

SERMONS

ON THE

SEVEN DEADLY SINS,

AND THE DIFFERENT SINS AGAINST GOD AND OUR
NEIGHBOR WHICH FLOW THEREFROM.

ADAPTED TO ALL THE SUNDAYS AND HOLYDAYS OF THE YEAR.

BY THE

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ON BAD CHRISTIANS IN GENERAL.

FIRST SERMON.

ON THE MALICE WITH WHICH BAD CHRISTIANS ASSAIL THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

Subject.

Bad Christians assail the Church by their sins : for, 1. She is a most holy Church, whose good name they disgrace and calumniate. 2. She is the only Church in which salvation can be found ; but her efforts to save souls are frustrated by bad Christians, who force her to help them to a deeper damnation.—*Preached on the Feast of SS. Peter and Paul.*

Text.

Portæ inferi non prævalebunt adversus eam.—Matth. xvi. 18.
“ And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

Introduction.

In vain, oh, heathen tyrants, do ye rage and storm against the Christian Church, with your torments and persecutions! The religion you tried to destroy has been confirmed and spread throughout the world by the very means you used to destroy it ; the blood of the martyrs was a fruitful seed, from which many Christians sprung. In vain, oh, perjured heretics, have you whetted your teeth against the Church ; in vain do you calumniate her still in your writings ; you have thereby only made her truth more evident and clear to the whole world! Vain, oh, infernal powers, is your wrath! it has been, is now, and always will be true, according to the promise of Christ : “ The gates of hell shall not prevail against ” the Church that is built upon Peter. Her enemies can do nothing against her ; she need fear

no harm from them ; would that she had nothing to fear from domestic foes ; then, indeed, would she be in a desirable condition ! But, my brethren, what do I say ? Has the Church of God, then, violence to dread from another quarter ? Is she threatened to be overwhelmed by another danger ? Alas ! to our shame be it said, that what neither the persecutions of tyrants, nor the treachery of heretics, nor the fury of the demons could ever accomplish, has been done, and is done against the Christian religion, by her own friends, the members of her own household, her own children. I mean by bad Christians, who live in opposition to her laws, as I shall now prove.

Plan of Discourse.

Bad Christians assail the Church by their sins ; why ? Because she is a most holy Church, whose good name they disgrace and calumniate. As I shall prove in the first part. Because they frustrate her efforts, and force her to help them to a deeper damnation. As I shall prove in the second part. For the encouragement of the good, that they may continue to live in a Christian manner, and as a salutary warning for the wicked, that they may begin to live in a Christian manner.

Jesus Christ, founder of the true Church, we beg of Thee grace to this two-fold effect, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and the holy angels guardian.

Wicked
children are
a shame to
their
parents.

By the fruit we know the tree : if the fruit is good, the tree is good ; if the fruit is bad, the tree is bad. This holds true always with regard to senseless plants ; but not always with regard to reasoning creatures. Sometimes a pious father has a wicked son, and a holy mother an irreligious daughter. On the other hand, pious children sometimes have wicked parents. Yet, as a general rule, the proverb holds good which says : "The apple falls not far from the tree ;" and, when the contrary is not known to be the case, we can learn what the character of the parent is from the morals of the child, according to the words of the wise Ecclesiasticus : "A man is known by his children."¹ If you see a licentious, dissolute youth, who spends his time in fighting, cursing, and swearing, and that, too, before the very door of his father's house, no matter how innocent the parents may be, nor how ignorant of their son's bad conduct, you may generally conclude, without any danger of

¹ In filiis suis agnoscitur vir.—Eccclus. xi. 30.

judging rashly, that there is something wrong in that family, that the children are not properly looked after, or that they do not get good example. However that may be, there is not the least doubt that an ill-reared, undutiful child is not an honor, but rather a shame and disgrace to its father and mother before the world, as Ecclesiasticus says: "A son ill taught is the confusion of the father A daughter that confoundeth becometh a disgrace to her father."¹ In the same way, it sometimes happens that a whole religious community in a town is disgraced by the conduct of one of its members, who has been so unfortunate as to have given public scandal; nay, even amongst the holy college of the apostles there was a traitor. If there were many religious of that kind in an Order, it would soon lose its good name, and be cried down as a corrupted and perverted Order, no matter how holy its rules and constitutions may be.

Wicked Christians (is it possible that such a holy name can be thus qualified?), what mischief you work by your sinful lives! You are selected as intimate friends by the Almighty God, and you are not afraid to despise Him, although His all-seeing eye beholds you, nor to declare yourselves His sworn enemies. That is the most terrible feature of sin. You have been made heirs of the kingdom of Heaven, and you have bartered away your souls to the devil and to the eternal fires of hell, for a momentary satisfaction of an unbridled passion: such is the terrible misfortune that sin brings with it. But there is still another that is deeply to be deplored: you are children of a mother, whose good name you take away, and whom you disgrace before the world by your evil lives. What mother is that? She from whom you received your second birth in baptism, the holy Catholic religion; a religion which never had, and never will have an equal on earth in sanctity and perfection. Hear what St. Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, says of it to the Ephesians: "Christ loved the Church, and delivered Himself up for it, that He might sanctify it, cleansing it by the laver of water in the word of life, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish."²

The Christian religion is most holy.

¹ Confusio patris est de filio indisciplinato . . . Filia quæ confundit in contumeliâ fit genitoris.—Eccles. xxii. 3, 4.

² Christus dilexit Ecclesiam, et seipsum tradidit pro ea, ut illam sanctificaret, mundans lavacro aquæ in verbo vitæ, ut exhiberet ipse sibi gloriosam Ecclesiam, non habentem maculam aut rugam, aut aliquid hujusmodi, sed ut sit sancta et immaculata.—Ephes. v. 25-27.

It would have been enough, O glorious Apostle, to prove the holiness of this Church, if you had merely said that her Founder is Jesus Christ, that Man, who even if He were not known to be God, would still be esteemed the most just and holy of all men on earth ; whose life, both interior and exterior, was so free from blame and from the least shadow of a fault, that He could ask even His worst enemies, “Which of you shall convince Me of sin ?”¹ against whom the whole synagogue of the Jews conspired to watch His least movements with lynx-eyed vigilance, but so fruitlessly that, with the aid of two false witnesses, they were not able to prove even the suspicion of a sin against Him: “And the chief priests and all the council sought for evidence against Jesus, that they might put Him to death, and found none,” says St. Mark. “For many bore false witness against Him : and their evidences were not agreeing.”² That Man whose innocence was openly proclaimed by His judge : “I find no cause in Him ;”³ whose more than human virtues were proclaimed even by those who crucified Him : “Indeed, this was the Son of God,”⁴ as the Centurion said of Him after His death. He it is who founded the religion of which we Catholics make profession, which He caused to be preached throughout the world by His apostles, and which He still announces to us by the uninterrupted succession of His vicars on earth in the Chair of Peter.

Prescribes a
most holy
law.

What could be expected from such a holy Founder, but holiness of institution, laws, morals, and customs ? In effect, everything we read of the Church, in the Gospel of Christ, points out its holiness. We need only read the 5th and 6th chapters of the Gospel of St. Matthew to find out that ; the greatest poverty and humility, charity, union, and meekness with one another, as if we had only one heart and one soul together ; purity of conscience, even to the extent of excluding an unworthy thought ; mercy and compassion towards the poor and needy, as if we saw Christ Himself in their persons ; modesty and mortification of the outward senses, to such a degree that we should rather tear the eyes out of our head, or cut off our hands or feet, than go freely into the occasion of sin ; patience, contentment, nay, even joy and rapture in persecutions, troubles, and difficulties ; hatred

¹ Quis ex vobis arguet me de peccato ?—John viii. 46.

² Summi vero sacerdotes, et omne concilium querebant adversus Jesum testimonium, ut eum morti traderent ; nec inveniebant. Multi enim testimonium falsum dicebant adversus eum : et convenientia testimonia non erant.—Mark xiv. 55, 56.

³ Ego nullam invenio in eo causam.—John xviii. 38.

⁴ Vere Filius Dei erat iste.—Matth. xxvii. 54.

and renouncement of the world and its vain customs; and insatiable hunger and thirst after justice and perfect holiness of life. These, and such as these, are the Gospel teachings to Christians. In former times, as our Lord says, murder was forbidden: "You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not kill . . . but I say to you that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment."¹ Not merely he who curses his neighbor, but even he who calls him a fool, out of hatred and anger, "shall be in danger of hell fire."² In former times the law was: "Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say to you that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart."³ Formerly the law was: "Thou shalt not forswear thyself . . . But I say to you not to swear at all . . . Let your speech be yea, yea: no, no."⁴ That is, you shall not use any stronger expressions than yes or no, to confirm what you say. Formerly the law was: "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, not to resist evil, but if one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other. And if a man will contend with thee in judgment and take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him."⁵ Formerly the law was: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thy enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you, that you may be the children of your Father who is in Heaven."⁶ You must be in your hearts so dead to temporal goods that you have not even care for the morrow, as to what you shall eat or drink, or as to wherewith you shall be clothed, so that you may place the most childlike confidence in Him alone who feeds the sparrows of the air, etc. In a word, "Be ye perfect as also your heavenly Father is perfect."⁷

Oh, what a wonderful and perfect, law is the Christian religion. From which

¹ Audistis, quia dictum est antiquis: Non occides. . . Ego autem dico vobis: Quia omnis, qui irascitur fratri suo, reus erit iudicio.—Matth. v. 21, 22.

² Reus erit gehennæ ignis.—Ibid. 22.

³ Non mœchaberis. Ego autem dico vobis: Quia omnis, qui viderit mulierem ad concupiscendum eam, jam mœchatus est eam in corde suo.—Ibid. 27, 28.

⁴ Non perjurabis. . . Ego autem dico vobis: Non jurare omnino. . . Sit sermo vester: Est, est: non, non.—Ibid. 33, 34, 37.

⁵ Oculum pro oculo, et dentem pro dente. Ego autem dico vobis: Non resistere malo, sed si quis te percusserit in dexteram maxillam tuam, præbe illi et alteram: et ei, qui vult tecum iudicio contendere, et tunicam tuam tollere, dimitte ei et pallium.—Ibid. 38-40.

⁶ Diliges proximum tuum, et odio habebis inimicum tuum. Ego autem dico vobis: Diligite inimicos vestros, benefacite his qui oderunt vos, et orate pro persequentibus et calumnantibus vos, ut sitis filii Patris vestri, qui in cœlis est.—Ibid. 43-45.

⁷ Estote ergo vos perfecti, sicut et Pater vester cœlestis perfectus est.—Ibid. 48.

holiness its
truth is
known.

ion ! says St. Augustine. "There are many things which convince me of the truth of the Catholic Church :"¹ the astounding commencement and spread of it throughout the world by twelve poor fishermen ; the countless miracles that confirmed it everywhere, and at all times ; the uninterrupted succession of bishops from the time of St. Peter ; the very name of Catholic or Universal Church, which it alone, amidst so many apostates and heretics, has always kept ; these things compel my understanding to submit itself to this truth without doubt or hesitation ; but there is nothing which proves to me clearer and plainer that it comes from God, than the holiness of its laws and morality. The whole world and even our worst enemies have acknowledged this holiness, they wonder at it, openly give testimony to it and freely confess that if the true religion must also be the most holy, then ours is the only true one. Certainly, O Lord, what Thy Prophet says must be true : "The law of the Lord is unspotted, converting souls ;"² a law that must be in every way fit to sanctify souls. What an honor and a happiness for us ! Eternal thanks to Thee, O God, for having called us, in preference to so many others, to such a holy religion !

This good
name is
disgraced
by bad
Catholics.

Oh, sinful Catholics, wicked Christians, away with you, away from the lap of such a holy Mother ! It is you alone who, by your wicked and perverse lives, disgrace her sanctity and her good name. But hear what St. Paul writes to the Romans : the Jews thought themselves much greater than heathen nations, because they had received such a holy law from God, yet there was nothing they disregarded more than this law, and they gave much scandal to the heathens by their transgressions ; so that St. Paul asks them how can they boast of the holiness of Judaism, if they live like heathens. Who would not be scandalized, he says, to see how you live ? You who say you are a Jew, and who know how your law forbids sin and vice, yet commit those things without shame : "Thou, therefore, that teachest another, teachest not thyself ; thou that preachest that men should not steal, stealest ; thou that sayest men should not commit adultery, committest adultery ; thou that abhorrest idols, committest sacrilege ; thou that makest thy boast of the law, by transgression of the law dishonorest God."³ So that

¹ Multa me in Ecclesia justissime retinent, etc.

² Lex Domini immaculata convertens animas.—Ps. xviii. 8.

³ Qui ergo alium doces, teipsum non doces ; qui prædicas non furandum, furaris ; qui dicis non mœchandum, mœcharis ; qui abominaris idola, sacrilegium facis ; qui in lege gloriaris, per prævaricationem legis Deum inhonoras.—Rom. ii. 21-23.

you blaspheme the name of God, and disgrace before heathens the law you boast of with the lips: "For the name of God through you is blasphemed among the gentiles."¹ So far the holy Apostle. Are there not many Christians nowadays who deserve the same reproach? My dear brethren, it is not apostates and heretics who bring shame on the Church of God; they may burst with envy and publish or preach what lies and calumnies they will; instead of bringing shame on our holy religion, they will only help to make its truth more evident; just as if one who is overcome by another, and who is lying on the ground groaning with pain, were to abuse and insult his victorious antagonist. The children of the Church of God, who have sworn to observe her law, and who make a boast of her holiness, are the ones who do violence to her, and disgrace and dishonor her by their wicked lives.

For, if I were an infidel, and knew nothing of the Christian law but what I learned from general hearsay, and if I were to consider the conduct of most Christians of the present day; if I were to see those bad habits that so many are subject to, and which they cannot conceal from their own conscience at least; the spirit of pride and vanity, avarice and injustice, immorality and unrestrained intercourse of the sexes, hatred and disunion between citizens, neighbors, and relations, nay, even between husband and wife; gluttony and drunkenness; the little care and watchfulness of many parents in training their children; the fearful amount of cursing, swearing, calumny, and detraction; the want of reverence and respect in church, etc.; what, I ask, should I think if I saw all this? I must doubt whether such people really have a religion. But they call themselves Christians and Catholics. Is it possible? Are they the chosen people of whom I have heard so much? Are they the glory and honor of the Incarnate God, as I have been told they are, the fruit of His bitter sufferings, the object of His special care and Providence in this mortal life? Is this the religion that I have been told to look upon as the only true, spotless, and holy one amongst all the religions on earth? No, that cannot be! I have been deceived about it; that religion is worth nothing; or, if there ever was any good in it, it must now be completely perverted and useless; I do not care for a religion of that kind. In fact, my dear brethren, the heathens of the Indian Islands have often spoken in that way, as the Annals of our Society re-

By their
wicked
lives.

¹ Nomen enim Dei per vos blasphematur inter gentes.—Rom. ii. 24.

late ; for they were disgusted at the wicked lives of the European Christians who were living amongst them ; so that the sermons and exhortations of our missionaries were in many cases fruitless. Such also is the opinion of the negroes who are brought as slaves to America, and whose conversion is hindered principally by the dissolute lives of Christians. One of our Fathers, who went to those countries as a missionary, told me once, with a sigh, that before there could be any hope of converting the natives and bringing them to the service of God, the greater part of the European Christians should be sent out of the country. I have no doubt, too, that many heretics, who live here and there amongst Catholics, are of the same opinion.

Of which
the Church
can justly
complain.

With reason, then, can the Church complain, in the words of the Canticle : “The sons of my mother have fought against me.”¹ My own children, whom I have brought forth by water in holy baptism to divine grace and the kingdom of Heaven ; whom I have so carefully instructed from their youth in my holy laws and doctrine, and fed so often with the Flesh and Blood of Christ, and strengthened with the other sacraments, are those who attack and try to overthrow me. Formerly, in the first two centuries, when I was persecuted without truce or rest by blood-thirsty tyrants, I had such a glorious name in the world, that my very enemies, who refused to submit to the yoke of my law, were obliged to have respect for me. If in those days any one outside the time of persecution were accused of a crime before the judge, he needed no defence beyond proving himself a Christian ; if he succeeded in doing that, he was at once declared innocent. “Our experience teaches us,” says St. Lucifer, Bishop of Sardinia, “that by this one venerable word, I am a Christian, all suspicion of crime is removed.”² If a woman were tempted by an idolater to impurity, the mere words, “I am a Christian,” were enough to deprive him of all hope of succeeding in his design ; neither threats nor prayers would help him. There was no one who would have exchanged my name for all the honors and riches of the world. If the heathen emperors sometimes tried to pervert old men, tender maidens, or weak children, by kindness, so as to induce them to adore false gods, or to give way to forbidden pleasures, “I am a Christian,” was the only and the sufficient answer. “Take away my life, but

¹ Filii matris meę pugnauerunt contra me.—Cant. i. 5.

² Cernimus hac una religiosa voce, Christianus sum, omne crimen excludi.

leave me my name.”¹ Oh, glorious and holy name, what a fate is thine ! In these times of peace, that were so longed for, I can well cry out : “ Behold in peace is my bitterness most bitter.”² “ The sons of my mother have fought against me ;” my own children have taken away my good name, that name which neither the torments of persecutors, nor the attacks of heretics, nor hell itself, with all its rage and fury, could tarnish ; that name, you, wicked Christians, disgrace by your perverse lives. Instead of my making you holy, you dishonor my holy name (mark, my dear brethren, the first attack of bad Christians against the Church), instead of my making you happy forever, you compel me to help you to a deeper damnation. This is the second attack of bad Christians against the Church, and the subject of the

Second Part.

It has never yet been doubted amongst Christians that faith can and must help us to salvation. The General Council of Trent calls it, “ The beginning, foundation, and root of all our justification.”³ Without it, according to St. Paul, it is impossible to please God.⁴ All heretics agree with us so far, but they rely too much on faith and attach no value to good works, under the false idea that faith alone is necessary to salvation. This latter assertion cannot be true. It is also certain and consistent with right reason, that there is only one true religion in the world, in which the true faith can be found ; for it is impossible that God can affirm and deny the same truth, which He should do, if two contradictory dogmas had equal claims to be believed. Now, it is not necessary for me to prove that our holy Catholic religion is the only true one ; none other has the marks of the true Church, and if it be false, then God has deceived us. What a great blessing it is for us, my dear brethren, to be called by God, in preference to others, to this Church, outside of which salvation is not to be found, in which alone the necessary means of salvation are given to us in abundance !

But how is it, then, that we can say that this only true religion is capable of hurling a believing Christian deeper into hell ? Alas, it is only too true, and we need not wonder at it ! Jesus Christ, the Author of our salvation, came into the world for no

The Catholic Church the only one in which salvation can be found.

Yet is the cause of deeper damnation to bad Christians.

¹ Christianus sum. Tolle vitam et linque mihi nomen meum.

² Ecce in pace amaritudo mea amarissima.—Isai. xxxviii. 17.

³ Initium, fundamentum et radix totius justificationis nostræ.

⁴ Sine fide autem, impossibile est placere Deo.—Heb. xi. 6.

other purpose than "for us men, and for our salvation." ¹ Yet when He was still a child, and was presented in the temple at Jerusalem to His heavenly Father, Simeon predicted of Him : "Behold this child is set for the fall of many," ² who will make a bad use of His graces and merits. So that the faith, which is given to us to justify and bring us to Heaven, will certainly condemn us, if we do not live according to it. This truth is founded on the words of Christ in the Gospel of St. Luke : "And that servant who knew the will of his Lord, and prepared not himself, and did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. . . . And unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required, and to whom they have committed much, they will demand the more." ³ One feels too much pity for a stupid, ignorant person, to be angry with him when he commits a fault ; just as a mother excuses the child, when the father is about to beat it, by saying, oh, it is only a child, it knows no better. But there is neither excuse nor pity for one who, with full knowledge and deliberation, sins against his duty, no matter how severe the punishment with which he is threatened.

Since they
can and
should live
holily, but
do not.

And this is the undeniable testimony which the Christian religion will bring against bad Christians : you could have led a better life ; you should have lived as a Christian, and you have not done so. You could have done it, for you knew your duty ; neither light nor grace was wanting to you ; I have often instructed you in my laws and doctrine by my servants ; unceasingly have I exhorted you to observe this law, sometimes exciting your hope by promises, showing you how God has prepared eternal joys in Heaven for you, if you serve Him truly for a short time ; at other times threatening you with the eternal torments of hell, as a punishment for a momentary pleasure ; again, showing you the infinite mercy and beneficence of a God who is infinitely amiable and good in Himself, a thought that should suffice to move you to serve Him most zealously ; again, I have tried to excite you to sorrow and repentance for your sins, by inspiring your conscience with fear and anxiety, as you must admit. Not only could you have lived in a Christian manner,

¹ Propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem.

² Ecce positus est hic in ruinam multorum.—Luke ii. 34.

³ Ille autem servus, qui cognovit voluntatem domini sui, et non præparavit, et non fecit secundum voluntatem ejus, vapulabit multis Omni autem qui multum datum est, multum quæretur ab eo, et cui commendaverunt multum, plus petent ab eo.—Ibid. xii. 47, 48.

but you were bound to do so, according to the promise you made before the altar in baptism, a promise you afterwards confirmed when you came to the full use of reason, a promise by which you bound yourself to renounce the devil and all his works, the world and all its pomps, the flesh and all its sinful lusts ; by which you undertook to submit to my law, to make public profession of being a Christian, to live according to that profession, and, as far as is possible for you, to follow your humble, crucified Head. Now, you have not at all kept your word ; compare your life and actions with those of Christ, and with my holy laws and doctrine ; they resemble each other like night and day. You are therefore a wicked servant who knew the will of your Master, and could and should have fulfilled it, but through sheer malice you refused to do so. See now for yourself what a sentence is in store for you. Such will be the complaint of the Christian Church against her wicked children.

Oh, how I pity you, Turks, heathens, Jews, infidels, and heretics ; for every day your souls, for which Christ shed His precious blood, are hurled into hell ! Ah, if you had only the light that has shone on us, and the opportunities and means of salvation that we possess ! But what am I saying ? You are still, so to speak, happy in your misfortune, when I compare your condition with that of many believing Christians ; for, if you do not serve the true God, it is because you do not know Him fully ; if you do not serve the God whom you know, as He wishes to be served, you are not to be wondered at, since no one has told you how He wishes to be served. If you lead bad lives, you have an excuse, because you do not know the principles of piety. We know them, believe them, make public profession of them, and acknowledge our duty to live according to them ; we have a thousand to one more opportunities of doing so than you, and yet we are wanting. In truth, your misfortune deserves pity, while ours has no excuse.

These are, therefore, more guilty and deserving of damnation than heathens and infidels.

Lamech is to be excused for having killed Cain, for he did not know him ; but who will excuse Cain for having killed Abel, whom he knew to be his brother ? Jonathan is to be excused for having tasted the honey, for he had not heard that it was forbidden to do so ; but what excuse is there for Saul, who deliberately refused to obey the command of God ? King Ezechias, moved by a silly vanity, showed the treasures of his palace to the Assyrian ambassadors, and at once the Prophet Isaias came, in the name of an angry God, and threatened him with punish-

Shown from the Scriptures.

ment: "Hear the word of the Lord: Behold the days shall come that all that is in thy house, and that thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the Lord. And of thy sons also, that shall issue from thee, whom thou shalt beget, they shall take away."¹ King David, inflated with pride on account of his power, caused a census of his subjects to be taken; this vanity of his cost the lives of seventy thousand of his people, who were carried off by a plague. "Go number Israel and Juda,"² said David, and on account of this "the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel."³ Such was the punishment. King Saul usurped the office of priest in order to ensure victory over his enemies, and offered sacrifice to God; at the same moment the Prophet Samuel was there to threaten him: "Thy kingdom shall not continue."⁴ In consequence of this threat, his army was beaten, his three sons miserably slain, and Saul himself, driven to desperation, put an end to his own life. O my God, what severe punishments for a little vanity, a slight disobedience! And yet Thou hast not punished so severely many others who committed greater sins. Did not King Assuerus show far greater pride when he gave a feast to all the princes of his kingdom, that lasted for one hundred and eighty days, for no other motive than "that he might show the riches of the glory of his kingdom, and the greatness and boasting of his power"?⁵ Was not the Emperor Augustus as vain as David when he wished to know the number of his subjects: "There went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled"?⁶ Did not Mesa, king of Moab, usurp the priesthood with much greater cruelty, when he slew his first-born with his own hand? "He took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt offering upon the wall."⁷ And yet, in all these cases, we hear nothing of the threats of a prophet, much less of a plague, or an unhappy death, as a punishment for those sins. Why this

¹ Audi sermonem Domini: Ecce dies venient, et auferentur omnia quæ sunt in domo tua, et quæ condiderunt patres tui usque in diem hanc, in Babylonem: non remanebit quidquam, ait Dominus. Sed et de filiis tuis qui egredientur ex te, quos generabis, tollentur.—IV. Kings xx. 16-18.

² Vade, numera Israel et Judam.—II. Kings xxiv. 1.

³ Immisit que Dominus pestilentiam in Israel.—Ibid. 15.

⁴ Nequaquam regnum tuum ultra consurget.—I. Kings xiii. 14.

⁵ Ut ostenderet divitias gloriæ regni sui, ac magnitudinem, atque jactantiam potentiæ suæ.—Esth. i. 4.

⁶ Exiit edictum a Cæsare Augusto, ut describeretur universus orbis.—Luke ii. 1.

⁷ Arripiensque filium suum primogenitum, qui regnaturus erat pro eo, obtulit holocaustum super murum.—IV. Kings iii. 27.

difference? Because, according to the general interpretation, Saul, David, and Ezechias had the true faith, while Mesa, Augustus, and Assuerus were infidels. Hear this, O Christians, it is not our misfortune, when we lead bad lives, that increases our malice and deserves a deeper damnation, but our knowledge and the light we have received. "He who sins, after having received the grace of the New Testament," says the Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas of Aquin, "is deserving of greater punishment, because he is unthankful for greater benefits, and has not used the grace given to him."¹ "Better," says the Wise Preacher, "is a living dog than a dead lion."² "And," says Cardinal Hugo, "better is a pagan than a wicked Christian."³ Therefore, O heathens and Turks, you are better off than we, if we lead a bad life; for in that case, it would have been better for us never to have had the light of faith, as the Apostle St. Peter expressly says: "For it had been better for them not to have known the way of justice, than after they have known it, to turn back from that holy commandment which was delivered to them."⁴

When you will stand with us on the last day at the left hand of the Judge, your case will be already settled, for, "He that doth not believe is already judged, because he believeth not in the name of the only begotten Son of God."⁵ But what a series of questions we Christians shall have to answer, what a severe judgment, what a terrible sentence we shall have to expect; because, not only have we, like you, the light of nature, but also the light of faith, the law of God, the example of God, the numerous benefits He has bestowed on us, His oft-repeated exhortations, and our own knowledge, which will all be brought forward against us. You yourselves, O heathens, will condemn us, inasmuch as many of you have lived better than we, although you had only the light of reason; and you would have led holy lives if you only had had half the graces that are given to us by the goodness of God. If you will have to hide your faces through shame, we must call upon the hills and mountains to fall upon us and hide us from the sight of Heaven and earth. If you will be buried a foot deep in hell, many hundred times deeper must our damnation be.

They have less to answer for at the judgment-seat of God.

¹ Si quis post acceptam gratiam Novi Testamenti peccaverit, majori poena est dignus, tanquam majoribus beneficiis ingratus, et auxilio sibi dato non utens.

² Mellior est canis vivus, leone mortuo.—Eccles. ix. 4.

³ Mellior est paganus, Christiano impio.

⁴ Mellius enim erat illis non cognoscere viam justitiæ, quam post agnitionem, retrorsum converti ab eo, quod illis traditum est sancto mandato.—II. Pet. ii. 21.

⁵ Qui non credit jam judicatus est, quia non credit in nomine unigeniti Filii Dei.—John iii. 18.

Bad Christians will be mocked at in hell.

And how you will then jeer and mock at us ! It seems to me that I see a bad Christian going down to hell, bearing on his forehead the character of the Christian faith that he received in baptism, and bearing it to his eternal shame, although it was given him for his eternal glory. This indelible mark lets loose all the fires of hell to rage against him, increases immensely his pains and torments, gives cause to the demons and the other reprobate to mock at him more pitilessly. What hellish joy the demons will experience at seeing given over to them to be their slave, him who was once their master, and who could put them to flight and utterly vanquish them with the mere sign of the cross ! How the heathen and infidel reprobates will jeer at him, when they see him suffering in hell ! The Prophet Isaias gives us an idea of this, when he describes the entry of a proud man into hell: "Hell below was in an uproar to meet thee at thy coming, it stirred up the giants for thee. All the princes of the earth are risen up from their thrones, all the princes of nations."¹ The infidels and the gentiles shall cry out to thee: "All shall answer and shall say to thee: Thou also art wounded as well as we, thou art become like unto us; thy pride is brought down to hell."² How is it that you are here, in the same prison with us, in the same damnation? "And thou saidst in thy heart, I will ascend into Heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God."³ During life you boasted that you were in the one true Church, and that the Incarnate Son of God had applied the merits of His bitter passion and death in a special manner to your sanctification and salvation. You gloried in being called the temple of the Holy Ghost, the brother of the Saviour, a child of God and a future heir of the kingdom of Heaven. You looked on us as mere slaves of the devil, as savages who knew nothing of the true God. You condemned all who were not of the same religion as yourself as having no right to Heaven, and now you are lost as well as they. "Thou shalt be brought down to hell, into the depth of the pit. They that shall see thee shall turn towards thee and behold thee. Is this the man,"⁴ who formerly made such a boast of his Christianity?

¹ *Infernus subter conturbatus est in occursum adventus tui, suscitavit tibi gigantes. Omnes principes terræ surrexerunt de solis suis, omnes principes nationum.*—Isai. xlv. 9.

² *Universi respondebunt, et dicent tibi: Et tu vulneratus es, sicut et nos, nostri similis effectus es. Detracta est ad inferos superbia tua.*—Ibid. 10, 11.

³ *Qui dicebas in corde tuo: in cœlum conscendam, super astra Dei exaltabo solium meum.*—Ibid. 13.

⁴ *Ad infernum detraheris in profundum lacri: qui te viderint, ad te inclinabuntur, teque prospicient: Numquid iste est vir?*—Ibid. 15, 16.

What have you done with yourself now ? What have you done with the merits and the blood of Jesus Christ ? If we had known, as you did, that they could have been of use to us, we should, perhaps, have profited better by them than you did. God our Creator, our damnation is just, because we have misused the light of reason, by which we might have come to a knowledge of Thee ; but, God our Saviour, we knew nothing of Thee ; if we have not believed, we have at least not dishonored Thy faith, nor disgraced Thy holy baptism, nor trampled Thy blood under foot, like this wicked Christian ! It is on him that the whole weight of Thy anger must fall. Is there any torment in hell great enough for him ? Cease your complaints, ye unhappy ones ; what you ask for is already decreed ; your torments will be much lighter than theirs. Ah, says Salvianus, what a terrible sight, what a sad spectacle awaits the bad Christian when he enters hell ! How he will be filled with shame and anger at the bare recollection that he was in the one true Church ! This very fact will be his worst torture. Full of despair, he will say to himself for all eternity : If I had not been a Christian, I would not now be damned like so many infidel nations ; I could not be reproached with the abuse of graces that I never received, nor be tortured more severely on account of them ; but I am a Christian, and am lost. Oh, sin, how hast thou been able to bring those two things together, hell and a Christian ? Hell and one who has been baptized ? Hell and a brother-member and co-heir of Jesus Christ ? Alas, what might I not have been, if I had lived according to my belief ? And what am I now, what shall I be for all eternity ? Such will be the thoughts of a lost Christian in hell. But they will come too late.

My dear brethren, now is the time for us to consider this, and often to bring this thought before our minds : my holy faith must either make me happy, or else it must be the cause of my deeper damnation ; both these alternatives are now in my own power and choice. If I live as the laws of my religion prescribe, I am an heir of Heaven ; if I live otherwise, I shall suffer more severely in hell. Which shall I choose ? But why ask ? Can I hesitate a moment when there is question of selecting an eternity of happiness, or an eternity of misery ? None of us, I hope, will select the latter. Oh, no, my God, preserve us from such folly and desperation ! If we have not acted up to the present in accordance with the dignity and holiness of Thy religion, if we have sometimes dishonored it by our sins, we repent bitterly

Conclusion
and resolution
of
amend-
ment.

of having done so, and on this very day we are determined to wipe out that shame by the holy Sacrament of Penance, which Thou hast instituted in the true Church for the forgiveness of sins. Do Thou, O dearest Saviour, give us Thy powerful grace, that we may henceforth worthily bear the name of Christian, which we have received in baptism, and that we may be always distinguished from those who have never received this name, and from those who dishonor it; so that, by a living faith in Thy one true Catholic Church, we may come to the enjoyment of Thy Church triumphant in Heaven. Amen.

