaps this view will impel us to punish ourselves for our disorders and to wash them away through penance. Holy Spirit, assist us by Your grace; all the fire in Hell will be incapable of warming us unless Your divine ardor blends with these flames to bring them to a kind of boiling point. It is in the name of Mary that we presume to ask of You this grace.

Ave Maria.

It is horrible, Christian Listeners, to be condemned to suffer for all eternity, but it is quite different to be condemned to suffer, as it were, eternity itself. To suffer for all eternity is to suffer torture that has no end; to suffer eternity itself is to endure at the same time the pains of all times and to be equally tormented by the present, the past, and the future.

It is in this sense that I plan to show you, today, that the torture of the damned is eternal, not simply because it must last forever, but also because, in order to torment them it would seem that God assembles all the forms of time, making present to them time which is no longer and time which is yet to come. Here, then, will be the subject and the order of my discourse. The damned suffer eternity for all eternity; that is, they are tormented at all times by all times: the present oppresses them by the sentiment of their pain; the past, by the remembrance of their crimes; and the future, by the sight of time's infinite duration. The present assembles all evils to inflict their impression on body and soul; the future anticipates, in a sense, and collects all its duration to afflict them even before it comes into being; the past returns and impresses itself on the memory so that it is never past for them. The present causes them inconceivable suffering; the future, a horrible despair; and the past, a bitter and sterile remorse. These will be the three points of my discussion.

FIRST POINT

Visualize in the center of the earth not an empty prison or simply a burning furnace, but a pool of fire and flames, a pool of pitch, tallow, and blazing brimstone, enormous both in depth and in width. It is in this place that all sinners who die impenitent will be precipitated: Erit terra eorum in picem ardentem (Their land will be as in a fiery pit). They will reside in the burning pitch, according to Isaiah; St. John adds: Pars illorum erit in stagno ardenti igne et sulphure (Their lot will be a pool blazing with fire and brimstone). Their eternal home, their lot, will be a pool of fire and brimstone. And do not believe that they will be immersed only up to their neck in these flames; the head, as well as the rest of the body, will be plunged deeply into this fire, into this ardent brimstone. It will fill their eyes and their ears; they will inhale it with each breath and exhale it through their nostrils; the stomach, the chest, the lungs, all the internal organs will always be filled with it. It will boil unceasingly both inside and outside of them, and since this fire will consume nothing, and since, without even dividing the skin, it will burn it in all its parts, the flesh, the fat, the blood, and all the humours will also boil within this skin, as in a kind of cauldron. The brain will boil in the cranium, as well as all the marrow in the bones. This burning and blazing matter will surround them for an almost infinite distance; there will be an abyss of it above them, and another

below them; all of this fearful mass will act simultaneously on their bodies, which will be as a center where the force of such a strong blaze will come to settle: Pars illorum erit in stagno ardenti igne et sulphure (Their lot will be a pool blazing with fire and brimstone).

Even if this fire were somewhat like our own, the torment would still be horrible. To be drowned and virtually lost in an abyss of flames and burning pitch! Can we imagine anything more dreadful? But you know the feeling of all the Doctors on this point. If this fire were similar to the one we know, Hell would be but a shadow of what it actually is, and that pool forever burning could pass for a pleasant and refreshing bath. Our fire gradually diminishes, or at least it quickly consumes the object upon which it feeds, with the result that, just as there is no torture which is so violent, also there is none which is so brief; it first exhausts all spirits, then dries up and ruins all organs of feeling. In addition to the fact that it cannot be extinguished, the fire of Hell also has the power to nourish bodies even while it burns them; it supplies them with a strength to withstand suffering equal to its own power to torture them. For this reason, in St. Mark, it is compared to salt: Omnis enim igne salietur (For all will be salted with fire). They will all be salted with fire because this fire, says St. Hilary, burns the flesh, and at the same time prevents it from rotting. Our fire is bright and colorful; the one in Hell is black, and it deepens the shadows instead of dissipating them. Our fire causes only

one type of pain; Hell fire afflicts at once all parts of the body with all the pains to which it is naturally subject and an infinity of others that it could never endure without a miraculous intervention. Finally, the fire that we use is an effect of God's love and generosity; along with all the other elements, it was created for man's utility and even for his pleasure; thus, it has a thousand uses that are convenient and agreeable: it warms, it cooks, it dissolves, it purifies, it brightens, it rejoices. The fire of Hell is the result of the angry power, the infinite hatred of the Creator; it is an instrument of rage and vengeance; it was created solely to torment, it has no other function; and, as if all the qualities that God had given it for this purpose were still not strong enough, as if His omnipotence in producing it had been powerless to satisfy His anger, He Himself becomes a part of this fire, He takes charge of it, He blows on it, He compresses it, He applies it with His Own hand, and He adds to its natural ardor all that He possesses in force ^{and} energy, in order to make it more active and more cruel!

Amid such great torture, the damned will not be allowed to take or to hope for any relief. The evil rich man asked only for a drop of water. Alas! what was one drop of water, asks St. John Chrysostom, for an entire sea of flames! It was nothing, and yet this small refreshment, this nothing was refused him. When one is in extreme pain, he walks, runs, rolls up into a ball, or stretches and turns a thousand ways, and nature finds in these motions some kind of relief; a damned soul, in

the midst of the fire, is as immobile as a rock. For this reason, it is said in the Gospel that he is bound hand and foot and thrown into Hell. However hard he may try to change his position or his posture, he meets with invincible resistance; he can perform no action, he lives only to suffer. With what horrible screams would he not shriek his despair, if he were allowed this small relief from his pain! But he is unable to do it! His screams are repressed by the waves of burning brimstone with which he is filled right up to the throat. This scorching matter enters his mouth each time he opens it and constrains him to stifle in his chest the curses that he attempts to utter.

Have you ever found yourselves, Gentlemen, by the side of a sick person who was tormented either by gout or gallstones, or by some violent colic? One has but to see him to judge the extent of his suffering; he rises, he lies down, he throws himself on the floor, he cries, he screams, he is in despair and wants to die to end this pain. And yet, this is but one sickness; he is suffering only in one part of his body, and everyone is occupied in bringing him relief. He is placed on a soft bed and given special foods; all types of remedies are brought to him to soothe his pain; he is surrounded by children who are eager to serve him, friends who console him, doctors who bring hope for a prompt recovery, servants who do all he wishes at his slightest command. How would it be if, in each part of his body, he felt a pain as great as that which he suffers either in

his kidneys or his internal organs? How would it be if he were abandoned by all; if, instead of being helped, he were mistreated, dragged by the hair, and torn by lashes of the whip?

In Hell, Christian Listeners, it is not simply from gout, or a migraine, or a toothache that one suffers. It is from all of these combined, and it is a thousand times worse than all of that; there are universal torments, acute, interacting with one another; fire is in all parts of the body, and all parts of the body are in the fire; all the senses, all the faculties, all the powers are afflicted from the inside and the outside; body and soul, everything suffers, everything burns in an incomprehensible manner! And yet, no relief, no remedies, no hope; a horrible and unending night; a bed of coals which are always blazing. In the place of parents, wife, doctor, or servants who comfort, there are legions of hideous spectres who insult the soul's misery, who spare nothing to intensify his aches and render them unbearable! St. Ephrem, addressing an apostate Christian, compared a damned soul to a man who, after being caught in the act of committing a crime, is bound with chains and thrown into a dungeon amid a crowd of scoundrels and criminals. But there is this difference, adds the Holy Father, that the prison of this villain is softened by the visits and the tears of his family, and by the zeal that they display to have him released, whereas a damned soul will be totally abandoned; no one will think of him, no one will solicit his deliverance. He will never again see anyone other than his

torturers and his most deadly enemies; he will never again hear anything that might appease his remorse, never a cheerful announcement, never a word of peace or consolation: Non habet consolatores atque intercessores; non circumcursat pater; non assidens consolatur mater; non ibi uxoris et amicorum condolentia; non ibi annuntiatio bonae; non fama atque auditio pacis (He will have no comforters or intercessors; no father beside him, no mother sitting nearby to console him; no sympathy from wife and friends; no good news; no reports of peace).

Indulgent father, and you, passionate mother, you have loved your child to the point of wishing to be damned for him. Do you realize that he will not even remember you? Nay, if he is damned, there will be no demon in hell more furious against you, more obstinately set on placing before your eyes all that he believes will inflame your despair; in a word, none more obsessed with tormenting you, than will be this child. And if he is saved, he will in no way be affected by your pains. The most hardened soul in the world, the most barbarous, the worst enemy that you have in this life would burst into tears if he could see you suffer, for one quarter of an hour, the one-hundredth part of what you will have to suffer. Your son--yes, your son--will see you suffer eternally, and he will feel absolutely no compassion for you. But it was only to make him rich that I threw myself into such evil ways, you may say. Were it even to place him in paradise, Christian Listeners, if you are damned, your son, your wife, your best friends will only mock your torture; they will regale their eyes with it as with an enjoyable

spectacle; they will rejoice because it will go on eternally. The reason given by St. Gregory in the fortieth of his Homilies is that all the movements of their heart will be regulated thereafter by the movements of the heart of God, and that the sight of your misery will make them enjoy all the more the happiness that is theirs.

All of this is very harsh, my lovable Redeemer. However, I would not find it unbearable if I knew that Your sentiments toward me would be different. But is it true that You would be even more pitiless towards me than all these others? You, my Savior, Who have loved me to the point of feeding me with Your flesh in my smallest infirmities and Who have prepared for me a bath in Your Own blood; You, Who have been so mortally alarmed if I strayed even slightly from Your path; You Who have worked so tirelessly to draw me back to You and have not hesitated to lay down Your life to free me from the hands of the devils, You could bear to see me thus oppressed by so much misery without being affected in the slightest way, You would see me lost beyond recall and suffer no regret, You would agree to see me pass into hands which have not formed me, O my God! You would deliver me up Yourself willingly to my most cruel enemies, You would give them the power to torment me, You would command them to do it, You would even join in Yourself and alone be more cruel to me than all the others combined! Mutatus es mihi in crudelem et in duritia manus tuae adversarius, mihi (You have changed towards me, and in cruelty and harshness, Your hands surrendered me to my enemies). And yet, ~~at~~, despite

Your hatred, one could still love You! This alone would suffice to ease all my torments, for where there is love there is no pain. But no, Christian Listeners, one will not be allowed to love in Hell; so sweet a passion is not admitted into this place of the Lord's vengeance. The damned will, in some way, be forced to hate God as much as they were obliged to love Him in this life. It will no longer be within their power to bless His equitable judgments. Thus, they will curse Him eternally; they will have toward Him only feelings of rage and thoughts of blasphemy; they will see that He is worthy of all love, yet they will never cease to hate Him.

A great deal more: the more clearly they recognize Him as worthy of love the more their hatred will grow. The reason, ^{paradox} for this/is that the same lights which will reveal to them His infinite perfections will make them understand the infinite loss they have suffered in losing Him. The Lord will not be able to show them how excellent He is in Himself without showing them how rigorous He is in depriving them of so great a possession, and, in this way, the knowledge of God, which will excite in their hearts desires to possess Him that are more ardent than the fires in which they are submerged, will at the same time create an aversion equal to these desires, since it is impossible to know perfect beauty, to desire it ardently, and love Him Who deprives one of its possession. O calamity! O disgrace! O divine beauty! What is this miserable state that can reduce us to the necessity of holding You in such horror? Behold, Sinners, what you can expect to find at the end of your

debauchery. But what should frighten you even more: Ecce quod erit in fine sine fine (Behold what at the end will be without end). Behold that which will have no end. All these miseries will be forever present in Hell and they will always be in the future. Much more: this eternal future will be ever-present to make the torture eternal. This is the second point.

SECOND POINT

My plan is not to prove here the infinite duration of the pains of Hell. Origenes was never able to comprehend it. ^{fact} This/does not astonish me since that which is infinite is beyond all created understanding. But this philosopher would never believe in its existence: that will always amaze me, since I find nothing more formal in the Gospels than this sentence of Jesus Christ: Discedite a me, maledicti, in ignem aeternum (Depart from Me, ye accursed, to the eternal fire). Depart from Me, accursed ones; go to the everlasting fire; and that which follows: These will be banished to eternal torments: Ibunt hi in supplicium aeternum. Neither is it my purpose now to determine how much suffering will be caused ^{one's} by/burning forever with an equal feeling of pain without ever having the fire burn out or diminish. Alas! twenty-four hours with a headache, one day of work that is a little strenuous, or even one day of idleness, seem to us so long and so trying! How will it be to burn, and to burn eternally! It would be

unpleasant indeed to spend one's entire life in a dark prison with ~~no other~~ occupation than that of thinking of one's misfortune. But, beyond that, to be thrown into flames that are equally fierce, black, and fetid; to be given no possibility of escaping, or even of moving for a hundred years, for two or three hundred years, for a million years, forever! Sinners, you do not think of these eternal torments when you surrender to your passions! No, I am convinced that you do not think of them, for there is not a man in the world who could think of them and commit sin at the same time.

And yet, all this is still not what I call suffering eternity. Whatever length of suffering has already been imposed on sinners, it can never be said that this duration has been infinite, but only that it will be; and thus, if we could advance, so to speak, all the future to have the damned suffer pains that are yet to come, there would still be no basis to assert that their torments were actually eternal.

A number of theologians, basing themselves on the words of the Gospel that I have cited: Ibunt hi in supplicium aeternum (These will go to eternal punishment), and taking the word "eternal" in its most rigorous sense, have taught that the damned will feel, every moment and with real feeling, all that they must suffer during all eternity. They state that an unhappy eternity is like a massive globe of iron or bronze of infinite size whose crushing weight continually presses down upon the area on which it rests, even though it touches it only in one single spot. They compare this eternity to God's immensity, which is no less extensive in an indivisible place than

it is in infinite space; to His knowledge, which assembles in a single act all that could engage His spirit in an eternity if He were to know the objects successively; and, finally, to His very eternity, which is indivisible and which allows Him to enjoy in a single moment all that He has ever enjoyed in the past or all that He will ever enjoy in the future. Since I do not understand the truth of this opinion sufficiently to defend it, I feel equally sure that it does not lie in my domain to censure it. I say only that, without having recourse to such subtle reasoning, it can be proven that sinners endure the eternity of their sufferings from the first moment that this suffering begins. It suffices to say that they have that eternity continually in sight and that they know the horrible pains they are suffering will never end: Quod quisquam timere coepit, jam passus est (What each one began to fear, he had already suffered), says St. Gregory of Nazianzam; there is no difference between the fear of pain and the suffering of that pain. If this fact holds true about fear, how much more real it will be for a future certainty, which leaves no room for doubt, and, consequently, no room for hope, as in the case of the damned in regard to the eternity of their torments.

Yes, Christian Listeners, these miserable ones know that after they have burned for a hundred years, they can expect a hundred more such years; that, once this second century has elapsed, they must begin a third, and a fourth; and that after ten thousand, one hundred thousand, a hundred thousand million years, renewed a hundred thousand times, the fire will be as fierce, the body and soul as receptive

to suffering, God as displeased and as irreconcilable as at the outset. Imagine a time as long as you wish; assemble all the numbers that your mind is capable of inventing; multiply them as many times as you wish; fill in new numbers; add them together in all the volumes needed to fill up the space between heaven and earth--a damned soul sees that he must burn during all that time; he looks even further and discovers beyond that immense duration of time an eternity of pain which is still as long and as full as if it had not been preceded by any time at all. You shudder when you are told that, should a bird every hundred thousand years carry only one drop of water from the sea or a single grain of sand from the earth, and should this bird have emptied out the depths of the ocean and leveled all the mountains of the universe, still the agony of the damned would not be ended. And I add that their agony would be as if it had not yet begun; I say also that if, between each grain of sand that he carried away, between each drop of water, he had allowed the lapse of one hundred thousand million years as many times as there are moments in a hundred thousand million centuries, and were there as many oceans to empty as there are drops of water in the ocean, as many mountains to raze as there are grains of sand in all of the earth's mass, he would have razed all of it, exhausted all of it before the term of their punishment had advanced by a single moment! Are you well aware of what all of this, and a hundred thousand million times more than this, equals in comparison to eternity? Nothing, St. Augustine tells us, nothing at all. I do not say

that it is but a day, an hour, a moment; I say that it is nothing at all. Omnia saeculorum spatia definita, si aeternitati interminae comparentur, non sunt existimanda exigua, sed nulla (All the definite periods of the ages, if they be compared with endless eternity, must not be thought of as small, but as nothing). I say that after that immense amount of time passed in the flames, if an angel of God were to descend into hell to tell the damned that they had only a hundred thousand million times as many centuries left to suffer as they had already suffered in moments (horrible thought), from that moment, Christian Listeners, all their blasphemies would cease, the slightest grumblings would be stifled in that house of confusion and horror; there would be only blessings, praises, and thanksgiving. Hell would no longer be a Hell, and the love that these miserable ones would then feel for the Lord Who would grant them this grace would equal the love of the arch-angels and the seraphim. But they are only too certain that they will never hear words of deliverance, or peace, or truce; they will never hear words of grace or reconciliation. No term, no end, no hope of an end! They must burn as long as the saints are blessed, as long as God is immutable, as long as God is God!

How many times have you said that this thought would be capable of upsetting the mind of anyone who ponders it with any degree of seriousness? What would happen if we were to think about it day and night, and, if at the same time, we were able to understand some small part of the other pains, whether they

be of the spirit or of the senses? The damned not only understand these pains, they suffer them; and they will be eternally occupied in examining and measuring this immense, this incomprehensible eternity. God will formulate, God will instill, God will fix in their minds that cruel thought in such a way that it will be impossible for them to be free of it.

Never, never, never will these torments have an end! Should we be astonished, after this, if they are beside themselves with fury, if they wish for the power to destroy God or to see Him damned with them? Can they do less than screech, than gnash their teeth, than explode in horrible blasphemies, than bite and tear at one another? I can understand how despair can make children turn their rage against their mothers or make mothers hurl themselves with fury against their children. I can understand how they strive to annihilate themselves, to heighten their own agony, to make themselves even more miserable than they are, to surpass on this point the cruelty of the most relentless demons and the infinite hatred of God Himself. None of this seems incredible to me. Do you wish to know, Christian Listeners, what I cannot understand and what I will never understand? It is that we freely confess that the very thought of eternity is capable of driving us insane, but that the fear of this same eternity is incapable of making us wiser. Let us be logical with ourselves. You turn your eyes away as much as possible from that eternal duration of torments, so frightening to you is the mere sight of it; but you cannot be persuaded to take a single step that would turn you away from

the road that leads to it! You lack the courage to look at this abyss, but you plunge yourself into it of your own free will!

Since you admit that your spirit is too weak to bear the thought of an unhappy eternity, it is not through lack of knowledge that you neglect to guard yourself against these eternal agonies. What is it, then? Madness? Enchantment? Despair? Alas! if we could repay our debt over a period of time, however long this period might be! For an adulterer, a million years in the flames, so be it. This length of time is apparently a hundred thousand times longer than the world will last in its entire duration. But at least there would be an end in sight some day. For a detraction, for an oath, for a theft of two crowns, to taste for one moment the pleasure of revenge, a Hell of a hundred million years! O God, what terms! But patience, there might still be an end, and the sight of God, if we were finally to possess Him, would erase in one moment even the memory of all this misery. But always, always! An entire eternity! Ah, Gentlemen! after these thoughts, the world must perish in our eyes; there is no misery in poverty, no confusion in lowliness, no austerity in penance that should frighten a soul which is penetrated with these terrible truths. Let us bury ourselves alive if necessary; let us spend the rest of our days in caves or even in tombs! This burial will be for twenty, or thirty, or forty years in the most, and Hell is for eternity!

What! someone might say, an eternity of agony for a single sin, for a sin of a single moment? Is there any justice

in such a judgment? Ah! who can doubt it, Gentlemen, since God, Who is justice personified, is the author of this judgment? There is no proportion between a limited pleasure and an eternal punishment. Miserable earth-worm! Is there any proportion between you and the infinite Majesty of God Whom you have outraged? Is it on the basis of the time taken to commit an offense that one should judge the punishment which is due to it, or of the greatness of the person offended? What can be more just than to punish eternally the person who has dared to rebel against the Eternal One? Furthermore, is there anything more equitable than to refuse all pardon to him who will never repent, to him who has refused to do so when the opportunity was offered him, to him, finally, who would have wished to live eternally so that he might never stop sinning? If there is inequality between one moment of pleasure and an eternity of torment, the choice is yours to take this small pleasure or not to take it. You are a fool to wish to purchase it at so high a price. But God is very just in exacting from you the payment on which you have, in a sense, agreed, since you were not without knowing the account which He would ask of you. You are a fool not to cease offending God when He menaces you with such terrible torments, but God is very just in punishing you by these same torments, the fear of which has failed to conquer your malice.



Perhaps the Lord will not be allowed to defend Himself, to protect Himself against your audacity and your temerity. What is your complaint? Who is forcing you to throw yourself from the



precipices by which He has surrounded His throne to oppose the insolence of His enemies? Has He failed to warn you against the pitfalls that He has set and the dangers into which you will certainly fall if you are so foolhardy as to challenge His infinite Majesty? But He might have chosen other punishments of a shorter duration, you say? Hell, eternal as it is, could not retain us on the straight path, and we would have feared a punishment infinitely less severe? Christians, the damned will have only themselves to blame. They will condemn themselves even before God condemns them; their conscience will compel them to admit that they have been treated with justice, and this forced admission will not be the least of their torments. Let us speak briefly about their memory which will make present to them all the time they spent on earth, and then let us conclude.

It is a constant truth among theologians that the damned in Hell will conserve all their natural faculties. Just as the body will retain the use of all the senses, so also will the soul retain the exercise of its three powers; the soul will not even have the power to suspend these operations or even to apply them to any objects other than those to which God has directed them for their suffering. That it will feel the present evils which it hates but is powerless to escape: such was my first consideration. That the soul will continually make present through the intelligence those evils which the future is preparing for it: such was my second consideration. There remains for me to show how memory, in order to torment

it, will even use images of past blessings and of the sweetest pleasures of life. No, Gentlemen, the sinner will never forget what he has done, nor what he could have done on earth. It is a myth, this river on which poets have claimed we would lose, after death, all idea of things past. They will be over, has said the pious St. Bernard, but they will be ever-present; they will be past in the realm of action but they will subsist in the mind: Transierunt et non transierunt; transierunt a manu, sed non a mente (They have come and gone and they have not come and gone; they have passed away from the hand but not from the mind). What has been done, continues this Father, cannot be undone; and thus, although "to do" belongs in time, "to have done" will remain eternally. That which transcends time does not pass away with time. It is necessary, then, that we be eternally tormented by the eternal remembrance that we have done evil: Non transibit cum tempore quod tempora transit; in aeternum ergo necesse est cruciet quod perperam te egisse in aeternum memineris (It will not pass with time because it transcends time; it is therefore inevitable that he be tormented eternally because he will remember forever that he has acted wrongly). That is what prompted St. Augustine to say, in the forty-eighth Psalm, that the evil rich man was digesting in hell that which he had eaten in life: Quod manducaverat apud superos, hoc apud inferos digerebat (He was digesting in hell that which he had eaten on earth). All the pleasures taken by sinners in defiance of God's Law will be, in Hell, like those raw and indigestible meats which stay in the stomach and which, by the long-lasting pains which

they cause, exact a high price for the small pleasure which they provided the palate for so brief a time.