Another Introduction for the second Sunday after Easter :

Text.

Et fiet unum ovile, et unus Pastor.—John x. 16.

“And there shall be one fold, and one Shepherd.”

By the fold is meant the true Church of Christ. By the sheep we understand the faithful who belong to this Church; Jesus Christ declares that He Himself is our Shepherd, since He is the Supreme Head of the Catholic Church, whose vicar on earth is the Pope. Oh, my dear brethren, when will that wished-for time come, when those words shall be verified, when in the whole world there will be but “one fold and one Shepherd”? When all heathens, Turks, Jews, infidels, and heretics, who are now being lost outside the true Church, will be converted to the true Faith, and will become members of the Catholic Church, in which alone salvation is to be found? But this wish of mine goes too far; I should rather ask, when will the time come, when all who are now in the true fold, will act as becomes worthy sheep of Christ? For not all who profess to be sheep hear the voice of their Shepherd; not all who say they are Catholics, have a true and lively faith; for they do not live according to the laws and truths of their faith; nay, by their bad lives they greatly hinder the Church from spreading herself, and from extending her influence; as I shall now show.

Subject.

Bad Christians hinder the spread of the Christian Church. Why? She is a most holy Church, whose name they disgrace and calumniate. As I shall show in the first part. She is the only Church in which salvation is to be found, etc.—*continues as before.*

SECOND SERMON.

ON THE INCREDULITY OF BAD CHRISTIANS.

Subject.

Very many Catholics have faith, but not a lively faith; this does not help them to eternal life.—*Preached on the Tuesday of Pentecost.*

Text.

Ego veni, ut vitam habeant, et abundantius habeant.—John x. 10.

“I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly.”

Introduction.

What is the meaning of those words, “That they may have life, and may have it more abundantly”? Have we not life enough? Can we enjoy two, three, ten, or twenty superfluous lives at once? Barradius gives a beautiful interpretation of St. Augustine and many others, on this text, which is admirably suited to my present subject. “I am come,” he says, “that my sheep may have life in this world by a lively faith, and that they may more abundantly have eternal life in Heaven.”¹ The Gospel of to-day is in perfect accord with this interpretation. “I am the door,” says Christ, of the fold, that is, of the true Church; “by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.”² Joy of joys, my dear brethren, we shall go to Heaven! Eternal life is ours! For, are we not all in the fold, in the true Catholic Church? Have we not all life in this world by the one true Faith, and therefore, according to the promise of Christ, have we not a right to abundant life in Heaven? But we must not claim a triumph before we have gained the victory. Perhaps we flatter ourselves with the idea that we have the true Faith, while in reality it is only the appearance of a true faith; we are Catholics and profess to be so; others, too, know that we are Catholics, yet it may be that we have the name alone of Christian. According to the words of our Lord, we must have

¹ *Veni ut oves meæ vitam habeant in hoc sæculo per fidem vivam, et abundantius habeant vitam in cœlo æternam.*

² *Ego sum ostium: per me si quis introierit, salvabitur.*—John x. 9.

a living faith if we wish to have eternal life in Heaven. Oh, how I fear that amongst the great mass of human beings, who profess the Catholic Faith, there are but few who have a living faith ; while there are many, very many, who have but a dead faith, which will profit them nothing to eternal life ! Let us see now whether any of us belong to that number, according to the words of St. Paul : “ Try your own selves, if you be in the faith.”¹ To-day I wish to begin this examination partially, and I say—

Plan of Discourse.

Very many Catholics have the faith, but not a lively faith ; this does not help them to eternal life. Such is the whole subject of the present instruction ; to the consolation and encouragement of pious Christians, and as a wholesome warning for tepid and careless Christians, that they may henceforth not depend too much on their faith alone, lest they find themselves betrayed in the end.

Holy Spirit of God, who hast so abundantly bestowed life and energy on the vacillating faith of the apostles, cause our weak faith also to live by the influence of Thy grace, which we now humbly beg of Thee, through the intercession of Mary and of our holy angels guardian.

What is
meant by
living and
dead faith.

Has death, then, such an unrestrained right over men, that he can take possession of and kill even their hidden virtues and the most secret acts of their understanding ? Yet that must be so, else how could we speak of a dead and of a living faith ? True enough, my dear brethren, even faith in a Catholic Christian is subject to death ; not, indeed, to that natural death which separates the soul from the body, but to a moral death which takes away the soul from the faith. St. James describes to us clearly in what the life and soul of faith consist, namely, in its works : “ For, even as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.”² Although a tree may be in a most beautiful garden, yet, if it produces neither leaves nor fruit, it is nothing more than a dry piece of wood, whose roots cannot draw up the sap necessary to nourish it ; a body, although it is lying on a most magnificent bed, is no better than dead carrion, if it has neither life nor movement ; so also a Christian, although he is in the true Church and makes profession of the Catholic

¹ Vosmetipsos tentate, si estis in fide.—II. Cor. xiii. 5.

² Sicut enim corpus sine spiritu mortuum est, ita et fides sine operibus mortua est.—James ii. 26.

Faith, if his works are not in accordance with his faith, that is, if he does not live in obedience to its laws, and fulfil the duties they impose on him, then he bears about in his soul a dead and lifeless faith. Faith, as St. John Chrysostom says, is a wonderful light that shines in the understanding, and enables us to see what we could not see with our bodily eyes, according to the words of the Psalmist : “ For Thou lightest my lamp, O Lord.”¹ How long would the light shine in a lamp without oil to nourish the flame ? It would very soon go out, and leave you in darkness. The oil that keeps alive the flame of faith is the practice of good works ; when there is no more of these, the flame must go out. “ So faith also, if it have not works, is dead in itself.”² Such is the conclusion drawn by St. James.

Now what is the good of such a dead faith ? It makes little difference to me, says St. Augustine, whether I have a faith of that kind, or none at all, for it will not help me to eternal life. There is, as I believe, no heretic here, otherwise I should bring forward many proofs to make this point clear, for heretics are accustomed to depend altogether on faith ; we may live as we will, they say, as long as we believe in Christ ; that is enough to bring us to Heaven. But that is what you have to prove. I am speaking now to Catholics, so that it is not necessary for me to adduce further proof, than to say that the truth I am alluding to is an article of faith. If it were enough to believe in order to gain Heaven, oh, then I could easily undertake to convert the whole world to the Catholic religion ; for the greatest obstacle to most people is, not the difficulty of submitting the understanding to the mysteries of our faith, but the difficulty of observing its laws, which make the Catholic religion hateful to them, because they are given to sensuality. Oh, I would say to those people, why are you afraid of our laws and precepts ? Let them be as difficult as they may, what is it to us ? All we have to do is to believe ; we need not keep those laws. If faith alone were enough to gain Heaven, we should have no more to do than the devils. Here what St. James says : “ Thou believest that there is one God : thou dost well ; the devils also believe and tremble.”³ So that they do more than believe ; they tremble when they think of the severity of His justice ; but you, O man, if you think it is sufficient to believe, have no need to tremble.

¹ Quoniam tu illuminas lucernam meam, Domine.—Ps. xvii. 29.

² Sic et fides si non habet opera, mortua est in semetipsa.—James ii. 17.

³ Tu credis, quoniam unus est Deus : bene facis ; et dæmones credunt, et contremiscunt. —Ibid. 19.

Dead faith
is of no help
to eternal
life.

It is not
enough to
believe;
our works
must har-
monize with
our faith.
Proved from
Scripture.

No, my dear brethren, that will not do. "What shall it profit, my brethren," asks St. James, "if a man say he hath faith, but hath not works? Shall faith be able to save him?"¹ Even so little as a dead foot can walk, or a dead wing raise itself in the air. "Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord," says the Gospel of St. Matthew, "shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father who is in Heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven."² It is not enough for us to raise the eyes of the understanding to God; we must also stretch out a working hand to Him. St. Paul calls faith the foundation of things to be hoped for in the next life.³ How so? Look at a map; there you will see all the countries and kingdoms of the world marked down. Are they yours therefore? Certainly you have them on your map, and can look at them there; but the mere looking at them will not bring them into your possession; you must toil and strive a great deal if you wish to become the owner of them. Faith is like a map, on which Heaven and its glory are marked down; but we must labor in order to possess Heaven. "The kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence," such are the words of infallible Truth; its walls are not to be climbed by merely looking at them and standing still, for "the violent bear it away."⁴ "If I should have faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing,"⁵ says St. Paul. Therefore the same Apostle says of himself elsewhere: "I fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh."⁶ But what do you say, holy Apostle? Do you think that something is wanting to the perfection of the sufferings of Christ, which you must supply? Yes, he seems to answer, the sufferings of Christ are indeed infinitely perfect, but they want something to make them profitable to us. And what is that? Even that which is wanting to a medicine that is prepared to heal me—I must take it; even that which is wanting to the bread that is already baked to feed me—I must eat and swallow it. The medi-

¹ Quid proderit, fratres mei, si fidem quis dicat se habere, opera autem non habeat: numquid poterit fides salvare eum?—James ii. 14.

² Non omnis, qui dicit mihi: Domine, Domine, intrabit in regnum cœlorum, sed qui facit voluntatem Patris mei, qui in cœlis est, ipse intrabit in regnum cœlorum.—Matth. vii. 21.

³ Est autem fides sperandarum substantia rerum, argumentum non apparentium.—Heb. xi. 1.

⁴ Regnum cœlorum vim patitur, et violenti rapiunt illud.—Matth. xi. 12.

⁵ Si habuero omnem fidem, ita ut montes transferam, caritatem autem non habuero, nihil sum.—I. Cor. xiii. 2.

⁶ Adimpleo ea, quæ desunt passionum Christi, in carne mea.—Col. i. 24.

cine is good enough in itself, but it will not restore me to health as long as it remains at the chemist's; the bread is good, nourishing food, but it will give me no strength as long as it lies in the oven. In the same way, the merits of Christ are infinite, and have an infinite power to save my soul; but for them to be really profitable to me, it is not enough for me to meditate on them by faith, I must participate in them by good works. Therefore, "I fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh." Very many Christians will come forward on the last day with the miracles they wrought by their firm faith: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and cast out devils in Thy name, and done many miracles in Thy name?"¹ But the Lord will condemn them to hell with their miracles: "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me you that work iniquity;"² your lives do not harmonize with your faith. Let no one, then, flatter himself with the promise of Christ in St. Mark: "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved."³ Let no one say to himself, I believe, I am baptized, I shall be saved. "He speaks the truth, if his works accord with his faith,"⁴ St. Gregory says.

God wishes to save all men by the true Faith, but just in the same way as He will help me to cross a river, when there is no means of doing so unless by swimming; it is not enough for me to have the water, nor to have hands and feet; I must jump in, and struggle bravely with the current, or I shall not get across. It is not the water of holy baptism, which has already been poured on me, nor an idle faith, that will bring me to the haven of eternal life, but an active faith, joined with good works. God wishes to save all men by the true Faith; but in the same way in which Agelmundus, the Lombard king, saved the life of a little boy. The king was once walking on the bank of a river, when he saw some children floating about in a box. Fearing they would drown, and moved with pity, he held out his spear to them, that they might draw themselves in to the shore. The little ones looked on at his proceeding with astonishment, and

Confirmed
by similes.

¹ Multi dicent mihi in illa die: Domine, Domine, nonne in nomine tuo prophetavimus, et in nomine tuo dæmonia ejecimus, et in nomine tuo virtutes multas fecimus?—Matth. vii. 22.

² Et tunc confitebor illis: Quia nunquam novi vos: disceditis a me, qui operamini iniquitatem.—Ibid. 23.

³ Qui crediderit, et baptizatus fuerit, salvus erit.—Mark. xvi. 16.

⁴ Verum dicit, si fidem operibus tenet.

only one of them had presence of mind enough to seize hold of the spear and save himself from drowning. Agelmundus took the boy in his arms and adopted him as his son and successor. The other children, who saw the spear that was held out to save them, but who did not grasp it, were carried away by the waters and drowned. We Christians, my dear brethren, according to the words of St. Peter, are like new-born babes ;¹ we are placed upon many waters,² in which we are in danger of drowning at any moment. God, the King of Heaven, reaches out His spear to us, that is, the true Faith, along with sufficient helps of His grace, to save us from the danger and to bring us safely to the haven of eternal happiness. Now, he who, like the drowning children, merely looks at those graces, without stretching forth his hand to seize them and use them properly, how will he fare ? He will sink into the depths, and will be lost forever. Once for all, a faith that is dead, a faith according to which one does not live, is of no help to eternal life.

Many
Christians
have a
dead faith.

Now, my dear brethren, let us see what the Christian world is like in our days. Even of those Catholics who appear daily in our churches and hear Catholic sermons, who assist at the Holy Sacrifice, and make public profession of their faith, even of these I might with justice use the words of our Lord in the Gospel of St. Luke : “ But yet the Son of man, when He cometh, shall He find, think you, faith on earth ? ”³ I ask you if the Son of man were now to come down on earth, and to begin a search, do you think He would find faith in the world ? Would He find faith, I do not say amongst heathens and Turks, but in His own true Church, in His own holy house, amongst His own chosen people, whom He has called to the true Faith ? Yes, Lord, faith enough as far as words go !

They accept
all the arti-
cles of faith.

I will now, in Thy name, put some questions on the articles of faith from the Catechism ; the answers to them will be easy enough. Is there a God in the world, O Christians ? Certainly, all acknowledge and confess that. If so, where is God ? Only in Heaven ? No, He is in all places. Is He here in our midst ? In the streets ? In your houses ? In your rooms ? In your workshops ? In places of meeting for young persons of both sexes ? In dancing-houses ? In the most hidden corners ? Yes, He is everywhere, in all places, by

¹ Sicut modo geniti infantes.—I. Pet. ii. 2.

² Super aquas multas.—Ps. xxviii. 3.

³ Verumtamen Filius hominis veniens, putas, inveniet fidem in terra ?—Luke xviii. 8.

day and night ; from His all-seeing eye not even the most secret thought is concealed. Has this God any right over you ? Most certainly ; from Him we have our beginning, He has created us and given us all that we have ; He is our lawful and supreme Master. For what end has He created you ? That we may serve Him, keep His commandments, and love Him above all things. Does He, then, notice those who serve and those who do not ? Yes, He takes note of all our desires, words, and actions. He remembers them, and on the day of judgment He will bring them forward and make them known to the whole world. What reward will He give you, if you serve Him and keep His commandments ? For every good work, for every momentary service He will give His eternal kingdom of Heaven, which is filled with endless joys. But, if one does not serve Him, and transgresses His commands, what has such a one to expect ? Endless torments and flames amongst the demons in hell. When will each one receive his reward, or his punishment ? Immediately after death. But must we all die ? Oh, certainly. When ? No one knows ; I may die this week, this day, this very hour ; the time is uncertain. How often can one die ? Only once ; and if anything goes wrong then, it cannot be amended for all eternity. Very well ; now, do you believe all that to be true ? I believe it, I believe it, you would all cry out, we are all ready to give our lives for these truths ; not the least one of them can be false ! And why so ? Because they have all been revealed by the One God, who knows all things and who cannot be deceived, who cannot reveal anything, unless according to His own knowledge, and who therefore cannot betray or deceive. Hear this, O Lord, and see what a number of believers there is !

But if we could all see what Thou seest, if we could find out what impression, what effect those well-known truths have had on the mind of each one, and how the life of each individual corresponds with those truths ; would the right faith be found in every one ? Alas, I am afraid that we might affirm of a vast number what the Abbot Guericus says of his own times : “ If you were to inquire in our days about the articles of faith, you would find almost every one a Christian ; if you examine the way in which people live, you will find very few real Christians.”¹ For, to believe in a great, Almighty God, who is

But their
lives do not
harmonize
with them.

¹ Hodie si de mysterio fidel interrogas, omnes fere invenies Christianissimos ; si conscientiam discutias, paucos admodum invenies vere Christianos.—Gueric. Abb. Serm. 4, *De Epiph.*

worthy of infinite love, as we all acknowledge, and yet to refuse Him so often the obedience due to Him, to despise His will and neglect His law ; to believe in a God who is present everywhere, and yet to have as little respect for Him as if He were a blind God ; to do acts of wantonness in His presence that one would be ashamed to do before a beggar ; to appear in His house with so little reverence ; to convert the church, in which He dwells really, into a place of idle talk, into a workshop of sin, of impure looks and desires ; to believe that one must die, and yet to sacrifice all one's thoughts, cares, and troubles, nay, even one's whole heart to earthly things, as if one could live here forever ; to believe that we can die but once, and that it is uncertain how, when, or where, although on that one death an eternity of happiness or misery depends, and yet to take such little trouble to prepare for death, and spend weeks, months, and years in sin ; to believe that a judgment awaits us in which all our actions will be made manifest, and yet, through a childish shame, to conceal our sins in confession ; to believe that an eternal Heaven awaits us as a reward, and yet to take such little trouble to secure it, to refuse to suffer or bear anything for the sake of it, to barter it even, by sin, for some worthless thing ; to believe that there is a hell, that is, a place of all imaginable tortures, without any comfort or mitigation, without a moment's rest from suffering for all eternity, without the hope of ever being released ; to believe that this hell is the punishment of a single mortal sin, even of thought, and yet to live as if it were only a fable, to choose this hell for the sake of a momentary pleasure, and to live in the state of sin without repentance and in danger of being lost at any moment. We shudder when we look into a flaming furnace : we laugh, and sin, and yet believe in an eternal hell. How are all these things to be reconciled ?

Therefore,
they are
Christians
only out-
wardly.

What can we say of a faith of that kind, my dear brethren ? It is astonishing that there are Christians who refuse to believe in what is terrible or fearful to them ; is it not much more astonishing that there are Christians who are neither frightened nor terrified at what they themselves believe to be terrible ? And yet do not, we might say, the greater number of Christians live in that way, in spite of their faith ? Oh, no, they can hardly have any faith ; if they had, they would not live as they do. St. Paul says, with good reason : “ They profess that they know God, but in their works they deny Him ; being

abominable, and incredulous, and to every good work reprobate.”¹ It is only a lip faith, but not a real one ; it is a faith that appears outwardly, but has no substantial existence. Hear what Herod Atticus once said to a philosopher whom he had admitted to an audience. Having asked him what he was, the philosopher answered : “ Sir, I am a philosopher ; do you not see that by my dress ? ” “ Excuse me, my dear man,” said Herod, “ I see the dress, but I do not see the philosopher.”² Oh, Christians, the same might be said to very many of you ; you have the crucifix and pictures of the Saints in your rooms ; you go every day to church to hear Mass, to listen to a sermon, to pray for one or two hours ; you carry your rosaries in your hands, your prayer-book under your arm ; when occasion offers, you can speak cleverly enough of the articles and mysteries of our faith, etc. But it is all only outward show, for your lives are vain, idle, impure, and impious. Oh, you poor people ! I see the dress, the appearance, the outward show of a Christian ; but the mark of a true Christian I do not see in you. You have a dead faith, which has neither life nor power, and cannot help you to Heaven.

Hitherto we have been speaking of those mysteries and articles of faith which Christians have in common with Jews, and Catholics in common with heretics. Now, if one were to examine those truths which concern Catholic morality, which Jesus Christ Himself has preached, and caused His apostles to preach, and which He has taught and confirmed by His own example ; would we nowadays find a proper lively faith in all Catholics ? Bring them again to the proof, O Lord ! let us again hear the maxims which Thou hast laid down as the foundation of a Christian life, such as will bring us to Heaven : “ Amen, I say to you, unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.”³ “ If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”⁴ “ Love not the world nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him ; ”⁵ that is to say,

The moral doctrine of the Church is holy.

¹ Confitentur se nosse Deum, factis autem negant: cum sint abominati, et incredibiles, et ad omne opus bonum reprob. — Titus i. 16.

² Habitum video, philosophum non video.

³ Amen, dico vobis: nisi conversi fueritis et efficiamini sicut parvuli, non intrabitis in regnum coelorum. — Matth. xviii. 3.

⁴ Si quis vult post me venire, abneget semetipsum, et tollat crucem suam quotidie, et sequatur me. — Luke ix. 23.

⁵ Nolite diligere mundum, neque ea quæ in mundo sunt. Si quis diligit mundum, non est caritas Patris in eo. — I. John ii. 15.

we must not follow the vain fashions and customs of the world. "He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me."¹ "But I say to you, love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, etc."² "Thou shalt love thy neighbor," that is, all men, "as thyself."³ "If riches abound, set not your heart upon them;"⁴ for it will be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man, whose soul is in his wealth, to enter into Heaven by the narrow gate. "Be ye merciful."⁵ What you shall do to the least of my brethren, you shall do to Me. Do unto others as you wish they should do unto you. "Be sober and watch."⁶ "If thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee."⁷ If thy hand or foot scandalize thee, cut it off; that is, watch over thy senses with the greatest care, lest they be an occasion of sin to thee. "Wo to that man by whom scandal cometh,"⁸ who in any way gives occasion to sin. Blessed are the poor, the meek, the pure of heart, those that hunger and thirst after justice, those who suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.⁹ Strive, do violence to yourselves, that you may travel on the rough way and enter by the narrow gate.¹⁰ Look upon yourselves as strangers and pilgrims on earth, whose only business it is to go to Heaven, their true country.

All Christians profess these things with the lips.

Enough, O Lord, enough! How is it with us Christians? Do we believe all these truths? Yes, you would all cry out, I believe, I believe; for, if it is infallibly true that there is a judgment, a Heaven, and a hell, because the God of truth has said so, then it must also be infallibly true that they cannot enter Heaven who are not humble, nor merciful, who do not forgive their enemies, nor bear their cross with patience, nor avoid the wicked customs of the world, and so on; because the same God has said so, and He can no more deceive or be deceived in these, than in the other things; so that we must believe one as well as the other. Such is the case; we all believe it, O Lord. We admire the example Thou hast given us to show us the right

¹ Qui amat patrem aut matrem plus quam me, non est me dignus.—Matth. x. 37.

² Ego autem dico vobis: Diligite inimicos vestros, benefacite his, qui oderunt vos, etc.—Ibid. v. 44.

³ Diliges proximum tuum sicut teipsum.—Ibid. xix. 19.

⁴ Divitiæ si affluent, nolite cor apponere.—Ps. lxi. 11.

⁵ Estote misericordes.—Luke vi. 36.

⁶ Sobrii estote et vigilate.—I. Pet. v. 8.

⁷ Si oculus tuus scandalizat te, erue eum, et projice abs te.—Matth. v. 29.

⁸ Væ homini illi, per quem scandalum venit.—Ibid. xviii. 7.

⁹ Beati pauperes, etc.—Ibid. v. 3-10.

¹⁰ Contendite intrare per angustam portam.—Luke xiii. 24.

way to Heaven ; for we know Thee to be a humble, meek, merciful, and patient God, and we have long since sworn in holy baptism to do our best to follow Thy doctrine and Thy mode of life.

Such is the belief and profession of the proud man, who is so exalted in his own estimation that he will hear nothing of humbling himself, or giving way to others. Such is the belief and profession of that vain woman who thinks only of her own comfort and gratification, and leads a luxurious, idle life ; who is more impressed by the new fashions and the usages of the world, than by the humility and holiness of the Gospel. Such, too, is the belief and profession of that impure young man, who seeks no other Heaven than that which his sensual pleasures procure for him. Such is the belief and profession of that dissipated worldling, who gives occasion, to innocent eyes and hearts, of impure desires and actions, by a too great luxury or immodesty in dress, or by a too great freedom of manner. Such is the belief of the miser, who looks upon gold and riches as his God ; who often prefers to lose his soul, rather than a piece of money ; who has not even a kind word, much less a bit of bread, for the poor at his door ; who seeks to enrich himself by all kinds of injustice and cheating in contracts, sales, and purchases. Such is the belief and profession of the vindictive man, who cannot bear the least word of contradiction, but gives way to hatred and anger against his opponent. Such is the belief and profession of the drunkard, whose god is his belly ; who ruins his health, and impoverishes his wife and children by his gambling and drinking. Such is the belief and profession of those evil-tongued persons, who rarely mind their own affairs, but are very attentive to those of others ; who carry stories about their neighbor's faults, and take away, or lessen the good name of others. Such is the belief and profession of those who laugh at the ceremonies of the Church, retain heretical books that are forbidden to be read, and read them under the pretext that they are in no danger of perversion, or that they seek only to pass away the time, etc. No, Christians, that will not do. It is forbidden, under pain of excommunication, even to keep such books in one's house, although one may not intend reading them ; and that, not only on account of perversion, but especially through hatred and execration of the heretical and wicked doctrine which they contain ; therefore, just as it is forbidden to have anything to do with one who is excommunicated, so it is

But most
act contrary
to them.

also forbidden to use any books that are condemned by the Church. In a word, such is the belief and profession of all Catholics ; yet we see and experience with most of them, customs and habits that are directly opposed to the poor, humble, meek, pure, and patient life and teaching of Jesus Christ. How, I ask again, can these things be reconciled, how can such lives harmonize with such a faith ?

How wrong
this is.
Shown by
smiles.

A certain painter was once guilty of a fearful blasphemy : he made a hideous figure of a devil, and wrote under it the words : “ This is Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God.” It is hardly less blasphemous for a sensual, impure, unjust, proud, and impious man to boast of bearing the name and title of Christian, that is, a follower of Christ. “ Ah,” says St. Augustine, “ in vain does he bear the name of Christian who does not endeavor to imitate Christ,”¹ according to the words of St. John : “ He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also to walk, even as He walked.”² Christ is our Head ; if He is not to be seen in us and in our actions, we are not Christians, but abortions, for we are as members without a head, and we cannot have any real, supernatural life in us. The celebrated Godfrey of Bouillon, when he was fighting against the Saracens, cut off a Turk’s head and right arm, on one occasion, with one stroke of his sword, yet the mutilated body remained on horseback, and was carried off at full gallop towards the town. If any one had seen this from a distance, he could have sworn that it was a living rider ; but those who were near and saw that the rider was headless, must have been convinced that it was not a living body, but a corpse. It is the same with many Christians : to judge from outward appearances, they seem to have true life in Christ, for they act like real Christians : they go to church, are present sometimes at public devotions, and say their prayers ; but when we look more closely into their actions, we see that they are far from following the example and practising the virtues of Christ. Then we find out that they are men without a head, that they are Christians separated from Christ, that their faith is dead. Wicked man, we must say : “ Thou hast the name of being alive, and thou art dead.”³

The early
Christians

Happy times of the early Christians, why are you no longer

¹ Christiani nomen frustra sortitur, qui Christum minime imitatur.—S. Aug. l. 6, *de Vita Christian.*

² Qui dicit se in ipso manere, debet sicut ille ambulavit, et ipse ambulare.—I. John II. 6.

³ Nomen habes quod vivas, et mortuus es.—Apoc. III. 1.

with us ? In those days, says the holy Bishop Pacianus, in the beginning of the Church, Christians had not so many and such clear instructions in their faith as we have nowadays ; they knew nothing of the learned explanations of our mysteries which the holy Fathers, the exegetes, and theologians have since given ; they could not dispute nor argue with heathens and infidels, nor convince them of error by force of reasoning : they knew how to die for their faith, although they could not argue in its defence ;¹ but their lives and actions were a far more powerful argument than mere words. See, they might have said to the heathens, how edifying and blameless our lives are, behold our humility and modesty in dress and in outward behavior, our piety and fervor in prayer and in the divine service, our moderation in eating and drinking, our meekness and patience in bearing persecution and trials, our concord and brotherly love towards one another, our aversion to the public games and amusements so common among the heathens, etc. From these things you may infer the dignity and holiness of our religion.

proved the holiness of their religion by their lives.

Have we not the same faith as they, my dear brethren ? But can we boast of it with the same reason as the early Christians ? If a heathen were to come to me now, and ask me questions about the mysteries of our faith, which to him are incredible, and I venture to explain them to him, showing how they cannot be false, so that our religion must necessarily be the true one ; and if he, after having listened to and understood what I said, were to ask me, How is it, then, that of the vast number of Christians who profess that faith, there are so many whose practice in no way accords with what they believe ? How is it that in such a holy, pure, and perfect religion, such perversity is to be found ? What answer could I make him ? I should be dumb-founded with shame, and could only acknowledge to myself that his question is reasonable enough. But I might turn aside his awkward question by quoting the words of Pic de la Mirandole : “ It is great madness not to believe the Gospel, whose truth is confirmed by the blood of the martyrs, proved by miracles, approved of by reason, proclaimed by the elements and acknowledged by the demons.”² Even then he could answer me in the words of the same writer : “ Far greater is the madness of you Christians, who do not doubt of the truth of the Gospel, to live

Many nowadays are put to shame by heathens.

¹ Sciunt mori et non disputari.

² Magna est insania Evangelio non credere, cujus veritatem sanguis martyrum clamat, prodigia probant, ratio confirmat, elementa loquuntur, dæmones confitentur.

as if you had no doubt of its being false.”¹ I would pretend not to understand his reproof, and would say: Are you not ashamed to worship stocks and stones in your temples, as if they were gods, although they can do you neither good nor harm? None of us Christians would be so foolish as to set foot in one of your temples, much less bend the knee before your idols. And are you not ashamed, he could retort, that in your churches, nay, anywhere, since you say your God is present in all places, you show so little respect and fear of Him, although He can reward or punish you eternally; are you not ashamed, I ask, to offend Him in His very presence? You are not foolish enough to set foot in our temples, but you are not ashamed to adopt our manners and customs. So that he would again reduce me to silence. Early Christians, where are your times gone? They knew not how to argue about their faith, but for its sake and for the sake of preserving their virtue, they knew how to give up life and property.² We sometimes boast that we are ready to shed our blood for our faith if it were necessary, and yet we cannot restrain our evil desires nor endure the least difficulty for the sake of observing the laws of this faith. We should think it an honor and glory to die as martyrs for our religion, and yet we are often ashamed and lack the courage to observe the maxims and principles of the faith; many, in fact, are ashamed to be called pious, innocent, humble, and devout Catholics.

They have, then, a dead faith, which is of no use to procure salvation, but helps to a deeper damnation.

What sort of a faith is that? Ah, we might well cry out with the Prophet David: “There is now no Saint: truths are decayed from among the children of men.”³ There are few zealous, upright, pious Christians to be found, because there is hardly any faith amongst Christians. The truths of faith are believed in, but only in a half-hearted way, only so far as it suits each one’s convenience, and even that belief hardly goes beyond mere words. Our faith consists of a mere speculative knowledge, which does not show itself in work and practice; it is a dead faith, which has neither life nor spirit. What is the good of a faith like that? Will it help us to Heaven, to eternal life? By no means; in fact, I have said too little against it, because it is a faith of that kind which will rather help us to eternal death and to a deeper damnation; for, if a heathen is sent to

¹ Sed longe major insania est, si de Evangelii veritate non dubites, vivere tamen, quasi de ejus falsitate non dubitares.

² Scilicet mori, et non disputare.

³ Defecit sanctus, quoniam diminutæ sunt veritates a filiis hominum.—Ps. xl. 2.

hell because he did not serve God, whom he did not know, but could have known if he had wished, what will become of a wicked Christian, who has received the light of the true faith in such abundance, and who knew the duties and obligations of his religion clearly enough, but did not fulfil them? A single hell for the former, a tenfold hell for the latter. "Go, thy faith hath made thee whole,"¹ are the words of our Saviour, which He so oft repeated when on earth. But He will speak in a far different tone to many Christians, at the last day, when He will come to judge the world: "Away with you to everlasting fire; thy faith hath condemned thee." You have said, I believe in the Gospel of Christ; that very Gospel in which you believed has condemned you, because you have not lived according to it; thy faith hath condemned thee.

Ah, my dear brethren, I hope those words will never be said to any one of us; for otherwise, it were better that we never had the light of faith. Therefore, I will conclude with the exhortation of St. Paul to Timothy: "Holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience."² We are Christians and we belong to the one true Church of Jesus Christ. Eternal thanks and praise to the good God, who has called us, in preference to so many others, to the true fold! But let us always live like true Christians, and profess our faith, not merely with the lips, but in our actions; above all, let us avoid mortal sin, which darkens and extinguishes the light of faith, the life of which is kept up by zeal in doing good; and then by a living, active faith, we shall attain to the possession of that abundant life which is promised us in Heaven. Rejoice, therefore, ye good Christians, who endeavor to serve God with zeal and piety. You will certainly hear the words: "Thy faith hath made thee whole." Amen.