At this point, Gentlemen, I wish to remind you of some pains that are just as ineffable as all those which I have mentioned thus far. Who can say how bitter and painful this memory of the past will be to the soul that is damned? Who can say what regrets will assail the soul when, after several centuries of suffering, it casts its eyes on that short space of time that it spent on earth! Even when it is viewed from very close, life seems very short. It seems to us, who are still enjoying it, that the part that has gone by has vanished like a shadow. At the hour of death, whatever the number of years we have lived, it will seem incredible to us that there has been any interval at all between the day of birth and this final day. All the years that have elapsed between these two poles will seem to us but an atom of time which our memory will find difficult to recall. How short it will be when not only you, but your children and the children of your children, and even your race will be extinct; when time will have destroyed the houses that you have built and ruined the very foundations of all the cities where you had once lived; when the universe will have been buried under its own ashes; when the gates of heaven, as well as those of Hell, will have been closed never to be opened again; and when, after that time, several million years will have elapsed! Now, Christian Listeners, what do you believe? What will the fifty or sixty years of your life seem to you then? What esteem will you give, then,

to that small portion of time that will seem almost lost to you after this incalculable number of centuries that will have followed it? What! I had only that moment to suffer, to impose on myself a little restraint! I gambled and lost eternity in order to have that short moment of liberty or of pleasure!

But notice that although a lifetime, as compared to eternity, may seem only a moment, it will nevertheless seem long to the souls in Hell because of the state in which they exist, a state which allows them not a single moment to make amends for their sins. Alas! some poor soul will say, I lived for fifty, sixty, or eighty years, and during all that time I was master of my fortune; I had the keys of paradise in my hands; it was my choice to take my place among the virgins, or the confessors, or the holy hermits, or the apostles; and here I am among the devils! I could have, by my zeal, or my teachings, or my good examples, averted the damnation of many who would have followed me to heaven or who would have welcomed me there, but I have chosen to ~~damn~~ myself! I knew there was a Hell. Alas! I was reminded of it so many times! I knew what had to be done to avoid it; God, other men, and my own conscience pleaded with me to amend my life; I could easily have done it, I was on the verge of doing it, and yet, I never did! Miserable wretch that I am! Was I a Christian? Was I free? Was I endowed with reason? Was I human? Who blinded me? Who overthrew my reason? Who bewitched me in this manner? Ubi erat tam
amnosum tempore liberum arbitrium meum (Where was my free will

for so many years of time)? That one might be thoughtless on some occasion, that one might be momentarily seduced by passion is not very strange; but it is strange that during the space of sixty years I could have saved myself and did not choose to do so, that during all that time I preferred to be what I am now rather than what I should have been, that I persisted in my determination to suffer Hell rather than renounce a few worthless trifles. Is this credible? Is there any sense to this? Is it possible that I could have chosen to be damned for so little, and could have chosen it for so long a time, unless I had taken leave of my senses? And if I were insane, O just God, as I must necessarily have been, why do You treat me so cruelly? Ah! life, life that is both short and long, and equally cruel to my memory, whether I consider your brevity or your length! Beautiful years, beautiful hours, precious moments, will you never return? What was I thinking of when I squandered you on bagatelles or when I allowed you to slip by while I stood idle? Who will give me a small portion of those days, which at times seemed so long to me? Who could have told me, while I wasted those days so easily and so joyfully, that I would come to regret them so bitterly, to regret them so uselessly, to regret them eternally!

There, Gentlemen, you have what in my opinion will prove most intolerable in Hell. Its eternity frightens me, the very thought of its flames terrifies me; but beyond this fear, this regret, this vision of the past, the remembrance of the use we made of it and the use we could have made of it,

this awareness appears to me more horrible than the furnaces or even eternity itself. Our mind will not cease to recreate vividly for us the vanity and the short duration of the goods which have separated us from God, the indescribable joys that we would have found in His service, the difference that exists between the pains that have kept us from the practice of virtue and those that we will suffer henceforth, the remarkable facility there was to avoid such great evils. It was so easy to pray, to fast, to give alms, to make a confession! There was weakness in my sin, but why did I defer repentance? Why did I put it off until death? The confessor arrived moments after my death. I could have called him one day earlier. Nothing more was needed to have made me as eternally happy as I will be eternally unhappy. O painful thought! O searing memory! O cruel and oppressive reflection!

My God, do not damn me, I implore You by Your goodness, by Your infinite mercy, by all that You have done to save me! Alas! what gain will You derive from the despair of this weak creature whom You have formed from clay and who soon will be reduced to dust! Is this an object worthy of such a raging anger, of such a long and bitter revenge? What glory will You achieve, Lord, for having imprisoned me for an eternity in those chasms of fire and flame? Non mortui laudabunt te, Domine, neque omnes qui descendunt in infernum (The dead will not praise You, Lord, nor all who descend into hell). Your praises are not sung in Hell, and to send me there would only increase the number of those who hate and curse You.

Christian Listeners, this is not simply a ruse to frighten you; it is not a subject without foundation in reality, or one chosen to please the speaker and allow him to display the force of his eloquence. If these thoughts do not change us, if the sight of these torments, this eternity, this eternal remorse, fails to detach us from sin and the vain amusements of life, we are fools, we are hopeless souls. These truths have made martyrs and have peopled the deserts; even today, they are filling monasteries with men and women. And yet, despite these truths, you are not willing to lose a quarter of an hour of entertainment or to relinquish a single cent taken from your neighbor. I admire your determination; it no doubt denotes a great strength of mind. For myself, I confess that I have less of this determination and that eternity frightens me. No, I will not accept being damned. I would prefer my life to be a series of trials, of persecutions, of disgraces. There is much sweetness in your pleasures, and I do not doubt that riches fill one with a joy beyond my comprehension. But if through poverty, if through suffering, if by withdrawing from the world, I can preserve myself from Hell, then, solitude, suffering, poverty, you will be my sole pleasures, you will be my sole delights. Let us imagine any penance in its direst form; let us consider it to be the purgatory or the Hell of this life. Since it is a road that is certain to avoid that other Hell, that horrible Hell of which I have spoken, I want no other paradise until my death. My God,

may these thoughts penetrate the minds of those who are listening to me, may they penetrate them so deeply that they will never leave them; may they become present to them in all their temptations, in all their occupations, in all their pleasures; may they meditate on them before they sleep, may they recall them upon rising, may they become the most familiar subject of their discussions. If they think of Hell frequently, it is impossible for them to do otherwise than prevent themselves from falling into it, it is impossible for them to take any road but that which leads to paradise. Amen.

SERMON LVIII

ON SERVING ONLY ONE MASTER

Nemo potest duobus
dominis servire.

None can serve two
masters.

(Matt. 6:24)

It is not possible to serve the world and God
at the same time; and if this were possible,
it would not be right to do so.

It would seem at first view, Christian Listeners, that
the Son of God could not have given us a more useless lesson
than this one. For, with men as naturally fond of liberty as
they are, there would seem to be little evidence of their
wishing to multiply their bonds by subjecting themselves
to several masters; and there would be much more reason to
fear that they might reject even one than that they would
desire to have two. However, it is only too true that almost
all of us wish to be doubly enslaved; and, through a strange

blindness, it is by this very love of liberty, so natural to us, that we seek out this double servitude.

The yoke of the Lord, when borne with no other, seems to tire us; we think we can lighten it by adding that of the world, as if one burden added to another were capable of diminishing its weight. Besides, the yoke of the world is both shameful and dangerous to bear, but we convince ourselves that in giving God a small part of our efforts, we will easily be preserved from both this infamy and this peril. We are mistaken; it is certain that the service of Jesus Christ, which is so sweet when one is completely dedicated to it, becomes intolerable to one who still retains the wish to depend in some way on the world; and there are none for whom this worldly service would be less honest and more dangerous than for those who profess to belong in any way to Jesus Christ. But what necessity is there to know whether it be agreeable or difficult, infamous or glorious, safe or perilous to so divide one's services, since such a division is absolutely impossible: Nemo potest duobus dominis servire (No one is able to serve two masters). None can serve two masters at the same time. It is absolutely necessary to devote oneself entirely to a single one. I will demonstrate this, Gentlemen, in the course of my discussion. I will show that this argument involves a double necessity. In the first place, there is an absolute necessity before which the objections of even the most rebellious spirits would prove powerless; in the second place, there is the necessity of propriety to which all minds of good breeding should yield. In a word, we

cannot serve God and the world at the same time: such will be my first point; and even if this were possible, it would be wrong to do it: such will be my second point. I will begin after having implored the assistance of the Holy Spirit through the mediation of His immaculate spouse. Ave Maria.

FIRST POINT

Just as there are few Christians who completely aspire to perfect holiness, I daresay that there are not many who resolve to spend their lives in the lowest disorders. The larger number consists of those who seek a middle course between these two extremes and who wish, if possible, to reconcile within themselves conscience and concupiscence, a moderate devotion and human passions. Let this woman enjoy a life of luxury and beautiful clothing; let this other maintain a friendship which, though not entirely sinful, is certainly dangerous; they will be quite willing to give the rest to God. You will find some men who, in their hearts, wish to be good, but who are very willing, on the outside, to live like their fellows; who desire the esteem of good people and the approval of those who are most worldly; who wish to be considered pious among the pious and gallant among those who pride themselves on their gallantry; who speak of sin with horror, but who nevertheless indulge themselves and live in occasions which lead to sin. On ^{the} one hand, they practice a few good works, but on the other, they partake of every vain amusement.

After attending all the sermons on Advent, they are present at all the carnivals; they receive communion in the morning, and in the afternoon they are seen strolling in public places to be admired; after vespers, one of them goes to the cabaret and another to a comic play; they detest indecency but are not willing to abide by that strict form of chastity which condemns the smallest liberties, the briefest thoughts--which condemns them, I say--as mortal sins; they have no evil intentions but spare nothing to make themselves alluring and would not be averse to evoke in others those passions against which they resolutely defend themselves. It is true, one woman might say, that I spend more money for clothes than my situation warrants, but at least I have my income under control and I am not one of those women who ruin their husbands by excessive luxuries. I am not so greedy as to withhold the goods of others, but I am not so liberal as to give my own to the poor. No one has heard me vilify my neighbor, but I lend a willing ear to slander. I would rather die than seek revenge, but I do not love those who wish me evil. As a judge, I will commit no injustice, but, for fear of making enemies, I will be quite willing to defer pronouncing judgment, or, if possible, I will not pronounce it at all. As a tradesman, no one can accuse me of the slightest dishonesty, but I am completely devoted to my business and I do no more good than evil. As the father of a family, I never give bad advice or bad examples to my children, but, beyond that, I am in no way involved in their training and leave this concern to their nurses and their teachers. Finally, there are certain

sins that one must necessarily commit from time to time; consequently, one must also confess them from time to time.

Behold the disposition in which most of the people of the world live. They wish to give something to the spirit and something to the flesh; to live as Christians and yet to live in comfort and luxury; to earn the rewards of heaven while enjoying all the advantages of earth; to please God without displeasing men or inconveniencing themselves. In a word, they wish to follow a route that the Gospel never traced, one which is neither wide nor narrow, and they attempt to build between Babylon and Jerusalem a new city where charity and selfishness are venerated as equals. Such, Christian Listeners, is what I call serving two masters; it is in so doing that we attempt to satisfy God and the world, by dividing ourselves, so to speak, between one and the other. But it is a futile attempt, because such a division will satisfy neither one nor the other. For God, one half is worth nothing; it will not even be enough to satisfy the world. God wants everything and the world will require even more.

Gentlemen, surely you know to what sanctity Jesus Christ, our Good Master, commands us to aspire. He wishes it to surpass that of the wisest pagans and that of even the most austere Jews. Pagans have gratitude, says Christ in one passage of the Gospel; they love those who love them. I ask something more of My disciples; I want them to love even those who hate them. The most reasonable among the Gentiles divide their time between the study of wisdom and a concern for their sustenance. These dual concerns are

a great deal for them; but, for Christians, they are nothing at all. Concern for their salvation should be their unique concern, and worrying about tomorrow's livelihood is, in effect, to wish to save one's body while losing one's soul. Finally, the Pharisees and the Doctors of the Law profess to live a life that is very pure and very regular: and yet, your justice must be more abundant than theirs; otherwise you must renounce Paradise. What does all of this mean if not that we must become holy as our heavenly Father is holy, according to the Savior's command, and that he who is content with a mediocre holiness will never succeed in satisfying God: Estote igitur perfecti, sicut Pater vester coelestis perfectus est (Therefore, be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect). Thus, perfection, holiness, and especially the holiness of God, which is proposed to us as a model--holiness, I say--is all-encompassing; it is total devotion of all that is in man, a sacrifice where all must be consumed, a meeting of all kinds of virtues. It is not possible to exclude a single virtue without destroying holiness.

I will go a great deal further: if you are lacking in a single virtue, not only are you without holiness, but you are also lacking all the other virtues. They are all interlinked in such a way that they cannot subsist if they are separated. This truth is a strict rule by which one can distinguish genuine piety from a false devotion. For piety, when sincere, is even and uniform, it neglects nothing, and has neither weaknesses nor imperfections; if it belies itself on

a single point, it is nothing but hypocrisy and self-love. And, thus, that woman who appears to be so humble, so mortified, so attached to prayer, so generous to the poor, so zealous for the salvation of others, if she is not also fully submissive to her husband, or does not refrain from judging or speaking of the conduct of others, then, not only is she lacking in discretion and obedience, but, without making a rash judgment one can say that she has no humility, no mortification, no union with God, no zeal, no real charity; and if she does not share this view herself, she is most certainly deluded.

I have said that the absence of a single virtue necessarily brings on the ruin of all the others. Now I add that to ruin a virtue completely, all that is needed is a single fault, a single limitation in regard to the virtue or to some aspect of it. To lose one's faith, it is not necessary to believe in nothing; it suffices to reject a single article; it is even enough to doubt it. Are you hesitant in your belief in indulgences or in purgatory? Even if you were to give your life for all the other truths, you would die an infidel and you would only be a martyr to your own sentiments. It is in vain that you flatter yourself on being chaste because you are horrified by the greatest disorders. If your thoughts, your words, your eyes, your ears, your books, your clothing, even your rooms in their paintings and the tapestries that adorn them are not as chaste as your body, you may not be as impure as the fornicators and the adulterers, but you have no more chastity than they have. You love all your enemies and you love them very tenderly, with the exception

of just one; and in his case, you readily forgive all the evil done to you, with the exception of one single injury; and yet, it is not your intention to seek any further revenge, except that in his regard you will be a little less kind and show a little less affection than heretofore. If these are your feelings, Christian Listeners, you have no Christian charity, no love for your neighbor. True virtues are not restricted to certain times, or certain actions, or certain subjects. He who possesses them is prepared to practice them in all things, in all encounters, in regard to all types of persons, and in all ways.

If this statement is true, and we can have no doubt that it is, it is quite evident that we can only satisfy God by giving Him all without reserve, since the holiness to which He has called us encompasses all. Furthermore, it is evident that he who does not give Him all, gives Him nothing at all, because there is no virtue where all virtues are not present, and because they are all, so to speak, infinite by nature and cannot be limited without being destroyed.

This truth, Gentlemen, is confirmed in the commandments that God has given us to serve Him, and especially in the first and most important of all, the commandment of love. You will love Me, said the Lord, with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, with all your mind: that is, you will love only Me; and to give proof of this love, you will yearn only for Me, ex tota anima tua (with your whole soul), you will work only for Me, ex totis viribus tuis (with

your whole strength), you will think only of me, ex tota mente tua (with your whole mind). And because we might have doubted whether we should share a part of our thoughts with the things which are most necessary, He anticipated this difficulty by teaching us that there is only one thing necessary for us and that is to know and love Him, porro unum est necessarium (besides, only one thing is necessary). But will He be satisfied, at least, with the heart, the mind, the thoughts; in a word, with the interior and invisible part of man? No, He also requires that the exterior be consecrated to Him; otherwise, the early Christians might have deceived those that persecuted them; they might have detested and cursed the false gods of the Gentiles in the depths of their souls and burned before their statues an incense which they were secretly directing toward the God of heaven. However, they were obligated, under pain of being eternally damned, to suffer the most cruel tortures rather than resort to this ruse! It was nothing, or so it seems, to do that which the world asked of them in that instance. This external act of worship, devoid of the intention, would not have been true worship, but rather a mockery and a bloody derision; as was the adoration that Pilate's soldiers offered our Savior. If we failed to adore our God in some way other than this, we would attract all of His anger. Besides, the horrible torments and death that might have been avoided by this dissimulation, the peace of the Church that might have been obtained by abandoning these appearances were, so it seems, reasons that were very valid; and yet all these reasons were never able to make God relinquish this right,

however unimportant it may have seemed. He has always numbered among the rebels and apostates those who, in the face of torture, gave the slightest sign of idolatry. And He Who sees the heart above all else, gave no value to those external actions which did not respond to the sentiments of the heart.

In view of these demands, what pretexts can be offered by those timid Christians who believe that, for fear of what might be said, one can continue to live before men as one always has, dress with the same vanity, visit the same groups, carry on approximately the same conversations; that, in order to avoid the scoffing of libertines, one can even assume in their presence a false disdain for the most venerable and the holiest things? Will they be obstinate enough to retain such beliefs after what I have just said? I realize that these are matters of slight concern, but the Lord demands all; and since He objects to false exteriors, I ask you to think about whether He will concede on matters of greater weight and importance?

I am willing, however, to have Him concede to the world all that you have decided to apportion to it. Do you think the world could be satisfied with so little? For example: let us assume that, in order not to appear weak, one might exteriorly treat an enemy in a way that effectively shows hatred for him; that, for fear of drawing the displeasure of a person of prominence and wealth, a judge would be allowed to absent himself from the palace of justice, to defer judgment, and to force the party who, in this case, has a clear and incontestable right--to force him, I say, by devious methods--to accept a compromise. In many cases the world will not be satisfied with this type

of solution: for such an affront the world will demand a cruel and startling revenge, and it will hold you up to ridicule if you persist in these deceptions. This lord will not only refuse to be condemned, but he will insist that you pronounce a sentence or a verdict in his favor. For years it has been one of your established principles that God must be satisfied but that men must also be indulged. What will you do in a similar crisis? Will you renounce this basic maxim of your own conduct? Will you suddenly be able to discipline yourself and treat as a vain apprehension this fear which has become deeply rooted in your heart and which until now had always seemed so reasonable to you? In these moments, when your faulty theory is sustained by a violent passion or by fear or anger, when all of nature conspires with the world to overpower you, will you forget your basic feelings and trample underfoot all human consideration? This reaction might be expected of a saint because of the habit he has acquired from many acts of a similar nature. But you who have accustomed yourself to these cowardly compromises and base complacencies, where will you suddenly acquire the necessary courage to undertake something heroic? I know that God has among His treasures resources powerful enough to inspire this courage. But I know also that these great gifts, these miracles of grace, are reserved only for His beloved ones, and that a man whose dealings with Him have always been so calculating would wait in vain for such liberality.

What, then, will this bad Christian do? He will do, Gentlemen, what Pilate did in the case of the Son of God. Having recognized almost at the same moment the innocence of

the accused and the fury of his accusers, he tried to evade the condemnation of the former without, however, displeasing the latter. For this he used several means. He attempted to unburden himself of this affair by referring it to Herod, on the pretext that Jesus Christ was subject to that prince. This ruse did not succeed as he had hoped. The innocent One was sent back to him, and he was pressed to conduct His trial: if he condemned Him to death, he would be guilty of a dreadful parricide; if he acquitted Him completely, the whole Synagogue would be in a fury. He took a middle course and resolved to spare His life, but to divest Him of His honor by having Him whipped like a slave: Emmendatum illum dimittam (I shall dismiss that man after He is chastised). The hatred of the Jews and the jealousy of the priests were not satisfied with so little; they had judged Him to be deserving of the cross, and they insisted that the governor confirm their judgment by his sentence. Again, Pilate sought a plan of evasion; the sentence would be carried out, but, after that, the prisoner would be pardoned, for it was the custom to free one criminal at the Easter feast. A man of sordid policy, a weak slave of passions which he should have repressed and even punished! What would he do, if all of this still failed to appease this enraged mob, if they demanded the death of their king and their God, if he was unable to control them by his mediocre injustices, if they reduced him to the necessity where he must either incur their anger or commit the vilest of crimes? We know what he did: he consented to all that was asked of him, he condemned Jesus to be crucified, despite all divine and human laws, despite the

visions and the terrors of his wife, despite the reproaches of his conscience.

I do admit, however, that there are some occasions when the world and even the devil, who is its prince, seem at first to be moderate and to demand very little. But such is the trap which all the saints and all the Fathers have warned us to avoid. The world asks but little only because it knows very well that, of your own accord, you will surrender all the rest. It is enough that a spark be lit in your heart, for no more is needed to set you aflame. The world asks only a few steps on your part, but these steps are on so steep an incline that, once engaged, you will not be able to stop yourself until you have reached the very bottom of the abyss. That is why this little is not so little at all, said St. John Chrysostom: one might say that it is practically everything: Quamobrem hoc parum non est parum, imo vero est fere totum (Wherefore, this little is not little; nay, rather, in truth, it is almost everything). I will go into the world, however corrupt, however dissolute it is today, but I will be very careful not to adopt its sentiments. How naive you are! Are you wiser than Solomon? When he allied himself with the Sidonians and the Moabites, he was very far from the thought of worshipping their false gods; yet, later he adored them, built temples to honor them, and burnt incense before them. I will allow myself to look, but I will refuse myself all types of desires. What man is so presumptuous as to promise himself this moderation in such dangerous circumstances? Job, as saintly as he was, did not feel he had that much strength; he had made a pact with his

eyes that he would never look a woman in the face. It is true that David was less cautious with his virtue but, then, into what abyss of iniquity was he plunged for this excess of confidence!

Yes, Gentlemen, Jesus Christ is a loyal and sincere Lord who will never make use of deceit or surprise. He frankly declares that He wants all your services or He wants none at all. The world is a deceitful master who will not be content with any less, although at the outset he does not ask for much. Why do you struggle so hard to reconcile these two irreconcilable enemies? Since you love the world and this master attracts you so strongly, why do you not declare yourself on the side of his interests and maxims? Why not give yourself over to him completely and without reserve? Completely and without reserve! you may exclaim. What! you would have me give myself without reserve to this traitor, this tyrant who pays only in air and smoke, who abandons at the hour of death all who have followed him during their lives, who plunders them and delivers them up to cruel and eternal tortures! Poor sinner, I reply, if the world is as you say, are you not terribly foolish to lose such a great part of your efforts and labors in the service of so vile a master? What madness to indulge and flatter a traitor, to give half of your goods to a scoundrel from whom you can expect nothing but torments!

Besides, I see that even in your greatest licenses, you fear to go beyond certain limits; you would not wish to go so far as to commit a mortal sin; you are apprehensive about displeasing God by gratifying your passions. Why this consideration and these restrictive fears? Why do you not shake off once and for all this heavy yoke? What, you say,

I should break all ties with my God! Ah! What would become of me, if I were His avowed enemy? Who would protect me in the perils of this life? Who would welcome me at the entrance of the next? Who would free me from the hands of the devil? Who would assure me of happiness during all eternity? What, Christians, you expect all that from God and yet you are unwilling to give yourself completely to Him? You await nothing from anyone but Him, and you would serve another along with Him! You believe that the little you are willing to do will be repaid by Him with infinite rewards, and yet you will not consecrate all your actions to Him? You have such a good Master and you look for a second one! Begone, weak and imprudent one, you well deserve to have Christ reject you forever from His service and disown you as a servant in the sight of His Father. After this, I no longer say that it is impossible to serve two masters at one time. I say that, even if it were possible you should not do it. The validity of this statement will be proved to you in the second part of my talk.