Conclusion
and exhortation to a
Christian
life.

Another Introduction for the Feast of the Ascension:

Text.

Qui crediderit et baptizatus fuerit, salvus erit.—Mark. xvi.
16.

"He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved."

Rejoice, my brethren, we are going to Heaven. Hear those words: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

¹ Vade, fides tua te salvum fecit.—Matth. ix. 22.

² Habentes mysterium fidei in conscientia pura.—I. Tim. iii. 9.

But we are all baptized. We also believe; and not merely like heretics, but like true children of the Roman Catholic Church, the one true Church of Christ. Therefore the reward belongs to us, which Christ has promised to those who are baptized and believe: we shall be saved. Rejoice, then, I say to you again. But, wait; we must not claim a triumph before gaining the victory. Perhaps we flatter ourselves with the idea that we have the true Faith, whereas we may have only the appearance of it. How so? Hear what St. Gregory says on the words of the text: "Perhaps each one may say to himself, I believe, therefore I shall be saved. He says the truth if he proves his faith by his works,"¹ that is to say, if his faith is alive and active. Oh, how I fear that, amongst the great mass of Catholics, there may be very few who have a lively faith; many, very many whose faith is dead and unprofitable to eternal life, to whom might be addressed the reproach that Christ gave His disciples before His Ascension, as we read in to-day's Gospel: "He upbraided them with their incredulity and hardness of heart."² Let us see now whether any of us be of the number of those, as St. Paul exhorts us, etc.—*continues as before.*

The same sermon may be delivered on the first Sunday after Easter and on the Feast of St. Thomas, the Apostle, on the words: "Be not faithless, but believing."³

¹ Fortasse unusquisque apud semetipsum dicat, ego jam credidi, salvus ero. Verum dicit si fidem operibus tenet.

² Exprobravit incredulitatem eorum et duritiam cordis.—Mark xvi. 14.

³ Noli esse incredulus, sed fidelis.—John xx. 27.

ON THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS.

On Pride.

THIRD SERMON.

ON THE VAIN LABOR OF THE PROUD.

Subject.

The ambitious man who seeks honor and authority amongst men : 1. Gains nothing from men on earth. 2. Gains nothing from God in Heaven.—*Preached on the fourth Sunday after Pentecost*

Text.

Per totam noctem laborantes, nihil cepimus.—Luke v. 5.

“ We have labored all the night, and have taken nothing.”

Introduction.

What an annoying thing it is to labor and effect nothing, to fish and catch nothing! No wonder, then, that the fishermen, of whom we read in to-day's Gospel, brought their nets and boat to land in sheer vexation. Why should we give ourselves further trouble, they thought? “ We have labored all the night and have taken nothing.”¹ We are tired of this useless toil. How many fishermen there are nowadays, my dear brethren, who also labor in vain! The world is often compared to a great sea, in which worldlings toil day and night to secure a large fish; some fish for honors, praise, reputation, and authority amongst men; others for wealth and temporal goods; others for sinful and impure pleasures. And according to the testimony of St. John, that is all that this great sea of the world contains. But

¹ *Per totam noctem laborantes, nihil cepimus.*

what fruitless labor! After having toiled and troubled for many years, they must at last cry out, like the Apostles : “ We have labored all the night, and have taken nothing.” And so it is in reality, when we consider the matter in the right light. Nothing is more capable of inducing a reasonable man to withdraw his heart and his desires from the vanity of the world, in order to fix them on God and heavenly things, than due knowledge and consideration of this truth. I will speak to-day only of the first class of those fishers of the world ; that is, of those who strive for honors ; and I say—

Plan of Discourse.

The ambitious man, who seeks honor and authority amongst men, gains nothing. Such is the subject of the sermon. He gains nothing from men on earth. The first part. He gains nothing from God in Heaven. The second part. Therefore he labors foolishly who seeks for anything else but to be humble and to please God. Such shall be the conclusion.

Oh, most humble Virgin, and you, holy angels guardian, obtain for us the grace of God, that we may know this truth !

Most people
try to gain
honor and
authority
amongst
men.

Honor and authority amongst men on earth consist in a sentiment of esteem which others have for one, either on account of his excellent skill and natural gifts, or on account of his virtue and piety, or on account of the high offices and dignities which raise him above others. This sentiment causes people, generally, to speak in high terms of such a one, and to show him outward marks of respect. See, my dear brethren, that is all the fish that an ambitious man can catch. For the sake of it, people of both sexes and all conditions give themselves no end of trouble and labor. For this, many a soldier goes into the field and exposes himself to the greatest danger, to gain the reputation of courage. For this, many a one wastes himself away with study, so as to gain a reputation for learning. For this, many a one gives away his money by hundreds and thousands, to get a mere name and title of honor, which will give him a higher rank than others. For this, many a one makes himself a regular slave in the service of some great man, wearing his life away day and night by constant bowing and scraping, so as either to gain or to retain the favor of his master, and that he may thus compel others to treat him with respect and honor. For this, many a one is extravagant in outward show, in building and furnishing houses, in giving parties and entertainments,

in order to get a name and authority for himself, by the influence of his wealth. For this, many a woman dresses above her station, and adorns and tricks herself out, more sometimes than the Gospel laws allow, in order to exhibit herself, as if for sale, to the eyes of men, that she may be admired by others, or that she may not appear to less advantage than others. For this the commandments of God are often set aside, either to please men, or not to displease them, so that many a one drinks more than he is able, or can afford, to the injury of his health, and many a vindictive man refuses to bear the least insult, that he may gain the reputation of bravery ; nay, what is more to be wondered at, there are hypocrites who put on an appearance of humility in word and behavior, so as to gain the name of being humble, pious, and devout. In a word, there are few who are not tickled by ambition, and who do not try to gain the praise of men, now and then.

But is it worth all the labor and trouble ? Suppose I catch the fish I am looking for, what have I ? Nothing ; a breath of air which comes out of the mouths of a few in my praise ; for it is in that that my praise and glory consist, and of course it vanishes with the breath, and leaves no trace behind. Or it is an empty imagination, a fleeting thought that a few men conceive of me, which constitutes my honor and reputation ; a thought which the first distraction that comes drives away completely ; a thought which I cannot see, of which I often know nothing, nor will ever know anything. And what can it matter to my happiness whether the Pope of Rome, or any lady or gentleman here has a good or a bad opinion of me, as long as I know nothing about it ? If I am sometimes aware of it, if men show me the esteem they have of me by their words and by outward tokens of respect, I cannot know, nor be certain that these come from the heart, and that they are not mere flatteries and compliments, which are cheap and common enough nowadays, so that one has a servant and attendant in almost every man he meets in the streets. Even if I am certain that people really respect me, and that their praise of me comes from the heart, do I gain anything by that, which I had not before ? Am I better, because others think highly of me ? Am I greater or nobler, because they pay me compliments and show me respect ? Am I happier because they speak well of me ? Have I attained greater perfection, skill, or virtue, or have I acquired any praiseworthy quality, be-

A foolish labor, because it seeks what is nothing in itself.

cause I enjoy a high position and dignity? No, I am the same as I was before in the eyes of God, and not a whit greater. Even the pagan philosopher, Aristotle, says: Honor and esteem are not in the person honored, far from it; they are in the person who pays the respect or conceives the esteem.¹ Hence, since that which is not in me can have no effect on me, the good opinion and praise of the one can no more do me good, than the bad opinion and blame of the other can do me harm. Tell me, oh, ambitious man, if I have a bad opinion of you, and say that you are ugly, weak, sickly, stupid, and ignorant; have you really those faults and frailties in you, because I say that you have them? No, certainly not. Very well; but, if so, you will surely not be any greater or better, if I, and every one, were to think and speak well of you; nor will you be any worse or more contemptible if we neither think nor speak of you in that way. It would be a foolish thing, then, for me to trouble myself about a breath of air. It would be a case of fishing in vain, and although I should get what I sought for, yet, if I consider the matter in its true light, I shall have to say that all that I have obtained for my trouble is worth nothing.

Nay, in high positions there is more trouble and annoyance.

With regard to the favor of the great, and positions of authority, which are so much sought after by the ambitious man, it is with us as with little children. Sometimes a child looks up to the top of a high tower, and thinks that Heaven is up there. Oh, it thinks, if I could only climb up, I might hear the angels sing and touch Heaven with my hand! Well, there are the stairs; you can go up, if you wish. And the little one climbs up with a great deal of trouble. Well, do you hear the angels yet? No; but instead of that the poor child has become dizzy. How foolish I was, it thinks, to imagine that Heaven was here; I find that it is as far off as ever; how am I to get down again? I am so tired climbing up that I am afraid to go down. The same thing happens to many an old man; he looks upon important offices and great honors as a high tower, on the top of which he will find, as he imagines, a Heaven full of happiness; he looks with envious eyes at those who have already gained the summit; he sees the pomp and magnificence they display, the favor and influence they have with the great, the titles they enjoy, the honor that is paid them, the obsequiousness of those who expect favors from them, etc. He sees all this outward glitter, and thinks, oh, what a beautiful tower! if I could only

¹ Honor non est in honorato, sed in honorante.

get to the top of it ! If I could have that office, that employment, how happy I should be, how people would respect me ! If, after long running hither and thither, and bowing and scraping in all directions, and seeking the favor and patronage of all kinds of people, and spending money right and left, if even then he succeeds in reaching the top of the tower, what sort of a Heaven has he discovered ? A very indifferent one ; he grows giddy, he finds all the care, trouble, and labor that such important positions bring with them, when one endeavors to do his duty properly in them ; he who before could live independently in his proper state, and look after his own interests, must now, after having sold his freedom, be a servant and attendant upon others ; he who formerly could enjoy his meals in quiet, is now very often prevented by his business from doing so ; even the honor shown him, the audiences he must give, the compliments he must hear, become burdensome to him at last, so that he is not his own master, and cannot any longer enjoy himself after his own fashion, in peace and quiet. I need not say that a necessary consequence of all this will be, that he gives up his usual devotions, and has no time left for the service of God, and the important business of his salvation. Besides, he has so much secret enmity and envy to contend against, that he must be always in dread of being supplanted and of being turned away in disgrace.

Cardinal Baronius used to say that, after he became cardinal, he was no longer at liberty to go out and visit his dear friends, as he wished ; for he could not go out without a whole retinue of servants in his train ; whereas, before, he might go as he pleased. Margaret Aldobrandina, as Cardinal Pallavicini writes, after her marriage with the Duke of Parma was obliged to dress in very costly style, and she grew so tired of it, that she wrote to her uncle, Pope Clement VIII., to allow her to give up this magnificence, and to dress like any ordinary woman of respectable standing, for comfort's sake. The same Cardinal says that he knew princes and dukes, with whom he was well acquainted, to be more unhappy, in the midst of all their splendor, than ordinary citizens who had to depend on their daily labor. And in fact, my dear brethren, if we look at the matter rightly, we shall see that it is very difficult for great men to enjoy themselves heartily. For, where can they go to enjoy themselves ? Not in the midst of their own state and magnificence. certainly, where they expect every one to bend the knee

Proved by
examples.

to them. Oh, no ; there they dare not speak a word, nor make the least movement unbecoming their dignity ; there all must be in earnest, for it is not the place for amusements ; no chance, therefore, of a hearty laugh in the midst of that grandeur. How, then, can they enjoy themselves ? By disguising themselves once or twice a year, and putting on the dress of an innkeeper, a coachman, or a lackey, as is the custom at Shrovetide, so that they may move about freely among their own servants, and that the latter may not be obliged to show them any special marks of respect. That is the pleasure they enjoy—a pleasure which their servants can have every day.

The ambitious do not find even the worthless thing they seek.

But why should I spend so much time describing the vanity and nothingness of worldly honor and glory ? The ambitious man, who toils and struggles for it, very often fails in securing the object of his search. In a public lottery there are countless tickets, from which one may draw after having paid a certain sum ; all sorts of costly things are hanging up—silver plate, swords, mirrors, and other objects, all designed to catch the eye and attract people to the lottery, by inspiring them with the hope of winning some of these things. Yet, how many there are who spend ten, twenty, or thirty dollars, and draw nothing but blanks each time ; or else they get some worthless thing, a knife or a spoon of no value, which they throw away in disgust ; and so they have to go home full of discontent at having squandered so much money for nothing. It seems as if the world gets up a lottery of that kind to cheat the ambitious. Honor, authority, esteem, praise, and a good reputation amongst men are the prizes offered ; the ambitious are easily caught by the bait, and eagerly stretch forth their hands to seize something valuable ; but after having spent much labor and money, they get, very often, nothing but blanks ; rarely do they succeed in gaining the particular prize they long for ; they wish to be honored, esteemed, and praised by men, but they are bitterly disappointed.

But nearly always the opposite.

For, nearly always the event is in direct opposition to their wishes ; instead of honor and authority, they draw down upon themselves hatred and envy ; instead of gaining praise and making a great name for themselves, they lose the reputation they already enjoyed ; instead of being spoken of with respect, they are laughed at ; instead of being honored, they are treated with contempt. Nor can it be otherwise ; for there is nothing more intolerable than an ambitious man who is known to think too much of himself, and tries to raise himself above others ; he

draws down upon himself the anger of the great, and the hatred of the common people. The two children of Zebedee, as St. Cyril remarks, desired to be greater than the other apostles; they asked their mother to obtain for them from Christ the privilege of sitting, one at His right, the other at His left hand, in His kingdom: "Say that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand, and the other on Thy left, in Thy kingdom."¹ But what did they gain by their request? Nothing but the displeasure of the other apostles; for St. Matthew says: "And the ten hearing it, were moved with indignation against the two brethren."² And so it happens nowadays amongst men; a proud man, who is arrogant in speech and bearing, and tries to make others honor him, imagines that every one thinks him a learned, prudent, experienced, and clever man, while the contrary is really the case; for he is looked upon as a conceited man, who thinks a great deal too much of himself, and who looks down upon his fellows. A vain woman adorns and tricks herself out, until she looks, as the Holy Scriptures say, like a magnificent temple: "Their daughters decked out, adorned around about after the similitude of a temple."³ She seeks to gain the respect and esteem of men, and imagines that every one must say of her: Oh, how beautiful she is, how well dressed! she cannot be one of the common people. Believe me, she is mightily deceived, especially if her dress is above her condition, or if it shows signs of excessive vanity or immodesty. In that case, a good and sensible Christian must say to himself: What worldliness she shows, what frivolity; it would be far better for her good name if she dressed more reasonably. The common people point at her, and turn her into ridicule. Such is the honor and respect shown to that kind of people. They try to please men, and are bitterly disappointed. That is the way the false world betrays its servants.

It is true that those who occupy high positions, or who display great magnificence, are treated with outward respect; every one bows to them; they hear flattery and praise on all sides, especially from those who require their assistance; but where is the honor or glory in that? You might as well say that a poor student has attained a high position, because he acts

Honor does not consist in outward tokens of respect.

¹ Dic. ut sedeant hi duo filii mei, unus ad dexteram tuam, et unus ad sinistram in regno tuo.—Matth. xx. 21.

² Et audientes decem, indignati sunt de duobus fratribus.—Ibid. 24.

³ Filiae eorum compostæ, circumornatæ ut similitudo templi.—Ps. cxlii. 12.

the part of king on the stage ; for he has even more respect paid to him, and the praises of his heroic deeds are loudly sounded. But when the play is at an end, he wraps his ragged mantle around him, and carries home the books of the little boy, born of wealthier parents, who bent the knee before him on the stage. Honor and glory before the world consist, as I have said, in the good opinion that men have of one, and in the terms of sincere praise in which they speak of him on account of that opinion. They do not consist in empty compliments. How often do not people praise outwardly what they inwardly detest and despise ? Many a one receives tokens of respect, who, when his back is turned, is laughed at. Many a one, who is accustomed to fawn upon others, through necessity or policy, really detests the persons he pretends to admire.

Therefore,
they labor
in vain.

“ We have labored all the night and have taken nothing.” These words may be used with truth by all who are influenced by ambition, and who seek honor and glory before the world. They labor long in vain ; they fish for a long time and with great trouble, but catch nothing ; generally, in fact, the opposite of what they desire happens. And this is in perfect accordance with Thy justice, O great God, for thereby Thou makest the pride and vanity of men to be the cause of their greater shame and disgrace. So true are the words Thou hast spoken by the Wise Man: “ The promotion of fools is disgrace ; ”¹ their honor will be their shame. Happy he who tries to please Thee alone, O Almighty God, and to be held in honor and esteem by Thee. As Thou hast said also by Thy Prophet Jeremias : “ Let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me,”² otherwise, “ Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, and let not the strong man glory in his strength, and let not the rich man glory in his riches ; ”³ whoever seeks honor and glory, let him seek it alone in honoring and serving Me. But the worst of all is, that the ambitious man not only fails to find honor and praise amongst men ; but also that he loses, through his ambition, all honor and esteem with God in Heaven, as I shall show in the—

¹ Stultorum exaltatio ignominia.—Prov. iii. 35.

² In hoc gloriatur, qui gloriatur, scire et nosse me.—Jerem. ix. 24.

³ Non gloriatur sapiens in sapientia sua, et non gloriatur fortis in fortitudine sua, et non gloriatur dives in divitiis suis.—Ibid. 23.

Second Part.

In the game of ball, as is well known, when two or more are playing against each other, the players must try to keep the ball constantly in the air ; if one of them lets the ball fall to the ground, or allows it to catch in his clothes, the others cry out at once that he has lost. This comparison will help me in my present subject, my dear brethren, for it seems that God plays the same game with men. Honor, praise, glory, authority, what else are they but a ball thrown into the air ? God, who bestows His gifts in different ways, allows, nay, decrees that those to whom He gives special graces or dignities should be esteemed, respected, and honored more than others ; even so He is accustomed to exalt His most holy and humble servants in the eyes of the world, so that, although they despise and shun honor and glory, yet they are on that account all the more esteemed. Now this is the ball that God throws to them ; it is not a losing game, nor is it bad, or vain, or culpable to be praised and esteemed by the world ; but to keep this ball, and not to throw it back again to God, from whom it comes, that is to say, to take the praise and honor to one's self, without referring it to God, to find a vain pleasure in it, or to seek it and work for it, as if it were an absolute good in itself, that means to play a losing game ; for then both Heaven and hell cry out that we have lost, that we cannot play against the Almighty God, that we have no longer grace or favor with Him, for we keep for ourselves what belongs to God alone, according to the words, " To the only God be honor and glory." ¹

Not he who is honored, but he who seeks honor, and arrogates it, displeases God.

Lucifer, a master-piece of the almighty hand of God, who received more beauty and perfection than any other angel, as soon as he gave way to the first vain complacency in his beauty, heard at once the words : Thou hast lost all, away with thee from Heaven, into the deepest abyss of hell, where thou shalt never have the least hope of recovering the Divine favor for all eternity ! See what happened to Adam in Paradise : as soon as he allowed himself to be deceived by the promise of the serpent : " You shall be as gods," ² and gave way to pride, he at once lost all—the garment of innocence, sanctifying grace, the immortality of the body, the favor and friendship of God, everything went in a moment. As we read in the 24th chapter of the Second Book of Kings, Joab came to King David, and as David

Shown by examples from Scriptures.

¹ Soli Deo honor et gloria.—I. Tim. i. 17.

² Eritis sicut dii.—Gen. iii. 5.

had commanded, brought him the number of his soldiers : “ And there were found of Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men that drew the sword : and of Juda five hundred thousand fighting men.”¹ Ah, thought David, with secret pride, what a great king I am ! Thirteen hundred thousand men can I place in the field. Who will dare to contend with me ? Oh, David, thou hast lost, lost ! Before thou wast a man according to God’s own heart ; now God cannot suffer thee any longer, on account of thy pride ; for thou hast kept to thyself the honor and glory that belong to Him. St. Gregory says : “ David was puffed up with silly vanity, and sinned by causing his people to be numbered against the will of God.”² And such certainly was the case, as David himself acknowledged, when, full of repentance, he cried out : “ I have sinned very much in what I have done ; but I pray Thee, O Lord, to take away the iniquity of Thy servant, because I have done exceeding foolishly.”³ God was so displeased and so angry with David, on account of this one vain thought, that even after David’s repentance, He caused seventy thousand men of his people to die of pestilence : “ And the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel, from the morning unto the time appointed, and there died of the people from Dan to Bersabee seventy thousand men.”⁴ So much does God hate pride and ambition.

Amongst all vices there is none more detestable to God than pride.

In fact, there is no vice that God looks upon with greater anger and displeasure than this. “ God resisteth the proud,”⁵ writes St. James. St. Augustine, speaking of these words, says : “ There is hardly a page in the Sacred Writings in which it is not stated that God resists the proud.”⁶ Hear the words of the Wise Ecclesiasticus : “ He that holdeth it, shall be filled with maledictions, and it shall ruin him in the end.”⁷ “ Because the daughters of Sion are haughty,” says the Prophet Isaias, “ and have walked with stretched-out necks, and wanton glances of their eyes, and made a noise as they walked with their feet, and moved in a set pace ; the Lord will make bald the crown

¹ *Inventa sunt de Israel octingenta millia virorum fortium, qui educerent gladium, et de Juda quingenta millia pugnatorum.*—II. Kings xxiv. 9.

² *David tumore inflatus, populum numerando peccavit.*

³ *Peccavi valde in hoc facto : sed precor, Domine, ut transferas iniquitatem servi tui, quia stulte egi nimis.*—II. Kings xxiv. 10.

⁴ *Immisitque Dominus pestilentiam in Israel, de mane usque ad tempus constitutum, et mortui sunt ex populo a Dan usque ad Bersabee septuaginta millia vivorum.*—Ibid. 15.

⁵ *Deus superbis resistit.*—James iv. 6.

⁶ *Nulla fere est pagina sanctorum librorum, in qua non sonet quod Deus superbis resistit.*

⁷ *Qui tenuerit illam, adimplebitur maledictis, et subvertet eum in finem.*—Eccl. x. 15.

of the head of the daughters of Sion, and the Lord will discover their hair.”¹ Countless similar passages may be found in the Sacred Writings. In the life of the holy virgin Lidwina, who was a miracle of patience, inasmuch as she suffered all kinds of sickness, so that she had to remain bed-ridden for thirty-eight years, we read that people of all classes used to visit her and ask her prayers. Amongst others there was a certain priest who earnestly and humbly begged of her to pray that God might take away from him whatever was the greatest hindrance to his salvation. The holy virgin began to pray, and behold, the priest’s voice at once became harsh and unmusical, although it had been up to that moment a very fine voice, so that he was able to lead the choir by himself. From this sudden change he understood that the vain pleasure he had in his fine voice was the greatest hindrance to his salvation. Reflect on this, my dear brethren; if a trifling act of vanity, on account of singing the praises of God, so displeased the Almighty that he who gave way to it was in danger of losing his soul, how must not God hate the pride and ambition with which some try to exalt themselves above others on almost every occasion?

And have we reason to wonder at this? What can be more intolerable to the Almighty than to see a miserable worm of the earth puffed up with pride, and trying to arrogate to himself the honor that belongs to God alone, although the great God has not refused to humble Himself and to become the last of men? What more intolerable than to see a worm of the earth, whom He has drawn out of nothing, who in and of himself is nothing, knows nothing and can do nothing, whose life is prolonged every moment by the power of God, to see such a one boasting of the goods that have been lent to him only for a time, and stealing away the glory that belongs only to the Giver of them? What would you say, my dear brethren, of one who is head and ears in debt, who has nothing but what he has borrowed from others, who owes the tailor for his coat, the shoemaker for his shoes, the baker for his bread, his workmen for their labor, in a word, he is in debt all round; what would you say, if he were to make a boast of what he has belonging to other people, and besides that to look down upon and despise his creditors? Oh, you would say, he is an intolerable idiot; no one could have pa-

Because the
proud man
steals away
honor from
God.

¹ Pro eo, quod elevatæ sunt filiæ Sion, et ambulaverunt extento collo, et nutibus oculorum ibant, et plandebant, ambulabant pedibus suis, et composito gradu incedebant: decalvabit Dominus verticem filiarum Sion, et Dominus crimen earum nudabit.—Isaï. lli. 16, 17.

tience with him. Poor mortals that we are, St. Paul asks each of us : "What hast thou that thou hast not received,"¹ that thou dost not owe to God ? From whom have you received all the goods of nature, understanding, knowledge, learning, skill, health, beauty, etc. ? Are they not a debt you owe to God ? And the goods of fortune, such as riches, nobility, the favor of the great, high offices and honorable titles, are they yours ? Show me a single penny of all your money, a single square foot of your land, of which you can say with truth, this belongs altogether to me. Is it not simply a debt you owe to God, who has lent you these things that you may use them for a time ? St. Asterius laughs at those who use the title master or owner, or the words mine and thine, when speaking of things they have in their possession : "I am lost in astonishment, when I hear people say, this is my house, my property, etc. For, by the help of that little word 'my,' these people take possession of what belongs to Another and not to them."² But, asks St. Paul again, if that is the case, if you have received everything from God, so that whatever you possess belongs really to Him, why do you act as if you were absolute master ? "And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it ?"³ Why dost thou raise thyself against thy good God, and arrogate to thyself the glory and praise that belong to Him ? What wonder is it, I repeat, if all esteem, grace, and favor with God are forfeited by him who acts thus ?

And many
other sins
come from
pride.

But the evil does not merely consist in the fact that the ambitious man takes away the honor that belongs to God, for from this vice come many other sins against God and man. The Wise Man says, "Pride is the beginning of all sin."⁴ When David prayed with all his heart to God to save him from this vice, he said these remarkable words : "Let not the foot of pride come to me."⁵ Regarding these words the interpreters of the Holy Scriptures ask the question: Why does David mention the foot and not the head, since it is in the head that pride has its seat principally, and why does he speak of one foot and not of two ? They answer, that pride has only one foot, because, like one who limps about on one foot, the proud man is very

¹ Quid autem habes quod non accepisti?—I. Cor. iv. 7.

² Cum aliquos audio dicentes, domus mea, prædium meum, etc., satis non possum admirari, cum tribus fallacibus literulis aliena sibi vendicant.

³ Si enim acceperis, quid gloriaris quasi non acceperis?—I. Cor. iv. 7.

⁴ Initium omnis peccati est superbia.—Ecc. x. 15.

⁵ Non veniat mihi pes superbiæ.—Ps. xxxv. 12.

liable to stumble and fall. So that each step that the proud man takes is a fall into some other sin, into contempt of his neighbor, injustice, prodigality, hard-heartedness to the poor, oppression of the weak, persecution of his equals, hatred and envy towards those who are preferred before him, rage and desire of revenge when he is slighted, impurity, which latter vice God allows him to fall into in order to humble him, coldness and indifference to God and heavenly things ; in a word, nothing is too wicked or unjust for him, either to defend his honor and authority, or to gratify his ambitious desires. Thus, Jezebel, in her pride and fury, persecuted the innocent Naboth to death, because he thwarted her desires ;¹ the proud Abimelech was so cruel as to put his seventy brothers to death, that he might reign alone.² The ambitious Adonibezec, in the height of his unnatural fury, caused the hands and feet of seventy kings to be cut off, and he compelled the unfortunate kings, thus mutilated, to lie down under his table, and eat the crumbs that fell on the floor.³ So true is it that pride is the beginning of all sin. With reason, then, does David pray : " Let not the foot of pride come to me ; " O Lord, permit me not to wander about on this one foot, lest I fall into many sins. He says nothing of the head, because the proud man has not a good head ; for, like the foolish man, he undertakes a great deal of useless labor and trouble to gain honor and authority amongst men, although in most cases he finds the very opposite of what he seeks, and moreover, loses all honor and esteem with God.

See now, oh, ambitious man, how well you have done your work ! A fine fish, indeed, you have caught ! You have sought for honor, praise, and glory in the world ; you have labored for such a long time and have taken nothing ; you have found neither the honor and esteem you sought for from men, nor have you the favor and friendship of God. The very opposite to what you wished has occurred ; instead of the good name you had before, you are now disgraced before the world, and you have lost the true honor you should have with God and His saints. " Pride is hateful before God and men. " ⁴ You are like the dog that found a piece of meat : as soon as he got it he ran off to eat it quietly on the bank of a river ; seeing his own shadow in the water, he thought it was another dog coming to

Therefore,
the ambi-
tious man
labors in
vain and
foolishly.

¹ III. Kings *xxi.*

² Judges *ix.*

³ *Ibid.* i. 7.

⁴ *Odibilis coram Deo est et hominibus superbia.*—*Ecclus.* x. 7.

take the meat from him ; starting off afresh he ran as quickly as possible, but of course the shadow kept apace with him ; at last he saw the piece of meat reflected in the clear water, and as it seemed much bigger than the piece he had in his mouth, he dropped the latter and snapped at the shadow ; so that he lost both the meat and the shadow. So it is with the ambitious man ; he strives with the greatest eagerness for the empty shadow of earthly glory, and loses the good name he formerly enjoyed amongst men, and, at the same time, the true honor he had with God ; the one goes with the other.

Conclusion
and resolution
to seek
honor with
God alone.

How foolish and vain, therefore, my labor has hitherto been, when I tried to please men, and to gain their esteem ! Away with the worthless thing ! I am tired of fishing and catching nothing. Art thou proud, my soul ? Dost thou desire honor and glory ? If so, let thy ambition soar higher. Look up to Heaven ; this earth is too small and low for thee. Thou canst, if thou wilt, be in honor and favor with the mightiest of monarchs, with the angels and princes of Heaven, with the chosen friends of God, the number of whom surpasses that of all living men. This honor will not be taken away from thee ; thou canst keep it as long as thou wilt ; it will last all the time of thy natural life and will accompany thee into eternity. Therefore, in order to gain this honor, I will henceforth strive always to please God by Christian humility and true virtue ; I will do what I know to be pleasing to God ; I will avoid everything that I know to be displeasing to Him ; men may think and speak of me as they will or can, it is nothing to me ; their judgments and idle talk cannot make me better or worse than I am in the sight of God. What good is it to me to be praised by them, if Thou, O God, alone despiseth me ? What harm is it to me to be looked down upon by them, if Thou alone, O my God, praisest and lovest me ? This love, this praise shall be enough for me. . Amen.

FOURTH SERMON.

ON THE FOLLY OF THE PROUD.

Subject.

One may be great before men, and also great before God ; yet he is a foolish man who on that account has a high opinion of himself.—*Preached on the Feast of St. John the Baptist.*

Text.

Erit enim magnus coram Domino.—Luke i. 15.

“For he shall be great before the Lord.”

Introduction.

There are three kinds of great people in the world ; some are great before men, others in their own estimation, and others are great before God. St. John the Baptist was certainly great before God ; if we had not the words of the angel to prove that, we have the infallible testimony of Jesus Christ Himself : “There hath not risen among them that are born of women a greater than John the Baptist.”¹ He was great, too, before men, although he performed no miracles ; for the Jews had so high an opinion of him that they looked upon him as the true Messias. But one greatness was wanting to him, to his own greater praise, glory, and sanctity, and that was the being great in his own opinion. In spite of his greatness before God and men, he was so little, and so lowly to himself, that he looked upon himself as unworthy to loosen the latchet of our Lord’s shoe. “Art thou the prophet ? And he answered : No ;”² although our Lord said of him that he was greater than a prophet, “More than a prophet.”³ Who are you, then, the Jews asked him. I am nothing but a mere sound, he answered : “I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness.”⁴ My dear brethren, in what does our greatness consist ? Are we great before men, like St. John ? It is not much matter to us, in any case, and it was a cause of very little concern to that great prophet. Are we great before God ? Oh, that is an important question, indeed ; to that all our thoughts,

¹ Non surrexit inter natos mulierum major Joanne Baptista.—Matth. xi. 11.

² Propheta es tu ? Et respondit : Non.—John i. 21.

³ Plusquam prophetam.—Matth. xi. 9.

⁴ Ego vox clamantis in deserto.—John i. 23.

desires, words, and acts should tend. Are we great in our own estimation? Oh, that would be a most foolish thing; for we have not the least cause to be proud, or to have a great opinion of ourselves. Therefore, if we are not so great before God, nor so great before men as St. John the Baptist, let us, at all events, imitate him in being little and lowly in our own eyes; and we have much more reason to be so than he had; all men, no matter who they are, have reason to be so, as I shall now show, and I say—

Plan of Discourse.

You may be great before men, you may also be great before God; yet you act foolishly if you are great in your own eyes and have a high opinion of yourself. Such is the whole subject of the present sermon.

O most humble Saviour, who wast pleased that we should learn of Thee especially to be meek and humble of heart, open our eyes that we may see how foolish it is for us to have a high opinion of ourselves, so that we may always preserve true humility. This we ask of Thee through the merits of that Virgin whose humility brought Thee from Heaven down upon earth, and through the intercession of the holy angels, who keep such faithful watch over us, miserable mortals.

What it is
that makes
one great
before God,
and before
men?

That which makes one great before men, consists mostly in the gifts and goods of nature which one has, such as a good understanding, prudence, knowledge, learning, skill, bravery, and the beauty and perfection of the body; or it may consist also in external advantages, such as riches, honors, dignities, nobility of birth, renown, praise, the love and good wishes of the people, etc. These and similar things appear great and noble in the eyes of the world, which generally judges by mere outward appearances: "They have called the people happy that hath these things,"¹ although such gifts and goods are to be valued, in themselves, only in so far as they help us to our last end, that is, to serve God and save our souls. On the other hand, that which makes one great before God is the possession of supernatural goods and the gifts of grace, especially sanctifying grace and the friendship of God, the Christian virtues, diligence in the practice of good works, the beauty of the soul and holiness of life. A poor beggar who possesses these things, although the world looks on him as an outcast, is worth far more, in the

¹ Beatum dixerunt populum cui hæc sunt.—Ps. cxliii. 15.

sight of God and His Saints, than princes, kings, or emperors who are deficient in them. Oh, my good God, give me only these gifts, and I willingly renounce everything else!

In order now, my dear brethren, that we may come at once to the root of the matter, imagine a man who has all that can make him very great before men, and before God also; and that he, on considering the gifts he is endowed with, thinks rather too much of himself, and looks on himself as greater and better than those who have less. But stop, I am contradicting myself; I am trying to bring two things together which mutually repel each other; for I suppose a man to be holy and virtuous and still to lack the very foundation of holiness and virtue. No, it is impossible for a man to be great before God, once he commences to be great in his own opinion. He cannot be holy unless he is little in his own eyes and humble of heart. St. Gregory says, and with him all the Holy Fathers: "No matter what virtues a man has, no matter what good works he performs, they are worth nothing, unless they be supported by humility."¹ Assuming, then, it were possible for my supposition to be realized, and that a man so holy, so fortunate, so highly esteemed, were to give way to pride and think himself great, and even greater than others, then, no matter how prudent, wise, and clever he may be, he acts in thought and imagination like a fool. Why so? Here is the reason:

He who has nothing of his own, and who knows that at any moment that which is intrusted to him, but does not belong to him, may be demanded from him by the rightful owner, acts foolishly if he thinks himself great and gives way to pride. Is not that the case? Suppose that a groom, or scullion, by chance gets hold of the keys of his master, and that, during the latter's absence, he enters into the palace in order to sweep out the rooms, bringing with him a number of simple country youths, his acquaintances, who happen to be in town at the time. He shows them the whole house, opens one room after another, and lets them admire the rich hangings, the beautiful pictures and the magnificent furniture; see, he says, what a great and rich man I am; this is the house in which I live; so well have I prospered. The country youths, who never saw anything of the kind before, go about staring open-mouthed at everything; they cannot help wondering that their friend should have become such a great

Still, he who has all these things acts foolishly, if he gives way to self-esteem on account of them.

For it is foolish for a poor man, who has nothing of his own, to be proud. Shown by a simile.

¹ Si quælibet bona opera adsint, nulla sunt nisi humilitate condiantur.

man; but they forget that he still has on his groom's jacket, and that if he invited them to his table, he could give them nothing better than a piece of bread and cheese. If a sensible man heard him boasting in that way, he would say to him: Oh, you foolish fellow, those things do not belong to you; the keys you have do not make you rich or noble; show us something that really belongs to you, the broom for instance, with which you sweep out the stable or the kitchen; and not even that belongs to you, for you did not get it till you came here.

Every man
is poor and
lowly in
himself,
with regard
to natural
gifts.

I have selected a simile of that kind, my dear brethren, because I should find it difficult to give you an idea of how little and how vile man is, in and by himself. All of us, great or small, are much poorer than the poor scullion; we need not go beyond ourselves to find reasons for being humble, and having a low opinion of ourselves; for, as God says by the prophet Micheas: "Thy humiliation shall be in the midst of thee."¹ Thou hast in thyself, O man, cause enough for humility and a low opinion of thyself. For, if we consider what we have from nature, we are nothing; it is from nothing that the Creator has drawn us; a hundred years ago all here present were nothing; can anything be viler or more worthless than nothing? Dust and ashes and corruption are the first materials of our being, so that each one of us can truly say, with holy Job: "I have said to rottenness: Thou art my father; to worms, My mother and my sister."²

Therefore, lest we should forget the vileness of our origin, and think ourselves greater than we are, the Catholic Church, in the beginning of Lent, when the ashes are sprinkled on our foreheads, reminds us of the words of God in Genesis: "Remember, man, that dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return."³ If, says St. Bernard, you are tempted to self-complacency or pride, remember your origin, whence you are, and what you have of yourself, and the temptation will soon vanish: "Consider, O man, whence thou comest, and blush."⁴

And also
with regard
to the state
of grace.

Let us consider, too, what we are in ourselves, with regard to the state of grace, and we shall find that we are not even as good as a lowly scullion, for we are born slaves of the devil; we are conceived in sin, and born in sin, and sin is the only inherit-

¹ Humiliatio tua in medio tui.—Mich. vi. 14.

² Putredini dixi: Pater meus es: mater mea et soror mea, vermibus.—Job xvii. 14.

³ Memento homo quia pulvis es, et in pulverem reverteris.—Gen. iii. 19.

⁴ Considera, homo, unde venis, et erubisce.

ance we bring into this world. Could there be a greater misery or misfortune than ours? Oh, how humble this thought compels me to be! I am a sinner, I am an object of the hatred and anger of God, I am a child of damnation, and therefore, worthy to be looked down upon and despised by all creatures.

But if we have something more than nothingness, and something better than sin, if we are in the state of grace, and are friends and co-heirs of Jesus Christ, if we possess, besides, a goodly share of natural gifts and temporal blessings, where do they come from, to whom do they all belong? Are they not pure benefits of the great King of Heaven, who has given them to us gratuitously? What am I saying? Given them to us? We have only the keys of them that we may look after them: at any moment, how and when it pleases Him, God can take them from us.

With regard to natural gifts and goods, who can doubt that the same is to be said of them, unless he who doubts the truth of the Word of God? "The Lord," says the Holy Scripture, in the 2d chapter of the First Book of Kings, "maketh poor and maketh rich; He humbleth and He exalteth. He raiseth up the needy from the dust, and lifteth up the poor from the dung-hill."¹ "He hath put down the mighty from their seat."² Even the goods we have gained, as we think, by our own labor and trouble, do not belong to us, but are the free gifts of God's goodness. We read in the Book of Daniel that King Nabuchodonosor carried off King Joakim captive, and with him a great part of the treasures that were in Jerusalem: "And the Lord delivered into his hands Joakim the king of Juda, and part of the vessels of the house of God."³ In the Book of Leviticus it is said of the land that was promised to the Israelites: "When you shall have entered into the land which I will give you."⁴ At first, on hearing those passages, one might think that Joakim was given over to Nabuchodonosor by an angel, or by some untoward accident, without any action on the part of the latter; and that the Israelites were to march into the promised land without trouble and take possession of it easily. But no, my dear brethren, neither of these exploits was so easy of accomplishment;

Everything
he has be-
longed to
God.

First, natu-
ral goods

¹ Dominus pauperem facit et ditat, humiliat et subleuat. Suscitavit de pulvere egenum, et de stercore elevavit pauperem.—I. Kings ii. 7, 8.

² Deposuit potentes de sede.—Luke i. 52.

³ Et tradidit Dominus in manu ejus Joakim regem Juda, et partem vasorum domus Dei.—Dan. i. 2.

⁴ Cum ingressi fueritis terram, quam ego dabo vobis.—Lev. xxiii. 10.

Nabuchodonosor had to take the field with a large army. he had to besiege Jerusalem for a long time, and at length take it by assault ; in that way he got possession of the Jewish king. The Israelites, too, had to fight for the promised land ; in a few years five hundred thousand of them conquered thirty-one kings ; they had to make their way into the country by force of arms, and take it away from the enemy bit by bit. And yet the Sacred Scriptures say : “ The Lord delivered into his hands Joakim ; ” “ The land which I will give you.” How can these be called gifts of God, when they are acquired by conquest and force of arms? From this we must learn that everything we have, even if it has cost us much trouble to acquire it, comes from God alone, that nothing belongs to us absolutely, for all that we have is a pure gift of the Divine Goodness.

And then
supernatu-
ral.

With regard to supernatural goods, the Catholic Church sings : “ God of strength, to whom belongs all that is good in us.”¹ Not only, says St. Paul, are we incapable of doing the least good of ourselves, but we cannot even say a single good word without the help and influence of the Holy Ghost : “ No man can say, the Lord Jesus, but by the Holy Ghost.”² Nor is this enough ; we cannot even wish to do anything good of ourselves, as the same Apostle writes to the Philip-
pians : “ For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish, according to His good will.”³ And what makes our incapacity still more evident, it is not in our power to form a good thought without the help of God. “ Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves ; but our sufficiency is from God.”⁴ So that every-
thing natural and supernatural that we have in body or soul belongs to God alone. Such is the fact, Christians. St. Thomas of Cirella, and others also, relate how the Sicilian fishermen, who were engaged for the tunny-fish season, were once so unsuccessful that after long trial they did not capture a single fish. The poor men made a vow to St. Anne and called on her for help, and, wonderful to narrate, on the fol-
lowing day their boat was surrounded with fish, so that they

¹ Deus virtutum, cujus est totum quod est optimum.—Prayer of the sixth Sunday after Pentecost.

² Nemo potest dicere : Dominus Jesus, nisi in Spiritu Sancto.—I. Cor. xii. 3.

³ Deus est enim, qui operatur in vobis et velle et perficere pro bona voluntate.—Philipp. ii. 13.

⁴ Non quod sufficientes simus cogitare aliquid a nobis, quasi ex nobis : sed sufficientia nostra ex Deo est.—II. Cor. iii. 5.

caught as many as they pleased with their hands, as well as with their nets. But the most wonderful thing of all was, that each fish had the word "Anne" written in large letters on its back; large and small, they were all marked with the wonderful letters, as if they wished to say to their captors: Your success is not due to your labor, nor can you take praise to yourselves on account of it, for it comes as a present from the great St. Anne. If we had sharper eyes, my dear brethren, we should see on all the gifts and goods we possess no other name written but God, God; on our understanding we should find the name, God; on our worldly goods, on our houses and lands, on everything we should find that holy Name written, according to the words of Job: "The Lord gave,"¹ God has lent it, it does not belong to us, but to God.

Have we, then, any reason to be proud and haughty? to look upon ourselves as greater and better than others? to have a vain complacency in ourselves? to give way to self-conceit and despise others who have received less from God? Oh, that would indeed be folly and madness on our part! we should act like the servant who pretended he was the owner of his master's house, because he had the keys for a short time. Yet the foolish world, like the simple youths, stares with wonderment at the man who has more than others, and esteems him great, because it does not understand the reason of things and goes no deeper into them than the mere outside. But one who sees things in the right light could ask a man who is great in his own estimation: "Why dost thou glory?" as St. Paul says, poor worm of the earth, why dost thou give way to self-conceit? how long wilt thou plume thyself on thy possessions? "What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory?"² Thou foolish man, show me something that is thine; thou canst not point to anything worth a straw; thou hast but the nothingness out of which God has drawn thee, and still worse, sin, which thou hast brought with thee into the world. Why dost thou glory? What cause hast thou to be proud?

Are you rich? Have you a large estate, much money and property? Can you lead a comfortable life? Does the world look upon you as happy? Still, "why dost thou glory?" Do you think a great deal of yourself? If so, are you better

Therefore
the proud
man is fool-
ish.

He is fool-
ish who
prides him-
self on his
riches.

¹ Dominus dedit.—Job i. 21.

² Quid habes, quod non accepisti? Si autem accepisti, quid gloriaris?—I. Cor. iv. 7.

and greater, on that account, than others who are not so rich as you? Why should you be? Where did you get your wealth from? To whom does it really belong? Is it not simply lent to you by the Almighty God? How, then, can you boast of it? Suppose, in order to make the matter clearer by a simile, that one is so reduced in circumstances by misfortune, that he has to be supported by alms privately given, but that, by the help of those alms, he can keep up appearances, and dress in a manner becoming his state. Ordinary people, who know nothing of his poverty, are as respectful to him as if he were still rich. Who is that man? they ask; to judge by his dress and appearance, he must be a man of position. If he were to hear what they say of him, what would he think? Would he give way to pride and vanity? Oh, if he did that, he would be a most intolerable fool. God help me, he would rather think, with shame in his heart and tears in his eyes, I a rich man, when I am living on alms given me for God's sake! What would I do without my benefactor? If he dies, what will become of me? I should have to beg, in spite of my grand clothes, or else starve with hunger. No, all the honor and respect shown such a man, only serve to shame and humble him. O man, no matter how rich you are, have you not the same cause for humility? Where do your riches come from? Are they not an alms given you by God, who in His mercy, and according to His wise decrees, sends them to you, as it were, privately? Whenever He wishes He can take them from you and reduce you to beggary. Why, then, do you glory and extol yourself above others?

Or on noble
birth.

Are you descended from a noble family, or are you raised above the common herd by the authority or dignity you possess? Is that a reason for you to be proud and self-conceited? Are you on that account greater and better than others? Is it your act that you are descended from ancestors who, by their virtues and illustrious deeds, have made themselves great and renowned before the world? In my opinion there is nothing which furnishes less reason for pride than nobility of birth; for we cannot contribute the least share of our own to it. We gain knowledge by our own exertions; we learn the arts by giving our attention to them, we grow rich, by the will of God, through our industry, nay, we must even co-operate with grace in order to attain holiness and piety; but descent from a noble family is given to us without any work at all on our part. When a courtier, on one occasion, was praising King Alfonso of Arragon

for being himself a king, and having a king for his father, a king for his son, and a king for his brother, the monarch answered : “ There is nothing I esteem less than what you make so much of.”¹ Have you raised yourself to high honors and dignities by your cleverness and diligence ? Who have you to thank for that ? Is it not again an alms and a gift of the good God ? Why then do you glory ? Imagine that you see a picture of the god Jupiter, that it can speak and that it says to you : I am a god amongst pictures ; I have a crown on my head ; I sit on a throne with a thunderbolt in my hand, so that all must fear me ; what are other pictures in comparison to me ? Oh, you fool, could the painter say ; what are you talking about ? If you have a thunderbolt, I gave it to you ; if you sit on a throne, it is because I painted you there. Are you anything of yourself ? Do you not know that I imagined you and then painted you, and that, with one stroke of my brush, I can destroy you ? Such should be your thoughts too, you who are raised above the common people ; be not proud on that account ; you must not forget that it is God who placed you where you are ; whenever He wills, He may give a turn to the wheel of fortune and in a day bring you very low indeed. He is the Lord, who “ hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble.”² Therefore you should and must seem small in your own eyes, and acknowledge the goodness of God, and say to yourself : In a few years, perhaps months, all my authority will be gone, my noble blood will rot in the grave, my titles and honor will become the property of others, and I shall have to present myself before the judgment-seat of God quite alone, without servants or attendants, and God will not ask me then how many noble ancestors I had, nor what titles I enjoyed when on earth, etc. The only question then will be whether I have served my God as a true and humble Christian.

Are you quick of understanding, so that you can learn several arts and sciences with little trouble ? Men admire and praise you on that account ; but are you, therefore, any greater or better than others ? To whom do your talents belong ? Are they not an alms that God has given you gratuitously ? Why, then, do you give way to proud thoughts ? Suppose that I am wandering about on a dark night in a forest ; I have lost my way and know not where to go. Suddenly, to my great delight, I

On account
of under-
standing
and skill.

¹ Nihil ipse minoris in vita duco, quam quod tu tanti facis.

² Deposuit potentes de sede, et exaltavit humiles.—Luke i. 52.

see a man with a lantern a few yards off; he takes pity on me and guides my steps to the nearest village; with the help of his lantern I can see as well as if it were day. On the following morning other travellers arrive, who complain of having been compelled to remain in the forest all night, because it was so dark that they could not find their way. Oh, you stupid people, I say to them, how did that happen? It makes no matter to me whether it is dark or light, I can find my way in either case. What a clever man you must be, they think. What would you think of such conduct on my part, my dear brethren? Would it not be a foolish thing to boast in that way, and to seek the praise of others? Ah, I must think to myself, if that good man had not had the kindness to accompany me with his lantern, I too should have had to spend the night in the forest. In the same way, he who is gifted with more intelligence than others must say to himself with deep humility: If the Lord did not go before me with that light, "which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world,"¹ I should be as stupid and dull as the most uncultivated of men. The talent that God has given me He can take away from me, so that the praise and honor I receive do not belong to me. Not to me, O Lord, not to me, but to Thee and to Thy name be honor!

On account
of prosper-
ity in busi-
ness.

You are prosperous in all your affairs; whatever you begin, you are enabled to finish; whatever you undertake, you are sure of carrying out successfully; you perform all your duties in a praiseworthy manner; but what if you do? Is that a reason why you should have a great opinion of yourself, or give way to self-complacency? Are you on that account greater or better than others, who do not always succeed, and who are not able to do what you can? It would be foolish for you to think that. For, why is it that you can do more than others? Is it not because God has given you a greater alms than He has given them? An experienced goldsmith works with his hammer, and makes beautiful gold and silver ornaments; if the hammer had the use of reason, and could talk, it would, perhaps, like self-conceited men, look down upon the tools of a smith or a shoemaker, and think them as of no account compared to itself. You can only give hard blows on iron or leather, it would say; see what fine work I can do. But, the others might answer, it is not you who do it; it is your master, who knows how to

¹ Quæ illuminat omnem hominem venientem in hunc mundum.—John i. 9.

use you skillfully. Change places with us ; let your master take me, and mine will take you, and you will see that I shall then have to deal with gold and silver, while you must be satisfied to work on iron or leather. Therefore you have no reason to boast ; all the praise belongs to your skillful master. That answer would suit you admirably, O man. God is the skillful Master, who knows how to make use of His creatures as instruments for different purposes ; He it is who can of the stones raise up children to Abraham, nay, according to the teaching of theologians and philosophers, He can use each creature for any purpose He pleases ; so that He could give a fly the power of building up Heaven and earth. Now, if this Almighty Lord has chosen you, instead of others, to perform great exploits, or to exercise great skill in any art, that is not to your credit, but rather to that of the skillful Master who knows how to make use of you so well. If, instead of using you, He had preferred a most ignorant person, the latter would have been just as successful as you are now ; so that, as far as you are concerned, you are not a bit better than he is. Why are you, then, so foolish as to have a high opinion of yourself ?

Are you of commanding stature or beautiful person, so that you attract the eyes and hearts of all ? Do you therefore spend half the day before the looking-glass, admiring your beauty ? Do you trick yourself out as bravely as possible, and then show yourself off before the public, so as to court admiration ? What a senseless vanity is yours, if so ! It is just as if one picture wished to extol itself above another, because it is finished in clearer colors, although both depend on the will of the painter, who has only to give one touch with his brush, in order to change the likeness of a beautiful angel into that of a horrible demon. Or, to use a comparison more to the point, it is as if a chimney, blackened with smoke, were to boast of its appearance because in the winter-time it is covered with snow. How long will the snow last ? The first shower of rain, or a good fire kindled on the hearth underneath, will put an end to it at once, and the chimney will be as black and ugly as it was before. Vain worldling, why are you proud of your beauty ? What else is it but a color that the Great Artist has given to your body ? Can he not at once destroy it, if He wishes ? A festering sore, a cancer, a fever, is quite enough to put an end to it. Wait a few years : old age will bring its wrinkles, or else the soul, in its flight from the body, will leave it to worms and rottenness.

On account
of beauty.

Think of the couch which awaits you after death, and there will soon be an end of your pride : “ Under thee shall the moth be strewed, and worms shall be thy covering.”¹

It is foolish
also to be
proud of
being pious,
and of do-
ing good.

Finally, and speaking of those goods which alone are worthy of praise, are you great in the sight of the Lord God, are you pious, holy, zealous in His service ? do you know of no, or very few, sins to trouble your conscience ? do you perform many acts of virtue and heap up merits daily ? are you now doing great things for the glory of God ? If so, I congratulate you, for you are far better off than all those who are in the state of sin. But, certainly you have least cause of all to be proud, and far the greatest cause to be humble and lowly in the grace and favor of God. For, where do your piety and holiness come from ? Is it from yourself ? Certainly your co-operation has been required, but your holiness first came from the special grace and assistance of God. If He abandoned you to your own weakness for a moment, what would become of you ? A child may laugh and enjoy itself as long as its mother leads or carries it about ; but it cannot be proud on that account, because if the mother leaves it alone for a moment, it falls down at once. You can rejoice and be glad in the Lord, O pious Christian, because you have a good conscience, and you can thank Him for the special graces He has given you ; but to have a great opinion of yourself, and imagine that you are greater and better than others, would be folly indeed. There is no sin, says St. Augustine, which another commits, that I may not commit also, unless God helps me with extraordinary grace. Perhaps to-morrow you will be in the state of sin, while the sinner, whom you look down upon to-day, will do penance, be justified and save his soul, and you, on the contrary, persevering in sin, will be lost forever. St. Francis used to say : “ If robbers and murderers had received from God the knowledge, grace, and help that He has so liberally bestowed on me, they would be on fire with seraphic charity, whilst I should have to crawl on the earth like a worm.” But we will now examine the good and holy things you do every day, in order to see if you have reason to extol yourself on account of them. We shall consider merely your daily prayer. For you to be able to do that little good, it was necessary, first of all, for God to draw you out of nothing by creation ; this one fact should suffice to show you that all the honor belongs to Him. Besides, you required the faculties of

¹ Subter te sternetur tinea, et operimentum tuum erunt vermes.—Isai. xiv. 11.

your soul, in order to pray ; now these are also creatures and gifts of God. Further, God, as the Author of all things, must help those faculties, for, without His help, a creature can no more work than if it had no existence. And, as prayer, and any dealing with God, is a supernatural work, the same God, as the Author of grace, must help your faculties by a supernatural assistance, so that they may be really raised above themselves. Finally, it is necessary that God should give you sanctifying grace, and preserve you in it, since it is that which makes our good works meritorious of eternal life. All this is required before you can perform a single good work. Tell me, now, is there a single thing in prayer alone that you can point to as being yours ? Certainly you have to co-operate with the grace and help that God gives you, and you have to use your faculties for that purpose ; but is not even that a benefit conferred on you by Him ? I do not mean to say that we do not do the good we perform ; if that were the case, no good works could be called ours ; there is no doubt of the good work being ours ; but, since we can neither desire nor perform any good without the help of God, we have no reason to extol ourselves, as if the good we do were all ours. “ Not that we neither wish nor perform,” says St. Augustine, “ but that without the help of God we can neither wish nor perform anything good.”¹ So that all our good works are God’s and ours too ; they are God’s for all the reasons that we have already seen ; they are ours solely on account of co-operation ; and, therefore, just as children, who are born of a noble father, but whose mother is of low birth, deserve honor on account of their father, and contempt on account of their mother ; so our good works that come from the help of God, and the co-operation of men, give praise to God and shame to us : “ To Thee, O Lord, justice,” says the Prophet Daniel, “ but to us confusion of face.”² If so little praise belongs to us when we, helped by divine grace, perform our good works perfectly and without fault, what have we to say, what must we think when we remember that we allow so many faults and imperfections to find their way into almost everything we do ? How many acts of negligence, how many wrong intentions, how many movements of vainglory and self-complacency accompany our good acts ? If we could see all these things clearly, it

¹ Non quia non volumus aut non agimus, sed quia sine ipsius adjutorio nec volumus aliquid boni, nec agimus.

² Tibi, Domine, justitia, nobis autem confusio faciei.—Dan. ix. 7.

would make us shrink back with horror even from our good works, instead of extolling ourselves on account of them, and we should exclaim with Job : “I feared all my works,”¹ even those which seemed praiseworthy in the eyes of men.

Therefore,
no one has
reason to be
proud.

You see now, my dear brethren, that no man, no matter how great he is before the world, or even in the sight of God, if he considers well his circumstances, can have the least cause for self-glorification ; but rather every cause to be humble, lowly, and meek before God and men. You see how true are the words that St. Paul writes to the Galatians : “For if any man think himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.”² In a word, he who thinks much of himself, and desires the esteem of others, is not a wise man, but a fool.

How we
must, then,
always
practise
humility.

From all this it follows, first, that no matter what tokens of honor are paid us on account of our office or employment, or because we really do something that deserves the praise of men, or if they see in us proofs of remarkable talent, or if we are constantly praised and made much of, etc., we can always keep ourselves in Christian humility and not allow ourselves to be carried away by the praise we receive, nor take a vain pleasure in it, if we remember the words of St. Bernard : “Consider, O man, whence thou art, and blush.”³ We must act like the wise king, who having formerly been a peasant, kept his peasant’s jacket always before him, after he was raised to the throne, that he might not forget his former lowly condition, nor give way to pride. In similar circumstances we must think sometimes of what we are of ourselves, and sometimes of Him who has lent us whatever we have that is any good. For instance, we might say to ourselves : To whom does that belong for which I am now praised or honored ? I certainly have it not from myself ; my origin is nothingness, my first work is sin, all that I am, all that I have, all that I can do comes from God ; so that the honor shown me now does not belong to me but to God, for it is He who has performed the praiseworthy work, using me as an instrument.

As pious
Christians
do.

We wonder at the great humility of the Saints ; but have we not much greater cause for wonder that any one, who knows himself, can be puffed up with pride ? Father Bernard Colnago, who in his day was a miracle of learning, eloquence, and holiness,

¹ Verebar omnia opera mea.—Job ix. 28.

² Nam si quis existimat se aliquid esse, cum nihil sit, ipse se seducit.—Gal. vi. 3.

³ Considera, homo, unde venis, et erubescere.

who performed many miracles, and lived on the most intimate terms with St. Anthony of Padua, St. Agatha and several other Saints, who was held in the greatest esteem and reverence by people of all classes, so that they looked upon him as an angel, was once asked by his general, Claude Aquaviva, what he thought of the great respect that the people had for him and of the extraordinary gifts that God had bestowed upon him, and whether he did not feel tempted to self-complacency. "Father," was his answer, "if you had in your room a treasure of great value, left in your charge by a prince, would you be tempted to pride when you looked at it? Or, if others came in, and seeing the treasure, began to admire it, would you, therefore, think highly of yourself, look upon yourself as rich and begin to give way to pride? Whatever good I have is not mine; it is lent me by God; if I do anything which shows forth the power and goodness of God, I look upon myself as one who represents a character on the stage, and who speaks and acts, not in his own name, but according to the part that has been assigned to him; nor do I forget that the honor and glory of God consist principally in this, that He is able to make use of a miserable creature like me for such great purposes. Besides, I look upon it as the greatest folly in the world to seek for empty honor, and to have a great opinion of self."

From this, too, we can see that we must never look down upon, much less despise or treat contemptuously any one, even the meanest beggar, or the greatest sinner; for he has just as much and just as little of his own as we have. Finally, in all the contradictions we meet with, whether they come from God in the shape of crosses and trials, or from men who insult and injure us, or put us to shame and humiliation, we must be always satisfied in all humility, and think: I am nothing of myself, I deserve nothing good, so that no injury is done me, if I do not get the praise, reputation, or pleasure I desire. I came into the world a sinner, deserving of hell; it is quite right, then, for me to suffer the punishment of sin; I have no reason to complain, if anything is done to cause me pain, for I deserve hell and all its torments.

Ah, Christians, if we only thought of this always! O humility, would that thou wert as common amongst us as the reasons we have for being humble are numerous! What a change there would be in us! But, humility, thou art wanting to us, because we have not a proper knowledge of ourselves! Therefore, O great God, we humbly ask of Thee, with St. Augustine: "Teach

We must never despise others, and must practise contentment in all humility.

Conclusion and prayer for grace to know and despise ourselves.

me to know Thee and to know myself.”¹ Let me know how great Thou art, that I may give Thee the honor that belongs to Thee, by humbling myself! Teach me what a miserable and powerless creature I am, that I may place myself beneath every creature! Teach me that Thou art everything and that I am nothing; that every good I have comes from Thee, and belongs only to Thee, that I may give Thee all the honor, praise, and glory; that all the evil I have is my own, and therefore nothing belongs to me but shame and confusion! Grant that I may be always little and lowly in my own eyes, in order that, by the practice of this necessary humility, I may begin to be really great before Thee, my Lord! Amen.

FIFTH SERMON.

ON THE CHARACTERISTICS OF PRIDE AND THE MEANS OF ATTAINING HUMILITY.

Subject.

1. How we may know whether we are proud or humble.
2. The means we must use in order to attain humility.—*Preached on the seventh Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

A fructibus eorum cognoscetis eos.—Matth. vii. 16.

“By their fruits you shall know them.”

Introduction.

True metal, according to the proverb, is known by its ring, a bird by its song, a tree by its fruit, a man by his works. To begin without further delay, I will only remind you, my dear brethren, that I have already shown that the proud man, who seeks honor from the world, loses honor with God and man. I have also proved that it is great folly to give way to pride, and that we mortals have the most powerful reasons to be little and lowly in our own eyes. But, in what does pride consist? What constitutes humility?

¹ *Noverim Te, noverim me.*

Plan of Discourse.

How am I to know whether I am proud or humble? I will answer that question in the first part. But if I see that I am not humble, since this virtue is so necessary for salvation, what means shall I use in order to attain humility? The answer to that I shall give in the second part.

Most humble Virgin Mary, and you, holy guardian angels, help me to speak in a humble manner of humility, so that the grace which is always given to the humble may have the greater influence on our minds.

It is a great and difficult art to know whether we are proud, or really humble of heart. There are some diseases of the body which are difficult to detect, but once detected, they are easy to be cured; such, for instance, are certain kinds of fevers, for which there is no difficulty in prescribing once they show themselves; although a rare skill is required to find them out in the beginning. Other maladies are quite different; they can be detected easily enough, but it is difficult to cure them; such are, for instance, certain other kinds of fevers, and consumption, when the patient has been suffering from them for a considerable time. Pride has both these difficulties; it is hard for us to see that we are suffering from it, and very hard to use the proper remedies, when we are forced to confess that we are laboring under that vice. So well does pride know how to conceal and cloak itself, that often God alone, from whom nothing is hidden, can detect it.

It is difficult to see whether one is proud or humble.

And this arises in the first place from the nature and characteristics of pride, for it does not seem to have anything that would cause one to fear it and fight against it. Other vices we can see at once, such as theft, injustice, impurity, drunkenness, enmity, cursing, detraction, and so forth. Why? Because they excite shame and disgust, so that any one can see that he should not be guilty of them. It is a shameful and disgraceful thing for a respectable man to commit a theft, and take what does not belong to him; shameful, disgraceful, and brutish to indulge in impurity, for it a vice that one is careful to conceal from the eyes of others, so that sometimes people are ashamed to mention it in confession; it is a shameful thing to deprive one's self of reason by drunkenness; a shameful thing to have one's mouth filled with profanity, like the demons and lost souls; shameful to laugh at and make known the faults and failings of our neighbor, which

This arises from the nature of pride.

we should rather try to hide. Nothing of that kind is to be found in the vice of pride; its end is to gain honor, fame, praise, esteem and authority before men, which is a laudable thing in itself; nay, God even commands that one man should honor another, and He has conferred great honor on His holy servants in the world. It is no wonder, then, that we should find it hard to detect this vice in ourselves, and to have a proper horror of it.

From the
character
of the
proud man.

In the second place, this arises from the character of the proud man, because he refuses to believe that he seeks more honor than is due to him. If he considered his own faults and failings, he could learn to have a humble opinion of himself; but he sees them only imperfectly, and at a great distance, so that they appear quite small in his eyes; while he looks at his virtues, his rare gifts, and the great things he does, which really deserve praise, through a magnifying glass, so that they seem twenty times as great as they are in reality. "Every one thinks his own the best," says the proverb. A mother is proud of her little son, and thinks him the finest child in the world, and imagines that every one ought to be delighted to see him, although in reality he is often a very naughty boy. In the same way, the proud man thinks that because his own actions are pleasing to himself, he is much greater than he really is, so that he will not acknowledge himself to be proud.