SECOND POINT

Were it possible to divide one's services between God and the world without offending either one or the other, it could not be done without committing an enormous injustice and without being guilty of a horrible ingratitude; and, for these two reasons, I say that it should not be done. We belong to God, Christian Listeners; it is He alone Who has formed us from nothingness; it is He alone Who keeps us from

falling back into that state; it is in Him, it is through Him alone that we live, that we think, that we speak, that we act. By what right can the world lay any claim to all of these things in order to share them with the Creator? Is God not sole master of the roots and the tree, and, consequently, of all the fruits? Yet, you decide which part of His goods He will have, and, defying Him, you feel that you can dispose of the rest without doing Him an injustice.

Furthermore, besides the fact that He is sole master of all things, the excellence of His nature and His adorable perfections require that all things be offered to Him. You would be satisfied with offering Him just half of your heart. Is He not most worthy of possessing it entirely? Your attitude would lead us to believe that He is not, for, in effect, you treat Him like an imperfect and limited being, who, far from being able to demand love and honor that are infinite, deserves only a part of the petty services you are able to render Him. Do you fully understand the injustice that you are perpetrating against God by these half measures? You are divesting Him of His divinity, you are degrading Him, and you are destroying Him, inasmuch as it is possible for you to do so.

And this injustice is even more outrageous to God since it is to give the world more that you withhold something from Him--to the world, I say, to an impostor, a tyrant, a villain, a horrible monster, beset by sin and blackened by all types of crime. In this way, you equate God with this infamous one and bring Him down to his level. And not only have you placed God in the same class with the world, but with

an even greater injustice, you go so far as to prefer the world to God, since it is to satisfy the former that you are willing to jeopardize your friendship with the latter. This injustice is even ~~more~~ evident in today's Gospel in which the Lord of the world states that of two masters that we might try to serve, we must necessarily honor one and despise the other: Unum sustinebit et alterum contemnet (He will honor the one and despise the other). So, I ask you, Gentlemen, which of the two do we despise in these worldly pursuits? Is it the world whose scorn we so strongly fear, whose judgments and words fill us with such apprehension, whom we strive to please at any cost? Can there be any greater marks of esteem and honor than these? It is God, then, Who is despised and Who is quite visibly relegated to second place.

O Men, who naturally love reason and equity and who pride yourselves on dealing justly with everyone, will you never deal justly with your God? And will you always be thankless in His regard, you who have such hatred for ingratitude and such reluctance to pardon it in others! Can there be any greater ingratitude! God has given you everything; you have received nothing from the world--yet you honor them equally and divide your services equally between them! What do you own that has not come from God? Not only that, but what did God have that He has not given you? He has given Himself to you without reserve, and you begrudge Him a part of your narrow and limited heart, a part of a moment in time of which you can dispose! If you can point out one day, one hour, one instant of your whole life when God is not thinking of you, when

He withholds from you the exercise of His loving Providence, when He is not acting for you and with you, well and good, I concede that, for that space of time, you might interrupt the service you owe Him. But if He is eternally occupied in sustaining you and leading you, if He never ceases doing good to you, why would you cease to recognize the good which He does for you?

What if God should treat you as you treat Him! Would you not be the most miserable of all men if, since you forgive only certain offenses, He forgave only certain sins; if, since you are satisfied not to carry out vengeance against your enemies without wishing to do them any positive good, the Lord refused to give you any actual graces, even after you had recovered sanctifying grace? You wish to avoid great crimes but you are not concerned about the small ones; and what if God, for His part, gave you only a little support, ineffectual support, where would you be then? I will be satisfied, you say, with looking, but I will abstain from free or lascivious touching.

And what if God should deprive you of your sight, as He could, and was content to preserve your other senses, would you be happy with Him? What if, to recognize the incalculable and infinite favors with which He has blessed you, you had an infinite length of time, infinite strength, and an immense heart capable of loving Him infinitely, all of which should be used to give Him marks of gratitude? But you have only a moment in time, a breath of life, a small mind, and a small heart, and from that you subtract half of the little you are able to give Him!

If it is so unjust and so ungrateful to divide, in this way, one's services between God and the world, what can

be said about those people who make the division so unequal and who give to God such a small portion? What can be said about those who, of all the thoughts in their day, barely offer Him the first; who, of all of the days of the week, reserve for Him only Sunday, and on Sunday very often give Him only the time it takes to hear the shortest Mass? What can be said of the others who, having spent all year either in business dealings or worldly pleasures, feel that they have acquitted themselves before God by attending the Easter ceremonies, performing who knows what devotions? And those who, out of their entire lives, reserve for the Lord only the last years, or even the last hours of life? What do you say, Gentlemen? Are these Christians very grateful and very reasonable? Can they say that they love God with all their hearts, all their souls, and all their strength? Can they boast of being followers of Jesus Christ? Can they expect that their services will be agreeable to Him? I have already shown that He cannot be satisfied when even a small amount is withheld from Him; yet these people believe He will be satisfied with the small amount they give!

Even if You were content, Lord, I shall not be until I have given You all things and have given myself to You without reserve. Since there is no one but You Whom I must serve, I wish to serve only You. All other servitude is shameful and intolerable to me. I will gladly obey the One Who commands nature, but I will never be the slave of another slave:

Dominus meus et Deus meus (My Lord and my God). If I must

necessarily choose one master, I want no other than You, O my God, for You have deigned to choose me among so many other men to number me among Your servants, You have delivered me from the tyranny of the devil, You have willingly agreed to be lowered to the condition of a slave for my freedom. Ah! What yoke could I possibly accept that would be lighter than Yours, since You Yourself help me to bear it, since, far from burdening us with its weight, it has the power to make all other burdens light? What could be sweeter than to be ruled by You! You provide all that You require; by Your grace You Yourself accomplish all that You command, so that, however magnificent Your rewards may be, You will only be rewarding Your Own gifts. You do not stop at facilitating the execution of Your wishes; You, in turn, execute all the wishes of those who obey You. You either render all that You do agreeable to them or You do only that which pleases them. And if we still seek glory in servitude, this servitude places us above all of the miseries of the world, above all of the grandeurs of the world; it gives us dominion over all that is submissive to God and endows us with God's Own freedom. Let us, then, Christian Company, love this sweet and glorious servitude. Let us attach ourselves uniquely to the only Master Who has the right to govern us. He is good, He is faithful, He is rich, He is liberal, He is immortal. To serve Him is to reign even in this life and to be assured in the next of a kingdom which will never end. Amen.

SERMON LXII

ON CONSCIENCE

Vox clamantis in deserto:
Parate viam Domini, rectas
facite semitas ejus.

It is the voice of one crying in the desert: Make ready the way of the Lord and make straight His paths.

(Luke 3:4)

Conscience continually causes great pain to the sinner by its bitter reproaches, and inspires in him a deadly fear by its terrible reproaches.

Although the Prophet Isaias applied these words to the preaching of St. John the Baptist, and St. John the Baptist applied them to himself, if we wish to take them figuratively, there is nothing to which they could be more fittingly applied than to man's Conscience. For, after all, we cannot deny

that conscience is the voice of God which makes itself heard at the bottom of our souls, in that desert which is so far from men's eyes and where God alone witnesses our virtues and our vices. Just as a voice was given to man to express his sentiments and his desires, so Conscience was given to us by God to reveal what His judgments are in all things and what He expects from each of us.

This secret voice employs a variety of interior words to express the different lessons and the diverse orders which it pleases God to give His creatures. It also has many intonations and accents to indicate the different dispositions of His heart in our regard. It is harsh and explosive in moments of anger, it becomes gentle to express His love, and it is lowered to indicate His indifference; in a word, it can be said to be the bond by which God chooses to communicate with us, the most common instrument used by Him to touch our hearts and reveal His Own. It is this voice, Christian Company, which serves today as the precursor of Jesus Christ, and which invites all sinners to prepare His path by a prompt and sincere repentance: Parate viam Domini, rectas facite semitas ejus (Make ready the way of the Lord and make straight His paths). If they refuse to listen, if they do not dispose themselves to be reconciled to Him on these feast days, according to the advice of their conscience, they will force it to shout or, what is more terrible, they will force it to fall silent. We will speak on some other occasion of this horrible silence of a conscience which has been rebuffed; my plan today is to discuss its

clamors. But I dare not proceed with any of this before invoking Mary who was so prompt to obey the voice of the Angel when he greeted her with these beautiful words:

Ave Maria.

Gentlemen, there is no peace for sinners: Non est pax impiis, dicit Dominus (There is no peace for the wicked, says the Lord). It is the Lord Himself Who has said this, and it is He Who has declared an immortal and unrelenting war against them. Do not heed them when they try to convince you that they are happy and that they enjoy the pleasures of this world in great tranquility. This condition is impossible, for they have against them a far too powerful enemy. When we have God to fear, what rest can we possibly find? And where are the sinners who do not fear God, unless there are some who do not know Him? For one's life to be sad and unhappy, it is not necessary to be deprived of all goods and oppressed by all kinds of misfortune; a single misfortune can rob us of the enjoyment which comes from a thousand blessings; the lack of even one good thing deprives us of the pleasure we would derive from the possession of all the others. Thus, whatever grandeurs, whatever riches sinners may possess, they can never escape from their conscience, which God awakens and arms, so to speak, against them, in order to avenge Himself for the outrages He has received from them. Nothing more is needed to trouble their happiness or even to make them completely unhappy. I will not

tell you, Gentlemen, with St. John Chrysostom; that this conscience is a cruel agony, a suffering that words cannot describe; that it is a worm in the mind, a poison of the heart, a merciless tormentor, a dark and horrible night, a tempest, a storm, an internal and malignant fever, and a battle which never ends. I am content to say that it is a voice that never ceases to blame us and terrify us, a voice which stings by its reproaches and frightens by its threats, a disturbing voice, a deadly voice, a voice which constantly places before us our sins and the torments they have merited, a voice which constantly exaggerates the enormity of the former and the severity of the latter, in order to cause us to despair over the evil we have done and to tremble at the thought of the punishment we have deserved. And there, Gentlemen, we have the matter for the two points of this discourse. We shall see, in the first part, what pain Conscience constantly brings to the soul by its bitter reproaches; and, in the second, what horror it inspires by its terrible threats; these parts will constitute my discourse for today.

FIRST POINT

No sooner has the sinner conceived the decision to offend God than he begins to suffer the punishment of his sin: Parturit iniquitatem, concepit dolorem (He brought forth injustice and conceived suffering), has said David:

the seed of suffering is planted in his soul the moment he formulates the desire to commit the crime; and, since the crime and the suffering were conceived at the same time, it is quite evident that they will be born at the same hour, or at least that one will follow the other very closely. Let us look, says Philonius the Greek, into the heart of this man who gives false testimony: Introspecte, si libet, falso jurantis animum (Observe, if you can, the heart of the man who is perjuring). You will see that, at the very moment that he is perjuring himself, his spirit is troubled and begins to rebel against him; that he is even then reproaching himself for his cowardly action and his betrayal. Aspiciet eum non quiescere, sed plenum tumultu trepidationeque, accusatum a se ipso et sibi ipsi facientem convitium (You will see that he is not at rest but full of confusion and fear, accused by his very self and violently reproached by that same self). Without penetrating into the secrecy of his conscience, just place your hand over his heart to see how affected it is, how agitated it becomes by its frequent palpitations; notice his eyes, his face, his lips, his voice, and his hand which he cannot lift without trembling; all of these signs will reveal the tumult within his soul. It is as if all the parts of his body, thrown into revolt by his conscience, refused to abet him in this sacrilege. Even his tongue, which becomes heavy and glued to his palate, testifies against him through the very words he uses to conceal the truth.

I say the same for other crimes. At the moment that

they are being committed, Conscience, which had already advised against them, condemns them strongly; it begins to cry out against the malice of the criminal, to demand justice for the violence to which it is subjected, and to take its own revenge. But, once the crime has been committed, there is a very different sound, a different agony; for, the passion which drives to sin having abated and the small pleasure it provides having ceased completely, the soul becomes a prey to suffering and remorse. Passion makes us drink the poison without looking; pleasure soaks it in a certain sweetness which disguises the taste in our mouth; but once it has been swallowed and it has spread through the bowels, then, it becomes only too easy to recognize it by the horrible spasms that it causes. St. John Chrysostom notes that what happens here is the direct opposite of what mothers experience in childbirth: they bring forth their infants in pain, but this pain is instantly dispelled by the joy that they feel at having brought a child into the world. The sinner, on the contrary, derives some pleasure from committing sin, but no sooner has he given birth to this monster than he begins to suffer torment, which surpass in excruciating pain all that cruelty has ever devised.

It is said, and it is quite true, that one cannot comprehend the peace and interior delights enjoyed by a fervent soul in the practice of virtue unless one has learned it through experience. I say that the same applies to the anxiety and the pains that a bad Christian suffers from his offended

conscience. First, it pursues him everywhere, constantly reminding him of his sin and never allowing him to turn his thoughts away, regardless of what he does to forget it.

This idea was expressed by the Prophet David: Quoniam iniquitatem meam ego cognosco et peccatum meum contra me est semper (Because I know my iniquity and my sin is ever before me).

I see the evil I have done, and my crime is before me at all times and in all places. It would be a small matter, no doubt, if it represented the sin to him just as concupiscence had made it appear before it was committed. But it removes the mask which had served to deceive his passion; it depicts it just as it is, with the horrible ugliness which disfigured Lucifer and in one moment made of God's most beautiful work the most hideous and most horrible of all creatures. It no longer is that very sweet revenge, that most charming pleasure, that money which was so necessary and so useful in realizing countless projects. Now it is nothing but cruelty, filth, shameful brutality, and an unjust and savage thirst for human blood; it is an act of ingratitude or impiety, an open revolt against God, which renders us unfit to live and worthy of being rejected, of being hated, of being scorned and cursed by all men.

Cedrenus, the Greek historian, tells the story of the Emperor Constantine who, having killed one his brothers named Theodosius, who was a deacon, saw this brother appear to him at night, dressed in his sacred vestments, and holding in his

hand a cup full of blood which he presented to him with these words: "Drink, my brother." This apparition and these words were meant to remind Constantine of the sacrilege by which he had soiled his soul, of the fratricide which he had committed, and of the brutal and bloodthirsty temper which had driven him to this excess of fury. It is in this way, Gentlemen, that Conscience continually presents to the mind the image of its sin with all its most repulsive features, with all the circumstances which might either increase or uncover its malice. Are you finally satisfied, it asks the revenge-seeker: you have become drunk on the blood of your brother, you have trampled on that of the Savior, you have shown contempt for the voice of God Who asked you to have mercy on this unfortunate person, and you have chosen to renounce the forgiveness which you yourself need rather than to forgive for the love of Jesus Christ. O what a lovely sight you presented, with your eyes ablaze and your wild countenance, acting like a madman, striking like a snake, roaring, biting, and tearing like a lion or a tiger! Barbarian! You had surely forgotten that you were a man and that it was another man whom you were mistreating; you had forgotten how many times your Judge had forgiven you, and how many offenses he would still have to forgive you. Ah, wretched one! it says to this woman, you are now dishonored for the rest of your days! One moment of pleasure has robbed you of that which is the greatest glory of womanhood and has placed you among the prostitutes! Will you ever again dare to show your

face among your friends and associate with virtuous people? You were willing to submit to the evil desires of this dissolute man and to sacrifice to him a husband who was deserving of a more virtuous wife! Your reputation and even your life are now subject to the discretion of a libertine who has perhaps already revealed your weakness or who, in some future debauchery, when wine makes the most reticent speak, will perhaps make such a public revelation. But even if this did not occur, you have sinned in the presence of your Creator, you have dared to do before His eyes something which He holds in horror and for which He will not fail to reproach you one day before the whole universe.

Behold, Gentlemen, what a wounded conscience cries in the ears of the sinner. But with what constancy and with what impunity? You may judge of this by what follows. Conscience loses no opportunity to renew its complaints. If the sinner looks toward heaven, the voice within himself says: See that which was mine by right of my innocence and which I have renounced for goods that I no longer possess. If he looks at a pious person, he feels guilty about the little resemblance he has to him. If he meets a known sinner, he blushes to see in himself that which makes this man infamous and despicable to all the world. If he is praised, his conscience reminds him that he owes this praise only to the ignorance of men and his own hypocrisy. If he is censured, it emphasizes this blame with bitterness; it confirms, to his face, all that is said about him; it renders him tongue-tied and embarrassed

to such an extent that he can offer only a feeble defense, and that, in the eyes of those who are a little clear-sighted, he gives himself away while trying to justify himself. If, in his presence, someone praises the virtues he has lost, or if someone accuses others of the vices of which he is guilty, these are all so many whiplashes, says St. John Chrysostom, that are secretly administered to him. Much more: Conscience even makes use of the good that we have done in the past to persecute us in our disorders. It compares us to ourselves; it exaggerates the glory and self-control of our youth, the esteem we had won by the regularity and purity of our morals, our staunch fidelity to God during many years, and the interior peace that was the sweet fruit of this fidelity. Nothing is so bitter, nothing is so hateful as this remembrance to the soul who has fallen from this blessed state: Nihil est, says St. Ambrose, quod tam summo dolori sit, quam si unusquisque positus sub captivitate peccati recordetur unde lapsus sit. (There is nothing that leads to such grief than if one is placed under the slavery of sin and remembers whence he has fallen).

Thus, we feel impelled to say with Job: Quis mihi tribuat, ut sim juxta menses pristinos, secundum dies quibus Deus custodiebat me, sicut fui in diebus adolescentiae meae quando secreto erat Deus in tabernaculo meo, quando erat Omnipotens mecum (Who would grant me to go back to my early childhood, to the days when God was watching over me; just as I was

in the days of my youth, when God dwelt deep in my heart, when the Omnipotent was with me). Alas, who will restore me to that glorious innocence that I preserved with such happiness! How I would love to recall those beautiful years, when I lived under the protection of my God, and when God Himself made His residence in the depths of my heart! Videbant me juvenes et abscondebantur, et senes assurgentes stabant (The young men would secretly watch me, and the old men would rise and remain standing): The greatest libertines were restrained in my presence, and the wisest men revered my youthful conduct which was regulated and beyond reproach. Auris audiens beatificabat me, et oculus videns testimonium reddebat mihi (The listening ear used to bless me, and the seeing eye used to give me credit). There was a time when, at the mention of my name, people would heap a thousand benedictions upon me and would envy the happiness of those who had given me life; and whenever my life and actions were examined closely, it was agreed that I deserved the praises that were given me and that my good reputation was justified. But, alas! that time is over. I have become an object of gossip and derision; young people and the more reserved among their elders regard me with horror; they dread my company and are forbidden to associate with me for fear that I might corrupt or dishonor them: Nunc autem derident me juniores, nunc in eorum canticum versus sum et factus sum illis in proverbium; abominantur me (Now, however, the young men scoff at me, I am ridiculed in their songs, and have become a joke to

them; they despise me). It is not astonishing, Christian Listeners, that those who have abandoned God often appear to be avidly in need of new pleasures and amusements. They are driven to this state by the relentless cries of their conscience, which they hope to appease by the continual use of all that is pleasurable in this life; they try to make of their existence an unending round of feasts, amusements, dances, and plays, because they fear that if Conscience were to find one moment of silence or idleness, it would assail them with reproaches. Nothing makes clearer to me the extent of their suffering than this insatiability and inconstancy. They remind me of those sick people who are in the throes of an agonizing edema. I am in no way envious of them, however delicious may be the beverages by which they try to quench their thirst; on the contrary, the more they drink, the more I pity them, because it indicates that the pain is stronger and the suffering more acute. I compare them also to certain people for whom, it seems, the riches of Arabia can never produce enough perfumes, for they must always have in their possession a large variety of the most exquisite kinds. We accuse them of being soft and sensual, while very often this excessive use of musk and amber is only an attempt to combat the putrid air which they breathe and which poisons them. The same is true of sinners: they plunge into all kinds of pleasures in an attempt to ease their interior sufferings; they use these pleasures as perfumes to counteract the infected air emitting from their conscience. They need pleasures to soothe them, and they are

in constant need of new ones, because no pleasure is capable of soothing them. There is nothing truer than this point, which is well worth our consideration.

David's harp appeased the demon which had taken possession of Saul; but no concert, no harmony can appease a bad conscience; it follows the sinner everywhere, it bothers him everywhere. One of the most vexing plagues inflicted on Egypt by Moses was the appalling number of frogs or, as some authors state, of toads which covered the countryside and even filled the cities. These repulsive animals crawled into Pharaoh's palace, and even into his bed; with the slime of their drooling, they soiled his expensive furniture and even the meats on his table; his rest was ruined by their constant and horrible croaking. This is a picture of the bad Christian and the torments which he must suffer because of his sins; these sins present themselves before him at all times and in all places, and always in some hideous form; they respect neither his hours of business nor his hours of rest; they spoil, they poison the most exquisite foods; they join their horrible screeching to the most beautiful concerts; they interrupt his sleep and his most pleasant conversations.

This paradox is the reason that Epicurus, the most voluptuous of men, always excluded crime from his brutish felicity, although he had composed it entirely of worldly and sensual pleasures. He did not believe that one could be happy and evil at the same time. David also said that innocence and peace were joined

together and their alliance was so close that it was impossible to separate them: Justitia et pax osculatae sunt (Justice and peace kissed). It is in vain that the sinner aspires to a peaceful life. The things which give the greatest pleasure to his senses are powerless to appease the worm which gnaws within them. He must become good if he wishes to end his misery: Justitia et pax osculatae sunt.

And if Conscience makes itself so troublesome and so vexing to the sinner in the very midst of his pleasures, who can describe how cruel it becomes in times of adversity? With what bitterness it insults him in his misfortunes! What advantage it takes on those occasions when the body writhes in pain or the spirit suffers depression, to avenge itself for having been scorned! The brothers of Joseph believed that they were about to be the victims of calumny; the first thing that came to their minds was the cruelty with which they had treated their own brother, although this deed had occurred many years before. It was of no use to them to be innocent of this new crime of which they were accused: their conscience chose that moment in time to reproach them for their former cruelty, and it was so forceful and so vehement in its reproaches that they were filled with confusion and forced to keep silent on an occasion when they had such good reason to complain: Merito haec patimur, quia peccavimus in fratrem nostrum; en sanguis ejus exquiritur (We justly suffer these things because we have sinned against our brother; his blood exacts it). Justice is

being done to us, they said, we are once again being called to account for the blood of Joseph; it is the voice of this blood that cries against us today, demanding vengeance; such a heinous crime could not go unpunished. See the wretched Antiochus, beset by shameful illnesses, covered with ulcers, and awaiting an early death. It was at this critical time that his sins rose up against him to make his misfortune complete: Nunc reminiscor malorum quae feci in Jerusalem (Now I remember the evils which I inflicted on Jerusalem). It was at this very hour that his conscience placed before his memory all his sacrileges, that it reproached him for the violence and the desecrations which he had exercised in Jerusalem: Nunc, nunc (it is now, now); it was at this moment that it spread before his eyes the holy vessels, that it displayed the furnishings which he plundered from the Temple of the Almighty: Nunc reminiscor malorum quae feci in Jerusalem.

Gentlemen, the situation of the sinner, whatever his state, always seems very miserable to me; but he is never more pitiful than in these times of misfortune. A painful illness keeps him tied to his bed on a wheel or a burning grill; he loses his possessions through injustice; his enemies blacken his name and treat him cruelly; death robs him of what he holds most dear in this world; he is besieged by crosses; and if he wishes either to lift his eyes toward heaven or to retire within himself for a while to seek some consolation, he finds only cause for pain and despair. What a misfortune! says

St. Augustine, and where will this miserable person find a refuge? Adversity assaults him in the country, it follows him to the city, it goes with him into his house, his room, and his office. All that remains is the small recess of his conscience. But if, even there, all is ablaze, if only trouble and disorder reign, if this last refuge has been taken over by his enemies, he will necessarily have to flee. But where can he go to escape himself? And wherever he goes in his present state, will he not meet there his tormentor and his torment? Quocunque fugerit, se talem trahit post se, et quocunque talem traxerit se, cruciat se (Wherever he flees, he drags along his accursed self; and wherever he has dragged his accursed self, he torments himself). How happy you are, Holy Souls, how happy you are even in the greatest trials of life. to have within yourself a loyal friend and a refuge that is impregnable to all afflictions!