From the
matter of
pride.

This difficulty arises, in the third place, from the matter of pride and of humility, which changes so much, according to different circumstances, that one cannot always know whether to attribute an act to pride or to humility. For instance, a torn, ragged garment would serve a rich man as matter for humility, but not so a beggar; if the latter were to beg a crust for God's sake, while clad in a rich mantle, he would feel very much ashamed, because his ragged coat suits him far better. It would be matter for humility and shame to a man of the world to go through the streets in a gray woolen habit, but that very same habit is the honor and glory of the poor Religious, who is accustomed to wear it always, and who is respected on account of it, because it is a sign that he has given up the pomps and vanities of the world in order to follow Christ, by observing the vows of religion; it would be a great shame for him, and he would deserve to be despised by men, if he went about dressed in grand style. Father Pallavicini, after he was made Cardinal, says that he was once engaged in the kitchen, while still a simple Jesuit,

cleaning up the dishes, and girt with a white apron, when one of his relatives came to see him ; he sent word to his visitor that he could not come to the door, as he was occupied in the kitchen ; and he acknowledges that he felt more tempted to pride, on that occasion, than he did afterwards when raised to the cardinalate. So that virtuous deeds, and even those that tend to humiliate one, can also furnish material for pride and vanity, because they are worthy of admiration and praise. From all this we see how hard it is to say with certainty whether one is proud or humble.

Still there are many signs and effects by means of which, if we study them, we shall be able to see whether we have true or false humility ; but it will always be easier to detect false than true humility, since the former is much more common than the latter, as St. Ambrose writes : “ Many have the appearance of humility, but not the virtue itself ; many pretend to have it ; ”¹ they speak slightly of themselves through politeness, but inwardly they are full of pride ; many, too, acknowledge their weakness and vileness in their own hearts, but they are careful to hide every appearance of humility from others, lest they should not be thought enough of.

Signs of
false humil-
ity, and se-
cret pride.

Of course all this is only sham humility, but real pride. Let us take an example : there are men who profess to be full of faults and failings, but they do not believe what they say, and they think it easy for others, too, to see that they are not subject to those faults. This is false humility and real pride ; people act like that in order to be looked upon as humble, or else to give others an opportunity of singling out their virtues in detail, that they may thereby get the praise they are ashamed to give themselves, for, as the old saying has it, self-praise is no praise. No, says St. Augustine, humility must not run counter to truth ; but must be always founded on truth. “ In Thy truth Thou hast humbled me,”² says David to God. No man, who wishes to humble himself, need have recourse to invented faults and imaginary failings ; he need only dive into the depths of his own conscience, examine his own thoughts of himself, and he will find matter enough for humility, without any hypocrisy or dissimulation. Others acknowledge faults of which they are really guilty ; but if he to whom they make the ac-

¹ Multi habent humilitatis speciem, virtutem non habentes; multi eam foris prætendunt, et intus impugnant.

² In veritate tua humilasti me.—Ps. cxviii. 75.

knowledge is hardy enough to reprove and admonish them, they will soon let him see that they do not want his correction, and thereby they will convict themselves of false humility and real pride. In the same way, many a one knows in his heart that he must amend his conduct in several things in order to be like the humble Saviour, but he cannot bear to have those faults spoken of in terms of reprobation ; nay, he cannot make up his mind to amend or get rid of them, lest he should seem to confess that he had been in the wrong ; a certain sign of secret pride. Another trick, too, is to speak of the faults and shortcomings which you are known to have, so that others may not be beforehand with you in condemning them, or in ridiculing you on account of them ; that is a false humility, which seeks to avoid humiliation. Again, you may bear patiently and meekly enough whatever is said in your blame by one who seems to be your superior, but you cannot bear a word from an equal, not to speak of an inferior ; a sure sign that true humility is wanting. You may even have a real good intention and an earnest desire to please God alone, and not to seek the praise of men, and yet you are annoyed and secretly dissatisfied if men do not approve of what you do ; much greater, too, will be your annoyance if they openly condemn your acts. Here also true humility is wanting.

Other signs
of pride.

There are other signs, too, by which we may distinguish between false and true humility ; for instance, I perform my good works, or whatever business I have to do, much more earnestly and zealously when others are looking on, than when God alone sees me ; a sure proof of secret pride. I do not mean, my dear brethren, that we must conceal all our good works from the eyes of men. No, if I said that, I should be contradicting our Lord Himself, who expressly tells us that we must give a good example to our neighbor. These are His words in the Gospel of St. Matthew : “ So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in Heaven.”¹ My meaning is, that I must be just as zealous and diligent in performing my good works in secret, as if I had the whole world looking on. If I do not do so, then, says Pallavicini, I am like those women who dress more carefully when they have to appear before strangers, than when they are alone with their husbands ; a proof that they do

¹ Sic luceat lux vestra coram hominibus, ut videant opera vestra bona, et glorificent Patrem vestrum, qui in coelis est.—Matth. v. 16.

not seek to please only their husbands by dressing magnificently. I must say the same of myself if I pray on bended knees, with down-cast eyes and uplifted hands, when I am alone before God, but dare not do so when in the public church, lest others should see me ; as is unfortunately the custom with many Christians, who are ashamed to fold their hands and kneel down to pray. That is a sign of a detestable pride, which prevents us, through human respect, from showing proper honor to the Almighty. Again ; I might wish to omit this or that action, which I know to be displeasing to God, if only others like me would do the same ; I do not wish to be alone, or to be the first in a thing of the kind ; the same difficulty I find when there is question of doing any act that I know to be pleasing to God ; for instance, I would willingly accompany the Blessed Sacrament, when It is carried publicly to the sick ; I know that that honor is due to the great God ; if I saw people of the same condition as myself accompanying It, I should do the same ; but I do not wish to be alone, or to be the first in doing it. See what false humility that is. A sure sign of secret pride. In what, then, does true Christian humility consist, and how are we to recognize it ? St. Bernard, following St. Thomas, and all the holy Fathers, answers this question : “ Humility is a virtue by which man, knowing himself thoroughly, becomes vile in his own eyes.”¹ From this, as the signs of this virtue, come the following fruits and effects. First a great reverence for God, by which the humble man is moved always and in every circumstance, publicly and privately, without any regard for human respect, to give to God that perfect honor and service which are His due ; thus, in all his words and actions, his first and only intention is to please and honor God, since humility teaches him that he belongs completely to God, body and soul. Secondly, the humble man shows a ready submission to those who are placed over him by divine will ; this should be found in subjects towards their spiritual and temporal superiors, in children towards their parents, in servants towards their masters and mistresses ; and it must be shown in everything that is not contrary to the law of God ; because the humble man sees God in the person of his superiors, and obeys them for God’s sake, according to the exhortation of St. Paul. Thirdly, humility causes one to have a good opinion of his neighbor, and to be always ready and willing to help him, when necessary ; so that he has not a bad

Signs and
effects of
true humil-
ity.

¹ Humilitas est virtus, qua homo verissima sui agnitione, sibi ipsi vilescit.

opinion of any one, even of the most abject beggar, or the lowest clown, or even of the greatest sinner, nor does he think him less than himself, much less despise, or treat him contemptuously; nor does he obstinately defend his own opinion, but readily gives way, and defers to the opinion of another; neither does he offend others in word or deed, and when he himself is offended, he bears the offence meekly and patiently. Fourthly, true humility causes one to have a low opinion of himself; yet the spirit of humility does not altogether consist therein. It is not enough for us to confess our misery; if it were, the demons and lost souls would be the most humble of creatures, because they know and feel their misery most keenly. No, along with this acknowledgment of our misery, true humility creates in us a desire and a longing for contempt and humiliations. In all the contradictions that a man has to endure, whether they come from God in the shape of crosses and trials, or from men in the shape of insult and injury, or from different circumstances that here and there occur to put him to shame and humiliate him, true humility makes him always satisfied, because he knows that he deserves it all, and that he is worth nothing better. Besides, it causes him to feel a hearty contempt for all worldly grandeur and vanity, so that if he is praised, he does not give way to self-conceit, but refers everything that is good in himself to the divine liberality, and thanks God for it.

They must appear in our outward conduct.

Finally, from this inward contempt of one's self comes the desire of being humbled before others; for, although outward signs alone do not constitute true humility, since many of them may be used for purposes of pride, while, on the other hand, a real Christian humility may lie hidden under the costly clothing that one's rank or station requires, yet it would be great folly for those who at heart have a low opinion of themselves, and are ashamed of their own nothingness, to give themselves up outwardly to worldly vanities and show. A truly humble man shows by his behavior that he has a lowly opinion of himself, so that one can see, in his conversation and in his silence, in his gait, in his dress, and in all his actions, that he does not esteem himself, and that he adores a humble, crucified God.

This virtue is as rare as it is necessary to salvation.

There you have, my dear brethren, a few marks of true humility. But, alas, says St. Bernard, "Humility, virtue of Christ,"¹ and of His Saints, how rare thou art in the world!

¹ O humilitas virtus Christi!

There is nothing harder than to convince a man that he must humble himself, and yet, there is nothing more necessary for salvation than to enter on the narrow way after the example of Christ. My dear friend, writes St. Augustine to Dioscorus, you ask me what you must do to live in a Christian manner and to please God and save your soul. "Of the ways that lead to God, the first is humility, the second humility, the third humility,"¹ and if you ask me still farther I shall again answer, humility. "Unless you be converted, and become as little children," such are the words of the humble Saviour, "you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven."² What are we to do, then, Christians? What plan shall we adopt? What means must we use in order to attain this virtue, which is so necessary for salvation? This question I mean to answer partly in the latter half of my instruction.

Second Part.

Since humility must exist in the heart and show itself in our outward behavior, there are two means by which we can attain and preserve that virtue. The first is in the heart of man, and consists in often and deeply meditating on what and who he is of himself. God will give him an answer interiorly, as the Emperor John answered the Patriarch of Constantinople, when the latter refused to obey him; the Emperor had raised him to that dignity, and he was incensed at the idea of being contradicted by him: "You worthless oven, I have made something of you, I have given you an honorable position, you must know that I can reduce you to beggary if I wish."³ In the same way, when we are assailed by self-conceit and secret vanity, we can imagine that we hear God saying to us: You poor creature, why are you puffed up? It is to Me alone, who drew you out of nothingness, that you owe your existence; whatever you are and have is from Me; I can deprive you of everything in a moment, and let you fall back into nothingness. Why do you glory and fill yourself with proud thoughts?

Means of
attaining
humility;
the consid-
eration of
one's self.

If I am reasonable, such a thought as that will necessarily drive me to the conclusion that not the least particle of praise, honor, or glory is due to me on account of anything I may have;

From which
contempt of
one's self
must come.

¹ *Ea est autem prima humilitas, secunda humilitas, tertia humilitas.*

² *Nisi conversi fueritis et efficiamini sicut parvuli, non intrabitis in regnum cœlorum.*
Matth. xviii. 3.

³ *Ego te furne condidi, ego te furne destruo.*

because it all belongs to God and not to me. Neither can I complain or think that an injustice is done me if men show me no honor or respect. All the praise that I may get from men is not mine but God's, and if I tried to arrogate it to myself, I should act as foolishly as a barber's wig-block, if it tried to set itself up on account of the beautiful curls and well-arranged locks that are placed upon it. How now, you stupid block? its owner could say, what you are wearing is not yours, it is mine, for I made it; leave off boasting at once, or else I will take it off and leave you bald-headed again. There was a famous saying amongst the ancient Greeks, "An ass carrying the mystic offering."¹ It was the custom amongst the heathens to place on the back of an ass the sacrifice destined for the goddess Isis; as the animal carried its burden along the streets, the people came out of their houses, fell upon their knees and struck their breasts in sign of adoration of their divinity. The ass, on one occasion, thinking that this was done in his honor, raised his head, pricked up his ears and began to walk with a slow, majestic gait, bowing first on one side and then on the other, as if to show that he was pleased with the respectful behavior of the people, until at last his driver gave him a blow of the whip over the ears and said: "The honor is not meant for you, but for Isis."² The ass then let his ears droop, and saw what a lamentable mistake he had made. My dear brethren, whatever excellent natural gifts or supernatural virtues we possess, whatever praiseworthy qualities we may have, all, as I have said already, belong to God, they are His gifts, which we can wear for a time in the sight of men. Whenever, therefore, I receive marks of esteem, or honor, or praise from others, and I feel myself tempted to vanity, I need only remember these words in order to humble myself: I am only a wretched ass carrying a mystic offering; this praise, this honor is not for me, but for God, who has bestowed His gifts on me; it cannot be for me, because, as St. Catharine of Genoa used to say, it is just as impossible for me to do good works without God, as it is for the devil to do them.

The consideration of the sins one has committed, of the forgiveness of which, one

When considering what I am of myself, my faith will help me to the answer that I was conceived and born in original sin, an enemy of God; while my own conscience will remind me of the sins I have actually committed during my life. If I am reasonable, this thought will again force me to the con-

¹ *Asinus portans mysteria.*

² *Non tibi, sed Isidi.*

clusion, that not only have I no right to praise or honor, but rather every right to shame and confusion ; so that I cannot complain, if I am treated with contempt and looked down upon, because it serves me perfectly right. I have sinned and merited the eternal fires of hell. With what humility that thought should inspire me ! If a minister were employed by the head of his government in some important matter, and neglected to discharge his duty properly, he would be ashamed to appear again in public, lest people should point at him and say : There is the man who was so careless of his duty. If a general were to retreat through cowardice, although he might easily conquer the enemy, he would be so ashamed when called upon to give an account of his conduct, that his worst enemies might pity him. A treacherous friend, caught in the act of perjury or treason, an unfaithful wife convicted of adultery with a servant, have they not both reason to be filled with shame and confusion ? O eyes of faith, open yourselves wide, that you may see that all these shameful acts are included in one mortal sin ! I am a minister and servant of the great King of Heaven and earth ; He has sent me into this world to look after His rights and His honor ; I am a soldier, who, as holy Job says, must fight for an eternal kingdom ; I am a friend of God by sanctifying grace, and must be always faithful to Him ; my soul is the spouse of the Holy Ghost and has sworn Him perpetual fidelity in baptism. If I have committed but one mortal sin, I have been unfaithful to my Sovereign Lord, I have disgraced myself by flying from, nay, by going over to the side of His enemy, I have been guilty of treachery to the best of Friends, who has never injured me, and always done me good. I have defiled my soul by spiritual adultery with the devil, in the sight of my heavenly Spouse. Can I dare to present myself again before God ? Must I not die of shame ? Have I not reason enough to humble myself, and cast myself under every one's feet ? But, you may say, I have done penance, I am cleansed from my sin, and am again a friend of God. Ah, my dear brethren, we must be careful of what we say. St. Peter, St. Mary Magdalen, and a few others whom Christ assured of pardon, could believe in their forgiveness as in an article of faith ; they could well say : My sins are forgiven, I am in the grace of God ; but we poor sinners, where shall we find the assurance that our sorrow has been really supernatural and that therefore our sins are taken away ? St. Paul himself, that great vessel

cannot be
certain.

of election, cries out with fear and trembling : “ For I am not conscious to myself of anything, yet am I not hereby justified ; but He that judgeth me is the Lord.”¹ Alas, I must think, where shall I find an infallible certainty that, after having committed so many grievous sins, I am now justified before God ? I have sinned, that much I can say with truth ; but that my sins are forgiven, I cannot say for certain.

Even if one were certain of having been forgiven, he would still have cause for humility.

Suppose, even, that I were certain of having been forgiven (oh, what a happiness that would be !), should I then have less cause for humility ? A robber or murderer, although he is pardoned by his sovereign, and set free by his judge, is still looked upon for the rest of his life as a social outcast, according to the axiom of jurists : “ Once a man’s character is gone, it is gone forever ; ”² therefore, a man of that kind goes away, as soon as he can, into some foreign land, where he is unknown, and takes a false name to avoid the disgrace that always dogs his footsteps. If he tried to become great in the estimation of those who know him, he would only incur deeper disgrace, for every one would point to him as the man who had escaped prison, or the gallows. Just souls, who have been sinners, it is a great mercy for you and me, since we cannot be perfectly certain of forgiveness, that we have to deal with a God of infinite goodness. For, if He wished to act with us according to the rigors of His justice, should we not now be amongst the lost souls in hell, the objects of His just vengeance ? That we are not now in that place of weeping and gnashing of teeth, is no work of ours. We were in the power of our Judge, fully convicted of crimes that deserve eternal death ; we were under the gallows, in that miserable state in which thousands have been judged already, and sent to hell for fewer mortal sins than we, perhaps, have committed ; the place appointed for us in hell might still be shown to us, and perhaps there are thousands of the reprobate who are now cursing God because He has spared us, and given us grace that we have by no means deserved. Have we not, then, just reason for shame and confusion ? This, my dear brethren, is the thought which kept the most fervent penitents in the deepest humility ; no matter how holy they became after their conversion, they still looked upon themselves as deserving only of hell, and of being made a laughing-stock

¹ Nihil enim mihi conscius sum, sed non in hoc justificatus sum ; qui autem judicat me, Dominus est.—I. Cor. iv. 4.

² Insania semel imposita perpetuo durat.

to demons, so that they deemed themselves fit objects of the scorn and contempt of all men.

And suppose that I have never committed a mortal sin (how many grown-up people can say that with truth?), even in that case, the consideration of myself will remind me that I may sin, that I may die in sin. I am now good and holy, but who has assured me that I shall remain so to the end, and that my name shall be written in the Book of Life? This is a mystery known only to God. As long as I live I am never out of the danger of falling into sin. He who suffers from epilepsy does not always fall down in a fit; many days, nay, weeks, may pass by without his having an attack; still he is not freed from his infirmity, and must expect to be surprised by it at any moment, because he has the root and cause of the disease in his limbs and in his blood. It is the same with me; although I may not fall into sin now, nor for many months, or even years, by the help of divine grace, yet I have in me the material of sin, my flesh and my corrupt nature, which are capable of leading me into the greatest crimes, unless God gives me special helps of His grace, and preserves me from my own weakness and malice; so that, with St. Augustine, I may thank God most humbly on account of the sins he has kept me from in the past, and will keep me from in the future: "It is by Thy grace, O Lord, that I have been preserved from the evil that I have not done,"¹ says this humble Saint. If I think that I have already attained a high degree of virtue, still I cannot say that I am safe from the danger of a disgraceful fall. He who climbs a high mountain, gets farther away from the valley beneath, the nearer he approaches the summit; but is he on that account more secure against the danger of a fall? One of the results of his having gained such a height, is this, that, if he does fall, he will be more likely to be killed. The nearer the slater is to the top of the roof, says St. John Chrysostom, the more reason he has to fear a fall; in the same way, continues the Saint, a pious, holy man has no greater certainty of his salvation, as long as he lives, than another; but as he is always in danger of sin, he has more reason to dread a shameful fall from the height of virtue to the abyss of hell. It may, perhaps, be the case, my dear brethren, that many a one feels a secret satisfaction at hearing that others of the same condition as himself are leading a bad, irreligious life; and that he thinks, oh, I am not so bad as that; I am

Still more
so when he
remembers
that he can
sin still, and
perhaps be
lost.

¹ *Gratiæ tuæ deputo, quæcunque non feci mala.*—S. Aug. l. 2, Conf. c. 7.

more certain of my salvation than those people. Alas, if I consider the matter rightly, I shall see that nothing ought to humble my pride so much as the miserable fall of so many into sin. And why? If I am travelling along the same narrow path with many others, and it is so slippery that I see many of my companions fall down on the way, have I any reason to think much of myself because as yet I have been able to keep my feet? No, I should rather be more afraid, thinking that since so many have fallen already, it may be my turn next. Now we are travelling along the road to eternity, we have all the same weak nature, and are exposed to the same danger of eternal ruin; if I see that many, nay, the greater number of men, are led into sin through their weakness, must I not be in continual fear lest the same should happen to me? I read in history of martyrs who were half roasted, or boiled, or frozen, and yet with the life barely in their bodies, they renounced the true Faith, for which they had already suffered so much. I read of hermits leading a holy life for twenty, thirty, and forty years, until their bodies were almost worn out by long fasting, vigils, prayers and austerities, and yet yielding to temptations to impurity, and sinning most shamefully; nay, some of them died in sin and were lost forever. Can I then think anything of myself, even if I really believe myself to lead a holy life? Alas! I have sinned, I have deserved hell; I know not for certain whether my sins are forgiven; it is possible for me to sin again, whether I shall do so or not, I cannot say; this much I know, that if I am not humble of heart, God will abandon me, I shall have no claim to Heaven, and I shall be lost of a certainty. This thought, if I reflect on it properly, should take away from me all pride and vanity. It should make me humble myself before all men, and as the humble Gospel of Christ teaches, make me meek and lowly in all circumstances. Ah, hear the warning that St. Paul addresses to us: "Be not high-minded, but fear."¹ O man, whoever thou art, do not think much of thyself, be humble, keep thyself in fear; to do so thou hast only to remember what thou art.

Outward
actions,
after the
example of
holy men,
also help to
attain hu-
mility.

Another means of external humiliation is to accustom one's self frequently to perform abject duties which men are generally in the habit of despising. "If you really desire to be humble, you must not avoid humiliations,"² says St. Bernard. The great King David often went barefoot, with downcast eyes and

¹ Noli altum sapere, sed time. — Rom. xi. 20.

² Si virtutem appetis humilitatis, viam non fugias humillationis.

his head strewn with ashes ; he was not ashamed to throw off his mantle and dance before the ark in the sight of all the people ; and when his wife, who felt ashamed, reproached him for acting in that manner, like a buffoon—" Michol, the daughter of Saul, coming out to meet David, said : How glorious was the king of Israel to-day, uncovering himself before the handmaids of his servants, and was naked as if one of the vain fellows should strip himself"—David answered : " Before the Lord who chose me I will both play and make myself meaner than I have done, and I will be little in my own eyes," ' no matter what you say to me. St. Louis, king of France, following the example of many kings and queens who preceded him on the throne, and who was himself imitated in this particular by many of his successors, used to keep twenty-six poor people at his court, as his most valued dependents, and every Saturday he knelt before them to wash their feet, which having washed, he kissed with the utmost reverence. At every mid-day and evening repast he had three beggars at table with him, and with his own hands he poured them out to drink and gave them of the best food, while he himself was satisfied with what was left. He used to visit the most revolting cases in the hospitals, and attend upon them with as little repugnance as if he were the meanest of beggars. St. Paulinus, syndic of Rome, a real oracle of learning, became a gardener, in order to humble himself, and appear contemptible in the eyes of the world. St. Alexander, at first a heathen philosopher, but afterwards a Christian, when he learned the humility of the Gospel went to live among charcoal burners, in order to be unknown to men. King Charlemagne, tired of the honor that was paid him, went into a monastery, and there herded the cattle. Father Colnago. in order to put himself to shame and practise humility, decked himself out with a fool's cap and went through the streets of the town in which his reputation as a preacher was so great, dragging a dead dog after him, so that the children began to hoot and throw stones at him. Read the Lives of the Saints, and you will find examples enough of the voluntary humiliations and self-abasement of the greatest men. I dare not, nor do I wish to exhort you, my dear brethren, to follow their example exactly ; but, if we really mean to practise humil-

¹ Et egressa Michol filia Saul in occursum David, ait : Quam gloriosus fuit hodie rex Israel discooperiens se ante ancillas servorum suorum, et nudatus est, quasi si nudetur unus de scurris. . . . Ante Dominum, qui elegit me. . . . et ludam et vilior flam plus quam factus sum, et ero humilis in oculis meis.—II. Kings vi. 20-22.

ity, there are other humiliations enough which we may embrace every day of our lives; such as, silence when anything is said against us, a humble acknowledgment of the faults we commit, yielding to those with whom we could and would willingly contend, asking pardon of those whom we offend, greeting in a friendly manner, visiting and showing respect to those whom we do not like, dressing and otherwise behaving outwardly in a manner suited to Christian humility, and especially avoiding everything that might give scandal, and that, consequently, is forbidden by the law of God, although by doing so we may give occasion to talk and unkind remarks; bearing crosses and trials with patience, humbly acknowledging that we deserve nothing better than to be punished for our sins. Many occasions of this kind will be presented to us daily.

Lastly,
humble
prayer to
God.

Finally, if all this does not help to subdue the pride of my heart, the last means must be humble prayer to Thee, O God, which I will offer to Thee daily with Thy servant Augustine: Grant, O Lord, that I may know Thee and know myself,¹ in order that I may give Thee all the honor and praise and keep all the shame and confusion for myself. Keep far from me all pride and vanity. O most humble Saviour, let me learn from Thee now, at least, to be zealous in the practice of that humility of heart, to which Thou exhortest me so earnestly, and without which I can have no part in Thee. Give me, then, a powerful grace, that I may enter on the narrow path of humility and persevere in it; for by that means alone shall I be able to come into the society of those humble souls who are now with Thee in the glory of Heaven. Amen.

Another Introduction of the same Sermon for the Feast of the Apostle St. James:

Text.

Dic ut sedeant hi duo filii mei, unus ad dexteram tuam, et unus ad sinistram in regno tuo.—Matth. xx. 21.

“Say that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand, and the other on Thy left, in Thy kingdom.”

What a strange request: that one of her sons should sit on our Lord's right hand, and the other on His left! Evidently the mother thought that Christ was about to establish a kingdom on earth, in which He would reign over Israel as a great

¹ Noverim Te, noverim me.

king ; and therefore she was anxious to get the first place, next to Him, for her sons, because, as St. Cyril remarks, they wished to be greater than the other Apostles. Thus pride and ambition found their way even amongst the Apostles of Christ, although, from His teaching and example, they could learn nothing but humility. And what did they gain ? Nothing except a reproof from Christ on account of their foolish request : “ You know not what you ask ; ”¹ and the displeasure of the other Apostles, as the Gospel says immediately after : “ And the ten hearing it were moved with indignation against the two brethren.”² And so it is, my dear brethren, with all proud and ambitious people who strive for the esteem and applause of men ; they gain nothing but hatred from God and man. Therefore I have already proved that there is nothing more foolish than to give way to pride, and that we, mortals, have the greatest reason to be lowly and little in our own eyes, etc.—*continues as before.*

¹ Nescitis quid petatis.—Matth. xx. 22.

² Et audientes decem, indignati sunt de duobus fratribus.—Ibid. 24.

ON AVARICE AND INJUSTICE.

SIXTH SERMON.

ON THE VAIN LABOR OF THE AVARICIOUS.

Subject.

The avaricious man who seeks money and property, 1. Gains nothing in time. 2. Gains nothing in eternity.—*Preached on the eighth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Homo quidam erat dives.—Luke xvi. 1.
“There was a certain rich man.”

Introduction.

Even rich people may be deceived and robbed, as happened to the rich man described in to-day's Gospel, who was so unjustly treated by his own steward ; for the latter not only robbed him of his goods, but also tried to make an unjust profit out of his debtors. Therefore, money and riches are not able to make one happy. No, because, like the wise Solomon, men find nothing in them but vanity. We have hitherto treated, my dear brethren, of the first class of worldly goods, namely, of honor and authority amongst men, and I have proved that an ambitious man gains nothing, either from God or from men, but the very contrary of what he seeks. Now I come to the second class of people, namely, those who strive for wealth and riches ; and I say—

Plan of Discourse.

An avaricious man, who seeks money and property, gains nothing. Such is the subject of the present sermon. He gains nothing in time. The first and longer part. He gains nothing in eternity. The second part.

O God of infinite riches, who for love of us became poor, that we might be rich in Heaven, withdraw our hearts from the empty goods of this world, that we may seek only Thee, and gain everything with Thee ! This we ask of Thee through the intercession of Thy Mother, and of the holy angels guardian.

A young prince, who was once out hunting on horseback, came to a cave in a forest, where he found the celebrated hermit Macedonius, who had spent over sixty years in this solitude, unknown to the world. The prince, surprised at the appearance of the old man, asked him what he was doing in that solitude, and how he lived in a cave without chair, or bench, or fireplace, and how he passed the day ? Sir, answered the hermit, I believe we are both of the same profession; for when I look at your dress, at the weapon in your hand, and the horn at your side, I see that you are a hunter; now you must know that I am a hunter also. How, you a hunter? said the prince; and what do you hunt? In this quiet solitude, answered the hermit, I hunt after and seek my God; my hunting horn are the psalms that I sing, by which I call out after Him, my dog is the constant prayer and meditation with which I cry to Him. "I hunt for God, and I will not cease until I have caught him."¹ Happy the hunting of that pious hermit, who sought and desired nothing but God! We read these words of St. Cajetan in the Divine Office: "He labored most assiduously for the salvation of his neighbor, so that he was called a hunter of souls."² Again a happy hunting, by which one catches precious souls redeemed by the Blood of Christ, and drives them into Heaven. We read of the Emperor Domitian that he used to spend many hours of the summer's days in doing nothing but catching flies; and he would laugh with pleasure when he succeeded in spitting a fly on a needle, or in killing it with his hand. What a difference between these huntsmen! Macedonius hunts God, Cajetan hunts souls, and Domitian hunts flies; a useless, childish, and foolish hunt, this last is surely.

My dear brethren, we are all hunters in this life; daily we go a-hunting; but what kind of game do we seek? Pious souls, whose first thought in the morning is directed to Heaven; whose desires and longings, words and actions during the day are directed to the fulfilment of the divine will with a real, supernatural intention, and a constant recollection of the presence of

There are many kinds of hunters, some of whom pursue vain and useless things.

We are all hunters in this life.

¹ Venor Deum meum, et nunquam cessabo donec comprehendam.

² Proximorum salutis assidua cura incumbbat, dictus propterea venator animarum.

God; who seek to please God alone by Christian humility, meekness, patience, purity, mercy, and the constant practice of good works; oh, what happy hunters you are! Like that holy hermit, you go out in search of your God. Continue your search with courage and perseverance; you will certainly find what you desire, and your God will say to you: "I will be thy reward exceeding great."¹ Zealous servants of God, who by your edifying lives and virtuous example, by bringing up your children in a holy manner, by avoiding scandal, by fraternal correction and exhortation of the wicked, by visiting the sick and helping the poor, seek to bring others to Heaven with you, happy hunters are ye! You hunt souls, like Cajetan; go on as you have begun; you will find what you desire, and your glory in Heaven will be increased by the souls you convert. Vain worldlings, who are busied every day with a hundred cares for the sake of some temporal gain, or some passing breath of praise, or some momentary pleasure, meanwhile forgetting your souls as completely as if you had none, what do you hunt? Ah, how foolish you are! Like Domitian, you hunt flies, which escape out of your hands in hundreds, and even when you have caught one, you have nothing but a worthless insect.

Those who
seek riches
gain no-
thing.

I will speak now only of those who are engaged in the pursuit of temporal riches. There are three classes of them; for they can be either prodigal with their money, or avaricious, or moderate, so that they make a good and sensible use of their wealth. None of the three classes catch anything but worthless flies, especially when money is the end and object of their labor. It is clear enough that the prodigal gain nothing, for they squander away on dress or luxurious living, or in some other foolish way, the money they made by their labor. Their motto is, lightly got, lightly gone.

Not even
those who
make a
moderate
use of
wealth.

With regard to the best class of those who seek worldly wealth, namely, they who use their riches in moderation, what do they gain? Besides their gold, which after all is only a piece of metal, they gain many cares and anxieties, much disquiet and trouble, much labor and fatigue, for they have to run hither and thither, either to get riches, or to keep them, or to increase them. A bad season, a failure in the crops, an unforeseen misfortune, a sudden depreciation in the value of goods, the bankruptcy of a debtor, lawsuits that sometimes make enmities among brothers and sisters, for the sake of that wretched mine and thine, etc., all these things fill them with fears, anxieties, and trouble.

¹ Ego et merces tua magna nimis.—Gen. xv. 1.