Yes, Christian Listeners, a good conscience is a retreat that is inaccessible to all enemies of your happiness; it is a most agreeable friend in all seasons, but most useful and of the greatest assistance in times of adversity. It is then that a soul which is afflicted on the outside and persecuted by creatures, finds in a good conscience reasons for a solid consolation. He finds there infallible testimony to his innocence and, as a consequence, unshakable proof that what he is suffering is not the effect of God's anger, but, on the contrary, a mark of His love. It is here that he receives the

assurance that there will be an end to his misfortunes, that he will draw from them much fruit and that they will be exchanged for goods that are immutable and eternal. I am reminded of that unfortunate Anna, the mother of Samuel, who, in the extreme suffering caused by her sterility, received from her good husband such tender caresses and such kind words of consolation: Anna, cur fles, et quare non comedis, et quamobrem affligitur cor tuum (Anna, why do you weep, why do you not eat, and why is your heart afflicted)? Why are you weeping, Anna, and why are you not eating? What reason have you to be so lost in grief? You have no children, but what does it matter, since I am satisfied and I love you no less for it? Am I not able to take the place of many children? Numquid non ego melior tibi sum quam decem filii (Why, am I not better to you than ten sons)? This resembles, to some extent, the voice of Conscience, or rather the voice of God, when He speaks to a faithful soul who is in great distress: Cur fles, et quamobrem affligitur cor tuum (Why do you weep, and why is your heart afflicted)? What reason do you have to be dismayed, my Beloved, since I love you and I am pleased with you? It is I Who dealt that blow of which you complain, and since you have not offended Me in any way, you can rightly suppose that it is not in anger that I strike you. From your present way of living, you can draw the assurance that paradise will be yours. Let the lost souls enjoy their false and brief felicity. Keep in mind that the ills that you endure will serve more than a little to increase the glory that

I am preparing for you. Numquid non ego melior tibi sum quam decem filii (Why, am I not better to you than ten sons)? You have no sons; you have lost the one in whom you had placed such high hopes and whose birth brought you such joy. But do you believe that this has happened without my permission, or that I have permitted it without a plan? And, loving you as I do, is it possible for Me to formulate any plan that does not work to your advantage? I wish to take the place in your life of your father, your son, and all things. No, you must not be grieved no matter what you may lose, as long as you do not lose My friendship. It is spiritual consolation which gives true Christians that serenity of spirit, that admirable constancy which edifies and charms us; this is what sustains them and allows them to bear disasters that would normally be expected to crush them; it explains why we hear from their lips nothing but words of acceptance and thanksgiving on those occasions when sinners give such visible and scandalous marks of their despair. But I have said nothing about the suffering that Conscience causes the sinner by its persistent reproaches; let us now say a word of the fright that it causes him by its threats. This is the second part.

SECOND PART

Although the Holy Spirit spoke in several passages of Scripture of this deadly fear by which the soul of the sinner

is eternally afflicted, and that, in each case, he expressed Himself in a very forceful manner, I do not believe that He has ever said anything stronger than these words which are found in the Fifteenth Chapter of the Book of Job: Sonitus terroris semper in auribus ejus (Sounds of terror are always in his ears). The ears of the wicked are always filled with a terrible sound, or rather the voice of terror itself, which horrifies him and causes him to dry up with fear. Non credit quod reverti possit de tenebris ad lucem circumspectans undique, gladium (He does not believe that he can return from darkness to light, as he sees a sword all around him). If it is night-time, he does not believe he will live to see the day, for he seems to see on all sides the sword of God's justice which pursues him and from which he cannot flee. It is true, Gentlemen, that for him every sound is a herald of certain death, and everything he sees is a direct threat to his life: a cloud that covers the sky, a bolt of lightning, the rumbling of thunder--any of these can cause him to freeze in his innermost soul. The sound of a bell/^{or} the sight of a funeral procession, fills him with a thousand thoughts of death. If he sees a shadow, it is a demon about to seize him; if he hears the slightest sound, it is the house caving in beneath his feet or over his head. He fears death even from the most common illnesses, and if he loses his balance or stumbles while walking, he believes it to be God's hand pushing him and preparing to hurl him into the bottomless pit. Since he has already been condemned by his own conscience, he awaits each moment the execution

of this just verdict. He is like a thief for whom the death sentence has already been pronounced: he is always in that cruel state of awaiting punishment. If someone even rattles the bolt on his prison door, he imagines that someone is about to take him out to conduct him to the gallows.

And not only does his conscience make him fear the anger of his Judge, but it also frightens him to the point that he mistrusts all men, all creatures, for he fears that they are all determined to avenge their Creator. Even though no one is interested in him, he believes, says St. John Chrysostom, that everyone is aware of his sin, that it can be read on his face, that it is the subject of all conversations, that ambushes are being set up in all corners to capture him. If someone caresses him, it is just a ruse to betray him; if he is treated more coldly, it is because people have been warned of his infamy. He mistrusts his own servants, and even those people who have been his accomplices in sin. Because of conscience Cain wandered through the woods, because of conscience he even fled from his children and believed that every man on earth was conspiring to kill him. Cum sit enim timida nequitia, says the Sage, dat testimonium condemnationis; semper enim praesmit saeva perturbata conscientia (For, since wickedness is timid, it gives evidence of guilt; a troubled conscience always presumes itself an object of hate). Wickedness is extremely timid and, since it feels worthy of every man's hatred, it becomes convinced, in its troubled state, that in fact it is hated by every man.

What marks this fear in a very special way is that it is not like the fears of panic which can be cured through reason. It is reason itself which produces the sinner's fear: the more he consults reason, the more justification he finds to tremble. Tetendit enim adversus Deum manum suam, et aversus Omnipotentem roboratus est (For he stretched his hand against God and strengthened himself against the Almighty). In truth, said the holy man Job, he has made himself a fearful enemy, he has been foolish enough to oppose God and to attack the Almighty. What is more reasonable, Christian Listeners, than the fear of a puny creature who has so basely, so cruelly offended the One Who can punish him eternally, Who holds in His hands the lives of all men, Who has created everything, Who can destroy everything; the One to Whom all obey: the angels, the demons, the elements, in a word, all animate and inanimate beings! We have heard of some wretched people who, because they had angered persons of high rank in the world, were driven out of their minds by the continual fear that they could never flee from the authority and the power of their enemies. What, then, should be the fear of a man who has had the insolence to despise and to outrage the Lord of Heaven and earth? To be without fear after having sinned, it is necessary to have already lost one's mind or to believe that there is no God. We know of some people who, in order to live more peacefully, have tried to convince themselves of this belief, but have they ever succeeded? In my

opinion, it is an impossibility. The most they can do is to doubt the existence of God. But in this doubt, I ask you if it is possible to be completely free from fear, when one realizes that he is risking all things on an opinion that is contrary to the opinion held by the whole world, an opinion that has never been seriously considered by any minds except those of a small number of men who were evil and corrupt in their morals.

But what agony, Christian Company, to live thus, always trembling, always gripped by a deadly fear! St. John Chrysostom says that death is a lesser evil than the fear of dying. Thus, we have seen all too many sinners who, no longer able to stand the terrors of their conscience, have ended their lives in the manner of Judas. There are some who confess their crimes and give themselves up, of their own accord, to the judges, preferring to finish their lives in torments of the worst kind rather than to have to listen any longer to that horrible voice. When I see a man suffering from gallstones who, in order to ease the pain, consents to have them removed by allowing an iron to be placed far down into his bowels, I say that his ailment must be very painful, since it prompts him to choose such a strong remedy. What can we say, then, of the fears caused by a bad conscience, since, to free themselves from it, some sinners give themselves up of their own accord to be broken upon the wheel or burnt alive! Finally, Gentlemen, to Origen this evil seemed so terrible that he believed, though falsely, that after this life, there would be no other hell for the damned; and

St. Jerome, who condemns this feeling as an error of the grossest sort, has nevertheless said, in favor of the truth I am now exposing, that there is a superior hell that can be opposed to the inferior hell mentioned by David, and that the former is nothing more than a guilty conscience. The pleasure experienced by the sinner, says St. Ambrose, is like a dream which disappears as soon as he awakes. Besides, it must be noted that what appears to be sleep and rest, if we are to judge by appearances, is a veritable hell into which sinners, while still alive, are hurled and where their conscience alone replaces the flames and the demons. Licet ipsa, quae videtur, etiam dum vivunt impiorum requies in inferno sit, viventes tamen in inferna descendunt (Even while they live, the very peace of the wicked, as it seems, may be a veritable hell; while living, moreover, they hurl themselves into hell).

If this is so, Christian Listeners, how can we ever cease to be amazed by the stupidity and the blindness of sinners! I have always been extremely astounded that there are men who have neither respect for the infinite greatness of God nor love for His goodness; who are not moved by what He has done or what He has suffered for us. It further astounds me that, with our faith, we can live as we do in the world, with so little concern about death and in such complete oblivion of our eternity. How powerful must be the attractions of pleasure, I have often thought, to drag us into sin despite the threats and the promises of God, despite the hope of paradise and the fear of hell, in the sight of such pure joys

and such cruel flames! But behold something which is even more surprising, Christian Company: The life of the sinner is a torment, a perpetual agony; he continually walks on thorns and burning coals; his sins not only lead him to hell, but they make a hell of his life on earth; and yet, he loves them, he renews them each day, and he cannot convince himself to renounce them! Obstupescite, coeli, super hoc, et portae ejus desolamini vehementer! Duo mala fecit populus meus; me dereliquerunt, fontem aquae vivae, et foderunt sibi cisternas dissipatas, quae continere non valent aquas (O heavens, be confounded at this; and you, heavenly gates, lament vehemently! My people have committed two evils: they have abandoned Me, the fountain of living waters, and have dug for themselves sterile cisterns which cannot hold water). Stop, O heavens, and stand motionless in your astonishment! And you, O Doors of the heavenly Jerusalem, give yourselves up to mourning and tears at the sight of such a remarkable blindness! My people have abandoned Me, the fountain of life-giving waters; they have scorned Me in favor of those muddy cisterns which fail to hold even the polluted and bitter waters that collect there!

Alas, Christians! when you turned away from the world to avoid the danger of falling into sin, you believed that you were offering God a great sacrifice and that this would mean the immolation of all your joys and the beginning of a road that was rough and narrow. However, it happens that you have avoided work and pain, that you have broken heavy chains, and that you have chosen the most agreeable road, the road of liberty and

peace. If anyone is still hesitant about making the same choice, I hope he will decide upon it after hearing these thoughts: Hodie si vocem ejus audieritis, nolite obdurare corda vestra (Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts). We have been too long in resisting this voice of God Who calls us to a true conversion. Why put off until Easter what can be done on the approaching holy days? Have we not suffered enough on that rack to which our conscience has pinned us for so long? Have we not moaned long enough beneath that burden of iniquity which weighs so heavily upon us? I know that the word "penance" frightens most people. But what is the most rigorous penance in comparison with what one must endure in the servitude of the devil? Believe me, Christian Listeners, it is not to become unhappy that we are being urged to change; on the contrary, among the motives which most strongly revive and inflame the zeal of preachers, two of the most powerful are the genuine compassion they feel at the sight of souls languishing beneath an unbearable yoke, and the desire to lead us to a life that is calmer and sweeter in order to obtain for us one that is eternal. Amen.

SERMON LXXII

ON THE LOVE OF GOD

Populus hic labiis me honorat;
cor autem eorum longe est a me.

These people honor Me with
their lips; but their hearts
are very far from Me.
(Matt. 15:8)

We must love God Who is infinitely lovable and Who
loves us infinitely.

God is without doubt worthy of our external reverence,
and He demands it. But He wants us to honor Him with our
hearts as well as our lips; and the greatest honor He can
expect from our hearts is to be loved. Otherwise, He re-
gards as hypocritical all our religion, He rejects our sac-
rifices and our praises. And it seems to me that He does so
with justice. For, if this homage of the senses results from
our knowledge of His divine perfections, I do not see why it
would not be accompanied by love, since we are naturally in-

clined to love the merit which we know. If God had not made Charity a precept, we might say that respect keeps us from it; but since He permits us--nay, even commands us--to love Him, if we do not do so with all our heart, we must admit that we do not esteem Him and that it is only with our lips that we honor Him.

But what am I thinking of, Gentlemen, in attempting in this way to speak to you of the Love of God! Am I not aware that this subject is an abyss in which the human mind can be lost and where all our eloquence becomes embarrassed and confused; that one cannot help but be dazzled by the sublimity and overwhelmed by the vastness of the subject; that even those who are the most aflame with this divine Love never find an adequate expression for their sentiments, and that those whose hearts are not filled with it are unable even to discuss it? I confess that it is with great difficulty that I resolved to enter into this discourse because I know much is expected of one who dares undertake it, and because I realize how powerless my thoughts will be in satisfying so great an expectation. I am encouraged by the hope that the Holy Spirit will prepare your hearts to receive my words, and for hearts thus prepared, a single spark is often enough to ignite a very ardent blaze. Divine Mary, we have never had so great a need of your favor; we ask it of you by that same Love which will be the subject of our discourse. Love is a very powerful motive for you--one which you will never ignore ^{any} more than you will ignore the prayer of the Church! Ave Maria.

It appears to me that all love develops in our hearts either through knowledge of the merit which abides in the person we love, or through gratitude for favors which are received from that person. We love that which is lovable, we also love that which loves us. The first love is one of necessity, the second is one of justice. We might say that the first resembles a kind of tribute that the heart, forced by reason as well as by natural inclination, renders to those objects in which the Creator has chosen to manifest more tangibly His divine perfections. The second is like a reward that one cannot justly refuse to those who have taken the first step in loving us, since love can only truly be repaid by love.

All this being assumed, Christian Listeners, I do not see why it is so difficult for us to love God. For, after all, whether I consider what He is in Himself or whether I reflect on what He has done for us, I find that we owe Him our hearts without reserve; and to refuse this devotion, we would have to be very insensitive as well as very ungrateful. Come here; unfortunate Soul. What excuse can you offer for failing to love your God? Is He lacking in anything that might attract your tenderness? Has He failed to do anything that might merit it? Perhaps you have never carefully examined either one of these two points. I shall attempt to do so briefly in the two parts of this discourse. We will see, in the first part, that He Who solicits our Love is infinitely lovable; and in the second, that He loves us infinitely. Here are two points which contain all that can be said on this subject. But there is no tongue capable of saying all that is contained in these two points.

FIRST POINT

It is true that if we were to consult our reason before loving, this passion would be neither as general nor as ardent as it is in the world. But for a long time, love has been presented to us not only as blind, but also as childish, to show that it is not only by accident that it makes mistakes, but that such a defect is a natural one and that, even if it had eyes to see objects, it would still lack the discernment to judge them properly. In fact, Christian Listeners, what creature is worthy of the devotion and the sacrifice that, out of love, we make of everything we are to the one we love? Love is a kind of divine cult; it is a movement that draws us to the object of our love as to a Sovereign Good, as to a superior being capable of supplementing all that is lacking in our own nature to be completely happy. Now, if we strove to know people thoroughly before paying them this homage, who would be foolish enough to adore, as many do each day, in the manner of the most barbarous of pagans-- adore, I say,-- tree stumps and animals?

We complain that men are fickle in their affections, and I believe that nothing is easier to explain than this inconstancy. It results from an act of our intelligence which reveals to us the defects which our passion had at first concealed; it is an indication of the strength of our reason which very quickly dispels the darkness in which it had allowed itself to be enveloped. It proves that our good judgment returns only moments after it has abandoned us, and that,

even if we sometimes allow ourselves to be misled, it is not long before we recover our senses. In regard to God, the case is very different: all natural enlightenment favors the Love we have for Him; the more we know Him, the more lovable He is. For that reason those who meditate regularly on His divine perfections experience an interior fire that grows stronger each day; for that reason, in heaven, where we shall see God, Charity, far from dying out as in the case of faith and hope, will receive an immense increase in its ardor and flames, and it will be most intense in those spirits who see Him at close range.

Whoever strives to know God will, from the start, find in Him all that is lovable in creatures, whether they be rational or irrational, animate or inanimate. I know that for each person the attraction to love is different, and that some are more moved by great beauty, others by a great sweetness of spirit, and others by a pleasant and agreeable disposition; greatness without pride, integrity without arrogance, learning without ostentation, a lofty position allied to great modesty are charms which some cannot resist. We sometimes see people drawn to those qualities which they find lacking in themselves, as they appear to them to be more admirable than those which they possess; some others are more responsive to qualities which are closer to their own because self-love has convinced them that none are more desirable. True virtues are loved by everyone, but those who are self-centered will attach themselves more strongly to liberality, those who are timid to clemency, those who are naturally haughty to pleasing manners and sweetness of disposition. But if on earth all the reasons for love

were assembled in one person, who could refuse to love him or her? Now, then, Gentlemen, all of these qualities are found in God, so that there could be no natural inclination, no attraction that would fail to draw us to God, if He were known to us.

And not only should He attract all hearts because He has in Himself all that charms us in creatures, but He should attract them with an infinite force because He possesses infinitely that which creatures have only in a most imperfect way. The most startling beauty is but a dried flower in comparison with the beauty of God. After Jesus Christ had appeared for only a moment to St. Teresa, even the most attractive persons seemed to her only living skeletons, and the sun, in her opinion, cast only pale shadows on the earth. All human knowledge consists in knowing that we know nothing, that we do not know ourselves; God alone possesses the treasures of knowledge and wisdom, and He has given men only a restless desire to learn what they do not know. I dare not mention to what the Scriptures compare our greatest virtues when they oppose them to the purity and the infinite holiness of God.

In creatures the favorable qualities are accompanied by so many unfavorable ones that they repulse us on one side even while they attract us on the other, so that it is difficult for them to arouse in us a strong and constant passion. Thus, he who is pleasing to the eye may revolt the mind; where there is brilliance, stability is lacking; the learned man is without goodness or honesty; the prudent man is self-centered; the virtuous lacks culture; a good friend becomes irritable;

one is lacking in zeal, the other in good will. Only God is supremely perfect; everything in Him is equally lovable; in Him, even the most opposed qualities are admirably reconciled; everything exists in a middle road, evenly distanced from all that is evil. No matter under which aspect we consider Him, the heart, the mind, the senses are fully satisfied; it is impossible to imagine a person, however beautiful, or to formulate an idea, however brilliant, that He would not infinitely surpass.

The crowning glory of such great qualities is that He possesses them constantly and will possess them eternally. Created beauties are variable; business or illness can trouble the most cheerful disposition; the greatest minds do not sparkle forever, and there are times when moderation and virtue seem to abandon the most virtuous persons. In God, all is constant and inalterable; it is not necessary to study His moods or to choose His good moments; He is always even-tempered, always equally good to those who love Him.

However hard we try, however perfect the object to which we attach our heart on earth, our love will never make us completely happy; it will not even make us happy for long: Non poterit labor finire, nisi hoc quisque diligat, quod invito non possit auferri (Suffering will not be able to come to an end unless each one chooses that which is not able to be taken away without one's consent), says St. Augustine. Love and pain have pledged an eternal alliance; thus, there will always be much pain in loving, until we love that which cannot be taken away from us. But what is there in this world which cannot be taken away from us in a thousand ways? Besides the

fact that age wears out the body and the mind, that death separates one from the other, there are a thousand accidents which can take from us the persons we love, and there are other men who can steal them from us before our very eyes by alienating their affection.

You alone, O my God, can be mine as long as I wish it. No chance, no reversals of fortune, no power in heaven or in hell can remove You from my soul. I can never be certain of a twenty-four hour stay in any place on earth, I am unable to promise myself one moment of life; but I well know that neither exile nor death can separate me from You. I know that I will find You everywhere, and everywhere I will find You equally good and lovable; that nothing can prevent me from living with You, from dying in Your arms, or from entering by my death into a fuller and sweeter enjoyment of Your divine presence.

If we had the happiness of finding in a created and sensual object all the qualities we mentioned, I would agree that this object would be worthy of our love; but even this^{exception} would not prevent our love from making us unhappy, as we have seen it happen to almost all who love. In the first place, I doubt that any creature so worthy of our love would judge us to be worthy of his; whereas the Lord, far from spurning our heart, insists that we give it to Him, and that we give it to no one else. Poor child, wretched creature, you who seem rejected by all, who command so little respect by your birth, your possessions, or your talents; who find no support or friendship among men, who are odious even to the members of your own family, who may even be disowned and treated as a

stranger by your father and mother, yes; you will be for God a cherished object; you can aspire to His good graces, you will unfaillingly find in Him an ardent and faithful lover.

Furthermore, even if our loved ones returned our love as perfectly as we desired, all our zeal, all our faithfulness, all the ardor and efforts of our hearts are still incapable of assuring us of one moment of constancy on their part. A single doubt is enough to destroy in their minds all that we might have gained by years of perfect friendship. It is not possible for us to penetrate the souls of our friends in order to fight the suspicions and false judgments that they may be forming against us; and neither is it possible for them to look into our hearts so that they might correct their own false judgments and take into account our most tender sentiments. But what sweetness for the soul who loves his God! We are assured that God is a witness to our most secret thoughts and that He knows all the ardor and the extent of our love, that not one sigh escapes Him, and that we are never mistaken when we judge the sentiments of our Beloved according to those which we have for Him.

After this, there can be only one subject of concern left for us. St. Jerome says one must search a long time for a friend, that he is not easy to find, and that, once found, he is not easy to retain. Amicus diu quaeritur, vix invenitur, difficile servatur (A friend is sought for a long time, is found with difficulty, and is hard to retain). We know that this God, Who sees so clearly ~~into~~ our hearts, will surely see things there which He should not see; we know as well that He deserves to be loved in a perfect manner and that, in loving us,

He does us an infinite honor. Consequently, it would seem that His infinite delicacy would render it impossible for Him to suffer our weaknesses and our cowardice, impossible for Him not to be repelled by the repeated infidelities which we seem unable to avoid in His service. But, such is not so, Listeners. The excellence, the grandeur, the holiness of our God do not render Him less patient. It may seem incredible but it is nonetheless true that it is easier to deal with Him than with the weakest of creatures. No, we must not imagine that He is capable of cutting us off for the slightest ingratitude, that it takes but a trifle to repel Him. He suffers with incredible kindness all the frailties of those He loves, He forgets ^{these} frailties, He pretends not to notice them; in His compassion, He even offers consolation to those souls who are inordinately saddened by these weaknesses and reproaches them for the excess of their suffering which seems to indicate a lack of trust. It is not His wish that our fear of displeasing Him be so great as to trouble us or hinder our spirit. He hopes that we will avoid even the smallest faults but insists that we should not let ourselves be troubled by even the most serious. He wants freedom and peace to be the eternal portion of those who truly love Him.

Domine Deus virtutum, quis similis tibi? (God, Lord of virtues, who is like You)? O Lord, God of all virtues, who is equal to You that he might contend with You for the Love and the heart of Your creatures! It is said in the world that one cannot live without love, and that the heart will necessarily seek an object for its affection. But, my God, is there anything

which deserves more than You to occupy this heart which was made only for You! Alas, it takes so little to attract us! A small ray of beauty, a little tenderness, the slightest quality of mind or body, even when combined with a thousand enormous defects, is capable of charming us, and making us lose our mind. We love a small child, who is yet but a mass of clay and poorly-digested humours. Even more: we have tenderness for horses, for dogs, for cats, and birds, to the point of being inconsolable when we lose them!