Therefore our Lord compared riches to thorns: he who wishes to pluck the rose, must not be astonished if the thorns prick him. What, then, is the result of all your cares and trouble, oh, rich man? Although you are rolling in wealth, you have gained nothing but food and clothing; a few times a day you can eat and drink your fill, that is all; the remainder of your wealth you must employ, whether you wish it or no, for the good of others, at least for that of the members of your own household. You have a grand house, you may have three or four of them; now, tell me the truth, are you, therefore, able to take up more room than before? Certainly not; you are not able to fill up even one room in your house; so for the time being, whatever you have beyond that is superfluous, even as much so as the wide world is for the poor beggar who wanders hither and thither over it. Your coffers are filled with gold, your barns with grain, your cellars with wine; are you, then, in need of more food and drink than before? Certainly not; and this is in accordance with a wise arrangement of Providence, which has not fixed the size of the body by the amount of superfluous food or clothing that one has, as if a rich man should be bigger than a poor man. "What doth it profit the owner," says the Wise Ecclesiastes, "but that he seeth the riches with his eyes?"¹ for it is only the least part of his gold that he can make use of; the greater part he can only look at and admire. And so it is, my dear brethren, that even the richest kings and princes, with all their pomp and wealth, can have nothing more than food, clothing, and lodging; and therefore an ordinary citizen, who has only food, clothing, and lodging, and who, according to the advice of St. Paul, desires nothing else, is far happier and more contented than the greatest monarch on earth. We learn from the Holy Scriptures that "the provision of Solomon," as to food alone, "for each day, was thirty measures of fine flour, and threescore measures of meal, ten fat oxen, and twenty out of the pastures, and a hundred rams, besides venison of harts, roes, buffaloes, and fatted fowls."² And how much of this great quantity of food was Solomon able to enjoy? The very smallest portion; for when he was satisfied, he had to stop eating, and thus the remainder of the food was of no good to him. Why, then, should we have such an inordinate desire to increase our wealth, if our nature is con-

¹ Quid prodest possessori, nisi quod cernit divitias oculis suis?—Eccles. v. 10.

² Erat cibus Salomonis per dies singulos triginta cori similæ, et sexaginta cori farinæ, decem boves pingues, et viginti boves pascuales, et centum arietes, excepta venatione cervorum, caprearum, atque bubalorum, et avium altitium.—III. Kings iv. 22.

tent with so little? Why should I trouble myself about things that I can never use nor enjoy? In truth, if there is any difference between the rich man and the poor man, it is this, that the latter has not the cares and anxieties of the former, nor has he so much to leave behind. So that the best of those who seek for money catch nothing but worthless flies.

Who are
misers, and
how the
vice of avarice
grows.

Let us now consider the third class, namely the avaricious ; that is, those who seek money, and live parsimoniously, and do all they can to increase their stock, not because they intend to make use of it, but solely that they may become rich ; they are those who love money for its own sake. This blind love of money does not spring up all at once in the heart, it grows gradually. In the beginning a man desires and works for money, because he can thereby provide himself with what he wants ; after a while, since men are apt to look rather far forward, he thinks that he might rise to a certain position in which he would require considerable wealth ; an uneasy desire impels him to accumulate more and more, so that he may have quite enough to supply all his probable needs ; meanwhile he begins to grow fond of money, as a fruit of his labor, and it pleases him to think that he is becoming a rich man. At last he gets fonder and fonder of money every day, for its own sake, until he becomes so infatuated with it, that he would rather suffer the pangs of hunger, or allow himself to be beaten almost to death, than part with it.

These are
the most
foolish of
all.

This greed of gain is the most foolish of passions, because it brings no advantage or profit to him who is subject to it. St. Paul calls it, “a serving of idols.”¹ And why? There is nothing more foolish than to adore false gods, and pray to images of wood, stone, or copper, which are not merely unworthy of being loved or adored, but also are without life and reason, so that they are gods only in the imagination of him who looks upon them as gods, and they can neither help nor hurt their adorers. The same folly is committed by the avaricious man, who loves his money and keeps it for its own sake ; for he loves a thing that is not worthy of love, and profits him nothing. Other goods, such as health, knowledge, beauty, comfort, and convenience, praise, honor, and authority before men, have charms which attract the human heart, so that people are easily induced to seek them ; but money, as the avaricious look upon it, is neither useful nor injurious, except in the imagination of the avaricious man himself.

For the
whole value

For, is it not true, my dear brethren, that the whole value

¹ Idolorum servitus.—Ephes. v. 5.

and charm of money consists only in the use of it, in the fact that I can give it in exchange for food, clothing, lodging, and other necessities or pleasures of life? In former times, as we learn from history, money was coined out of the hides of oxen, through want of metals, or the skill required to work them. Were people any worse off then than we are now? Not by any means; we are neither better off nor richer because we have gold and silver coin to buy the necessities of life with; the same things might have been had formerly for copper money. We pay three cents or more now, for what would then have cost but one cent, and where I must now spend three dollars, I should have had then to spend but one. Money is like food: if I cannot enjoy the food, what good is it to me? What good is money to me, if I cannot or will not make use of it? I certainly cannot eat it. Still there is this difference between money and food, that by the use and enjoyment of the latter, I increase my bodily health and strength, while the good of money consists in my giving it away to others. If I had a bag full of gold in my room, and were lawful owner of it, but were forbidden to give any of it away, of what use would it be to me, unless merely to look at? As far as my own profit is concerned, it would be even better for me if the bag were filled with hay or straw; for then, at least, I might make a cushion of it, which I could not do with the gold.

There is no one who makes less use of money than the miser; he will not and can not part with it; there is no one who eats, drinks, and lives more miserably; he would rather starve than spend a penny of his hidden treasures; he would rather cut off his hand than give away any of his gold for a lawful pleasure or enjoyment; his only care is how to increase his store. The Wise Ecclesiasticus says: "The eye of the covetous man is insatiable, he will not be satisfied till he consume his own soul, drying it up." The more he has, the more he desires; the greater his wealth becomes, the less can he bear to part with any of it. In the other desires of the senses, one can easily find sufficient satisfaction; when I have looked at a beautiful picture for an hour or so, I get tired of it and go away. No matter how fine music may be, if we hear too much of it, our ears grow wearied. Food and drink, no matter how good they are, cause disgust when we have had our fill of them. But the insatiable miser

of money
is in its
use.

The miser
makes no
use of it.

¹ *Insatiabilis oculus cupidī, non satiabitur donec consumat arefaciens animam suam.*—
Ecc. xiv. 9.

is never satisfied ; so that he is sometimes compared to one who suffers from dropsy, who grows thirstier the more he drinks ; and sometimes to the sea, which never overflows, although all the rivers in the world empty themselves into it : “ All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea doth not overflow,”¹ says the Wise Preacher. Experience generally teaches that the less one’s income is, the more ready he is in giving, and the more willing to procure for himself lawful pleasures : a thing that a rich miser would not dream of doing. A beggar can never grow rich, says the proverb. And why ? Because, since he has no hope of ever amassing money, he spends the little he has, without care for the morrow, trusting either to getting some work to do, or to the charity of others.

Shown by an
example.

Martial describes a man named Calenus, as a moderately rich and good-hearted man, who was very generous ; he used to give his children, brothers, sisters, friends, neighbors, nay, even his servants, the best of everything he had. What a pity, thought his friends, that Calenus is not a richer man. And they began to pray that he who knew how to make such good use of the little he had, might become very rich. Their prayer was heard ; in a short time Calenus inherited four large properties, one after the other, and a large sum of money as well, so that he became much richer, but, at the same time, much poorer than before. His only care now was to hide his gold away in his coffers, and to bury it in his cellars ; no friend or neighbor was invited to share his hospitality. Instead of increasing his household, as he might have done, he endeavored to cut down expenses as much as possible, and sent away his servants. It takes too much, he thought, to feed so many mouths daily ; it is better to avoid that useless expense. Formerly, he used to enjoy himself with his friends, but now he would rather suffer hunger than spend any money. Martial then describes his friends as thus addressing him : Calenus, we have made you rich by our prayers and good wishes ; shall we continue to pray for you ? Yes, answered Calenus, pray by all means. For what, then, shall we pray ? that you may return to your former condition ? No, said he, pray that I may get more money. Very well then, “ We wish you a thousand times more, Calenus ; ”² since you inherited such a large property, you have hardly eaten enough, while we have not had the least share of your wealth ; if you become

¹ Omnia flumina intrant in mare, et mare non redundant.—Eccles. 1. 7.

² Optamus tibi millies, Calene ; hoc si contigerit, fame peribis.

richer still, as we earnestly desire, you will starve yourself to death through sheer avarice, and then we shall have all your riches. So true is it, my dear brethren, "The miser wants what he has, just as much as what he has not."¹ The one is as useless to him as the other; he is as poor as a beggar in the midst of his wealth.

Nay, he is worse off than a beggar; for the latter, when he gets a little money, spends it with joy to purchase what he is in need of; but the miser, when he is forced to spend a trifle for the bare necessities of life, does it as unwillingly as if it was his heart's blood he was depriving himself of. Thus the use of his riches causes him more trouble and anxiety than pleasure and satisfaction; he possesses wealth, but has nothing from it; he is frightened at the bare idea of having to spend money to keep himself from starving. The Holy Scriptures give us an example of this in the friends who came to visit Job in order to console him in his affliction; as soon as they saw him, they were frightened, and Job said these words to them: "Now you are come, and now seeing my affliction, you are afraid."² What were they afraid of? They were rich misers, says de Lyra; they saw that he was in great poverty, lying naked on a dunghill, and they felt, not pity for his misfortune, for they reproached him bitterly, but feared lest they should be obliged to help him: "They were afraid that Job would ask them for help,"³ are the words of de Lyra. The patient man seems to have seen what was in their minds, for he reproached them thus: "Did I say: Bring to me and give me of your substance?"⁴ There you have a true picture of the miser; he is annoyed at seeing any one come into his house, lest he should have to spend anything on him; if he sees a beggar in the street, he shuts the door at once, for fear of having to give a penny in charity. If a tradesman knocks at his door, he trembles with fear, lest he should have to pay for the coat, or the pair of shoes he had made. At the end of the year he tries to avoid his servants, and grows pale at the idea of paying them their wages. If his clothes show signs of old age, he shudders at the thought of having to get new ones. If his wife, or if one of his children get sick, he is almost beside himself, not with pity, but through fear of having to pay

Avarice entails only trouble and anxiety.

¹ Tam deest avaro quod habet, quam quod non habet.

² Nunc venistis, et modo videntes plagam meam timetis.—Job vi. 21.

³ Timebant ne aliquid stipis a Jobo pro sublevatione sua peteretur.

⁴ Numquid dixi: Afferte mihi, et de substantia vestra donate mihi.—Job vi. 22.

for medicines. In that way he torments himself on account of that wealth in which others find their comfort and pleasure.

And also
the hatred
and scorn
of all.

Besides that, he draws down on himself the hatred and scorn of others. Generally speaking, no one is more looked down upon than a miser. Wherever he goes, whenever he is spoken of, he is always ridiculed ; his neighbors dislike him, his friends are ashamed of him, and avoid him ; the poor and needy curse him, because they cannot hope for anything from him ; tradesmen and laborers are unwilling to work for him, because they have just reason for suspecting that he will not pay them, or that he will keep them waiting a long time for payment ; his servants cannot bear him, because he feeds them so badly ; nay, he is even hateful sometimes to his own wife and children, because they do not get enough from him to be able to dress according to their position. In nearly all comedies a miser is brought on the stage to excite the laughter of the audience ; no one pities his misfortunes, they are rather a source of enjoyment. Thieves hardly think it a sin to steal from him ; and sometimes they do so, not for the sake of what they can carry off, but to vex the miser. He is generally compared to a swine, that is of no good to any one till it is dead. See, my dear brethren, how vain and foolish is the labor of him who is influenced by greed of gain. After hard work he succeeds in getting what he so much longed for, and yet what has he but a lot of flies that buzz around his head and drive him nearly frantic. But if the avaricious man gains nothing in time, he gains far less for his soul in eternity ; as I shall show in the

Second Part.

All men,
when they
die, must
leave what
they possess
to others.

This truth seems to me so evident, that it will not take long to prove it. The richest and most foolish miser knows well that he will not be able to take a single penny with him into the next world ; he must acknowledge with St. Paul : “ For we brought nothing into this world ; and certainly we can carry nothing out.”¹ What happened to St. Paul in his conversion, namely, that as he was on his way to persecute the Christians, a brilliant light from Heaven suddenly shone round about him, and he was struck with blindness, “ and when his eyes were opened, he saw nothing,”² the same, according to the Holy

¹ Nihil enim intulimus in hunc mundum : haud dubium, quod nec auferre quid possumus.—I. Tim. vi. 7.

² Apertisque oculis nihil videbat.—Acts ix. 8.

Scriptures, will happen to all rich men after their death : “They have slept their sleep, and all the men of riches have found nothing in their hands.”¹ To keep to my original simile, my dear brethren, what happens in a hunt ? The huntsmen go out with their dogs ; some are on foot, others on horseback ; they all look around for game most eagerly, and if they see a hare jumping out of a bush, what a noise they make ! They run here and there, and set the dogs after the hare with loud cries ; but when the dogs have caught it, they take it from them at once. The same thing happens to the worldly-minded and avaricious. Some chance of gain or profit offers itself to their notice, they rush at it at once, and work with all their might to make the most of it ; but when they have got what they want, very often death comes, and cries out to them to leave it. What a sad thing for the dying man that is ! Where is my money ? he asks. You must leave it, answers death. Where are my hidden treasures ? You must leave them. Where are my lands and vineyards, and my costly furniture ? You must leave them. Away with you at once, poor and naked, into eternity ! Everything you have you must leave to others, whether you wish it or not ; to others, who will perhaps squander it away most recklessly. What time, trouble, and labor you have devoted to amassing wealth ! Now you must leave it to those who will not even thank you for it, nor say an Our Father for your soul, because you gave them nothing during your life. If we can believe what is written on the subject, it appears that in India there are ants of enormous size, that live in caves, and collect together all the gold and other metals they can find ; but they never can derive any profit from their treasures, because the people of the country come and take them all away ; so that they lose in an hour what they spent many months in putting together.² The same thing happens to the rich man on his death-bed : he has toiled and labored during life to heap up gold and silver, and add treasure to treasure ; but to what end ? Hardly is his toil finished, and the wealth he desired accumulated, when death comes, and forces him to leave all he has to be divided amongst others, who very often get rid in a short time of that which it took him many years’ labor to amass.

It is true that pious servants of God, as well as misers, must *It will be*

¹ Dormierunt somnum suum, et nihil invenerunt omnes viri divitiarum in manibus suis.—Ps. lxxv. 6

² Cæsius, de mineral. Ex Plin. l. 3, c. 10.

especially
hard for the
avaricious
to do so.

leave their riches behind them at the hour of death, and that they can bring nothing with them into eternity ; but as there is a great difference in the manner of using and possessing riches, so also there is a great difference in the manner of leaving those riches. The pious Christian, who has never set his heart on them, puts them off as he would a garment, which he lays aside in the evening without the least regret. The avaricious man, on the other hand, looks upon riches as a part of himself, as if they were hair, or feathers, so that he finds it as hard to part with them as a fowl does to be plucked alive. St. John Chrysostom, explaining the words of our Lord, in which He compares riches to thorns, says that we can have thorns in the hand in two ways : if we hold them in the open hand, they will not hurt us, but if we close the hand on them, they sink into the flesh, and we cannot free ourselves from them without pain and loss of blood. So it is with riches : the pious hold them in the open hand ; they employ them in the service and to the glory of God ; they share them with Jesus Christ in the persons of the poor and needy ; and they are resigned to the will of God, if it should please Him to lessen their wealth or to take it away altogether. They say, with holy Job : “The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away. . . . blessed be the name of the Lord.”¹ They feel no pain when those thorns are taken out of their hands, because, when the time comes for them to go into eternity, they have, so to speak, only to turn the hand over, and the thorns fall off, without pain, or sorrow. “Not so the wicked, not so ;”² not so the avaricious, who, during their lives, held fast to those thorns with closed hands ; many a pang and torment they will feel when the thorns are taken out of their hands by force. “O death, how bitter is the recollection of thee to a man that hath peace in his possessions !”³

How foolish
most men
are to
strive so
eagerly for
money, and
neglect
eternal
goods.

Ah, Christians, is it possible that we should plague and torment ourselves about those perishable goods, which are only worthless flies in time, pricking thorns in the hour of death, and nothing at all in eternity ? And yet nearly every one is most eager in pursuit of them. If people employed for God and Heaven the fourth, nay, even the tenth part of the labor and trouble they give themselves to amass worldly wealth, then would they become great Saints in Heaven. St. Francis Xav-

¹ Dominus dedit, Dominus abstulit . . . sit nomen Domini benedictum.—Job i. 21.

² Non sic impij, non sic.—Ps. i. 4.

³ O mors, quam amara est memoria tua homini pacem habenti in substantiis suis.—Eccl. xli. 1.

ier could not see without pain so many merchants leaving Portugal and other countries of Europe, and crossing the wide and dangerous ocean, to make money in the distant Indies ; while he found so few who were willing to accompany him to the same countries to save souls. Zealous servants of God, reason, indeed, have you to complain, when you see and experience how much is done and suffered daily for the sake of money, and how little is done in a whole year for God and Heaven ! Shout from the pulpit until you are hoarse, exhort the people to come to church on Sundays and holydays, to hear the word of God and do something for their souls, and you will see that many Christians can find a hundred excuses : some will say that the church is too far away, others that the weather is too severe, others again have something to do at home ; nay, you will find some who do not hesitate to stand in their shops and wait upon customers on those days consecrated to the service of God. Preach to them of fasting, alms-giving, mortification of the senses, Christian meekness and humility, to which the law of Christ binds every one, and they will find a hundred excuses to dispense themselves : fasting is bad for their health, alms-giving they cannot afford, they are too delicate to practise mortification, the dignity of their position does not allow them to humble themselves. So that it is too difficult and almost impossible to do anything for God and one's soul. Gold ! Oh, what a far greater power thou hast over the hearts of men, than even the Almighty God Himself, with His kingdom of Heaven and its eternal joys, which He has promised to His faithful servants ! No mortification is too great, no labor too heavy, no humiliation too degrading, no way too rough, no weather too severe, no time too precious, nothing so troublesome as to frighten away one who has a hope of gaining thee ! Dost thou ask one to expose himself to a thousand dangers, either on the stormy sea, or on land amongst robbers and murderers ? Oh, thou wilt find enough who are only too willing to do so ! The most violent desires and inclinations are easily restrained, when there is question of money. It is often to no purpose that preachers endeavor to persuade people to do away with scandalous abuses, or to be reconciled to their enemies ; to no purpose do they hold up for imitation the example of the meek and humble Jesus, who prayed on the cross for His enemies and murderers, who has threatened not to forgive us, unless we forgive others, and who has pronounced eternal woe against those by whom scandal

comes ; useless, I say, it is to allude to our Lord's examples. But if a few bags of gold were brought and placed in the hands of the audience, there would be plenty of them who would at once lay aside their enmity and grasp each other's hands in token of friendship ! If there was a fine imposed for indulging in this or that abuse, how quickly we should see an improvement ! Thus, what cannot be done by reason, or honesty, or conscience, or by the example and Gospel of Christ, or for the sake of saving one's soul and going to Heaven, or of avoiding the eternal torments of hell ; what cannot be done by the Almighty God and His law, is accomplished by avarice and the inordinate desire of temporal goods. To this avarice, says Tertullian, are sacrificed all the cares and thoughts of a restless mind. But that is not enough. To it are sacrificed all a man's cleverness and prudence. Not yet enough ! To it is given all the sweat of one's brow. Still more ! a much greater victim is slaughtered in its honor, the soul's salvation.¹

Conclusion
and resolution
to seek
God and
heavenly
goods alone.

O foolish world, thus to seek what thou knowest will be taken from thee in a short time ! Hear my dear brethren, how much more prudently King Ezechias acted. It was announced to him in the name of God : " Behold the days shall come, that all that is in thy house, and that thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon : nothing shall be left, saith the Lord." ² Now, I ask, was everything that Ezechias might accumulate after this threat, to be saved from plunder ? For, certainly Jerusalem was not taken at once, nor for some years after. No, we must answer, even that will not be saved, according to the Prophet's words : " Nothing shall be left." But if that is the case, and if everything that the fathers of Ezechias had laid up, " unto this day," was also to be taken away, why does not the Prophet add that whatever the king himself might accumulate, after the warning, would meet the same fate ? The answer is easy. The Chaldeans took away everything they found in the royal palace, so that as the Prophet said, nothing was left ; but they found only the treasures that had been brought together up to the day of the warning, because when Ezechias heard that the Chaldeans were to take all he had, he was not so foolish as to waste his time lay-

¹ Illi ingenium suum immolat ; illi prudentiam suam accendit ; illi sudorem suum libat ; majorem hostiam cedit, salutem suam.

² Ecce dies venient, et auferentur omnia, quæ sunt in domo tua, et quæ condiderunt patres tui usque in diem hanc, in Babylonem : non remanebit quidquam, ait Dominus.—IV. Kings xx. 17.

ing up more treasure ; for, he thought, would it not be a senseless thing for me to trouble myself and distress my subjects with taxation in order to fill my treasury, when I know that in a short time the Chaldeans will be masters of it ? Therefore, from that day forward he put aside every idea of increasing his wealth. How unwisely then, do not we Christians act, although the day is appointed for us too ; behold the day and the hour will come when death will take away all thou hast in thy house ; how unwise to strain every power of soul and body to heap up riches, while we forget altogether the interests of the soul ! If we were only eager in the pursuit of eternal riches, of incorruptible goods, of God Himself, we should be infallibly certain of gaining what we seek. Is it not foolish to plague ourselves so much in the pursuit of that which cannot content us when we have it, and meanwhile to neglect the only good that is able to satisfy us fully ? Poor ye are, oh rich, if you have lost your God. “Woe to you that are rich,”¹ says Christ, if your hearts are fixed on riches and temporal goods. Rich are ye, oh poor, if in your poverty you have gained God alone. “Behold,” said St. Peter to our Lord in the name of all the Apostles and the contented poor, “behold we have left all things,” we desire nothing but Thee alone, “and have followed Thee.” “What therefore shall we have?”² “You shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall possess life everlasting.”³ Therefore my first, greatest, and only care shall be to say with the pious hermit, “I am hunting for my God and I will not cease until I have fast hold of Him.”⁴ If I have Him alone, I shall be rich enough for time and eternity. Amen.

¹ Væ vobis divitibus.—Luke vi. 24.

² Ecce, nos reliquimus omnia, et secuti sumus te : quid ergo erit nobis ?—Matth. xix. 27.

³ Centuplum accipietis et vitam æternam possidetis.

⁴ Venor Deum meum, et nunquam cessabo donec comprehendam.

SEVENTH SERMON.

ON THE CARELESSNESS OF THE AVARICIOUS IN NEGLECTING
GOD DURING LIFE.

Subject.

The avaricious man neglects God during life. 1. By omitting the good that he ought to do. 2. By doing the evil to which his desires lead him.—*Preached on the ninth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Ingressus in templum, cœpit ejicere vendentes in illo et ementes.
Luke xix. 45.

“And entering into the temple, He began to cast out them that sold therein and them that bought.”

Introduction.

So far are men carried away by the desire of money and temporal riches, that they do not hesitate to place the honor of God in the back-ground, and profane the buildings consecrated to Him; as we read in to-day's Gospel of the buyers and sellers who turned the temple of the Lord into a public market-place, so that even the meek Jesus was forced to be wroth with them and to drive them away with scourges. In my last sermon, my dear brethren, we have seen that the avaricious man, with all his labor and trouble, gains nothing either in time or eternity. But I have not said near enough, for he loses everything in time and in eternity, inasmuch as he neglects God and all that belongs to God, as I shall now show.

Plan of Discourse.

The avaricious man neglects God during life by omitting the good that he ought to do. The first part. He neglects God by doing the evil to which his desires lead him. The second part.

Therefore, O Lord, give us Thy powerful grace, that our hearts may not be led captive by this greed of gain; but that we may always raise them to heavenly goods, through the intercession of Mary and the holy angels guardian.

What is
necessary to
please God.

To possess God, it is indispensably necessary for us to acknowledge him as our last end, and only true and highest happi-

Carelessness of the Avaricious.

99

ness, who alone can fully and perfectly satisfy all the desires of our hearts ; necessary to fly and avoid everything that could keep us away from Him, and on the other hand, to undertake and fulfil exactly all that can lead us to Him ; necessary for us to love Him constantly with all our heart and soul, with all our mind and strength, so that every thought, desire, word and work of ours must be directed to Him. That is the only business that we have to perform in this short and uncertain life here below ; whatever cannot be directed to this business by a good intention, is not only useless, but culpable and unlawful.

Now, an avaricious man who works for temporal goods with inordinate desire and care, does none of those things, and it is, humanly speaking, impossible for him to fulfil properly the duties which Jesus Christ Himself has imposed upon us ; not merely because, generally speaking, it is impossible to serve two masters, but also because the love of money is utterly incompatible with the service of God ; “ you cannot serve God and mammon.”¹ Besides, on what does the avaricious man fix his heart and his affections ? “ For where thy treasure is,” says Christ, “ there is thy heart also.”² Now, money and property are a treasure. What is the end of all his actions ? His money and property. In what does he place his happiness ? Where does he seek his rest and pleasure ? In his money and property. Of what does he think most ? What does he watch most carefully ? What is the most frequent subject of his thoughts ? What injury does he most dread, what loss does he most fear ? All these things are referred by him to his money and property. Amongst the many inclinations and propensities that lead men to evil, there are some that are violent and impetuous enough, but they are of short duration ; such is, for instance, anger ; a man gets angry in a moment, but in a moment his anger is over. On the other hand, there are passions that last a long time, but they are not violent ; such as the feeling of dislike that we entertain for many years against another, on account of his bad temper, or ill manners ; a feeling of that kind may become very deep-seated in the heart, so that everything that man does is displeasing to us ; yet we carefully refrain from showing this feeling to others, nor do we allow it to lead us to deeds of rashness or violence. But avarice has both these evil qualities ; it is

An avaricious man cannot do this, because all his thoughts run on money.

¹ Nemo servus potest duobus dominis servire . . . non potestis Deo servire, et mammonæ.—Luke xvi. 13.

² Ubi enim est thesaurus vester, ibi et cor vestrum erit.—Matth. vi. 21.

a violent and at the same time, a long-lived passion ; it is an unceasing craving which lasts night and day, it is an insatiable greed that keeps all a man's thoughts in a continual ferment.

Explained
by a simile.

I might compare it to a restless, fidgetty, hard-hearted woman, who can hardly give herself a few hours' sleep, and makes her servants rise at day-break every morning, keeping them at work the whole day, scolding and abusing them, never giving them a moment's peace, while she herself is on foot the whole day, bustling about in every corner of the house. Avarice is just the same ; it keeps all one's thoughts busy, and all the powers of soul and body constantly on the rack in order to gain wealth, to increase it, or to preserve it. Either a business has to be established, or a loss has to be made good, or a lawsuit to be continued, a journey to be undertaken, a property to be looked at, or else money has to be laid out at interest, or yearly income and rents to be collected, and payment of debts to be demanded, etc. In a word, one's head is always full of uneasy thoughts, cares and speculations, from which one is never free ; they are the last thing at night, and the first thing in the morning, and the only thing during the whole day.

Therefore
he cannot
attend to
God and to
his soul.

How is it possible to give the heart, and the whole heart, to God, under such circumstances ? It is impossible. To hear Mass devoutly several times a week, to hear the word of God in sermons on Sundays and holydays, so that one may be encouraged to love heavenly things and to despise earthly goods by the inward working of the Holy Ghost, to go to Confession and Holy Communion, every month, or oftener, to make once a year a more careful examination of conscience, so as to keep one's account with God in good order, now and then, to read a spiritual book, or the lives of the Saints, to make a daily examen of conscience every evening before retiring to rest ; these and similar exercises of a Christian life are unknown to the avaricious man. They do not suit his fancy, he cannot afford to practice them either at home or in his place of business. They will not help me to earn my bread, he says.

He has
neither
strength
nor inclination
to do
good.

Greed of gain has taken from him all desire for God and the things of eternity, and all strength to work for the salvation of his soul. It is to people of this kind, that Christ threatens woe. Samson, as we read in the Holy Scriptures, often allowed himself to be taken by the Philistines and bound, while he was asleep. At last, he told the false and avaricious Delilah, that all his strength was in his hair, and once while he was asleep, she cut

off all his hair. Thus deprived of his strength, he fell an easy victim to the Philistines, who put out his eyes and condemned him to turn a mill for their sport. Now I ask, what was Samson's greatest fault and the occasion of his misfortunes? Was it his falling asleep and allowing himself to be bound with ropes and chains? No, for he knew well that he could break his bonds as easily as if they were silken threads. His whole misfortune is to be attributed to his having disclosed the secret of his strength, and having allowed his hair to be cut; when that was done, he was no longer the same man. My dear brethren, the father or mother of a family who has to look after many children and servants, the merchant, the official, the lawyer, the tradesman, and many others of the kind, whom Divine Providence has placed in the world for the good of mankind in general, are bound fast with a hundred bonds; that is to say, they are busied every day with countless thoughts, cares and speculations as to how they are to support themselves and those belonging to them, in a manner suitable to their state. Is it perhaps in this, that the misfortune of the avaricious man consists, which makes him neglect and lose God? Oh no! one must do that in order to maintain the position in which God has placed him, as I have proved elsewhere. It is, in fact, by properly performing one's duties and directing all the cares and occupations of one's state to the right end, that is to God, that Christian perfection is attained. Avarice shows itself generally, by the fact that people who are infected with it lose their spiritual strength through their inordinate greed of gain, and become blind to the true good.

I will explain myself: a man of business has, as I have said, a hundred different thoughts in his head about buying, selling, answering letters, paying out and receiving money, and other matters of the same kind. Still, if he hears the bell ring at the usual time for Mass in the morning, he thinks at once: oh, my business can wait a while, I must go to Mass, and do my duty to my God. On Sundays and holydays, he says to himself: this is no day for business, I shall begin a new week at it tomorrow; to-day, I must attend to God and to my salvation. A poor laborer, who happens to be in town on Sunday, and who cannot come on another day to make his necessary purchases, waits until the afternoon and meanwhile hears Mass and the sermon and performs his usual devotions, fully impressed with the idea, that if he had made his purchases instead of doing his duty as a Catholic, he would deserve to lose all he has. The

He might
work for
money, and
still serve
God.

first or some other Sunday in the month comes on ; at once he thinks, oh, good bye to all business for to-day, I must prepare for Confession and Communion. He sees the Blessed Sacrament carried through the streets to a sick person ; my business must now wait a little, he says to himself, I must show proper respect to my God and publicly accompany Him. A poor beggar comes to his door ; I have a great many children, he thinks, and house-keeping is expensive, still, I must not on that account, refuse to help Christ in the person of His poor. He never rises in the morning, or goes to bed at night, without saying his prayers devoutly. See, my dear brethren, this man is a Samson who is bound with many cords, but he is not shorn of his hair ; that is, he has many temporal cares, but he still preserves his spiritual strength by which he can tear asunder those bonds, and free himself from the slavery of worldly anxieties whenever his duty to God or the good of his soul requires ; he takes care of his temporal affairs and works to make money, but he is not on that account avaricious.

But his
avarice
does not
permit him.