We give our heart, we offer it without reserve, we throw it, so to speak, at the first person who comes along. Only You, my God, can have no part of it! You, I say, Who alone are great, good, wise, faithful, constant, holy, liberal, impeccable; You Who are without fault, Who possess all perfections, Who possess them always and forever! Our hearts are so inclined to love! We prefer to suffer, languish, struggle to no avail; we prefer to be troubled and worried, to lose our joy, our rest, our possessions, our good conscience, and our honor rather than to love nothing; and we refuse Your Love, O my divine Master, that love so tender, so pure, so fulfilling, so glorious, which brings with it peace, tranquility, and happiness to all those whom it inflames!

I know that the reason usually offered for not loving God is that we do not see Him. But this reason is a feeble one, since so many holy men and women, who have never seen God any more than we, have not been deterred from loving Him with an unbelievable ardor and are now living in great languor, or in ecstasies that the most violent

passions could never produce. If we could only love what we see, how is it that we sometimes become enamored of the mind of certain persons whose deformed face and misshapen body could only inspire aversion and disgust? How many times have we felt impelled to love some unknown persons merely from an account of what was lovable in them or of what they had done to please us without knowing us? What! Gentlemen, we feel tenderness for an honorable man because ancient history has depicted him favorably; we are moved by the character of a fictional hero even to the point of shedding tears over his fabulous adventures; and we dare to say that love can only enter through the eyes and that we cannot love that which we do not see! Our only reason for not loving God is that we do not know Him. But how can we know Him when we never deign to approach Him by meditating on His infinite perfections, when we close our ears to all those creatures who speak to us of His grandeur and who tell us that it was His hand which formed them, His beauty which adorns them, His wisdom which arranges and directs them, His kindness which preserves them for our pleasure and utility? Who among us could help loving You, O my God, if each day we took a little time to study You, to see how lovable You are; if, at least from time to time, we considered that infinite power which has created all from nothing, and which without effort maintains all things in such a beautiful order and in such a constant regularity; that wise Providence which presides over the entire universe, which leads each being to its end with such tenderness, which can be upset by no accident, which makes the greatest calamities serve its most admirable designs, which

concerns itself with the smallest creatures and the slightest needs, which provides for everything and is held back by nothing; that liberality which excludes no man from its blessings, not even Your most deadly enemies; that most selfless zeal which prompts in You the same enthusiasm for our salvation as if all Your happiness depended on our own; that patience with which You support the ingratitude and impiety of men; that wise gentleness with which You recall them to their duty; that ease with which You forgive them after they have strayed for so long; that joy which You experience when they repent; those eternal rewards which You have in store for those who serve You, and of which You give them on earth an assurance and foretaste which infinitely surpass all their services. Let us occasionally entertain these thoughts, Christian Listeners, and unless our hearts are harder than bronze or marble, we will give our divine Master these ungrateful hearts which we owe Him under so many titles. Although in my opinion nothing seems more lovable in God than that very Love which He is first to offer us, it is just that we should love Him even if He were not infinitely lovable, because He loves us infinitely. This is the second point.

SECOND POINT

Of all the proofs of love, the ones which find men most responsive are the benefits which they receive from it, either because there is no better way to indicate the strength of a lover's passion, or because nothing is more pleasing to

our self-centered natures than a love that serves us. It is also by such means that God has tried to gain our love. He has lavished on us a thousand blessings, the least of which deserves all our gratitude.

After hearing time and time again about creation and preservation, we become accustomed to these terms and to the things which they signify, so that they come to make almost no impression on us. But if we were willing to spend a little time examining these two important blessings, we would find two powerful motives for love and gratitude. It is sufficient for me to say that God has created you from nothing, and that of His free will He has made you just as you are. He could have left you in a state of non-existence, He could have formed you without intelligence or judgment, He could have made your birth obscure and your body deformed and horrible to see. Instead He gave you common sense and an affectionate nature, He made you healthy and strong, He chose for your birthplace a palace or a house in which there are a thousand luxuries and a host of people ready to serve you. All of these gifts which please you and make you pleasing to others come from His hand. If you had been born blind, or deaf, or with some horrible defect of face or figure; if you had lost an arm or a leg in an accident; if sickness had completely ruined your complexion --what would you not give to repair these defects! And, if some man had restored your sight or your speech, had straightened your body, had made you beautiful rather than ugly and deformed, how strongly obligated you would feel toward him, and what means you would be willing to take to

repay that obligation!

Ah, Gentlemen! Just think that it is our God to Whom we are indebted for these eyes which are so precious to us, this tongue which serves us in so many ways, these ears, these arms, and all the other parts which compose and embellish our body. Let us realize that He has not blessed everyone in this way and that it would be most painful for us to be conspicuous because of some major physical defect. If we could cover this area more extensively, you would see that God's preservation is even more obliging. It is this blessing which permits us to enjoy the Creator's gifts. If, for one moment, He should cease to sustain us, to watch over us, over all our external and internal parts, everything would fail, it would all disintegrate or fall into a terrible chaos. We would lose the use of our senses and of all our faculties, physical and spiritual; we would be deprived of health; we would be beset by sickness; and we would lose this life that we love so much. A doctor, through his art and his energy, through the use of distasteful remedies and severe diets, may be able to prolong in a feeble old man a life that is unhappy and languishing; this doctor, I say, is not only rewarded, but even loved, honored and, in a sense, regarded as a divinity. Yet, we express no gratitude to our God Who provides us with a pleasant and comfortable life, and with the health needed to participate in all the functions and pleasures of that life!

But these blessings are not all. Cast, if you will, an eye over the whole universe. See the sky, the air, the earth, all the seas and oceans that water it, all the trees that cover

it, all the animals that inhabit it. All of this is yours, and it is God Who made it out of love for you. The Lord is in all these things; He gives Himself to you in all these things. And not only is He in them, but He works unceasingly therein for your benefit. It is God, yes, God Himself, Who is your light in the sun; Who warms you in the fire, Who refreshes you in the air and the water, Who delights you in pleasant odors, Who charms you in sounds, Who puts pungency in your stews, Who nourishes you in meats, Who charms you in colors, Who serves you in all that is useful, and Who does it all out of love for you and a desire to please you. That He does so is no illusion nor the simple thought of a contemplative: it is a truth of nature which can be arrived at without making use of any other lights than those of reason. My God, if I sometimes remembered that You are eternally around me, occupied not only in preserving my life, but also engrossed, fully absorbed, so to speak, in preserving all that surrounds me, all that is useful or agreeable to me, and in serving me Yourself in every way and in all things, what motives for loving You I would find in this consideration!

And now, what shall I say about the mystery of the Redemption and the sanctification of our souls, about the happiness God has prepared for us in heaven and the helps He places on earth to lead us there! The Creator of men abases Himself until He is like men, He takes on flesh, He assumes a body, that He might live among them, that He might suffer for them and suffer like them. God is willing to be born in a stable,

to live in a shop, and to die on a cross, in order to save miserable men and give them proofs of His Love! This same God returns each day, under the appearances of bread, to be more intimately united with His creature, to serve him as a delicious food, and to find in him His Own greatest delight! Gentlemen, I leave these truths to your meditation, for human eloquence has nothing more to add; this subject transcends its power and eludes its most artful descriptions.

However, I should not omit two or three considerations which seem to me quite apt to excite our gratitude. The first is that however great, however ineffable, may be the actions of the Lord for our salvation, the love that inspired Him to do all these things is even greater than the things themselves, because it is infinite. It is the same love with which He loves Himself and with which He will love Himself eternally. Thus, even though you exert all your efforts, even though you love God with all your heart and all your strength, you will never be able to acknowledge the love He has shown you; He has loved you with a love that is divine and infinite, and you will always be limited in your gratitude.

Even if we were able to love God as much as we are loved by Him, our gratitude would still not equal the obligations we have toward Him. For, in truth, we would only love Him as much as He deserves; we would love infinitely a God Who is infinitely lovable, whereas, in loving me, He has attached Himself to a creature who is unworthy of His love, a creature who is vile, imperfect, and subject to countless weaknesses and vices, a creature who is at times

odious and unbearable to other creatures, and who, often enough, finds it difficult to stand himself.

I go even further and say that, even if we were perfect, as God Himself is, and our love were infinite, He would still have this advantage over us, that He has loved us first, and that, as a consequence, He has bestowed a grace on us while, in returning it, we would only be rendering Him justice. What makes His charity so remarkable on this point, says St. Paul, is that He loved us not only before He had any reason to do so, but also at a time when He had most reason to hate us, at a time when we offended Him, at a time when we abused all His blessings, at a time when we repulsed Him the most and when we had only disdain for His love: Dilexit autem non existentes, says the pious St. Bernard, sed et resistentes (He loved, moreover, not only the existing creatures, but also the rebellious). He loved us in spite of ourselves, He favored us with graces which we did not want to receive and which we opposed with all our strength. It is especially to you, repentant Souls, that He has shown this incomprehensible love. Yes, at a time when you were saying: My God, I have no need of Your advice or Your inspirations; it is in vain that You try to save me in spite of myself; I renounce Your paradise and my salvation. But He was saying at this time: I cannot resign Myself to your unhappiness; I will pursue you so persistently that you will finally yield to My importunity, if to nothing else; I must make you happy with or without your consent, even if you are determined to live in sin to the very end. I, rather than let you die in that way, am resolved to pursue you to the

end. You may ask: Why have you given me a free will if You will not allow me to make use of it? Christ replies: And why would I have given My life and My blood for you, only to see you perish eternally? Dilexit autem non existentes, sed et resistentes (He loved, moreover, not only the existing creatures, but also the rebellious).

Gentlemen, we are told that those who first brought the lights of the Gospel to the far corners of the Orient, having begun to explain publicly the mysteries of our faith--especially that of the Incarnation and the Death of the Son of God--reported that the natives, in their astonishment over this prodigious charity which was completely opposed to the pride and the harshness of their infernal deities, could not help exclaiming: O what a great and good God is the One adored by the Christians! How tender, how kind, how lovable He is! But what would they have said, these infidels, if it had been explained to them that this most lovable God that the Christians adore is not loved by the Christians! What would their astonishment be, even today, if we were to tell them: Yes, Christians have the greatest, the most powerful, the wisest, the most just, the most liberal of all gods; yet, they do not love Him. It is He Who drew them out of nothingness, Who gave them all the possessions which they enjoy, Who preserves them and all these blessings. He never lets them out of His sight, everything that He does is for their welfare, and He continually performs for them all kinds of services, with a heart full of zeal and an infinite love; yet, these ingrates do not love Him! He took upon Himself their sins and was willing to bear the punishment due to these sins; every day He

continues to suffer their rebellions and their outrages; He forgives them, He is the first to seek them out, to offer them His friendship; He has no need of them and, still, He is inconsolable when they are lost to Him; He is beside Himself with joy when they are found; in a word, He loves them beyond anything that can be said, and yet, He cannot obtain their love!

What people, however savage, however devoid of humanity, could hear this discourse and not conclude that we are the ones who are the most hardened and inhuman of all peoples? What would they say if when they learned that, to engage us in this love, it was necessary to command it of us under pain of death and eternal torments, and that even this has failed to penetrate the callousness of our hearts? Would they not exclaim: O dead and insensitive souls! In what climate, under which skies of iron and bronze, on what barbarous and cursed land do they live, these heartless men, these men of marble and ice? Lord, we well deserve all these reproaches; but, unless You soften our hearts by Your grace, we will be as insensitive to them as we are to Your blessings. Da quod jubes, et jube quod vis (Give what you exact, and exact what you wish). It is necessary that You Yourself give us with kindness this love which You require from us with so much justice. All we can do, for our part, is to think often of how much You deserve to be loved, how much You have loved us despite our small merit, and to ask You often to give us that which You have commanded, so that, having obtained it from Your infinite mercy, we may soon begin to do on earth what we will continue to do for a blessed eternity.

Amen.

SERMON LXXI

ON CHRISTIAN CHARITY

Unde ememus panes,
ut manducent hi?

Where are we to find
enough bread to sat-
isfy this crowd?
(Matt. 16:33)

~~We must love our neighbor:~~ he belongs to God,
he was created in His image, and he is the ob-
ject of His tenderness and love; we must love
him as we want to be loved by others, as we
love ourselves, and as Jesus Christ has loved us.

Today's Gospel teaches us that Jesus Christ, having been
followed into the desert by a large crowd of people and being
convinced in His goodness that He had an obligation to feed them,
performed to this end one of the greatest miracles of His
life. He took five loaves and two fishes, which were all the
provisions He had for Himself and His disciples, blessed them
and, while distributing them with His Own hands, multiplied
them in such a way that, after satisfying five thousand people,

there still remained enough to fill twelve baskets. This example of Charity, I believe, provides me with a favorable opportunity for a discourse on Christian Charity, that virtue which links us to our neighbor and unites into one all the hearts of the faithful. I am particularly eager to speak on this subject, knowing that it paves the way for the discussion I wish to present to you on the love of God, since love for our brothers is an essential part of our love for God, and we cannot separate these two virtues without destroying them. When we are told of our obligation to love God, we complain that we are being forced to love a Being Who cannot be apprehended by our senses and about Whom even our minds cannot formulate a true idea. But, in this case, it is no longer an invisible and supernatural object that we are commanded to love: these are men like ourselves, for whom nature may even inspire in us too strong an attraction.

It is true that the natural love that we feel for our brothers is not the love which God wishes us to show them. He can, however, dispose our hearts so that they will be favorable to the movements of this virtue which is so lofty and so rare among Christians. Is it possible that we still revolt against this precept or that we are still reluctant to obey it! Holy Spirit, unless You soften our hearts, we will find it impossible to obey even the easiest commandments, we will always hate that which You order us to love, and we will love that which You order us to hate. May You dispose my listeners to hear with docility what I will try to tell them with all the zeal which You have chosen to instill in me for their salva-

tion. They also ask this grace for themselves. To this purpose, we address a common plea to Your spouse and, with the Angel, we salute her. Ave Maria.

I do not doubt that you have often heard what St. Jerome has said about St. John the Evangelist: When this apostle, at a very advanced age, had to be carried to church by his disciples, when he no longer had the strength to deliver long discourses, he would be content to repeat this same message at every assembly: My Brothers, love one another. As it was always the same sermon, the faithful became tired of hearing it and took the liberty of asking him why he repeated it so often. His answer was indeed worthy of one who was the beloved of Jesus: This is the commandment of our good Master, and if we observe it, all is done: Quia praeceptum Domini est, et si solum fiat, sufficit (Because it is a precept of the Lord, and if one should do this only, it is sufficient).

O what a beautiful reason, Christian Listeners, to convince us to love our brothers! It should, it seems to me, make a deep impression on our hearts and our minds! Children of Jesus Christ and of His Church, should it be necessary to suggest any other motive to engage you in the practice of this virtue? Is it not enough to remind you that it was recommended by our good Master, that it was the wish He declared to be the closest to His heart, that before His death He stated that He had no other command for us but this one, that He asks of us no other reward than this for all that He did for us? Praeceptum Domini est, et si solum fiat, sufficit.

(Because it is a precept of the Lord, and if one should do this only, it is sufficient). Still, Gentlemen, I wish to add to this motive all those with which God has chosen to inspire me, and since I have no doubt that it will be easy to persuade you and that you will be eager to put your convictions into practice, I will add the rules that one must observe in the love of neighbor to the motives that I will have produced to establish this obligation. The motives and the rules of Christian Charity will thus compose the two parts of my discourse. In the first point, we will see why we must love our brothers, and, in the second, how we should love them. This love is the entire subject of our discussion.

FIRST POINT

It may surprise you, Christian Listeners, when I tell you that we have the same reason for loving our brothers as we have for loving God. But you will no longer be astonished when you realize that the love by which Christians love one another is the same virtue and the same love with which God Himself wishes to be loved. I will go even further: it is the same object which we love, whether we love God or men, for we love only God in men and we love men only because of God. These two loves, says St. Gregory the Great, are two parts composing one whole, two links on the same chain, two actions of the same virtue, two works from the same hand, two inseparable merits, neither of which can exist without the other.

Sunt duo isti amores duae quaedam partes, sed unum totum est ex utrisque compositum, duo annuli, sed catena una, duae actiones, sed una virtus, duae operae, sed una charitas, duo apud Deum merita, sed unum sine alio inveniri impossibile est (These two loves are as two parts, but one whole is derived from both; two links, but one chain; two actions, but one virtue; two works, but one charity; two merits before God, but one is inseparable from the other).

From this principle, I will first draw two conclusions which are very important in guiding us. The first is opposed to the belief of those falsely devout people who think they are filled with divine love simply because they pray often and receive frequent communion, although in their hearts they nourish aversions and jealousy, they withhold the possessions of others, and they delight in defaming the reputations of their brothers. Even if there were only one person in the world whom we did not love as we love ourselves, it would be in vain that we would pride ourselves on loving God: Duo apud Deum merita, sed unum sine alio inveniri impossibile est (Two merits before God, but one inseparable from the other).

The second conclusion is in favor of charitable persons. They sometimes complain that they feel no tenderness toward God, that they are cold in those actions which would demand the most fervor, or that they have not a single spark of that great fire with which the saints were filled. Be ^{you} consoled, Christian Souls, for you hate no one, wish everyone well, and you even do good works for all; far from being downcast over the prosperity

of your brothers, you show interest in their joys and are saddened by their temporal misfortunes; you are zealous in regard to the salvation of their souls. Go in peace on my assurance that you are truly filled with the love of God; these two loves are never separated: Unum sine alio inveniri impossibile est (One is inseparable from the other).

But how is it that the love of God necessarily contains the love of neighbor? I will present here three reasons to prove this point and will attempt to explain each one in a few words. The first is that our neighbor belongs to God; the second is that he is created in the image of God; the third is that he is the object of God's tenderness and love.

Your neighbor belongs to God, Gentlemen; he is His handiwork, His treasure, and His possession; it is He Who formed him with His hands and placed him on earth, as in a palace, that he might work towards His glory and the execution of His will. We are thereby obliged to honor and respect all men out of consideration for the Master to Whom they belong. We honor even the lowest servants of eminent persons; we respect even the monograms and coat-of-arms to be found on their horses and mules; we would not lay hands on that which bears their name or their livery. Even though one had suffered some insult from a member of their household, one might complain about it but would not venture to administer the punishment oneself. That is why it is said in the Scriptures: Mihi vindicta et ego retribuam (Vengeance is mine, and I shall punish). Let no one take the liberty of avenging himself for the outrages or injustices he

might have suffered; I will know how to punish those who are responsible. But since all men belong to Me, if you were so bold as to lay a hand on one of them without an order from Me to do so, you would be guilty of an attack that I would not leave unpunished.

I have said that we must respect all men because all men belong to God. I now add that, for the same reason, we must love them, if we love God. It is not necessary for me to explain the effects of love. You know better than I that it usually extends to everything that surrounds and relates to the loved one. We do not love our friends only; we love also their children, their servants, and the works of their hands and their minds. We say that when a man is a truly passionate lover he is not only touched by the object of his passion, but also idolizes all that relates to her, is moved by the mere sight of her house; even a glove or a handkerchief that he sees by chance can send him into raptures that he is unable to conceal.

If this is the case, O my God, how few people truly love You! For, in fact, if we loved You, we would not find it so difficult to endure or even to cherish our brothers, who are Your servants and Your children. How could we hate creatures whom You have formed and sustained with so much care, who are the masterpieces of Your wisdom and Your power; creatures who are essential to Your glory, who not only belong to You but also occupy the highest rank in Your house and are, in a manner of speaking, the choicest portion of Your heritage?

The second reason we have to love our neighbor is that, besides belonging to God, he is also created in His image.

From earliest times, Christian Listeners, the prestige and the quality of great persons have made even their statues and their portraits venerable. But, just as it is love that invented this art of representing men, so is it love that developed this beautiful art even further and manifested such enthusiasm for its works. It is remarkable to see how happy we deem ourselves if we own a statue or a painting on which are faithfully reproduced the features of a friend. With what care we preserve such reproductions, though they be lifeless, of this face! How much help we derive from them to console us for the friend's absence! And not only do we preserve these reproductions with care; but, as a proof of how much we cherish them, we may keep them in gold boxes, crown them with jewels, kiss them, venerate them, and even give them all the marks of tenderness we would give the original, if he were present. That is why St. Teresa, who was truly aflame with the love of Jesus Christ, after having seen Him many times in Person, derived so much pleasure from looking at His pictures and said she would have wished to see them everywhere she looked.

Now I say, Gentlemen, that the Creator, Who has wished to make visible in each creature ^{or another} one of His divine perfections, has assembled, as it were, all His features in man. He proposed, in creating him, to depict Himself on a small scale and to give to the universe the most faithful image of His divine nature that He had as yet produced, although He had already made the angels and the sun. This resemblance, Chris-

tian Company, is the source of the deadly and irreconcilable hatred that the devils feel for us even though, alas! we had not caused them any displeasure, nor been in any way responsible for their misfortune. But they hate in us the image of Him Who has banished them from heaven and Who administers to them such a rigorous vengeance. Accordingly, if we loved God as much as the demons hate Him, we would love our brothers as much as the demons hate them, and we would take as much pleasure in performing good works for them as these miserable spirits take in doing them harm.

And let us not use as a pretext the bad qualities of body or mind which we find in others and which provoke our aversion. Just as we would not be deterred by the material or the decor of a painting when it represents someone we love tenderly, so, when we love God sincerely, we love our neighbor for love of Him, without regard for his talents, his faults, his virtues, or his vices. Yes, Lord, says the soul who is truly steeped in the love of God, all that is required to make me cherish my neighbor as myself is to perceive in him Your image, to discover in him a single one of Your features; whether this image be made of gold or clay, whether this feature be engraved in diamonds or lead, I will respect and love it for love of You.

I have stated that our fellow-man belongs to God and that he is created in God's image; for these two reasons, we are obliged to love him. I now add a third reason: that he is the object of God's love, and this motive seems to me so

strong that I do not believe it can be resisted. The Lord can hate no part of what He has made; in a strict sense, He loves only man, since He made all other creatures out of love for man. Even the angels, says St. Paul, were, in a sense, designed to be guides for those among us who will one day be heirs to salvation. It is for this reason that St. Gregory of Nyssa says that love for man is the proper characteristic of the divine nature. From which I may conclude, Gentlemen, that if we love God, we must love our neighbor who is loved by God: either because the love we have for God should make only one heart of His and our own, or because the love God has for our brother makes of God and our brother one and the same object. Love transforms the lover into that which is loved, and, as a result, he who loves God should have the same desires and the same sentiments; he should love all that God loves and hate only what God hates. Love, once again, transforms the lover into that which is loved, and, as a result, makes of God and our brother--makes of them, I say--one whole, one and the same thing, which, being itself indivisible, must not be divided by our love.

This argument contains many others and, in my opinion, vanquishes all pretexts. Say all that you wish about your neighbor; paint as unfavorable a picture of him as you like, and, in depicting his mind, use the very darkest colors: you may say that he is cowardly, treacherous, ambitious, selfish, violent, and brutal; that he is without spirit, or morals, or honor, or religion. Such as he is, God tolerates him, He does

good to him, He loves him; and He orders you to love him. But he persecutes me, you protest; he robs me of all my goods; he mistreats me; he hates me unto death. Notwithstanding all of this, God loves him, I say, and all that God loves is infinitely worthy of being loved. Furthermore, this man treats God as he treats you; he offends Him, he dishonors Him, he betrays Him, but he is nonetheless loved by Him. However great a sinner you may be, the Lord hates in you only the sin which dishonors you, which kills your soul, and which places you in danger of eternal perdition. But outside of that, all your revolts, all your ingratitude, all the outrages that He suffers from you have not the power to prevent Him from loving you, and loving you to the point of seeking you out, of pursuing you, of suffering and even dying for your love. It is then true that God loves your neighbor such as he is, however unworthy of being loved he may appear to you. Will you claim that God is not reasonable, that He is blinded by His passion, that He loves that which He should hate? Is there not a great deal more evidence to indicate that it is you who hate that which you should love? How presumptuous and foolish we would be, Christian Souls, if we judged unworthy of our love that which our God has found lovable and which He actually loves!

For all these reasons, it is evident, I believe, that the love of God imposes on us the indispensable obligation to love our neighbor; that, in effect, the love of God cannot subsist without this fraternal charity. Now listen to the thoughts on this subject of the Apostle for whom Jesus Christ showed the

greatest tenderness and the one who displayed the greatest love for Jesus Christ: Si quis dixerit quoniam diligo Deum, et fratrem suum oderit, mendax est (If anyone says that he loves God and hates his brother, he is a liar). If someone says he loves God and does not love his brother, says St. John, he is a liar. Say it without fear: if you were to see a person lead the life of an angel, and though his brother were worse than the devils, if this person does not love his brother and says that he loves God, he is misleading you and deluding himself: Mendax est. And from St. Paul: Si linguis hominum loquar et angelorum, charitatem autem non habeam, factus sum velut aes sonans, aut cymbalum tinniens (If I should speak the tongues of men and of angels, and should not have charity, I become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal). If I had received from God the art of speaking all languages and even the language of angels, if I have no charity, I am but tinkling brass and resounding cymbals. Furthermore, if God had given me knowledge of the future, if He had given me access to all the treasures of infinite wisdom, if I were the most enlightened of men in the knowledge of the saints, if my faith were great enough and strong enough to transport mountains and raise the dead--if I am lacking in love for my brothers, then I have no merit, no virtue, and I am nothing before God, nihil sum (I am nothing). If I had at my disposal all the earth's treasures and gave them away to feed the poor, if I sacrificed myself for God and were ready to suffer martyrdom, to endure even the torments of iron and fire--if I am destitute of char-

ity, all of these things are of no value to me, nihil mihi prodest (nothing avails me).

O how I fear, Gentlemen, that the lack of this virtue will render null and even loathsome in God's eyes many fasts, many prayers, many mortifications and labors which were presumably endured for love of Jesus Christ! How many pious men and women, after having performed thousands of religious exercises, having passed their days in solitude, or having spent their possessions and their lives in the service of their neighbors, will find themselves empty-handed at the moment of death because they have neglected to become perfect in the practice of charity! What will it benefit me to have wasted my body in austerities, to have inflicted on myself as much cruelty as the tyrants inflicted on the martyrs, if I am unable to bear the imperfections of my brothers? What will it benefit me to have by my tears forced the justice of God to forgive me and to pronounce a favorable sentence on my past if I pass judgment on my neighbor, if I condemn him on the slightest evidence? I carry all my crosses with an invincible strength; there is no adversity capable of making me falter; I rejoice amidst the greatest causes of sadness--but my neighbor's joy distresses me and his prosperity causes me pain: nihil sum; all of my patience is for nought. I take pleasure in performing for the poor the lowliest services; I humiliate myself; I willingly abase myself and prostrate myself at the feet of others--but also, it gives me pleasure to see the proud humiliated and the ambitious confounded: nihil sum; my humility is nothing

but hypocrisy. I would prefer to have my tongue pulled out rather than to slander my worst enemies, but I suffer when good things are said of certain people and am unable to force myself to join my praises to those that are offered them; I work with all my strength to achieve sanctity, but I am quick to believe that some other person is less holy than he appears: if such is the case, nihil sum; nihil mihi prodest; once again, all of my determination serves no purpose, my humility is a false humility, and all my holiness is but illusion.

Christian Company, do you truly wish to assure yourselves of the fruit of your labors and to set the edifice of your sanctification on a solid foundation? Look into your hearts from time to time and see if charity reigns there and if it rules all of its movements. It will not be very difficult to recognize this virtue from the admirable characteristics by which St. Paul described it in writing to the Corinthians: Charitas patiens est, benigna est, charitas non aemulatur (Charity is patient, kind, not envious). Charity is patient, it is good, it is not envious of the good of others, not even of the spiritual good; non agit perperam (it does not act with deceit), it harms no one either by its actions or its speech, and is even fearful of doing so by its silence; non est ambitiosa (it is not ambitious), neither in matters of honor nor in matters of Christian perfection, does it attempt to triumph over anyone; non quaerit quae sua sunt (it does not seek to gain what is its due), it has so little self-interest that it is willing to lose all rather than to enter into dis-

putes that might upset the peace; non cogitat malum (it does not think evil); if you offend it, it will believe that it has given you cause to do so; if you despise it, instead of being irritated, it will believe that justice is being served; it gives a favorable interpretation to faults that are excusable but is distressed, seriously and in good faith, over those which are too obvious; it is overjoyed when it finds something to praise; it is not too saddened if it errs by judging favorably even that which is evil, charitas non se multum dolet errare, cum bene credit etiam de malo (charity does not grieve unduly when it errs; it even trusts with respect to evil).

These are the sentiments of St. Augustine. Besides, it believes all that it is told regarding the virtue of holy souls, omnia credit (it trusts with respect to everything); and it never despairs of the conversion of the most dissolute. Finally, it suffers all without complaint, fearing that any criticism might result in some harm to those who cause the suffering; it tolerates the most imperfect people, forgives their faults, and even in these faults always finds something that makes them worthy of indulgence: omnia suffert, omnia sustinet (it suffers all things; it tolerates all things). I do not doubt that such a beautiful picture will inspire you with love for charity and will provide you with a strong motive to love all your brothers.

After such compelling reasons, capable of disturbing even the most inflexible if they retain some vestige of Christian piety--after these reasons, I say--I am convinced that

you desire nothing more than to learn the rules governing this wonderful virtue, so that you might observe them as exactly as possible. These rules I shall explain briefly in the second point.

SECOND POINT

To love as we wish to be loved by our fellow-man, to love as we love ourselves, to love as Jesus Christ has loved us--these, Gentlemen, are the three rules which comprise the duties of charity that we must practice towards our brothers. The first flows from the natural law; the second, from the written law; the third, from the law of grace. By the law of nature, we are obliged to treat others as we would wish to be treated by them: Omnia quaecumque vultis, ut faciant vobis homines, et vos facite illis (Do unto others all things whatsoever you wish men to do unto you). From the law of Moses we draw the precept: Love your neighbor as yourself: Diliges proximum tuum sicut te ipsum (You shall love your neighbor as yourself). Finally, Jesus Christ in the Gospel has commanded the practice of charity in these terms: Mandatum novum do vobis, ut diligatis invicem, sicut dilexi vos (A new commandment I give you, that you love one another as I have loved you). Behold, I give you a new commandment which is to love one another as I have loved you. And, Gentlemen, I find that we wish to be loved universally by everyone, that we love ourselves sincerely, and that the Son of God has loved us solidly. Thus, if our charity is to be perfect, it must be

universal, it must be sincere, and it must be solid.

I say it must be universal and that no man should be excluded from this love. Just as we wish to be loved by everyone, and even one enemy would be enough to trouble the peace of our lives, it is just that we in turn love everyone. And it is true that hatred for a single one of our brothers, even if we had for all others the most charitable feelings, completely destroys charity. The reason for such destruction, Christian Company, is found in the integral law which I have quoted; the motive for charity is universal. It embraces all mankind, just as the motive of faith extends equally to all of the articles of our belief; and just as it suffices in order to lose one's faith that one doubt a single point of religion, it suffices to lose charity that a single man be banished from our heart. If you love the entire world with the exception of one person, you must have a reason to love the others that you have not found in this one person. This reason is a natural one, for, if it were supernatural and divine, it would extend to the one you do not love; as a consequence, God not being your motive for love, your feeling is without doubt less than Christian charity and your love is purely natural. Besides, let us be very careful not to criticize this law as being hard and restrictive, since it was made to favor us.

I do not know if you have ever reflected on it, but it is certain that God could find no better way to prove the depth of His tenderness for us. For, in commanding that charity be universal, His reason was that He feared that we would not be

generally loved by all. He wished, by this law, to win for us all hearts; if, instead of this law, He had allowed each man to hate only one other man, I probably would have been hated by many, perhaps I would have been the one whom nobody chose to love. What ingratitude, if we were to despise a law that is so favorable to us! But let us admit, Gentlemen, how few people observe it. There are Christians who, far from loving all mankind, love no one but themselves and their own interests. But I wish only to speak of those men with a greater degree of natural feeling and sensitivity. How limited even they are in their love! Is it not true that their love often fails to encompass all of their relatives and their small group of friends? True charity has as many brothers and as many friends as there are men on earth; it excludes no one, for it finds all persons enclosed in the heart of Jesus Christ. As God is my witness, Charity says with St. Paul, I love you all in the entrails of Jesus Christ: that is to say, in the words of St. John Chrysostom, that it embraces all of the universe and has more affection for all men than each father has for his children.

This is a strong claim, Gentlemen, but the written Law seems even more demanding, when it orders us to love our neighbor as ourselves: Sicut te ipsum (As you yourself). St. Thomas, interpreting this second rule, observes that the word "sicut" does not denote equality but simply a similarity in the love; thus, the meaning of the Scripture is: Love your brother not as much, but as sincerely and in as good faith, as you love yourself. Let it not be reasons of self-interest or pleasure

that impel you to cherish him, as in the case of a horse which serves you or a bird which amuses you. Love him for his own good, with no regard for yourself or your own benefit. You see that, by this rule, most of the world's friendships lose the value of Charity. For let us not delude ourselves and let us not dissimulate the corruption of our century.

Has there ever been a time when people loved one another with less sincerity and less generosity? Is it not pure self-interest or some form of politics that brings most people together, and I include here even those whom nature or Providence has most closely united? It is impossible to advance in the world without friends, and a single enemy can sometimes cause serious anxieties. There are few people, however low their stations, who cannot render us some service at one time or another; there are likewise few people who, though powerless in themselves or devoid of riches, cannot by their tongues cause us great harm. One wants to be on good terms with everyone.

For this reason, one practices dissimulation, pays numerous compliments, and gives and receives countless vain caresses. When services are exchanged in this manner, it is nothing but a sordid trade--one gives only to receive, one yields something only to reap more gain; the heart has no place in this exchange. Please God that we may never give the name Charity to the sentiments of one who is so narrow and so wrapped^{up} in his own person, who judges all things in relation to his own needs, who loves only himself in his best friends, who loves in them only the love they have for him, or who is always ready to shift his

affection whenever his interests can be served by this inconsistency! The charity commanded by God in the written Law withdraws us completely from this baseness, from this selfish dissimulation; it opens our heart to our neighbor; it fights against self-love for possession of this heart, which it then shares with others. And, just as the love we have for ourselves diminishes our faults in our own mind, exaggerates our ills in our imagination, and never abandons us, so also does Charity cover a multitude of sins in others, and is, according to the Gospel, extremely sensitive to the miseries of others whom it never abandons, even after death.

What I have said until now, Gentlemen, has been based on Charity according to the law given by God to Moses. Through Jesus Christ, He has given us a third form which is even more elevated. I give you a new commandment, says the Savior, which is to love one another as I have loved you: Mandatum novum do vobis, ut diligatis invicem, sicut dilexi vos (A new commandment I give you, that you love one another as I have loved you). St. John Chrysostom says that by this precept we are commanded to treat our brothers with special regard without waiting until they have earned our friendship by acts of kindness, or until they have shown themselves worthy of it by their virtue. St. Cyril said that this law obliges us to forget our own interests in favor of others--a statement which, I believe, must be understood with some reservation. What is beyond doubt is that the Son of God requires us to have for our brothers a solid love which extends even to eternity and the possession

of God Himself. To secure this eternal and infinite happiness for us, Gentlemen, you know what Jesus Christ did: He annihilated Himself, He suffered and died. If I were to tell you that to secure the salvation of your friends, your children, your wives, and even your enemies, you must be prepared to sacrifice your lives, St. John would confirm this idea: Et nos debemus pro fratribus animas ponere (And we should lay down our lives for our brothers). But alas, Christian Listeners! how would I venture to preach this doctrine when I see that, far from having such zeal for their enemies, many neglect to teach their children the basic religious truths; they even place them in danger of losing their religion by various means that we need not go into at this time: they flatter them; they encourage them in their waywardness; they inspire in them a love for the world and a hatred for their fellow-man; they corrupt them by licentious discussions and by examples that are even more scandalous. Who would attempt to speak to Christians about dying to save their brothers in these days when they seem bent on causing one another's damnation; when, to conserve one's innocence, it is necessary to flee from society, just as in other times it was necessary to flee from tyrants for fear of losing one's faith; when hardly a word is said which does not contain some pitfall to ensnare the innocent; when a thousand attempts are made to debauch those who strive to live in a Christian manner; and when one must be prepared to suffer persecution from the moment that he declares his love for piety.

Nevertheless, Charity is a mandatory virtue and the most important of its duties is surely that of helping one another to be virtuous and to earn paradise. I told you earlier that we have no love for God if we do not love our brothers; but it is certain that we have no love for our brothers if we do not help them to love God. And if we lack this virtue, alas! what are we, Christian Listeners? Can we even claim to be Christians? St. Augustine, referring to the Church as the house of God, says that it comprises as many mysterious stones as there are members. These stones are taken from the quarry by Baptism; they are carved and polished by instruction and by the doctrine of Jesus Christ. Verumtamen domum Domini non faciunt, nisi quando Charitate compaginantur (However, they do not form part of the house of God, except when they are joined together in charity). (But they only become part of the edifice through Charity, which cements them together; and, just as it cannot be said that a block of marble is part of a palace unless it is joined to the other blocks which make up the edifice, so a Christian who is not united to his brothers through Charity bears falsely the name of Christian.

For this reason, in the first centuries of the Church, though the faithful gave examples of all sorts of virtues, they were known, above all things, by the union that existed among them. Jesus had declared that it would be by this sign that they would be recognized, and, in effect, Tertullian said that this was the Christian virtue which most impressed the pagans and which they admired most. Videte, they said, in the

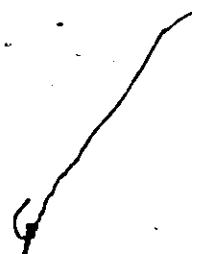
words of this Father, videte, ut se invicem diligent, et alter pro altero mori sint parati (See, see, that they love one another and that they are ready to die one for the other)! See, I urge you, how these Christians love one another, how eager they are to perform all kinds of services for one another, how in their mutual relations they forgive the small injuries they may have caused one another: Videte, ut se invicem diligent (See, that they love one another)! Do you not find admirable the generous ease with which they relinquish their personal interests, with which they confer on others the honors they could justly claim for themselves? Do they not appear to be one family, having only one heart and one soul? O how pleasant this union is! How honest! How clearly it conveys the message that any religion which so perfectly unites men of different ages, classes, nations, and professions is a holy religion! See how these Christians defy death when it means coming to the assistance of their brothers in need! See how they assist them in prisons, how they encourage them in their torments, how faithfully they bury them after their death, and how joyfully they face a thousand perils to accomplish these duties! Videte, ut se invicem diligent, et alter pro altero mori sint parati (See, that they love one another, and that they are ready to die one for the other)!

O how I wish, Gentlemen, that all those who have separated themselves from the Church might admire in us this same union! But alas! in speaking of Catholics today, could we not use these words in a completely opposite sense! Videte,

ut se invicem diligent! See, I pray you, what Charity reigns among these Christians who boast of having conserved the true spirit of Jesus Christ and who brand us as heretics. Who does not know that Charity is the mark of the faithful? And what traces of this virtue can be found among them? Videte, ut se invicem diligent! See how they tear at each other by their slander, how they struggle to destroy and ruin themselves by natural means; see how they often deal with us more harmoniously than with each other, and how we must sometimes arbitrate their differences and inspire in them thoughts of kindness and patience! Among themselves, they are far from having the good relations that we enjoy, far from practicing the mutual assistance in time of need that is common to us. Videte, ut se invicem diligent! See how they try to catch one another unawares, to deprecate one another! What artifices they employ to corrupt innocence and modesty! How they transmit to their children their own hatred! How they quarrel, how they rob one another of goods and honor, how they allow the poor to perish from cold and hunger, how they neglect to extend a helping hand to those who might wish to embrace their religion! Videte, ut se invicem diligent!

Divine Spirit of Love and Charity, do not allow your spouse ever to fall into the vile state I have just described; do not allow us to renounce in this way the glory of Your disciples, who were also our first teachers; do not allow that, by our lack of this beautiful virtue, we give others cause to doubt that we are true children of the Apostles. Give us one

heart which embraces all our brothers in a perfect Charity;
a Charity which makes one heart of all who share our common
religion. And give us a zeal which extends to those of other
religions, so that, having here below loved our neighbor as
we would wish to be loved, as we love ourselves, as Jesus
Christ has loved us, that is, universally, sincerely, and
solidly, we may love one another perfectly and eternally in
heaven. Amen.



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ADDENDUM

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ABSTRACT

These twenty sermons, translated into English from the selected works of the seventeenth-century French priest Father Claude de la Colombière, are presented in order that Joyceans may more easily continue their study of a relationship between him and Joyce. Aspects of this relationship have been tentatively established by Virginia Moseley in an article "The 'Dangerous' Paradox in Joyce's 'Eveline'" and by Donald Torchiano in an article "Joyce's 'Eveline' and Blessed Margaret Alacoque." A number of similarities between Father de la Colombière and Joyce are revealed in Dr. Moseley's article: They shared the same birthday on February 2; their training was entrusted, for the most part, to the Jesuit Fathers; they excelled in music, rhetoric, and drama; both were school masters.

Similarities of style were also noted. Dr. Moseley states that even a cursory account of this priest's sermons reveals parallels with Joyce's own writing. His style, like that of Joyce, often alternated between dramatic dialogue and familiar speech, and related great happenings of the past to contemporary events. It is particularly as the stylist par excellence in the art of the sermon that Claude de la Colombière, employing the standard, almost "formula," tradition of the Jesuits, would probably have attracted and retained the interest of James Joyce.

After his death in 1682, Father de la Colombière's sermons were collected in six volumes and joined to his Spiritual Letters and Meditations to form Les oeuvres complètes du Bienheureux Claude de la Colombière. These volumes contain seventy-eight sermons, the greater number of which were delivered over a period of eighteen months in the Court of St. James in London while Claude was the Chaplain of the Duchess of York. They began on November 1, 1676, and ended after Easter in 1678. The excellence of de la Colombière's style drew glowing praise from his contemporaries and continues to elicit admiration^{from} his modern readers. According to Father Joseph Gallifet, who was one of a small group of young Jesuits whose scholastic training was entrusted to Claude in 1679, "He was . . . a man of superior intelligence, of eminent wisdom, and of renowned eloquence." His style also drew praise from such eminent men of his time as Louis Bourdaloue and Olivier Patru, who recognized his sermons as representative of the best homiletic style available.

It is probable that Joyce, whose training had been entrusted almost exclusively to the Irish Jesuits, would have been familiar with the eminent follower of Ignatius of Loyola. The glowing reputation which de la Colombière had achieved for his seventeenth-century metaphysical sermon style would hardly have been ignored by one who was so evidently enthralled by imagery, rhythm, and cadence.

Joyce had access to the Works of Claude de la Colombière while he was in Paris in 1903, not long before he

wrote "Eveline" and began Stephen Hero. In his biography on Joyce, Richard Ellmann states that, after reaching Paris in 1903, Joyce spent his days in the Bibliothèque Nationale and his nights at the Bibliothèque Ste-Geneviève. Joyce was a master of languages, and reading Father de la Colombière's sermon in French would have presented no difficulty to such a gifted linguist. His interest in sermon style is evident by the frequency in which they appear in his work. In A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Joyce devoted most of one long chapter out of five to the sermon on Hell. This sermon, which so frightened the young Stephen Dedalus in A Portrait, bears a great similarity in structure and style to the one delivered by Father Claude de la Colombière. In Ulysses, Bloom hears a missionary sermon at All Hallows, and the tones of the preacher sound on occasion in Finnegans Wake. Stanislaus Joyce recalls in My Brother's Keeper that his brother attended the Gardiner Street Church in Dublin to hear a sermon on "Grace," an experience which inspired the story "Grace" in Dubliners.

It is especially as the Chaplain of Margaret Mary Alacoque that the Catholic Church honors Claude de la Colombière. He was assigned the role of Superior in the small town of Paray-le-Monial, in France, at the time that Margaret Mary received the last of the "Three Great Revelations" in which Christ revealed his love for mankind and asked Margaret Mary to inaugurate a public feast honoring the devotion to His Heart.

In selecting twenty sermons out of a possible seventy-eight for translation, I have considered style, major themes, or particular imagery associated with Joyce's settings and characters. The sermons are divided into three parts:

Part I (Sermons on the life of Christ):

Christmas Day, Epiphany (1), Epiphany (2),
Easter, Corpus Christi--Holy Eucharist (1),
Holy Eucharist (2), Holy Eucharist (3),
Transfiguration.

Part II (Sermons on the lives of the Saints):

All Saints Day, Pentecost, Nativity of
the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, St. John
the Baptist, St. Stephen.

Part III (Sermons on Doctrine):

The Holy Trinity, Hell, On Serving One
Master, Conscience, Love of God,
Christian Charity.

CONCLUSION

These selected sermons by Father de la Colombière have been translated and submitted as an adjunct to Joyce scholarship because they represent a peak of excellence in the art of homiletics--an area of great interest to Joyce--and because they comprise, in the words of a noted critic Pierre Ravignan, "a compendium of Catholic doctrine"¹--an area which served Joyce as a training ground as well as a fertile source for his works. While this thesis does not claim to show that Joyce was necessarily indebted to de la Colombière in a direct way, it does propose to show that in style and themes there are striking resemblances in their works. It maintains that, in a sense, Joyce was a homiletic writer and that the excellence of de la Colombière's 17th-century sermons may well have drawn him to these sermons. It maintains, also, that for the scholar of Joyce an understanding of de la Colombière as the eminent Catholic writer of his times will provide a better understanding of Joyce and his works.

To substantiate these claims I propose to examine the place these sermons occupy in Jesuit tradition, and their transcendence of that tradition. Then, James Joyce's interest in the art of the sermon will be made evident by the recurrence of sermon styles in some of his works. His relationship to de la Colombière, in the areas of style and themes, will also be examined.

Although each of the twenty sermons, chosen from a total of seventy-eight in the Complete Works, has been selected on the basis of specific affinities with Joyce, it will not be possible here to give more than an outline of some of these relationships. Particular stress will be placed in this conclusion on two of the sermons, Sermon LV, "On Hell," and Sermon LXII, "On Conscience," to trace, in the former, a close textual relationship between the writers, and possible borrowings on the part of Joyce; and, in the latter, striking affinities between the 17th-century homily and the structure and imagery of the second part of Chapter Three in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.