But, mark the difference ; if any one of you is so much taken up with business cares, that he does not attend to God and to his soul in the manner described, then should I say of him : alas, poor, unfortunate Samson, thou art shorn of thy locks and bound fast ; thou hast lost all thy strength to do good ; thou art a slave to greed of gain and an inordinate desire of earthly things ! Even though thou seekest no unjust profit, thy very mode of life is not justified before God ; thou art subject to a disgraceful avarice which will treat thee as the Philistines treated Samson, after they had shorn him of his locks and deprived him of his strength ; it will put out thy eyes and make thee blind, that is, it will take away from thee all supernatural light and all thoughts and desires of heavenly things ; it will put thee to grind in a mill, wearing out thy life with constant cares and anxieties, until, at last, as happened to Samson, when thou art tired of the unceasing toil, the house will fall upon thee and thou shalt hear the words : “ Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee, and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided ? ” ¹

Because it
blinds him,
so that he
works for

Whose shall they be ? I ask. They shall be for my children and heirs, you think. Is that the case, says St. Augustine, do you then work for others and forget your soul ? And it is so in

¹ Stulte, hac nocte animam tuam repetunt a te : quae autem parasti ; ejus erunt ? Luke xii. 20.

reality. Ask some gray-haired old grandfather, for whom does he labor ? For my children he will say.¹ And for whom does his married son labor ?² The latter will answer, for his children.³ And for whom do they work ?⁴ For their children in turn.⁵ Alas, concludes St. Augustine, what folly and blindness ! no one works for himself and his soul.⁶ Naturalists tell us of a certain kind of bird that lives but a short time, yet it is always flying about looking for food, not indeed that it eats much, for it is content with very little, but simply to make provision for the future ; the result is that by dint of sparing, it dies of hunger while other birds come and eat the food it has heaped up. The avaricious act in the same foolish manner ; they wear away their lives in constant efforts to make money, which they will not be able to make use of themselves ; but when they die, exhausted by unceasing toil, others come and carry off their hoards. They are like Domitian, of whom Suetonius narrates that he dreamt one night that he had on his shoulders a heavy, but at the same time, an agreeable burden ; he thought that a hump of gold had grown on his back, whereat he was greatly rejoiced. A foolish joy in my opinion, for he had much more reason to grieve at a deformity that would make him contemptible in the sight of men. If he could have really had such a hump, he would have been obliged to carry it about with infinite labor, without ever deriving the least advantage from it. How many there are who make a golden hump for themselves. They heap up riches, but on their backs ; not for themselves, but for their children and descendants. With reason, does St. Augustine complain that no one works for God and for Heaven. No ; avarice will not tolerate labor of that kind, when it once gets hold of the heart. As Salvianus says : “ The mind follows its treasure, and becomes changed into an earthly substance.”⁷ Heaven is nothing more to an avaricious man, than it is to a dumb beast, which can see it as long as there is light ; his soul is no more to him than to a dumb beast, he neglects it as if it were to perish with the body.

His God is money, and therefore St. Paul compares avarice to idolatry. As the Prophet Osee, during the Babylonian captivity, was preaching to the Jews and exhorting them to adore the true God, Ephraim said to him : “ I will not adore the God of

others, but
not for his
soul.

At last he
looks upon
money as
his God.

¹ Filiis inquit.

² Et ipse cui ?

³ Filiis suis.

⁴ Et ipsi quibus ?

⁵ Filiis suis.

⁶ Nemo ergo sibi.

⁷ Mens thesaurizantis thesaurum suum sequitur, et quasi in naturam terrestris substantiæ demutatur.

whom you speak." And why? "But yet I am become rich, I have found me an idol."¹ The avaricious man says the same thing by his acts: I have found me an idol; what is God to me? I have neither time nor inclination to serve Him; I have my God at home in my coffers. If now and then, he does something to serve the true God, he does it only for the sake of money and temporal gain. Prayer, visiting the church, processions and pilgrimages are all directed by him to his own selfish ends; he wishes to have a good harvest, or to succeed in his enterprises, or to avert misfortune from his household, or to gain a lawsuit; these and such things as these, are the only ends that he proposes to himself in his devotions. If he had nothing to fear or to hope from Heaven, he would never think of God. Thus, says St. Augustine, he places his highest happiness in riches, and looks on God only as a helper in the pursuit of wealth. "He does not seek money for God's sake, but he seeks God for money's sake."²

And besides
loses all
pity for the
poor.

God, as the common Father of all, has given to some an abundance of worldly wealth, that they may help the poor and needy; that is the last thing the avaricious man thinks of; it is easier to get blood from a stone than an alms from a miser, although he has more money than he knows what to do with. Divine Providence has given to some a large share of temporal goods, to others a lesser share, and to others none at all, so that men might stand in need of each other, and by helping each other, all go to Heaven; the poor man by his patience and resignation to the will of God; the rich man by alms-deeds and the works of Christian charity. Now, if there is no doubt that the rich are bound under pain of sin to help the poor out of their superfluous wealth, how much greater is not the obligation of a rich man who is a miser? For, since he spends less than he might, his store increases daily, and with it the obligation of alms-giving. But there is little use in reminding him of his duty; greed of gain has tied his hands, and taken all charity out of his heart. On account of their transitory nature, and because they generally pass from one hand to another, riches are compared to flowing water; but there is a great difference between a gently flowing stream and the stormy sea. The stream with its clear waters is useful to all; the traveller slakes his thirst at it, the maid-servant comes to it for water to cook

¹ Verumtamen dives effectus sum, inventi idolum mihi.—Osee xii. 8.

² Non nummum propter Deum, sed Deum propter nummum.

with, it can be used for washing, etc. On the other hand, the water of the sea is too salt to serve for any purpose but one, and that is, to carry merchandise. A miser's riches are like the sea water; as long as they are in his possession, they are of no good to any one; no poor man, nor any one else need hope to profit by them. The poor who knock at a miser's door, seem to me to resemble the lean cattle on the mountain of Fiesole in Italy; I have been told by people who have been there that this is a very high and precipitous mountain, and at its foot is a most beautiful plain, full of green meadows, and well watered. The cattle on the mountain look down upon the plain, stretch out their necks and lick their lips at the sight of the fine grass; but all in vain, they are just as hungry as before, because the grass is beyond their reach. Such it seems to me is the state of those unfortunate poor who ask alms of a miser. They see the rich pastures, the superfluous wealth, the heaps of money; their mouths water at the sight, they bow their heads humbly and ask an alms for God's sake. Alas, all in vain! There is nothing for you here, away with you, I will not give you a single crust! Avarice has taken from the miser's heart all human feeling and natural pity, and much more than that, it has taken away all supernatural virtue, all Christian charity and mercy. Thus my dear brethren, the avaricious man neglects God during life by omitting the good he is bound to do. But he incurs a still greater responsibility before God, by doing the evil to which his avarice leads him; as we shall see in the

Second Part.

I need only appeal to the infallible testimony of the Holy Ghost, in the Book of Ecclesiasticus: "Nothing is more wicked than the covetous man." "There is not a more wicked thing than to love money; for such a one setteth even his own soul to sale, because, while he liveth he hath cast away his bowels."¹ But, O Holy Spirit, Spirit of infallible truth, is avarice then the worst of all vices? Is the miser the most unjust and the most impious of all? That is the meaning of the words quoted; for, as students of grammar say, there is no difference of meaning between the two sentences: no one in the school is more learned than Peter, and Peter is the most learned boy in

From avarice spring nearly all other great vices.

¹ *Avaro autem nihil est scelestius . . . Nihil est iniquius quam amare pecuniam; hic enim et animam suam venalem habet, quoniam in vita sua projecit intima sua.—Ecclesiasticus. x. 9. 10.*

school. Therefore, there is no difference between saying : no one is more unjust and impious than an avaricious man, and the avaricious man is the most unjust and impious of all. It is true then, that nothing is more wicked than the covetous man. Because nearly all the worst vices and sins come from avarice. Let us consider it from its origin up to the present time, and we shall see how true that is.

Proved by
examples
from the
Old Testa-
ment.

I find that it was in the world already in the time of our fore-father Adam, for the first vice that showed itself in Cain was greed, and the love of worldly goods, since he kept the best fruits for himself and offered the worst to God. Was that the only fault that Cain committed? Yes, it was the only one. What? The envy, jealousy and hatred with which he regarded his innocent brother Abel, the treacherous friendliness with which he invited him to go with him into the fields, the fearful fratricide he committed, the sulky, rebellious answer he gave to God: "Am I my brother's keeper?"¹ his despair when he lost all hope of pardon and mercy from God : "My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon;"² the madness that drove him to spend his life wandering over the world among wild beasts, were not these greater sins than the first? Yes they were, but they all came from the first; they were all children of avarice. See what harm has since been done by the same vice amongst the common people, the judges, high-priests and kings of the Old Testament. You will find in the Holy Scriptures that treason, incest, murder and assassination have sprung from avarice. It was through avarice that King Jeroboam introduced idolatry into the kingdom of Israel ; it was the cause of the rebellion and murmuring against God of the Israelites in the desert, for they clamored for meat to eat ; "Who shall give us flesh to eat?"³ Although, as De Lyra says, they had sheep and cattle in abundance, which they were unwilling to slaughter through avarice.⁴ The same people often disobeyed the express command of God, and refused to destroy their enemies, through greed of gold, as Theodoret says. As we read in the first chapter of the Book of Judges ; "Manasses did not destroy Bethsan; Ephraim did not slay the Chanaanite; Zabulon spared the inhabitants of Cedron, and Aser those of

¹ Num custos fratris mei sum ego?—Gen. iv. 9.

² Major est iniquitas mea, quam ut veniam merear.—Gen. iv. 13.

³ Quis dabit nobis ad vescendum carnes?—Num. xi. 4.

⁴ Propter suam avaritiam parcebant suis animalibus.

Accho,"¹ but they kept all these hostile tribes as tributaries. Avarice led King Saul into a similar act of disobedience, when he spared Agag and the best of his flocks and herds.²

St. Paul says of avarice : " The desire of money is the root of all evil ; which some coveting, have erred from the faith."³ In fact, there is no sin so great and horrible which an avaricious man is not ready to commit for the sake of money. You, Scribes and Pharisees, wanted some one to deliver Jesus Christ into your hands ; you had only to promise a sum of money, without saying at once how much, and the traitor Judas immediately offered himself ; he was blinded and corrupted by a few pieces of silver. You, high-priests, who wish to nail the Son of God to a cross, be ready to spend your money, and you will find soldiers and Jews enough who are willing to do the work of the executioner ! You, Jews, hear in your Synagogue that the soldiers have come back from the grave of Christ, filled with dread. They have seen that He whom you crucified has really risen from the dead, and as eye-witnesses, they can publish the fact throughout the whole city of Jerusalem, to your great shame and confusion ; what are you to do ? Out with your money at once ; there is nothing better ! Bribe the soldiers, and they will not only hold their tongues, but they will even spread a false report, that the disciples of Christ came and took away His body during the night while they were asleep. So great is the power of money. The evil spirit himself, after having vainly tempted Our Lord to gluttony and ambition, at last tried to seduce Him by love of gold ; if He is a mere man, thought the tempter, He will have to succumb to this ; and so he took our Blessed Lord to the top of a mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the earth, and their glory, and said to Him : " All these will I give Thee, if falling down Thou wilt adore me ! " Clearly the devil did not yet know that he had to do with God, otherwise he would not have made such a promise, nor would he have dared to try a temptation of the kind.

From the
New Testa-
ment.

If he were to show a purse of gold nowadays to many Chris-

From daily
experience
of all kinds
of people.

¹ Manasses non delevit Bethsan, etc ; Ephraim non interfecit Chananæum, etc. ; Zabulon non interfecit habitatores Cetrion, etc. ; Aser quoque non delevit habitatores Accho, etc.; —Judges i. 27-31.

² Pepercit Saul et populus Agag, et optimis gregibus ovium et armentorum.—I. Kings xv.

³ Radix omnium malorum est cupiditas, quam quidem appetentis erraverunt a fide.—I. Tim. vi. 10.

⁴ Hæc omnia tibi dabo, si cadens adoraveris me.—Matth. iv. 9.

adoration of him ! Faith, honor, fidelity, conscience, soul, Heaven, God Himself, all are too light when weighed against a sum of money. The desire of money is the root of all evil, nay, it is the means that the most vicious make use of to accomplish their sinful and wicked undertakings. The proud man uses it to make himself great in the eyes of the world and to oppress others ; the sensual and unchaste man to satisfy his brutal lusts and his sensuality ; the vindictive man to destroy his enemy ; the glutton to satisfy his appetite ; all of them require money to carry out their wicked intentions. What fearful sins are caused by avarice in private families ! That secret joy and satisfaction, so contrary to every instinct of nature, which many a brother feels at his sister's death, because his own portion will be increased thereby ; which many a husband feels at the death of his wife, because he is then sure of her dowry ; which many a son feels at the death of his parents, because he will thereby become master of all they leave behind them ; those interminable law-suits, which cause enmity between brother and sister, friend and relative for years, on account of some legacy ; what are all those things but the unhappy fruits, the children of avarice ? Jesus-Christ, the Eternal Truth, when exhorting us to bear with each other in kindness and charity, says : “ And if a man will contend with thee in judgment, and take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also to him.”¹ That is to say, if a man will go to law with you, to try to take the very clothes off your back, give him what he wants, so as to satisfy him, and make a present to him of your cloak also, that you may avoid contention. But, O Lord, why should I give away what belongs to me by right ? And why should I give him my cloak, which he has not asked for ? An interpreter of the Holy Scriptures gives the following beautiful answer : “ If we wish to go to law for the sake of our coat, we shall have to spend more money than both coat and cloak are worth.”² And so it is in reality ; at the end of a long law-suit, even the successful party finds that he has had to pay his lawyers more than he gained by the suit. But avarice so blinds a man, that he is ready to risk his two eyes for the sake of saving a trifle, rather than keep what he has with the loss of one eye. And meanwhile, what a number of sins, and great ones too, are committed by both sides, during the progress of

¹ Et ei qui vult tecum iudicio contendere, et tunicam tuam tollere, dimitte ei et pallium.
—Matth. v. 40.

² Si velimus litigare pro tunica, multa oportebit expendere, quæ pluris valent, quam tunica et pallium.

such a suit. Constant hatred and anger against each other, vindictiveness, contumely, calumny, detraction, cursing, blaspheming, unlawfully bribing the lawyers of the opposite part, etc., are generally the effects which spring from avarice alone. Go into the stores and taverns and you will see and hear what lies and cheating and perjury people are guilty of for the sake of a penny; the tongue lies in buying and selling; the hand lies in weighing and measuring; the heart lies by false promises; money itself lies when false coin is passed off as if it were genuine. In a word, nothing is spared in the way of injustice and cheating in order to make a small profit. I dare not say anything of public offices and courts of justice; how many acts of injustice would I not find practised in them, of which avarice alone is the cause.

Even in the houses of the poor, God is forgotten for the sake of gaining money, by committing crimes that one may not name. The demon of avarice says to many, what he said formerly to Christ: "Command that these stones be made bread."¹ What, can stones be turned into bread? Alas, yes, my dear brethren, it is done only too often! Is there beauty and poverty in the house together? oh, what a dangerous thing that is! For then, very often, people are not ashamed to sin, that they may spare themselves the shame of begging, command that these stones be made bread they say; maidenly modesty, innocence, conjugal fidelity, away with you, that we may earn our bread! Why, says the abandoned woman, in the Book of Osee, should I not do the will of my lovers, without whom I cannot live? "I will go after my lovers that give me my bread, and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink."² I should never come to an end if I were to reckon up all the sins and vices that greed of gold causes even in those who have temporal riches and goods in abundance. How many tricks and artifices, how much impoverishment and secret oppression of the poor, how many open deeds of violence, how many usurious contracts, how many ~~sins~~ ^{crimes} are committed for the sake of money! In a word, there is no sin too great for an avaricious man to commit, provided he can make something by it. Therefore, the words of Ecclesiasticus are true, there is nothing more wicked than an inordinate love of money.³ And consequently, it is true that the avaricious

Of the poor
as well as of
the rich.

¹ Dic ut lapides isti panes fiant.—Matth. iv. 3.

² Vadam post amatores meos, qui dant panes mihi, et aquas meas, lanam meam et linum meum, oleum meum et potum meum.—Osee ii. 5.

³ Nihil est iniquius quam amare pecuniam.—Eccl. x. 10.

man neglects God by omitting good, and committing evil during his life. And the words of Christ, too, are verified : “ How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God ! ” ¹

Conclusion
and exhortation to
the rich.

I will conclude with the words of the Psalmist : “ If riches abound, set not your heart upon them. ” ² You, to whom God has given abundant blessings and fortune, place not your affection in temporal goods. I do not say that you must throw away your wealth ; but that you must not fix your heart and desires on it. It is not an evil thing in itself to possess riches ; many of the greatest friends of God have been rich in this life ; the whole evil consists in the bad use, and inordinate love of it. It is one thing to keep poison in a closed vessel, and another to take it into one’s mouth and swallow it. Every apothecary has in his shop different sorts of deadly poisons, which are used in preparing wholesome medicines for the sick ; but woe to them if a single drop should touch their hearts. In the same way, “ Woe to you that are rich, ” ³ not because you possess money and lands, but woe to you if you allow them to take possession of your hearts. You must use them with true humility and gratitude to God and His service alone. Be careful above all that you never lose God for the sake of worldly goods. Tell me, you who are so eager for money ; there is a chance for you to make ten dollars, but in another place and at the same time, you can make a thousand dollars ; the thing must be done at once ; now which of those chances will you take ? Oh, you think, there is little need of hesitation, of course I will go after the thousand dollars at once. But, wait a little ; will you give up your chance of the ten dollars ? It is a pity to let them slip. Do you think I am a fool, you would say ? A thousand dollars are worth far more than ten dollars. Well, I believe you are right ; but, listen ; why are you not as prudent in other and far more important affairs ? Here on earth, you have a chance of gaining a few perishable things that you can keep only for a very short and uncertain time ; while in Heaven, you may have an immortal, immense and infinite good, the Great God Himself. If you are not foolish then, do your very best not to let this latter good escape you. In the words of St. Bernard, “ I beseech you, since you are so prudent in looking after the straw, not to forget the

¹ Quam difficile, qui pecunias habent, in regnum Dei introibunt !—Mark x. 23.

² Divitiæ si affluent, nolite cor apponere.—Ps. lxi. 11.

³ Væ vobis divitibus.—Luke vi. 24.

barn,"¹ in which all your crops are preserved. If you are so careful and provident with regard to earthly riches, you ought not to forget that your first and greatest care should be to preserve your soul, your Heaven, your God. Pray then daily with the Prophet David : "Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies and not to covetousness. Turn away my eyes that they may not behold vanity ; quicken me in Thy way ;"² that I may desire and seek nothing but Thee, my greatest Good.

You, who are moderately rich, remember the words of St. Paul : " But having food and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content."³ If we have enough to procure daily bread for ourselves and those belonging to us, let us be content therewith, and not desire great riches. Finally, you who are poor, remember that Divine Providence has so ordained for you, and that the Eternal Father gave the same portion on earth to His Incarnate Son, who came into this world poor, lived poor, and died poor, that He might make us rich in Heaven. Say often with the patient Job : "The Lord gave" me the little I had ; "He hath taken away" what He had given ; He has reduced me to poverty ; "blessed be the name of the Lord."⁴ Thanks be to Him for taking from me that which might have been to me the occasion of many grievous sins, and might have caused me to lose my soul forever ! I will try to serve him henceforth, not as a hireling, for the sake of mere temporal wages, but as an adopted child, and out of pure love for my heavenly Father. Far from me the folly and madness of trying to remedy my poverty by unlawful and unjust means, which would leave me poor in this life and poor in the next. If I have no consolation here on earth, I will try all the more to become rich in Heaven, for on that all depends. Amen.

To the
moderately
rich, and to
the poor.

¹ Quæso te, si tam prudenter serves paleas tuas, etiam horreum servare memento.

² Inclina cor meum in testimonia tua, et non in avaritiam. Averte oculos meos, ne videant vanitatem : in via tua vivifica me.—Ps. cxviii. 36, 37.

³ Habentes autem alimenta, et quibus tegamur, his contenti sumus.—I. Tim. vi. 8.

⁴ Dominus dedit, Dominus abstulit. . . . sit nomen Domini benedictum.—Job. i. 21.

EIGHTH SERMON.

ON THE UNHAPPY DEATH OF THE AVARICIOUS.

Subject.

The avaricious man 1. generally dies without true repentance. 2. And if he has been guilty of injustice, he generally dies without restitution.—*Preached on the tenth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Deus gratias ago tibi quia non sum sicut cæteri hominum, raptores, injusti.—Luke xviii. 11.

“O God, I give Thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust.”

Introduction.

Good reason had the Pharisee to thank God, that he was not addicted to extortion and injustice ; if he had only done so with real, humble gratitude to God. My dear brethren, what a great thing it would be for us, if we could all say of ourselves with truth and Christian humility : Thank God, I am not given to extortion and injustice. Avarice and injustice are not many degrees removed from each other ; for the former is generally the root of the latter, as I have explained in the last sermon, in which I showed how the avaricious man neglects God during life by omitting good and doing evil, and committing all kinds of sin. But I have now to add something far more terrible.

Plan of Discourse.

The avaricious man neglects God also in the hour of death ; for generally speaking, he dies without true repentance, as I shall prove in the first part ; and also, because, if he has been guilty of injustice, he generally dies without restitution, as I shall prove in the second part. Therefore, we must be careful not to allow our hearts to be attached to temporal things ; such shall be the conclusion.

May God give us the grace to carry it out, through the intercession of Mary and the holy guardian angels.

other vices
generally
decrease
with age.

Generally speaking, as we live, so shall we die ; a good life is followed by a happy death ; a bad life by an unhappy death ; therefore, since, as I have shown already, the avaricious man

neglects God during life, he will also neglect Him at the hour of death. It is true that such is the case with all wicked men who live badly, and put off repentance till the hour of death, for as a general rule, they die without true sorrow for their sins; still, it is especially the case with the avaricious. There are certain diseases which, when they once take deep root, cannot be cured by any medicine, such as consumption for instance; the only remedy for it is to wait patiently until the end comes. Avarice or greed of gain is a similar malady of the soul. Other vicious habits disappear with age; for one either loses all taste for them since he has found that they cannot content him, or else the bodily strength required to indulge in them is wanting. For example, a proud, haughty, insolent manner, and vanity in dress, are generally the faults of young people; but when those young people come to mature age, they say to themselves; oh! when I was young I used to conform to the fashions of the world; I am too old for that now, and must not think of it. If one is addicted to impurity, it is, as experience unfortunately teaches, generally during youth; it is a passion that lasts a long time, and when it becomes inveterate, it is almost impossible to get entirely rid of it, without an exceptionally powerful grace; still it often happens that failing strength and old age diminish or destroy it, like taking fuel from the fire. The same may be said of gluttony and drunkenness and similar vices, which time destroys or lessens.

Avarice alone, does not yield to the influence of years or old age; on the contrary, it increases more and more, and as years go on, it strikes deeper root. St. Thomas attributes this to the fact that the other passions, which affect the exterior senses, lose their strength when the sensitive powers become weakened, as is the case when old age weakens the body; while avarice or greed of gold, being a spiritual sin, and being seated in the soul, gives rise to more vehement desires, the older it gets. And as a matter of experience, we see that old people are the most avaricious; many a one who was a spendthrift in his youth, becomes miserly in old age, and eager in the pursuit of worldly goods. Although such a man knows that he has already one foot in the grave, yet there is nothing that gives him so much pleasure as to see his coffers full of money. No matter how wicked a man may be who is given to other vices, when he sees his last hour approaching, he tries to make his peace with God by doing penance; when on his death bed, the unchaste man gives up his

Avarice increases with age.

sinful indulgence ; the vindictive man forgives his enemy ; the hitherto careless Christian raises his thoughts to God ; all of them wish they had not sinned, and incurred the danger of eternal damnation ; all of them wish they had done good works, that they might receive a great reward in Heaven. But it would be a miracle if a miser, whose God was money, had such thoughts.

Therefore true repentance is difficult for the avaricious man.

No doubt he will confess his other sins and receive Holy Communion ; but what devotion can he have, or love of God, whom he still loves less than his money ? What kind of sorrow can he have for his inordinate and sinful greed of riches, when his greatest and only grief is that he must now leave his beloved money for ever ? No use in speaking to him of the eternal treasures and joys of Heaven ; that is a happiness that is strange to him, one for which he never had any desire, and which he would now willingly renounce if he could only remain on earth with his treasures. No use in speaking to him of the eternal pains of hell ; his heart has no room for any such salutary thought, because it is filled with the love of gold, and is insensible to all supernatural ideas. Not without reason, does St. Paul say that avarice is the root of all evil. Why ? Because while there is no difficulty in breaking, or cutting a branch off a tree, it takes a great deal of labor to pull up the root, and it is nearly impossible to bring away the whole root without leaving some of it behind. Other vices and evil inclinations are like the branches, but avarice is like the root ; if it is difficult to overcome the former by true penance, how much more difficult will it not be to conquer the latter ? St. John Chrysostom says of this : when God wishes to cure by His grace a malady of the soul, He finds no obstacle to grace but the vice He wishes to cure by planting the opposite virtue, except in the case of avarice ; for instance, if He wishes to give the grace of humility, He has pride alone to contend against ; if He wishes to make a man chaste, He has no obstacle in His way but carnal lust ; if He desires to make a man meek, He has only to destroy anger, and so on for the other virtues. But when He wishes to cure the avaricious man, and to inspire him with a contempt for worldly goods, then He is opposed not only by a greed of gain and love of money, but also by all the passions and appetites, and all the vices to which the man is inclined, for they all take up arms in defence of avarice, since they look to it for the means of carrying out their designs.

We have an example in

In order to show us how hard it is for an avaricious man to be truly converted, Our Lord and Saviour is not satisfied with

merely bringing forward that terrible comparison of His, in which He says "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,"¹ that is for one who has set his heart on riches; He also teaches us the same truth in His Gospel by the conduct of the traitor Judas. What means had not Jesus, who is the Master of hearts, employed to turn that perjured man from his wicked design. Frequently, in the presence of His other Apostles, He had had recourse both to exhortation and example to inspire him with contempt for earthly things; He promised Heaven to him: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their's is the kingdom of Heaven;"² He spoke of the exceeding great reward which shall be given to those who leave all things for His sake: "And every one that hath left house or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, . . . or lands . . . shall receive a hundred-fold and shall possess life everlasting."³ He told him of hell and its eternal misery, when He warned him at the Last Supper: "Woe to that man by whom the Son of Man shall be betrayed; it were better for him if that man had not been born."⁴ How did He not humble Himself before him at the same Supper? He went down on His knees, washed and dried his feet, and, according to the opinion of the holy Fathers, kissed them; certainly a heart of stone might have been softened then. But Judas remained as obdurate as ever; the thirty pieces of silver which had been promised him, had taken possession of his heart, and for their sake he was quite willing to renounce his apostleship, and to deliver Jesus, whom he knew to be the Son of God, in whose name he had cast out devils, to His enemies and murderers. What a terrible passion avarice must be, since Christ Himself, with all his exhortations, caresses and threats, could not eradicate it from the heart of one of His Apostles!

With a few words He humbled the pride of James and John, when they asked for the highest place in His kingdom: "You know not what you ask."⁵ A single look was enough to fill Peter with sorrow and contrition for having denied Him: "And

the traitor
Judas.

Christ converted
other sin-
ners with
little
trouble, but
not Judas.

¹ Facilius est camelum per foramen acus transire, quam divitem intrare in regnum cœlorum.—Matth. xix. 24.

² Beati pauperes spiritu, quoniam ipsorum est regnum cœlorum.—Ibid. v. 3.

³ Et omnis, qui reliquerit domum, vel fratres aut sorores, aut patrem aut matrem . . . aut agros . . . centuplum accipiet, et vitam æternam possidebit.—Ibid. xix. 29.

⁴ Væ homini illi, per quem Filius hominis tradetur: bonum erat ei, si natus non fuisset homo ille.—Ibid. xxvi. 24.

⁵ Nescitis quid petatis.—Ibid. xx. 22.

the Lord turning looked on Peter," who at once was sorry for what he had done, and "going out wept bitterly."¹ To cure the obstinacy and unbelief of Thomas, He merely allowed him to touch His wounds, when full of repentance and love, Thomas cried out: "My Lord and my God."² The Samaritan woman was living in impurity, but a short conversation with Christ converted her, into a zealous Apostle, so to speak. Magdalen was a public sinner, possessed by seven devils, but her heart was touched by a few words of the Saviour, and she was converted. Avarice alone was the obstinate vice that He could not cure, in spite of all the means He adopted; when all the people who heard Him preach, believed in Him and followed Him, the covetous Pharisees alone stood aloof, and jeered at Him: "Now the Pharisees, who were covetous, heard all these things and they derided Him."³ For the same reason He failed to touch the heart of Judas, and could not bring him to repentance, no matter what means He adopted. Even while the act of treachery was being accomplished, He took pity on the traitor, and said to him, in order to encourage him to repent: "Friend, whereto art thou come?"⁴ But all in vain. Avarice brought the traitor so far that at last he hanged himself in despair. I see clearly now, O Lord, how fruitless it is to preach penance to the avaricious, for even Thou hast not succeeded in converting them!

The same is true of the avaricious man at the point of death. Shown by examples.

Oh, woe to those unhappy men whose hearts are possessed by this vice. "All avaricious people suffer from the dangerous malady of Judas," says St. John Chrysostom;⁵ there is hardly any hope of their conversion; they neglect God even in the hour of death, although they know they are about to die, and to leave all their treasures behind. There are several examples which prove that such was the case not only with Judas, but also with many avaricious Christians. We read of dying people who, instead of turning their thoughts to God, examining their consciences, repenting of their sins and preparing for the long journey into eternity, spent their last moments looking at their money, which they had brought into the room and laid on the pillow. We read of dying people who calculated how much their funeral expenses would amount to, and who were sorely distressed at the

¹ Et conversus Dominus respexit Petrum . . . Et egressus flevit amare.—Luke xxii. 61, 62.

² Dominus meus et Deus meus.—John xx. 28.

³ Audiebant autem omnia hæc Pharisæi, qui erant avari, et deridebant illum.—Luke xvi. 14.

⁴ Amice, ad quid venisti?—Matth. xxvi. 50.

⁵ Avari omnes gravissimi Judæ morbo laborant.

thought of so much money being spent. We read of dying people who, when a silver crucifix was placed in their hands, looked only at the silver of which it was made and asked how much it cost. We read of dying people who had a bag of money placed on their beds, which they asked their friends to bury with them. That is related by Cæsarius of a certain rich man, who lived in a town that I will not name, as it is too well known here, who never could be accused of any injustice, but whose time was so exclusively occupied in making money, that he had no leisure to look after his soul; he was always either travelling, or busy in his shop, or writing, or looking over his accounts. Poor man, to be so careful of the present life, and so negligent of the future! Hear how he died. In his last moments, he was much troubled, but could find consolation nowhere; he could find none in God, whom he had neglected; none in Mary the Mother of God, whom he had little honored; none in his good works, because they were so few in number that he could not expect them to help him to save his soul. Alas! he cried, since neither God nor any of the Saints will give me any comfort, bring a bag of gold dollars and lay them on my troubled heart. His request was granted, and he was asked if he was any better. Better, he cried; how can I be better when I am tortured by the thought of having to leave all my money behind! Alas! I can take nothing with me; still I shall try to do so; tie this bag of gold over my heart, and bury me with it. The foolish heirs fulfilled his desire. A few days afterwards, one of his former friends thought that there was no sense in leaving so much money buried in the ground; so he went one night with a lantern to the grave, opened the coffin and found a horrible-looking toad making its way through the bag of gold into the breast of the dead man, so that the pieces of money rolled into his heart. From this you may see, adds Cæsarius, how the soul of the avaricious man is tortured in the next world, since God allowed the heart of the dead man to be so tortured by his own money.

Remarkable are the words in which St. John describes the wickedness of the traitor Judas: "The devil having now put into the heart of Judas to betray Him."¹ Why does not the Evangelist say, *cum diabolus misisset in cor Judæ*? Because, as St. Gregory explains, Judas had no longer a heart of his own, it was completely absorbed by the demon of gold, who could do with it what he wished. According to the words of the Holy

How the
avaricious
have no
heart for
God any
longer.

¹ Cum diabolus jam misisset in cor, ut traderet eum Judas.—John xiii. 2.

Pope: "The wicked have lost their hearts, and the devil possesses them, and it is to this that the Evangelist alludes, when speaking of the traitor Judas."¹ And so it is in reality; the avaricious have no heart either for themselves or God. You have heard, doubtless, of that rich miser who died suddenly; when his body was opened, he was found to be without a heart; the bystanders were astonished, and wondered what sort of an illness it was that had thus eaten away his heart; but the mystery was soon cleared up. When the heir opened the chest in which the dead man used to keep his money, he saw the heart of the unhappy man in the claws of a devil, who, in the appearance of a small, but terrible dragon, sat on the heap of gold, and uttered the following words: "This gold and silver is the price of the heart which your friend sold me, so that it is mine by right."² Having frequently repeated the words, "the heart is mine, the heart is mine," the dragon flew away taking the heart with him to hell. Thus the avaricious man neglects God in the hour of death, since, generally speaking, he dies without true sorrow for his sins, even if he has not been guilty of any injustice. How much more is he not apt to neglect God, after having committed many acts of injustice to which he was impelled by greed of gain? Oh, surely in such a case there is no hope of a true conversion, since he dies without making restitution; as we shall see in the

Second Part.

It is a difficult and rare thing to restore ill-gotten goods.