Very early in his religious career Claude de la Colombière was recognized as a gifted speaker. In 1666, at the age of twenty-five, he was chosen by his Jesuit superiors to deliver the oration at the canonization of Francis de Sales, Founder of the Visitation Order. Father Louis Chabrand, S.J., in charge of the ceremonies, was aware that the strained relations which existed between Pope Alexander VII and King Louis XIV of France called for a careful choice in this matter; thus, he selected Claude as one who could "speak with eloquence and wisdom without offending either group."² On this occasion, as well as others, his fame as an orator attracted the attention of such notables as François de la Chaise, S.J. (Confessor to Louis XIV for thirty-one years), Jean-Baptiste Colbert (the King's minister of finance), as well as the Sun-King himself. Because of his outstanding gifts of oratory and clear thinking, Claude was among a small number of seminarians to be sent to Paris to study

theology and rhetoric in 1666. It was also because of these gifts that Colbert requested his services to tutor his two sons, a task that he fulfilled with remarkable success.

It was in August, 1676, that Claude was assigned to the post of Chaplain to the Catholic Duchess of York in London. Although the full political import of this appointment remains unclear, it is certain that Claude's gifts of oratory were of no small consideration. In this role he would be called upon to give sermons in the Queen's Chapel on Feast Days and on special days in Advent and Lent. These homilies, dating from November 1676 to Easter 1678--along with approximately twenty others delivered in Lyon in 1674--have been preserved as masterful examples of style and devotion.³ In a recent biography, By Royal Command,⁴ George W. Pennington confirms that Claude's sermons in London were heard in secret by King Charles II as well as by his brother, the Duke of York, who would be the future King James II.

Almost immediately after his death in 1682, in recognition of their excellence, the sermons of Claude de la Colombière were collected in six volumes. Although his renown had by then become associated with the devotion of the Sacred Heart and Margaret Mary, his fame as "the king of preachers," conferred on him earlier by his biographer André Ravier,⁵ had not dimmed and his sermons continued to be in great demand both for their elegant metaphysical style and their lucidity in matters of devotion. From 1684 to 1739 the sermons went through several printings; then, in 1757, the text was modified by the editor Alfred Léon Bertrand of Lyon to make some passages "more acceptable to modern readers" and to expurgate certain expressions which to

him seemed lacking in decorum.⁶ After the French Revolution the sermons were again published and this time the editor, E. M. Goedert, of Paris, restored the original text. The definitive edition was published in 1900 under the title Oeuvres complètes du Bienheureux Claude de la Colombière. My translations were all taken from this edition.

These 17th-century sermons are models of Jesuit tradition. They were patterned on the very precise rules laid down by Ignatius of Loyola in his Spiritual Exercises of 1548. This pattern, which remained almost completely unchanged for four hundred years, produced a "Jesuit-style" sermon which retained its basic structure and ideas in the various languages into which it was translated. The Ignatian sermon, based on a clarity of style aimed at heart and intellect, helped to place the Jesuits among the most highly respected preachers of the Church. A cursory examination of the manner in which de la Colombière applied the basic plan (as simplified by Aloysius Ambruzzi, S.J.)⁷ to Sermon II, "For the Feast of All Saints" is indicated below:

1. Appeal to the Senses: De la Colombière appeals to the sense of sight: "cities made up of emeralds and sapphires," "streets paved with gold," "trees always in bloom," "cloudless skies," and "straight, graceful postures," (212-18); to the sense of sound: "listen to the blasphemies," "hear their curses," "converse with honorable men," (220-21); to the sense of smell: "perfumed air," (222); and the sense of feeling: "toothaches, headaches, and kidney disorders," (222-23).

2. Appeal to the Intellect: De la Colombière proceeds,

in the manner of Ignatius (and St. Thomas Aquinas) by way of deduction and induction. After presenting his main premise: "Perfect happiness requires the absence of all pain and all evil," he argues, in a minor premise, that "heaven is free of all pain and all evil," and concludes that "only in heaven can we find perfect bliss." His main point is stated at the outset, then buttressed by a number of arguments. Among the many arguments presented by de la Colombière in Sermon II, I will cite but two: "So attractive is virtue to all men that even the most evil man will seek virtue in a wife and in a servant," (220); and, it is only in a perfect place, such as heaven, that God can adequately reward man's virtue (229). From the deductive method, he usually proceeds to the inductive. Examples, to illustrate or persuade, are plentiful in all sermons. In Sermon II they are sometimes found in a series, as in this description of heaven:

No longer will there be proud men to despise you, ambitious men to trouble you, miserly men to persecute you, envious men to spread calumnies about you, jealous men to suspect you, rash or audacious men to injure you, bothersome ones to annoy you (219).

He may also use the example of some saint of the past, as when he relates that St. Teresa found very few of her acquaintances who were not unduly attached to this earth (228); or he may oppose the joys of heaven to the torments of hell (229).

3. Appeal to the Will: The Ignatian method assumes that if the intellect recognizes a good the will naturally desires and pursues it. In Sermon II, heaven is described as the greatest good and the absence of all evil. After these points are made, the preacher exhorts his listeners to take all possible

means to merit this desirable reward (226,238).

4. Resolution to change one's life: In this sermon, Father de la Colombière's emphasis on a resolution is more implicit than explicit. The joys of heaven are depicted in such alluring terms that it seems likely that the listeners will feel impelled to formulate, without further prompting, whatever resolutions are required to attain such joy. Such is not the case for the other sermons. Sermon XXXIV, "For the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin," for example, is more illustrative of the need for a resolution. Father de la Colombière speaks at great length of the need to "uproot...that which time and human nature have made second nature," (277).

5. Colloquy: This "heart-to-heart" talk with God or one of the saints, strongly endorsed in all meditations or sermons by Ignatius, is very prominent in all of de la Colombière's sermons. Father Gilles Cusson, in Les Exercices de Saint-Ignace dans la vie courante,⁸ cites Claude de la Colombière as one who best applies the colloquy in the texts of his sermons. In Sermon II, he makes this grand appeal:

Great Apostles, glorious martyrs, invincible confessors, holy virgins, illustrious anchorites, charitable protectors of men who are still in peril, it is not enough for us to hear your counsels or see your examples; we also need your prayers. You know our weakness and the strength of our enemies. Obtain for us the grace of keeping always before our eyes what you have done for God, and what God is now doing for you, so that your good examples might teach us how we should live, and the sight of your reward might encourage us to live as we should. Amen. (238)

The sermon structure of de la Colombière is also a model in regard to the division of parts, according to the directions of St. Ignatius in that regard. Father I. Parra-⁹guirre, S.J., in Key to the Study of the Spiritual Exercises, outlines the divisions of sermons as conceived by Ignatius. De la Colombière's sermons are strictly faithful to these divisions. In each case, he begins by a biblical reference, followed by a three- or four-line summary of the topic to be discussed. In a preface to the sermon--called "prelude" by Ignatius--he outlines briefly and concisely the manner in which he will treat his topic, stating what matter will constitute each of his two Points. This prelude always ends with his personal prayer in which he entreats God or Mary to aid him in making his message clear and beneficial to his hearers. The two main Points are then expounded. In a few cases, as in Sermon II, "For the Feast of All Saints," and in Sermon XVII, "For Pentecost," his topic is comprised of three Points.

But, these sermons are not only models of the Ignatian method in structure and design. In both content and style de la Colombière has transcended the Ignatian traditional sermon. To be termed "a compendium of Catholic doctrine" and to earn the praise of Benedict XIV the sermons had to display a great knowledge of theology, the Fathers of the Church, and Catholic teaching. The high praise accorded these sermons in the matter of style (cited in the preface of this work), as well as the attention drawn by de la Colombière's oratory even from dignitaries of the French Court, attest to the fact that his sermons were masters in their genre. In a later section examining similarities with Joyce, particular attention will be given to his style.

James Joyce, as was noted in the preface of this work, from an account by Stanislaus Joyce in My Brother's Keeper,¹⁰ displayed a remarkable interest in sermons. It was noted also that he was generally disenchanted with the poor quality of those he heard. It is quite conceivable then that, with his mastery of French and his access to libraries in Paris in 1903 and in subsequent years, Joyce may well have familiarized himself with these sermons of renown. His interest in the art of homiletics, his Jesuit training, and his lasting fascination with Catholic doctrine would have provided strong incentives. In a letter from Zurich, in 1918, to the Swiss writer Fanny Guillermet, Joyce showed his appreciation for the language in which the sermons of de la Colombière were written: "I envy anyone who writes in French not so much because I envy the resources of that language... but on account of the public to which one can appeal."¹¹

Joyce was a homiletic writer as is evidenced by the wide use he made of this form. In Stephen Hero, the early manuscript from which Joyce developed A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Stephen attends the Gardiner Street Church in Dublin on Good Friday to hear the Very Reverend W. Dillon, S.J., deliver a sermon on the "Three Hours' Agony" of Jesus.¹² In a later section of the same book, Stephen's friend Temple delivers a travesty of a sermon. After opening his homily with the traditional "Dearly beloved Brethren," he recounts a parable about a group of monkeys in Barbary who learn to "ape" the prayer attitudes of the holy hermits living nearby (202). The same

Gardiner Street Church is the setting for the sermon in "Grace" from Dubliners. The topic of this sermon is "The Unjust Steward" (Luke 16:1-8), reputed to be one of the most difficult texts to interpret. Taken literally, the parable would seem to approve those who resort to worldly practices to achieve power and prestige. Joyce's scorn for Father Purdon, if not explicit, is at least implied. The priest speaks in a "business-like manner to businessmen," and Joyce adds that "he developed the text in all assurance.... He told his hearers that he was there...as a man of the world speaking to his fellow-man....," and added:

If he might use a metaphor...he was their spiritual accountant; and he wished each and every one of his hearers to open his books, the books of his spiritual life and see if they tallied accurately with conscience (203).

In outlining how Ignatius provided the Director of Retreats with a framework for his texts, I. Parraguirre, S.J., explains that "the director must look at the end and strive for it in a practical manner." This view is referred to by Loyola as the "logic of the heart," and the Founder adds: "It is impossible to take a passionate interest in something...without striving for it in the most efficacious, in the fastest and the surest way."¹³ Father de la Colombière, in Sermon XXIII, "On the Transfiguration," also speaks of worldly wisdom and cautiously advocates "a holy cupidity," adding "that the more piety you have, the more possessions and honors you will derive from God's creatures" (195).

In "The Dead," another story from Dubliners, the speech given by Gabriel Conroy at the yearly gathering takes on the characteristics of a sermon. The occasion is the religious feast

of Epiphany, and the guests are gathered in the "upper room" of the Morkan home. About Gabriel's wife Gretta, it is said, "there was grace and mystery in her attitude as if she were a symbol of something" (210). Before Gabriel's speech, his Aunt Kate reminisces about her father and exclaims, "The Lord have mercy on his soul," to which Gabriel rejoins, "Amen" (205). Religious overtones can also be noted in the description of Gabriel as he begins to speak: "Meeting a row of upturned faces, he raised his eyes to the chandelier" (202). And the speech itself, both in tone and tenor, resounds with a homiletic ring:

...we are living in a sceptical age; and sometimes I fear that this new generation, educated or hyper-educated as it is, will lack those qualities of humanity, of hospitality, of kindly humour...(203).

Even Gabriel's closing disclaimer reinforces the idea of a sermon: "Therefore I will not linger on the past, I will not let any gloomy moralising intrude upon us here tonight" (204).

In Ulysses, it is Bloom, Joyce's Everyman, who gives a sermon on love and peace, opposing the violence of the Citizen in Barney Kiernan's pub:

But it's no use, says he. Force, hatred, history all that. That's not life for men and women, insult and hatred. And everybody knows that it's the very opposite of that that is really life.... Love, says Bloom, I mean the opposite of hatred (331).

In his wrath the irate Citizen calls Bloom "a new Apostle of the Gentiles" and proceeds to pelt him with a biscuitbox, saying "By Jesus I'll crucify him" (340). This passage identifies Bloom with the daring Apostle Paul and with Jesus. A little later he will be referred to as "ben Bloom Elijah" who, in turn, has been telescoped with Christ in His triumphant ascension" (343). The theme of universal love is examined in great

detail in Father de la Colombière's splendid sermon, "On Christian Charity." The reason he posits for loving one's fellow-man is rooted in the love of God, the common Father of all men. After exhausting the loftiest motives for loving all men without exception, Father de la Colombière provides a pragmatic reason for excluding no one from our affection:

...if instead of this law, God had allowed each man to hate only one other man, I probably would have been hated by many, and perhaps I would have been that one whom nobody loved (477).

Bloom, who has been invested by Joyce with Christ-like qualities, delivers another sermon in the Nighttown section of Ulysses:

My beloved subjects, a new era is about to dawn.
I, Bloom, tell you verily it is even now at hand.
Yea, on the word of Bloom, ye shall ere long
enter into the golden city which is to be, the
new Bloomusalem...(459).

And, in the Oxen of the Sun section, Stephen pronounces his own sermon on the birth of new life: "Thus spoke young Stephen...:

Therefore...how at the end of the second month
a human soul was infused and how in all our
holy mother foldeth over souls for God's greater
glory whereas that earthly mother which was but
a dam to bring forth beastly should die by canon
...(387).

Joyce's only play, Exiles, published in 1918; conveyed many of his ideas about the artist, marriage, friendship, and nationalism. Richard, the main character--bearing many resemblances to Joyce--is an artist who has returned to Dublin after a period of exile. In a conversation with Eertha, his wife, and Beatrice, the wife of his friend, Richard brings to the reading of a newspaper article some of the qualities of a sermon.

He has just made the sign of the cross to dispel his private demons--the traditional gesture of the preacher at the beginning of a homily. The stage directions of the play state: "He begins to read in a loud voice" (318). Such volume seems more appropriate to a homily than to a private conversation. Though the speech concerns national loyalties, the tone is homiletic, dispensing praise for those who have chosen "spiritual exile" rather than "physical exile," and referring to the former as a search for "that food of the spirit by which a nation is suspended in life" and the latter as a search for that food by which only "the body lives" (319).

The longest and most dramatic use of a sermon by Joyce appears in A Portrait. This is the graphic sermon on Hell which not only occupies the central chapter of Joyce's book but also prepares the way for the dramatic climax--Stephen's non serviam--and the resolution--Stephen's decision to be a "priest of eternal imagination" (221). This sermon is delivered by Father Arnall, S. J., as part of a three-day retreat attended by Stephen Dedalus at Belvedere College. Two of the four sermons based on The Last Things are centered on Hell. Several scholars have sought to find Joyce's sources for this remarkable sermon. Kevin Sullivan's study of Joyce among the Jesuits¹⁴ relates the sermons to St. Ignatius Spiritual Exercises, and, in a more particular way, to the manual of the Sodality of Our Lady used by Stephen at Belvedere. He concludes that this manual, compiled by Father James A. Cullen, S.J., was the primary, if not the exclusive source by which Stephen lays out the plan for his devotional life. Regarding the sermon, James R. Thrane

disagrees with Sullivan's view that the Sodality manual is also the source of the sermon. He cites the English version of an Italian tract called in translation Hell Opened to Christians, to Caution Them from Entering into It, written by Giovanni Pietro Pinamonti, a seventeenth-century Jesuit, as a much more convincing source. Using the 1753 edition of this tract, Thrane shows, by a very close examination of the texts, that Joyce's sermon and that of Pinamonti are more than similar--they are, for a large part, identical. Thrane's study, entitled "Joyce's Sermon on Hell: Its Source and Its Backgrounds,"¹⁵ concludes that the obvious correspondences not merely in image, example, and organization but even in sequence and phrasing should leave little doubt concerning Joyce's extensive use of the Italian work. He further concludes that both these authors owe a debt to "the common pool of devotional writing" (52) that has existed for hundreds of years. In tracing the relation of both works to their parent tradition, Thrane shows that Alphonsus Liguori, founder of the Redemptorists and author of Stephen's "old neglected book" of devotions, speaks of "a storm of darkness to torment the damned" in his manual Preparation for Death.¹⁶ In the same manual, Liguori refers to "the stench of one of their bodies which would kill all on earth," (52) "the fire that was created for our use," and the blood which "burns in the veins." Thrane's article states that Aquinas contributes the ideas that hell must be situated at the center of the earth as the place farthest from God and fittest to sustain heat and darkness; that mortal sin merits no less than an eternity of torment; and that the fire of hell burns corporeally forever without consuming. (53). Further contributions are noted from Gregory the Great and

a seventeenth-century Jesuit, Leonard Lessius, a gifted Flemish writer, both of whom speak of a "lake of brimstone." A memorable example from Father Arnall's sermon concerns a mountain of fine sand, carried away by a bird at the rate of a grain every million years. This striking image, says Thrane, is "virtually a literary convention" in devotional works, especially of the seventeenth century (54). Father G. B. Manni, still another Jesuit of the seventeenth-century, uses a variation of this image in an attempt to depict the idea of eternity:

...so many ages as there are stars in heaven, drops of water in the sea, and motes in the air, and particles of dust in the earth would not make up eternity. Let all the space between earth and heaven... be filled with fine sand, and every one hundred thousand million ages let an angel carry away a single grain. Could the damned believe that after this their torments would end, they would rejoice... (55).

Another study on the same subject by Elizabeth F. Boyd, "James Joyce's Hell-Fire Sermons,"¹⁷ also traces Joyce's sources to Giovanni Battista Manni (1606-1682) and Giovanni Pietro Pinamonti (1622-1679) by way of the eighteenth-century Redemptorist Alphonsus Liguori.

While accepting their findings concerning the validity of these sources, and the idea of a common pool of devotional rhetoric from which all preachers might seek material, I would suggest that Father de la Colombière is still another probable source for Joyce. Not only can there be found in their sermons on hell certain general similarities, but in a number of cases, Father de la Colombière's text is closer to Joyce's than is that of Pinamonti.

To emphasize the idea of eternity, Joyce and de la Colombière both make use of the sand image, to be found in G. B. Manni, but not in Pinamonti. Father de la Colombière's text is as follows:

"...should a bird every hundred years carry only one drop of water from the sea or a single grain of sand from the earth, and should this bird have emptied out the depths of the ocean and leveled all the mountains of the universe, still the agony of the damned would not be ended. And I add that their agony would be as if it had not yet begun; I say also that if, between each grain of sand that he carried away, between each drop of water, he had allowed the lapse of one hundred thousand million centuries, and were there as many oceans to empty as there are drops of water in the ocean, as many mountains to raze as there are grains of sand in all of the earth's mass, he would have razed all of it, exhausted all of it before the term of this punishment had advanced by a single moment! (399).

James Joyce's version is:

You have often seen the sand on the seashore. How fine are its grains! And how many of those little grains go to make up the small handful which a child grasps in its play. Now imagine a mountain of that sand, a million miles high, reaching from the earth to the farthest heavens, and a million miles broad, extending to remotest space, and a million miles in thickness; and imagine such an enormous mass of countless particles of sand multiplied as often as there are leaves in the forest, drops of water in the mighty ocean... and imagine that at the end of every million years a little bird came to the mountain and carried away even a square foot of that mountain, how many eons, upon eons of ages before it had carried away all. Yet at the end of that immense stretch of time not even one instant of eternity could be said to have ended. At the end of all those billions and trillions of years eternity would have scarcely begun.... (A Portrait, 131).

Although the passages cited show some differences they bear a marked resemblance. Elizabeth Boyd points out that "the traditional formula based on Loyola's work was brought to a peak of elaboration and refinement in the seventeenth century."¹⁸

Of the two sources cited by Thrane and Boyd, as representing the most probable sources, neither bears as close a relationship to Joyce as de la Colombière does in that passage.

Both Joyce and de la Colombière make use of the "blood boiling in the skull" image. Father de la Colombière describes it thus: "The blood will boil unceasingly...within the skin, as in a cauldron. The brain will boil within the skull, as well as in all the marrow of the bones" (388). James Joyce says: "The blood boils in the veins, the brains are boiling in the skull, the heart in the breast..." (121).

Although the preceding section of Joyce's sermon is closer to Pinamonti than to de la Colombière, in the very next passage there are at least three instances in which the relationship is closer to the French writer than to the Italian, suggesting that Joyce may have borrowed from both. While Pinamonti speaks of "the fire...shall burn without ever consuming" (Thrane, 40), Joyce says, "the fire has this property that it preserves that which it burns" (A Portrait, 374), and de la Colombière says, "the fire has the power to nourish bodies even while it burns" (389). When dealing with the fire as an instrument of divine wrath, Pinamonti expresses it thus: "It will have its rise from the foot of the throne of God, that is to say, it will receive an incredible vigour from the omnipotency of God..." (Thrane, 41). Joyce expresses it thus: "It is a fire which proceeds directly from the ire of God...as an instrument of divine vengeance" (A Portrait, 374), which is closer to de la Colombière's version: "It is the result of the angry power of the infinite hatred of God; it is an instrument of vengeance" (390)..

The third similarity involves an expression that appears in both de la Colombière and Joyce but is absent in Pinamonti. Joyce speaks of the immortal soul "that is tortured eternally," (A Portrait, 376), and de la Colombière, of the soul that is "tormented eternally" (390). In a later section, while Joyce uses a second-person pronoun to dramatize the voice of conscience reproaching the lost soul: "You had the graces and indulgences of the church to aid you..." (A Portrait, 47), both de la Colombière and Pinamonti use the first person. Pinamonti says: "Was I not assured by my faith...? And I would not open my eyes..." (Thrane, 47), and de la Colombière, in a long series of rhetorical questions, asks "Was I free? Was I endowed with reason? Who blinded me...?(407) Such a change on the part of Joyce could indicate that he chose to use a more threatening voice to heighten the effect, and, if so, he could choose to differ from both of his sources.

In the body of the sermon, Joyce and de la Colombière show a similar structure. Both contrast the fire in hell to that of earth; both emphasize the cramped space and inability of the damned to move about; both insist on the desolation resulting from the lack of comforters in this place of suffering. The most prominent difference seems to be a more elegant, flowing style in de la Colombière's work: more balanced sentences; more short, pithy statements; and a more judicious use of rhetorical questions. Even if Joyce were familiar with both, it would probably suit his dramatic purposes better to opt for the less gracious expression rather than for the same idea in a more pleasing tone.

An example of the use of similar ideas expressed in different styles can be noted in these passages: James Joyce (close to Pinamonti) states: "In hell all laws are overturned: there is no thought of family or country, of ties, or relationships.... All sense of humanity is forgotten....(122)." In a more flowing sentence, de la Colombière expresses the same idea:

...a damned soul will be totally abandoned; no one will solicit his deliverance. He will never again see anyone other than his torturers and his most deadly enemies; he will never again hear anything to appease his remorse, never a cheerful announcement, never a word of peace or consolation. He will have no comforters or intercessors; no father beside him, no mother sitting nearby to console him; no sympathy from his wife and friends...(393).

But often both of the writers exhibit the long periodic sentence characteristic of 17th-century metaphysical style. An example from both writers displaying balanced and climactic sentences are presented as illustrations. From the pen of Father de la Colombière:

The Lord will not be able to show them how excellent He is in Himself without showing them how rigorous He is in depriving them of so great a possession, and, in this way, the knowledge of God, which will excite in their hearts desires to possess Him that are submerged, will, at the same time, create an aversion equal to these desires, since it is impossible to know perfect beauty, to desire it ardently, and to love Him Who deprives one of its possession. (395).

From the pen of James Joyce:

But what is the fury of those dumb beasts compared with the fury of execration which bursts from the parched lips and aching throats of the damned in hell when they behold in their companions in misery those who aided and abetted them in sin, those whose words sowed the first seeds of evil thinking and evil living in their minds, those whose immodest suggestions led them on to sin, those whose promptings tempted and allured them from the path of virtue? (A Portrait, 123).

Likewise, rhetorical questions are interspersed in both sermons; there is often a series of such questions to create a dramatic effect. In de la Colombière, we read:

Is there any proportion between you and the Infinite Beauty of God Whom you have outraged? Is it on the basis of the time taken to commit an offense that one should judge the punishment which is due to it, or of the greatness of the person offended? What can be more just than to punish eternally the person Who has dared to rebel against the Eternal One? (403)

In James Joyce's A Portrait, we read:

Why did you sin? Why did you lend an ear to the tempting of fiends? Why did you turn aside from your pious practices and good works? Why did you not shun the occasions of sin? Why did you not leave that evil companion? Why did you not give up that lewd habit, that impure thought? Why did you not listen to the counsels of your confessor ...? (132)

In many instances, such as the one cited above, Joyce demonstrates an affinity of style with de la Colombière that is much more striking than with that of Pinamonti or Manni. The series of questions listed above from A Portrait, for example, bear a remarkable resemblance to the series in Sermon XIII, "For Easter," which de la Colombière addresses to the guards at Christ's tomb (88). Elizabeth Boyd's article, "James Joyce's Hell Fire Sermons," also cites areas in the original Italian of Manni that present difficulties to the translator because of irregularities of style.²⁰ De la Colombière's French is remarkably well constructed and free flowing, allowing for an ease in translating. It would seem that the more fluent style would be congenial to Joyce.

One notes in the Hell sermons of de la Colombière and Joyce a recurrence of similar words and imagery. The words: "pool,"

"lake," "prison," "shadow," "visualize," and "finally" are among those which recur in both sermons. A similarity in the use of such imagery as fog, light, darkness, water, mountains, food, drink, family ties, friendship--these are the metaphors common to both sermons. Concrete examples to elucidate abstract ideas are also common. Examples of fire, worms, physical illnesses, and imprisonment recur in both sermons.

These words and images are common to the seventeenth-century tradition, it is true. But James Joyce, having been drawn to the rhetorical and devotional style of the sermon, would no doubt have been drawn to the one who had distinguished himself as "the king of preachers"; to the one who had drawn the approval of two kings--one in France and one in England--by his gifts of oratory; and to the one who, in the words of Benedict XV, "had become famous throughout Europe because of his sermons." Furthermore, for Joyce, as well as for the Joyce scholar, a more complete picture is needed. After the torments of Hell, Ignatius traditionally recommends, as noted by Sullivan is Joyce Among the Jesuits,²¹ that the joys of heaven should be extolled with great fervor. In de la Colombière's body of works such a sermon is brought to the peak of metaphysical style and complements the harrowing description given on hell.

Another one of Father de la Colombière's sermons, LXII, "On Conscience," also demonstrates the affinity between him and Joyce. In structure, especially, strong similarities emerge. The sermon outlines four stages in the process whereby the Conscience exerts its effect on the sinner. These four stages are re-echoed

in the development of Stephen's periods of terror following the sermon on Hell delivered by Father Arnall. De la Colombière quotes John Chrysostom's statement that a guilty conscience is a cruel agony. John Chrysostom--whose name appears on the first page of *Ulysses*--is doubtless an important figure to Joyce, who generally reserved such prominence in his novels to motifs or symbols of significance to the work. It is remarkable that this Father of the Church was labeled "golden-tongued" by his contemporaries and, as such, might be related to both Joyce and de la Colombière. An examination of the sermons reveals that he is the most-quoted source in de la Colombière's works, appearing in twelve of the twenty sermons presented here. The cruel agony described by Chrysostom is certainly experienced by Stephen in his conscience-stricken state. De la Colombière describes the first stage as that when the conscience blames the sinner: "It is a voice that never ceases to blame and terrify us, a voice that stings by its reproaches..."(435). In A Portrait, Stephen feels this blame. "Could it be that he, Stephen Dedalus, had done those things? His conscience sighed in answer. Yes, he had done them, secretly, filthily, time after time..." (137). The second stage, as outlined by the preacher, is fear. "Just place your hand over the heart of the sinner," says de la Colombière, "to see how affected it is, how agitated it becomes by its frequent palpitations; notice his eyes, his face, his lips, his hand, which he cannot lift without trembling..." (436). For Stephen, also, the second stage is fear. "He was in fear, praying that death would not touch his brow..." (137). In the third stage, says de la Colombière, Conscience places the

sin before the sinner. "I see the evil I have done, and my crime is before me at all times and in all places" (439).

These lamentations, reminiscent of David's cry in Psalms 50, are echoed by Stephen, whose plight is described by Joyce:

"...though his eyes were shut fast, he saw the places where he had sinned and, though his ears were tightly covered, he heard. He desired with all his will not to...see. He shook under the strain of his desire and until the senses closed. They closed for an instant and then reopened. He saw" (137). The final

step described by de la Colombière is exaggeration whereby the conscience distorts the sin in order to paralyze the sinner. The preacher dramatizes this distortion by citing two historical cases: that of Joseph's brothers who, long after they had slain him, suffered agonies of guilt even when they did no wrong; and that of Emperor Constantine who, having killed one of his brothers who was a deacon, often saw him appear at night in his sacred robes, bearing in his hand a cup full of blood and saying, "Drink, my brother" (435-438). Stephen is not spared the distortion and exaggeration inherent to his sinful state: "He had sinned. He had sinned so deeply against heaven and before God that he was not worthy to be called God's child" (137).

Another feature of structural similarity can be seen in the division established by de la Colombière; he points out the sharply different emotions experienced by the soul before and after being absolved of sin, using childbirth as an analogy. (436). The sermon ends, conforming to the directives of Ignatius, on a note of hope and joy (449). Stephen also experiences great joy at the end of Chapter Three: "His soul was

made fair and holy once more, holy and happy.... He sat by the fire... not daring to speak for happiness. Till that moment he had not known how beautiful and peaceful life could be... how simple and beautiful was life after all!" (145)

The sequence and structure of the account of Stephen's agony of conscience and rebirth parallel the text of the sermon so closely that one might even believe that this sermon could have served Joyce as a model for that section of his story.

The characteristics of de la Colombière's sermon style which may have made him interesting to Joyce are also apparent in this study of Conscience. An examination of his stylistic devices here should serve as a general view for all of the homilies. The sermon is characterized by de la Colombière's recognized clarity and eloquence. Most apparent are the number of long, periodic, musical sentences. One example follows:

I am content to say that it is a voice that never ceases to blame us and terrify us, a voice which stings by its reproaches and frightens by its threats, a disturbing voice, a deadly voice which constantly places before us our sins and the torments they have merited, a voice which constantly exaggerates the enormity of the former and the severity of the latter, in order to cause us to despair over the evil we have done and to tremble at the thought of the punishment we have deserved (435).

Shorter sentences are interspersed throughout the sermon. The following one also illustrates his use of comparison as well as balance: "Just as a voice was given to man to express his sentiments and desires, so Conscience was given to us by

God to reveal what his judgments are in all things" (433).

There are also short pithy sentences: "When we have God to fear, what rest can we possibly find? (434). Series of rhetorical

questions abound, as in this last section of the sermon:

Why put off until Easter what can be done on the approaching holy days? Have we not suffered enough on that rack to which our conscience has pinned us for so long? Have we not moaned long enough beneath that burden of iniquity which weighs so heavily upon us?... (456)

Personification and apostrophe are combined in this passage by which Conscience is made to reproach the soul of a murderer:

O what a lovely sight you presented, with your blazing eyes and wild countenance, acting like a madman, striking like a snake, roaring, biting, and tearing like a lion or tiger! (439)

De la Colombière calls upon figures of the past to illuminate the present, as when he cites St. John the Baptist, St. John Chrysostom, and King David, as well as two Greek philosophers, Epicurus and Philonius (432, 436, 444). Perhaps his most pervasive device--and one which is particularly relevant to a study of Joyce--is a kind of interior monologue which abounds in all his sermons. At times the preacher is voicing the thoughts of the listeners; at times he is expressing his own interior feelings; at other times he may be interpreting God's wishes to the group. The interior musings of Stephen, following the sermon on Hell in A Portrait, present a possible manner in which Joyce might have applied this devotional apostrophe and spoken meditation. Another feature of the sermons which would have interested Joyce is the vivid imagery used by Father de la Colombière. A particularly striking example of this follows:

These repulsive toads crawled into Pharaoh's palace, and even into his bed; with the

slime of their drooling, they soiled his expensive furniture and even the meats on his table; his rest was ruined by their constant and horrible croaking. This is a picture of the bad Christian and the torments which he must suffer because of his sins; these sins present themselves before him at all times and in all places, and always in some hideous form...(444)

Other naturalistic details included in the sermon are less horrifying. De la Colombière speaks about the commonplace problems facing family members in their daily routine, the difficulty of training servants, and the annoyance of having a wife who is extravagant or frivolous, children who are disobedient. Joyce's description of Dublin is filled with naturalistic details; Leopold Bloom's day in Ulysses²² is represented in one of the most graphic descriptions of literature. Joyce's predilection for the rhythmical, balanced sentence so abundantly used in de la Colombière's sermons, can be pointed out by citing a few examples in his works. This passage in Ulysses, although a parody of the metaphysical style, and combining some of the characteristics of the interior monologue, is nonetheless representative of the cadenced sentence:

The trip would benefit health on account of the bracing ozone and be in every way thoroughly pleasurable, especially for a chap whose liver was out of order, seeing the different places along the route, Plymouth, Falmouth, Southampton and so on, culminating in an instructive tour of the sights of the great metropolis, the spectacle of our modern Babylon where doubtless he would see the greatest improvement tower, abbey, wealth of Park Lane to renew acquaintance with (547).

Even allowing for the intentional "gaffe" of ending the sentence with a preposition, and the lack of transitional words and punctuation, the quoted passage allies itself to the

metaphysical style. Another example from Ulysses--more elegant and yet more stilted--is Bob Doran's part of a conversation with Bloom at Kiernan's pub:

Let me, said he, so far presume upon our acquaintance which, however slight it may appear if judged by the standard of mere time, is founded, as I hope and believe, on a sentiment of mutual esteem, as to request this favour. But, should I have overstepped the limits of reserve let the sincerity of my feelings be the excuse of my boldness (Ulysses, 312).

The ludicrous quality of the language is not lost on the reader, but the characteristics relating this passage to 17th-century style writing are also evident to him: inversion, interjection, multiple phrases, and periodic sentence. The use of such language in Ulysses is indicative that Joyce did not abandon this flowing style after A Portrait, even though his general writing became progressively more compressed and less conventional. His interest in metaphysical writing, as well as his interest in the art of homiletics, can be considered a driving force in leading him to the works of Claude de la Colombière.

It was said earlier that Joyce was a homiletic writer because of the recurrence of the sermon or the sermon-form in his writings. He can also be considered a homiletic writer because of the religious or devotional themes that permeate his works. It is in this area, especially, that the Joyce scholar can benefit from a reading of de la Colombière's sermons. Each of the twenty sermons presented here deals with matters of Catholic doctrine which have influenced his training and his works. They are considered to be classics in their

genre. A reading of the three sermons on the Eucharist presented here will give the reader a more complete understanding of the Eucharistic structure in Ulysses. The Catholic doctrine of the Christmas sermon will give a deeper dimension to the story of the early scenes of A Portrait. The sermons on the Saints will enhance the understanding of all of Joyce's characters. The Holy Trinity and Christian Charity sermons can be enlightening especially in regard to Ulysses, to mention only the most obvious connections.

A notable example of Joyce's use of doctrine is that of the Eucharist in Ulysses. This doctrine, which functions as a theme in "Grace," can truly be called a structural device in Ulysses. In both cases the story is set on a Thursday, a significant day for the Eucharist. In "Grace,"²³ when Mr. Power served drinks in Tom Kernan's sick room, the text states that "he stood up to officiate." And, when Mrs. Kernan enters the room, Joyce writes, "A pale oval face came forward into the light (Dubliners, 166). Later, she is described as "drying her hands" and "coming into a solemn company. She did not disturb the silence but leaned over the rail at the foot of the bed (170). These Eucharistic allusions illustrate Joyce's use of a recurring motif and a unified theme. In Ulysses, the Eucharist is invested with an added dimension --it functions as a structural basis for the final communion of Stephen and Bloom. Joyce doubtlessly based much of the Ulysses story on the Homeric epic, but he also relied heavily on the doctrine of Communion as a strong symbol of unity and as a base on which to construct his story. The theme of the Eucharist is introduced in the opening passage of this story --a method characteristic of his work. This image, with a

number of others---will appear and reappear, combine and recombine with other motifs as they are woven into the fabric of the story to enrich the meaning. Buck Mulligan parodies the entrance of the priest at Mass, while he intones the "Introibo ad altare" (9). The theme continues as he pours tea and cries, "In Nomine Patri et Filii" and slings his towel stole-wise around his neck. The same theme is taken up as Bloom steps into All Hallows Church in time for communion and his thoughts are revealed: "Yes, bread of angels it's called" (82). As the priest rinses out the chalice, Bloom's thoughts turn to the wine, and by a process of free association, to a number of subjects which interest him. A sermon is pronounced by Father Vaughan, who then bends down to kiss the altar. He recites the customary closing prayer "Blessed Michael Archangel" (84) and the Mass is over. Many echoes of the Eucharist persist throughout the day. Father Connors is seen posting a letter, a suggestion of the Epistle read at each Mass. The theme is re-introduced at Barney Kiernan's pub when the Citizen throws a biscuit tin at Bloom and adds, "I'll be in for the last gospel" (341). In the Nighttown chapter, when most of the themes are present, Father Coffey intones: "Nomine Jacobs Vobiscuits, Amen" (453), a distortion of the priest's blessing, and Lynch is greeted with "Lamb of London, who takes away the sins of the world," recalling the prayer just before Communion. The importance of this key theme becomes evident in the Emmaeus and Ithaca chapters when Stephen and Bloom seemingly achieve a true communion. As they share coffee in the cabman's shelter,

Bloom expresses his solicitude for his young friend: "You ought to eat more solid food. You would feel a different man" (555). Implications of renewal--recalling the "metempsychosis" of an earlier chapter--are fused here with the Eucharistic symbols: solids and liquids. Later, the pair will drink in "jocoselious silence Epp's massproduct, the creature, cocoa (597), and their union is implied in the fusion of their names "Stoom" and "Elephen."

De la Colombière's three sermons on the Eucharist contain many of the themes and images that appear in Joyce's work. He speaks of the Eucharist as a nutritious and solid food capable of renewing the soul and making one feel like a different man. In Sermon XX, this preacher states that: "Jesus Christ demonstrates in the institution of the Holy Eucharist the ardent desire he has to be united with us; His love forces Him, in a sense, outside of Himself in order to live only in us; His love makes Him forget Himself, as it were, to live only for us" (106). The expression "outside of Himself" could be related to the events that occurred both in the life of Bloom and that of Stephen on the day described in Ulysses. Bloom was unmistakably "outside" most of the day, and it is in that way that he encounters Stephen with whom he will enter into some form of communion; it is, however an inward journey for both Stephen and Bloom. For Stephen, it is necessary, to some extent, to move outside of himself--the self that is arrogant and aloof--in order to share in the greater humanity of Bloom. It is significant that, in the First

Point of this sermon, de la Colombière emphasizes the quality and excellence of friendship, as well as love. This is an unorthodox approach to the topic, and one that fits in well with the relationship that is being established between Bloom and Stephen before they actually drink the "massproduct" in communion. Sermon XXI, the second on the Eucharist, studies the dimensions of faith and love as basic requisites for communion; while the third sermon on the topic, Sermon XXII, stresses the advantages of its frequency. The question of whether Joyce actually found some of his inspiration in these sermons goes unanswered, but it is safe to say that they stem from a tradition which he shared and they are representative of the kinds of sermons that were given at Clongowes Wood and Belvedere Colleges while he was a student there. If the excellence of style and the depth of thought of his Irish masters were no match for those of de la Colombière, at least the doctrine was there and many of the examples were similar. In this respect they are valuable sources for the understanding of Joyce and for the reading of Ulysses.

Two of Joyce's major themes--the Trinity and the Virgin Mary--become associated in the last section of Ulysses. Bloom's kind attentions to Stephen, as well as his inner reflections, have allied him with the father. When Molly's lamp is introduced as a symbol of the Holy Spirit, the Trinity is complete. The text speaks of "the mystery of an invisible person, his wife Marion" (Ulysses, p. 623). Molly's soliloquy confirms that she is indeed a unifying element in the Stephen-Bloom relationship--a theory explored by Virginia Moseley in Joyce and the Bible. And the Blessed Virgin Mary is herself a unifying

force in relation to Molly. Molly's name and her birthday on September 8 are obvious links with the Mother of God. While Bloom is speaking of Molly's upcoming singing tour, an unknown commentator describes her in terms reminiscent of the Virgin Mary: "Pride of Calpe's mount, the ravenhaired daughter of Tweedy.... The chaste spouse of Leopold is she: Marion of the bountiful bosoms" (318). Gerty MacDowell on the beach of Sandymount, in the Nausicaa section, is firmly tied in with the Virgin Mary by the recitation of the litany of Our Lady of Loreto in the Star of the Sea Church during Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Each invocation from this litany serves as a background for the scene between Bloom and Gerty. All women remind Bloom of Molly. Thus, Gerty is associated here with both the Virgin and Molly. The surrealistic Nighttown section brings all manner of change; through the process of "metempsychosis,"² introduced earlier, the characters have the power to merge and change. Molly, hitherto associated with Mary, may now be associated with Mary's spouse, the Holy Spirit, or even with God the Father.

Father de la Colombière's sermon on the Trinity has been proclaimed as one of his finest. André Ravier, his biographer, notes that the depth of thought and the grandeur of style have made of it a veritable masterpiece (Ravier, p.xi). A passage follows:

Who can explain how a single divinity can exist in three distinct Persons without forming three Gods; how it is that the Son is not the Father, although He is one with the Father; how it is that the Holy Spirit is neither

the Father nor the Son, although all three form a single Holy Spirit, quite indivisible and quite simple; how it is that the Son is not only as powerful as the Father, and the Holy Spirit as powerful and as wise as the Son, but that all three together have no more power, no more wisdom, than each has separately, and that each one occupies as much space by His immensity as does the Trinity altogether? (367)

The splendor of these lines, as well as the mystery they try to grasp with human means, would have delighted the ear and the imagination of Joyce. The Trinity itself captured his interest, no doubt, because of the boundless possibilities it offered in relationships and merging of personalities. Claude's statement that he would not respect a religion that would offer a God capable of being understood by finite man is of interest here. Joyce, by nature, relished mystery and was stimulated by it. This sermon explores the dimensions of the mystery without ever attempting to probe it. De la Colombière resorts to a number of images or symbols to represent to our senses what our intellects cannot comprehend. Two of the most pertinent for purposes of this study are listed below. From St. Augustine, de la Colombière borrowed this image: "Consider your soul; there you will find being, knowledge and will. Certain differences exist among these three, and yet they constitute a single essence, a single soul." (372). A case could be made for assigning these characteristics to Joyce's three main characters in Ulysses. Could Joyce, with his love for multiple meanings, have included these features in his puzzle? The second image is borrowed from St. Basil and is found in the rainbow. "It is a cloud that has been painted three different colors by a single ray. (372). Like

the Trinity Itself, the topic offers unlimited possibilities. Joyce, who did not always acknowledge his sources, and who always transformed them, may very well have been enriched by this sermon.

It is not my intention to explore the other doctrinal themes pursued by Joyce, for they are legion. All of the twenty sermons offered here are related to these themes. Nor is it my purpose to further establish Joyce in the Catholic and Jesuit tradition. These areas have been amply documented by the critics and scholars. Richard Ellmann, William Tindall, Hugh Kenner, Richard Kain and Marvin Magalaner, Herbert Gorman, Frank Budgen, Stuart Gilbert, and Harry Levin have all cast light on these aspects. More intimate pictures have been given by the works of Stanislaus Joyce, Kevin Sullivan, S.J., William Noon, S.J., and others. No doubt can remain that Joyce's roots have left lasting and deep influences in his life and works.

I would like to conclude this work, in a cyclic way, by returning to the first group of scholars, mentioned in my preface, who have begun to pursue a tentative relationship between James Joyce and Claude de la Colombière. Theirs is perhaps one of the most significant link: the devotion of the Sacred Heart. These scholars, based on a reference in Joyce's story "Eveline" in Dubliners, have independently, and sometimes cumulatively, traced Joyce to Margaret Mary and her Revelations; Donald T. Torchiano's article made direct reference to the Promises that were so widespread in the homes of Joyce's youth. Virginia Moseley made other connections: From the picture of the obscure priest hanging on the wall in Eveline's modest home, she traced the priest who became the confessor and confidant of Margaret Mary, Claude de la Colombière. She noted certain

coincidences and similarities. Joyce and Claude shared the same birthday and the same interests in rhetoric, drama, and music. William P. Kean discovered that the all-important date chosen for Bloomsday was also the date on which the Sacred Heart appeared to Margaret Mary in the most momentous of their encounters and proclaimed His love for the world. Eileen Kennedy also noted the importance of that date in her article. Another article, not previously cited here, is "James Joyce's Pauline Vision" by Robert Boyle who also writes on the devotion of the Sacred Heart and Joyce, although his reference is Gerard Manley Hopkins.²⁴ Referring to Joyce, Boyd says: "...he was hearing it [the devotion of the Sacred Heart] often enough from ...Jesuit lips, in their speaking of the central devotion of the Society of Jesus." It was indeed the central devotion of the Jesuits right from the beginning, since it was divinely revealed to Margaret Mary that they were to be the foremost promoters of this devotion. It has already been shown that Joyce made a number of references to the heart in general, and the Sacred Heart in particular. It does seem fitting that his interest in the central devotion of the Jesuits would extend to the central Jesuit in that devotion.

FOOTNOTES

¹Pierre Ravignan, Ecrivains du grand siècle (Lyon: Emmanuelle Vitte, 1941) p. 101.

²André Ravier, ed., Complete Works of Claude de la Colombière (Grenoble: Imprimerie du Patronage, 1900), p. 7.

³Ibid.

⁴George W. Pennington, By Royal Command (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1977), p. 52.

⁵Ravier, p. 179.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Aloysius Ambrozzi, S.J., The Spiritual Exercises in Our Daily Prayer (Calcutta: Xavier Press, 1955), p. 4.

⁸Gilles Cusson, Les Exercices de Saint-Ignace dans la Vie Courante (Quebec: Presse Amicale, 1977), p. 16.

⁹I. Parraguirre, S.J., Key to the Study of the Spiritual Exercises (New York: Columbia Press, 1960), p. 13.

¹⁰Stanislaus Joyce, My Brother's Keeper (New York: Viking Press, 1958), p. 227.

¹¹Richard Ellmann, ed., Selected Letters of James Joyce (New York: The Viking Press, 1975), p. 230.

¹²James Joyce, Stephen Hero (Norfolk: New Directions, 1944), p. 224.

¹³Parraguirre, p. 15.

¹⁴Kevin Sullivan, S.J., Joyce Among the Jesuits (New York: Columbia University), p. 82.

¹⁵James R. Thrane, "Joyce's Sermon on Hell: Its Source and its Backgrounds," A James Joyce Miscellany, 3, Ed. Marvin Magalaner (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1962), p. 37.

¹⁶ Alphonsus Liguori, Preparation for Death, quoted from James O. Swift, Religious Leaders and Champions (Fairfield: Standard Press, 1955).

¹⁷ Elizabeth Boyd, "James Joyce's Hell Fire Sermons," Modern Language Notes, Vol. LXXV, (November 1960), 563.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 562.

¹⁹ Ravier, p. 13.

²⁰ Boyd, p. 561.

²¹ Sullivan, Ibid.

²² James Joyce, Ulysses (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1968).

²³ James Joyce, Dubliners (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 42.

²⁴ Robert Boyle, James Joyce's Pauline Vision (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978) p. 7.