It is absolutely necessary to restore what one possesses unjustly, when one can restore it to its lawful owner, no matter how one has come by it; and without such restitution, there is no pardon for sin, no hope of Heaven. But what a difficult and unusual thing it is for men to make restitution. In the Holy Scriptures we find hardly any example of restitution having been actually made, except in the case of Judas, who, as the Evangelist says, "brought back the thirty pieces of silver;"³ but even this restitution did not come from a love of justice; it was an act of despair on the part of one who had made up his mind to hang himself, and not to try to save his soul. The elder Tobias wished to give back the kid that he erroneously thought to be

¹ Reprobi quidem, corda sua non habent, diabolus ea possidet; unde et de proditore dicitur, cum diabolus misisset in cor, ut traderet eum Judas.—Prosper. de dono Tim. l. 3, in Theatr.

² Hoc aurum et argentum pretium est cordis, quod mihi vendidit amicus vester, ideoque jure meum est.

³ Retulit triginta argenteos.—Matth. xxvii. 3.

stolen. Zaccheus said to Christ : “ If I have wronged any man of anything I restore him fourfold.”¹ But the Gospel does not say that he wronged any one. St. Augustine relates as a great wonder, a circumstance that occurred in Milan, when he was in that city. A poor, but pious man, named Proscholus, had found a purse full of money, and as he knew that he should give it to the owner, if he could find him, he scattered about in different parts of the city, small slips of parchment containing an account of what he had found ; the owner of the purse appeared and received his property. He wished to give the poor man a present, as a mark of his gratitude : “ No,” said Proscholus, “ I will not touch what does not belong to me ; keep what is your own.” He tried again and again, but Proscholus remained firm and would not accept anything. At last, the man got vexed and threw down the bag of money on the ground and said to Proscholus : “ If you will not take anything from me, then I have not lost anything.”² “ What a contest, my brethren,” cries out St. Augustine, “ that was for the world to wonder at, and for God to behold ! ”³ Proscholus was thus forced to take the present, but he could not make up his mind to keep it, so he gave it to the poor.

What do you think, my dear brethren, if it is a rare thing to find even a pious, good man, who has never wronged any one, restoring the property of another, how rare must it not be to find an unjust man, who loves money, ready to restore what he has got wrongfully ? Is not that, humanly speaking, impossible for an unjust and avaricious man who is at the point of death ? For, at a time like that, how can he remember all the unjust tricks he has had recourse to in his business, and how, when, where, and whom he has wronged ? Can he say how much he has unjustly taken from others ? Is that an easy task for a weak dying man, who has enough to trouble him already, and whose greatest anxiety is that he must leave his wealth behind ? Well, then, try what the priest can do ; let him exhort the dying man to give up a large share of his riches before he dies, in order to save his soul. And what good will that do ? Will the sick man agree to do what the priest says ? What, he will answer, give up the money that cost me so much hard work ? But, the priest will insist, you did not get it honestly ; you must make

Especially
for an avaricious man
who has
acted unjustly.

¹ Si quid aliquem defraudavi, reddo quadruplum.—Luke xix. 8.

² Si non vis aliquid a me accipere, nec ego aliquid perdididi.

³ Quale certamen, fratres, quale certamen, theatrum mundus, spectator Deus !—S. Aug. Sermon. 19, de verb.—Apost.

restitution. Restitution? And what are my children to do? They have no more right to it than you; if they keep it they will be lost as well as you. But I cannot ruin my family. You must do so in order to save them from eternal ruin. And my reputation and good name, if the thing is known? No matter about them; God wishes you to do it. But I cannot. Then you will lose your soul. Alas, I cannot! Then you will not go to Heaven. Alas, it is impossible! Then you will have to go to hell for ever with the demons. Well, at least give me a little time to consider. Time? And death already in your face? Let me rest a while first. Yes, rest, and while you are looking for idle excuses, and considering whether you will yield to the influence of grace, if, indeed, it is possible for an avaricious heart to yield to it, time is flying rapidly, the last moment is approaching, death comes, the unjustly acquired wealth is not restored, what will become of the poor soul?

Nay, it is almost impossible for him.

“The men of riches,” says the Psalmist, “have found nothing in their hands.”¹ Another interpretation, according to St. Jerome, has “they have not found their hands.”² Both versions are true of the avaricious. Whenever there is question of keeping or receiving, they find their hands easily enough; but they have no hands to give back or to make restitution. Ill-gotten goods, says St. Gregory, are like the bait which conceals the hook; a hungry fish swallows the bait, and loses its life in consequence, for either it is hauled into the boat, or else it breaks the line, and goes off with the hook in its mouth, from which it will never be able to free itself. The avaricious man who has ill-gotten goods, suffers from a similar misfortune: he has swallowed, with the bait, a hook which will cause him eternal death. He is exhorted to give back what he has wrongfully acquired, to reject what he has swallowed; but that is what he refuses to do, until the Almighty God takes it from him violently by death. The Holy Scriptures represents Sophor, a friend of Job’s, as speaking in that manner: “The riches which he hath swallowed, he shall vomit up, and God shall draw them out of his belly.”³ Brennus, the king of the Galatians, once allowed a young girl of Ephesus to take away as much gold as she could carry on her back; the greedy girl took such a load, that the weight of it killed her before she got home. Aribert, king of

¹ Nihil invenerunt omnes viri divitiarum in manibus suis.—Ps. lxxv. 6.

² Non invenerunt manus suas.

³ Divitias quas devoravit, evomet, et de ventre illius extrahet eas Deus.—Job. xx. 15.

Lombardy, was once swimming across a river, and he took such a quantity of gold with him, that he sank to the bottom. What foolish people these were. They might easily have seen that the load was too much for them, and have thrown it away. True, but they were too much infatuated with the greed of gold to see it. Such is the case with all the avaricious; they will not throw off the burden they place on their own shoulders, until they sink under it, and lose their souls as well as their ill-gotten wealth.

But, it may be objected, restitution cannot be such a difficult thing for one who stands face to face with death. Why should he desire to keep what he cannot use? True, my dear brethren, there is a good deal in that remark; but it does not apply to deep-seated avarice. If the avaricious man cannot enjoy his wealth himself, he still clings to the idea of leaving it to his heirs, in whose persons he imagines he can continue to live. This is the extreme of folly and desperation, into which a man is hurried by love of money. Salvianus says to an avaricious man at the point of death: "You take great care that others should live well after you are gone; but you do not think of the unhappy death that is in store for yourself."¹ Forgive me, O dearest Lord, if I seem to contradict what Thou hast said: "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends!"² Does it not seem that the avaricious man has a still greater love, or rather madness, since he gives up for his friends, not the life of the body, but that of the immortal soul, by being ready to sacrifice his hopes of Heaven and to condemn himself to hell, rather than impoverish them by making restitution of what he has unjustly acquired? Can there be greater madness than this? Yet a man may be brought to it by avarice.

Although he cannot use it himself, he does not wish to deprive his heirs of it.

In the annals of the Cistercian order, we read of a well-known rich man, who, a few hours before his death, sent for a notary to make his will. When the notary arrived, he said to him: Sit down and write as I shall dictate to you; this is my last will; after my death I bequeath my body to the earth from which it came, but my soul I give to the devil, to whom it belongs. All the by-standers were horror-stricken at this. Go on, said the dying man, write as I tell you; I give my soul to the devil; and

Shown by an example.

¹ Cogitas quam bene alii post te vivant; nec cogitas quam male ipse moriaris.

² Majorem hac dilectionem nemo habet, ut animam suam ponat quis pro amicis suis.—John xv. 13.

also, as far as I can, I give him the souls of my wife and children. My soul I give him, because I have made a good deal here and there in my business, that does not of right belong to me ; my wife's soul, because she has made me commit many acts of injustice, in order to support her extravagance ; and the souls of my children, because I neither can, nor will make restitution, so as not to leave them poor. Having said these words, he breathed his last.

Therefore, the avaricious are the most unhappy of all.

Oh, accursed greed of gold, to what depths of despair dost thou not drive men ! Thou forcest them to sacrifice Heaven, their souls and their God for all eternity. Now I understand that terrible woe that the meek Saviour threatens to those rich men whose hearts are attached to their wealth : "Woe to you that are rich." The vain world thinks you fortunate ; men, blinded by the glitter of your wealth, look upon you with envy, and wish they were like you ; but, woe to you. And why ? Not only because it costs you so much labor and trouble to gain wealth, so much care to preserve it, so much fear and anxiety, lest the least accident should deprive you of it ; so that with all your riches your lives are full of torment and uneasiness. Woe to you. And why ? Not only because your gold cannot make you contented and happy, since the desire of it increases every day, and so keeps you constantly on the rack, without ever giving you time to enjoy it. Woe to you. And why ? Not merely because your avarice prevents you from using and enjoying your wealth, so that you live as miserably as if you had nothing. Woe to you. And why ? Not only because death will compel you to relinquish your treasures, as the hunter compels the dog to give up the game it has seized ; so that you must go into eternity without being able to bring with you a single farthing of the money you loved so much. Woe to you ; not only because you neglect God during life by not doing the good you ought to do, and by committing many sins through greed of gain ; for, all that might be amended and atoned for. But, woe to you, especially, on account of the darkening of your understanding and the hardening of your heart which makes you neglect God at the hour of death, and refuse to make due restitution, or else so fills you with fear and despair that you die without true repentance, and thus are lost for ever ! Woe to you !

On the contrary, hap-

Happy indeed is he, who, according to the words of the Holy Ghost in the Book of Ecclesiasticus, has kept his heart free

from the affection to worldly goods : “ Blessed is the rich man that is found without blemish, and that hath not gone after gold, nor put his trust in money nor in treasures.”¹ Happy is he, since he thus saves himself from a thousand cares and anxieties during life ; still happier, because he always walks in the way of justice, and minds his soul ; happiest of all, when at the approach of death, he can look round him without seeing anything that he has acquired unjustly, anything that he will be sorry to leave, anything for which he is not prepared to give an account to his Judge. But, “ who is he, and we will praise him ? For he hath done wonderful things in his life.”² Who can say that he is like this ? Let him come forward, and we shall look on him with admiration.

I am afraid, my dear brethren, that there are very few who will derive any profit from this sermon ; because people either refuse to acknowledge that they are avaricious, although they are in reality infected with that vice, or else they maintain that very few are addicted to it. Would to God that this latter assertion were true. The poor, and those of the middle class, will not see much in this sermon to apply to themselves, although it suits them better than they imagine. They will think that what I have said is for the rich alone. We have not much money, they will say, we have no large revenues, and therefore we have not the chance of being avaricious. Oh, Christians, you make a mistake ; I have not said that avarice consists in possessing much wealth, but in an inordinate desire and love of money and worldly goods ; a love which the poorest as well as the richest may have. When Christ said in the Gospel : “ How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God ; ”³ the disciples were surprised, and asked Him : “ Who then can be saved ? ”⁴ But, the Saviour might have answered them, how does that affect you ? I am alluding only to the rich ; you are poor like Me, and you have left the little you possessed ; besides, there are as many, nay, more poor than rich in the world ; so that if Heaven is closed to the rich, it still remains open to the greater number, who are the poor. But no, our Lord did not answer in that way ; He rather sanctioned the fear and astonishment of his disciples. The latter understood His meaning very

py they who
are not
given to
avarice.

Of whom
there are
few, since
avarice is to
be found
even
amongst the
poor.

¹ Beatus dives, qui inventus est sine macula, et qui post aurum non abiit, nec speravit in pecunia et thesauris.—EccI. xxxi. 8.

² Quis est hic, et laudabimus eum ? Fecit enim mirabilia in vita sua.—Ibid. 9.

³ Quam difficile, qui pecunias habent, in regnum Dei introibunt.—Mark. x. 23.

⁴ Et quis potest salvus fieri ?—Ibid. 26.

well ; they knew that He spoke, not merely of those who were really rich, but also of those who wished to become so. The world is full of rich people of the latter class ; the love of money is so general, that it may be found in the midst of poverty and want ; while, on the other hand, the grace of God is so powerful, that poverty of spirit is to be seen in the midst of wealth. St. Augustine asks the poor man : “ What better are you for being poor outwardly, if you are inwardly consumed with a thirst for money ? ”¹ If, in your poverty, or mediocrity, you are dissatisfied with the will of God and murmur because He has not given you more of the goods of this world ; if you are always busy with plans and contrivances to become rich ; if you envy others because they have more than you ; if you are as covetous of your earthen-ware pot and wooden platter, as the rich man is of his gold and silver plate ; if you are as ready to lie and swear falsely for a few pence, as another is for ten pounds ; if you are always on the watch to seize hold of everything you can find, whether you have a right to it or not ? How will your poverty help you to Heaven, in that case ? You are rich in spirit, although poor in reality ; you are avaricious at heart, although you have no money.

And
amongst
people of all
classes.

A likely thing, indeed, that avarice is a rare vice ! Hear what the Prophet Jeremias says : “ From the least of them even to the greatest all are given to covetousness.”² What a terrible thing you say, O holy Prophet ; are, then, all men avaricious ? Yes, all are infected with greed of gold. All from the smallest to the greatest ? even little children and women who must sit in the house all day, and who cannot take any part in business ? All are given to covetousness. His meaning is, my dear brethren, that hardly anyone, no matter what his state or condition may be, is so free from this passion as not to be sometimes assailed by the thirst for money. We can see that in little children, almost as soon as they are able to crawl ; show them a piece of money, and they will stretch out both hands for it, and not stop crying until they get it ; pretend that you are going to take it from them and they will put it in the mouth at once. A wonderful, and at the same time, a terrible thing happened once in our own days ; a little girl, of about six years of age, acknowledged to one of our Fathers that she had killed her little brother. The Father, astonished, asked her how she did it. “ I thrust a

¹ Quid tibi prodest, si egeas facultate, et ardeas cupiditate ?

² A minore quippe usque ad majorem omnes avaritiæ student.—Jerem. vi. 13.

needle through his head," answered the child. The Father, still more horrified, said to her: "And did you know that what you did would kill him?" "Of course I did," replied the child. "But why did you do it?" (Hear, my dear brethren, how a little child can become possessed by avarice). "When my brother was born," said she, "people began to make fun of me, and to say that since I was no longer the only child, I should not inherit all my parents' property; therefore I put an end to him, that I might have all." Great God, who could have expected to find such greed of gold in one so young. It is seen in grown-up people too, whose chief care is how to grow richer; who are afflicted and troubled at the least loss. It is shown especially, as I have said already, by the old, although they know that death is near. It is shown by those who are wealthy enough, but who desire to become wealthier still. It is shown by those who have little or nothing, but who commit theft or impurity for the sake of money. All love money; and if one does not check this passion in the beginning, it will increase more and more, until the heart is filled with it, and God and the soul are forgotten.

Therefore, my dear brethren, we must remember the warning of Our Lord in the Gospel of St. Luke: "Beware of all covetousness;"¹ do not allow yourselves to be possessed by greed of gold. You, who are rich, make friends to yourselves with your riches, that they may hereafter receive you into eternal tabernacles; remember that God has lent much to you, that you may share it with His poor servants; nor can you make a better use of your money, than to place it in their hands, that they may forward it on to eternity for you. You, who are poor, console yourselves with the words of the Wise Man: "Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasures without content,"² which cannot bring happiness. "Better is a dry morsel with joy, than a house full of victims with strife;"³ it is better to have but a dry crust, and to be at peace with God, than to sit at a well supplied table with a heart filled with care. I know then what to do. I thank Thee, O good God, for all Thy decrees regarding me; I desire nothing more than what Thou hast given me, be it much or little, now or in the future; I shall always be satisfied with Thy will; I shall so work for temporal goods, that I may not

Conclusion
and exhortation to all
to avoid
avarice.

¹ Cavete ab omni avaritia.—Luke xii. 15.

² Melius est parum cum timore Domini, quam thesauri magni et insatiabiles.—Prov. xv. 16.

³ Mellior est buccella sicca cum gaudio, quam domus plena victimis cum jurgio.—Ibid. xvii. 1.

lose eternal riches. My first and greatest care shall be to keep Thee, my God, as my Friend during life, by doing good and persevering therein until death, so that I may gain in Thee my greatest treasure in Heaven. Amen.

NINTH SERMON.

ON INJUSTICE AS AN EFFECT OF AVARICE.

Subject.

1. There are many who take what belongs to others. 2. Many who keep what belongs to others. 3. Many who injure what belongs to others.—*Preached on the twelfth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Quodcumque supererogaveris, ego, cum rediero, reddam tibi.—Luke x. 35.

“Whatsoever thou shalt spend over and above, I, at my return, will repay thee.”

Introduction.

And quite right too. Whatever is given out by a third person for the good of another, ought to be given back again. If the Samaritan, of whom we read in to-day's Gospel, had not performed his promise, and repaid the host for looking after the wounded traveller, he would indeed have done a work of mercy and charity to one, but he would have been guilty of injustice to the other. Injustice is of very frequent occurrence nowadays, my dear brethren. I will still continue to speak of avarice, or the inordinate desire of worldly goods. I have shown that this vice is the cause of many different kinds of sin, but especially of injustice; since men, blinded by love of money, seek to gain it by unjust means. In my last sermon, I have briefly alluded to the fact that avarice is a common vice, from which few men are quite free; I shall now prove that unjust avarice is also a very common vice. In order to make matters clearer, I shall divide the unjust into three classes, namely:

Plan of Discourse.

Those who take unjustly what belongs to others, those who keep what belongs to others, and those who injure the property of others. There are many who take what belongs to others.—The

first part. Many who keep what belongs to others.—The second part. Many who injure what belongs to others.—The third part, which will assume the form of a catechetical instruction, since many grown-up people do not attend catechism in the parish churches on Sundays, although they may be as much in need of it as children are.

I begin, then, trusting in the help of the Holy Ghost, and in the intercession of Mary the Mother of God, and that of the holy angels guardian, to the end, that if ever we love money, we may at least be careful not to possess anything unjustly.

The first kind of injustice is committed by those who take what does not belong to them. I am not speaking now of thieves and highway robbers who attack and rob travellers, or break into houses at night ; for, it is evident that such people commit grievous sin, and violate the laws of justice most flagrantly. The very name of thief is detested by every one ; and imprisonment or hard labor is looked upon as meek punishment for those who thus outrage the law. But how true it is that great thieves are let off, while petty ones are imprisoned. How many there are who, under some plausible pretext or other, actually steal more than would be required to condemn them to prison !

There are many kinds of secret thieves, who take what does not belong to them.

Amongst the number of such thieves (to begin with the head of the family), are those husbands and fathers who rob their own children, by sharing with the children of a second marriage that which belongs by right only to the children of the first ; or by wronging their other children out of the inheritance that justly belongs to them, for the sake of favoring unduly the child they love most. Injustice of that kind gives rise very often to hatred and contention between brothers and sisters. Of the same class also are those husbands who rob their wives, by squandering away their marriage portions with dissolute companions, in feasting and carousing, while their poor wives and children are half starved. It is a sin that cries to Heaven, for a man thus to wrong those who have every right to look up to him for help and support.

Such as unjust heads of families.

To the same class belong those wives and mothers who rob their husbands ; by spending, for instance, without their husbands' knowledge and consent, a considerable sum out of the common fund ; by concealing and hoarding up for themselves, that they may be richer when their husbands die,

And mothers.

money that should go to the children or other lawful heirs ; by giving considerable sums to their parents and relations ; by giving alms profusely, or being too lavish in supporting any pious work, not to speak of spending money for other purposes. All these acts are thefts and injustices, which bind to restitution. Remember, however, that I have said, without their husbands' knowledge and consent ; because, if the latter know what is being done and say nothing, or if they give their wives permission to act as they please in money matters relating to household expenses, then there is no theft committed. Again, I have said, if they spend a considerable sum ; because it is not unlawful for them to incur the ordinary expenses suitable to their station, or to give alms reasonably and according to their means, (and, if their parents are poor, they must give to them in preference to others), even without the knowledge and consent of their husbands, for in such cases the latter would have no reasonable grounds for objecting.

Sons and
daughters.

To this class also belong children who rob their parents, by stealing money from them ; or, as sons who are away in foreign countries frequently do, by pretending to be in want of money, and then spending what their parents send them, in drinking, gambling and similar ways ; or when they marry, by taking out of their father's house whatever they can secretly lay hands on, a thing which is done sometimes without the least scruple ; oh, they think what belongs to my parents will be mine after their death, it is all the same if I take it now. But they are grievously mistaken ; hear what the Holy Ghost says in the book of Proverbs : " He that stealeth anything from his father, or from his mother ; and saith : ' This is no sin,' is the partner of a murderer." Why of a murderer ? Because he treats his parents as if they were already dead, by taking possession of that which should not belong to him until after their death. Besides, who has given them a right to dispose of what must be divided equally between their brothers and sisters after their parents' death ? If they were not guilty of robbing their parents, they could certainly be accused of theft towards their brothers and sisters, and of course they are bound to make restitution.

Servants.

The same kind of theft is committed by servants who rob their masters and mistresses ; this, they do by often taking small things without permission, either for themselves, or to give them

¹ Qui subtrahit aliquid a patre suo, et a matre, et dicit, hoc non esse peccatum, particeps homicidæ est.—Prov. xxviii. 24.

to others, so that in time the things thus taken, amount to considerable value. The same guilt is incurred by all those who receive such stolen things from servants or children, or who buy them, although they have a reasonable suspicion that they have been taken without the consent of masters or parents. Sometimes servants and laborers, under the pretext of occult compensation, take away secretly from their employers more than they agreed upon as payment for their work ; whether they pretend that their wages are too small, or that they have done something over and above what was agreed upon, for which, as they think, they ought to be paid, although they promised to do it freely and for nothing when making the agreement. Ah, my dear people, that is not right ; for amongst the propositions condemned by Innocent XI., there is the 37th, which reads as follows : “ Men and maid-servants may secretly take from their employers whatever is necessary to compensate them for the work they do, for which they think their salary is not sufficient.”¹ This proposition, I say, is condemned by the Church as erroneous. You say that you do not take much ; but if every servant were to take as much as you imagine you have a right to, the masters would be at a considerable loss. What you take each time is small, but it accumulates and forms, at last, matter of a grievous theft, which binds you under pain of mortal sin to restitution ; as I have elsewhere explained, more at length, when I was speaking of the duties of servants to their employers.

Those workmen also are guilty of theft, who, when they are supplied with the material for the work they undertake, such as silver, silk, wollen stuffs, cloth, leather, timber, and so forth, keep for themselves, besides the wages agreed on, the pieces of the material which are over, and which might still be useful to the lawful owner. There are many who continue acting in that manner for years and years, so that they gain considerable thereby, which they have no right to.

Gamblers, who cheat at play and win money thereby, are also guilty of theft, unless it is free for their opponents in the game to make use of the same tricks as a means of passing the time ; but if the latter are playing seriously and fairly, he who cheats is bound, in conscience, to restore what he has won. Thefts, and grievous ones too, are committed also by those merchants and storekeepers who use short weights and measures ; even if the

Workmen.

Gamblers
and store-
keepers.

¹ Famuli et famulae domesticæ possunt occulte heris suis surripere, ad compensandam operam suam, quam majorem judicant salario, quod recipiunt.

measure is only a straw's breadth too short, or the weight only an ounce too light ; and if such people continue and mean to continue that mode of action for a long time, they are in a constant state of mortal sin, which they commit every time they sell in that way ; because they have constantly the intention of making an unjust profit, which will amount in the end to grievous matter. They also sin against justice, who sell old, damaged goods as if they were new, and for the same price ; who induce simple, inexperienced people to pay a higher price than the thing is worth ; and who, when they see that a customer is in a hurry for a thing, and that he cannot have it elsewhere, charge him much higher for it.

Inn-keepers.

With these may be classed inn-keepers, who make rich people pay more for accommodation than others, on the pretext that they can afford it better, or that such an opportunity of making a trifle does not often occur. Thefts, and grievous ones too, are committed also by those who take wood from forests, or vegetables and fruit from gardens, or grapes from vineyards, or fish from ponds without the owner's permission ; as well as by those who encroach little by little on their neighbors' land, so as to increase their own ; or who remove their land-marks on the foolish pretext that others deceive them in that way. That is no excuse at all ; no matter what is stolen from me, I have no right to steal from others. Theft is never allowed.

**Other
thieves
who, by all
sorts of
tricks, ruin
entire fam-
ilies.**

These and similar thefts, my dear brethren, generally remain undetected, so that the injured person is not aware that he has been wronged. But there are other thefts which do not long remain unnoticed, on account of their disastrous effects. Sometimes the wolves get into a vineyard, when the grapes are beginning to ripen ; the birds, too, come and eat the grapes ; but what a difference between the two. One wolf opens his jaws and tears down a whole vine, so that he leaves proof enough of his presence behind him ; while ten birds pecking here and there, do so little damage that it is hardly noticed. Alas, how many families there are in the world who were once in a good position, but are now reduced to poverty by the unjust tricks and artifices of the rich and powerful, who deceived and oppressed them ! Tell me, you poor and oppressed ones, was it wolves or birds that thus made away with your property ? But your present poverty is answer enough, and shows how you were plundered ! You merchants, whose account-books are full of bad debts, contracted dishonestly, of which you will never receive a farthing ;

you, who have suffered from lawsuits that the lawyers spun out longer than necessary, although the case might be finished in a day, so clear was your right ; you, who were forced by the bribery, or influence employed by your antagonist, or by the ignorance or culpable negligence of those who undertook to plead your cause, to suffer from an unjust sentence and to pay heavy law expenses besides ; you, who have been compelled to satisfy unjust claims ; you poor widows and orphans, who have lost all you had through the chicanery of designing people, tell me, what sort of plunderers have got into your vineyard ? Had they four legs, or two ? Were they wolves or birds ? It is easy to tell ; for they have left proof enough of their presence. According to the words of the Holy Ghost : “The wild ass is the lion’s prey in the desert ; so also the poor are devoured by the rich.”¹ Just as a weak animal cannot defend itself against the attack of the lion, so the poor and weak are unable to protect their property from the machinations of the rich, who seize it and batten on it.

In the Bollandist life of St. Rictuda, for the 12th of May, there is an account of a rich man who was having his corn brought in from the field ; on the way he passed by another field in which the corn was much better than his ; he immediately told the man who was driving the wagon to hold still, and take some of the good sheaves with him, and meanwhile, he himself, who was on horseback, would keep a good look-out, so that no one might be witness of the theft. The man did as he was ordered, and came back laden with sheaves ; he put them on the wagon and made ready to start again, but the oxen which were drawing it refused to move a step ; no beating or whipping was of any use. The rich man seeing this, harnessed his own horse in front of the oxen to help them, but all in vain ; they would not move until the stolen sheaves were returned to their owner. Ah, my dear brethren, if I had those oxen I could give you ocular proof of many acts of injustice. I could bring them to the gates of many cities in the world, and yoke them on to the wagons that are laden with grain and wine to sell in the city ; I believe that very often they would stand stock still, and not move an inch, because the grain and wine are the property of poor people, who, in times of dearth or scarcity, were forced to buy on credit, trusting to the next harvest for the means of paying, and when the harvest came round, had to sell their crops to their creditors

And grow
rich unjust
ly.

¹ Venatio leonis onager in eremo, sic et pascua divitum sunt pauperes.—Ecc. xlii. 23.

at a shamefully low price. They would stand still and refuse to draw many a chest full of money, because it is money extorted from the poor by usurers, who take advantage of the necessities of others to make them pay six, seven, eight, nine or ten per cent, for money lent, and who, sometimes, when the debtors are unable to pay, force them to sell everything they have at a loss. They would refuse to draw many a load of silver plate, because it belonged to poor citizens, who, in times of scarcity, were forced to pledge it for a very small sum, and, since they were unable to redeem it, had to leave it in the hands of strangers, without getting any more for it. My good people was it wolves or birds that robbed you? But you need not answer; the thing is clear enough!

Who take
unjust
bribes.

There are other wolves who will not even take the trouble to go into the vineyard in order to plunder it; they compel those whom they mean to rob, to bring the booty to their houses. Of this kind are avaricious officials, who will not stir hand or foot to help others, unless they are paid for it; whence it is that many a poor man cannot get justice done him, before he has secured their help by the sacrifice of his little savings. A certain judge who was very pious, and at the same time, of a pleasant disposition, had a cat which used to run away whenever a plate of food was given her, but if the least bit was thrown on the floor, she devoured it eagerly. He had also a big dog which would never take a whole loaf or a large piece of meat, but would willingly accept a small piece of bread or meat. Their owner used to say that he kept those two animals for the sake of the lesson they taught him. "They refuse," he said, "a great quantity of food, because they think it is not for them, but for their master; they take little bits, because they know that they do not injure him thereby. It is said that we judges have claws and teeth, with which we seize upon and devour everything. My claws are like the claws of my cat, my teeth are like those of my dog. He who offers me a valuable present, even out of gratitude, must go away with it again; but a small present I willingly accept, so as not to put the giver to shame, and even that I do not take until I have helped him, according to my duty, to secure his rights." Oh, if all who hold similar offices were in those dispositions, how many acts of injustice would be avoided, how many poor people would be saved from loss! But, unfortunately, the contrary is more frequently the case, and men in office resemble thievish cats and hungry dogs, that are

not content with small bits, but always grasp at as much as they can lay hold of. If their clients bring them presents of trifling value, they are turned off without the least hope of getting what is their due. Of such thieves the Psalmist says : “ In whose hands are iniquities, their right hand is filled with gifts.”¹ But, they say, I do no one any wrong by taking what is freely offered me ; people are quite free to give or not, just as they like. That is a likely thing indeed, and a novel kind of free will ! They have the same kind of free will as those unfortunates who get into the claws of usurers, and are forced by dire necessity to pay back twice as much as they have received. They have the same kind of free will as those who fall into the hands of highway robbers, and can save their lives only by giving up all their money. What a scene there will be when all those thieves will hear the words : “ Pay what thou owest.”² Give up thy ill-gotten wealth. Herewith, I leave them the responsibility of their own acts, and I will go on to speak of the second kind of injustice, which is committed by those who keep what does not belong to them. This will be the

Second Part.

I must again commence with masters and mistresses who do not pay their servants, tradesmen, or laborers, the proper wages, or who without just cause, retain something out of their wages, or make them wait a long time before paying them. It sometimes happens that the servant-maid breaks a ewer, or other valuable thing ; the price of it is at once deducted from her wages. That is an injustice. And why ? Because, in order that I may have a claim to justice to withhold what belongs to another, it is required that he should have taken away something of mine, or have done me some injury through culpable negligence or malice, or if such is not the case, it would be required that he should still have the stolen or injured article in his possession, or at least that he should have drawn some profit from the damage done. Now it is certain that a servant has a right to the wages agreed upon at the expiration of the appointed time ; it is equally certain that whatever injury was caused by breaking things, was not caused through any sinful negligence or malice, but through sheer accident ; and it is certain, too, that no profit has accrued

Masters and mistresses, who deduct anything from, or retain the wages of their servants and laborers, act unjustly.

¹ In quorum manibus iniquitates sunt : dextera eorum repleta est muneribus.—Ps. xxv. 10.

² Redde quod debes.—Matth. xviii. 28.

to the servan thereby, and that the broken article is not in her possession ; therefore no one has any right to deprive her of what is justly due to her. It is true that in law, they who injure the property of another are bound to make good the loss, whether they committed a sin or not ; because men cannot see what passes in the conscience, nor can they judge of another's intention, so that they can consider only the outward act. Masters and mistresses, however, are not judges in their own case, and of course they must look upon their servants as not guilty in conscience. There is a remarkable saying of the Holy Ghost on this subject in the Book of Ecclesiasticus : “ He that sheddeth blood, and he that defraudeth the laborer of his hire, are brothers. He that taketh away the bread gotten by sweat, is like him that killeth his neighbor.”¹ But how can that be ? Is not the life of a human being of more account than the wages of a servant, or a piece of bread ? Does not he who commits a murder incur far greater guilt than he who defrauds a laborer of his hire ? If so, why are they both classed together as brothers ? I find the reason of that in the same chapter : “ The bread of the needy is the life of the poor ; he that defraudeth them thereof is a man of blood ; ”² for he takes away their livelihood. It is an injustice to deduct anything from, or to retain a legacy belonging to a rich man, although he can bear the loss very well ; but to take away or retain even a few cents from a poor laborer, who has nothing except what he can earn by the sweat of his brow, is a far greater injustice. Therefore, in the Book of Deuteronomy, God gives the express command : “ Thou shalt not refuse the hire of the needy, and the poor . . . ; but thou shalt pay him the price of his labor the same day, before the going down of the sun.”³ Why before the going down of the sun ? Why to-day and not to-morrow ? “ Because he is poor, and with it maintaineth his life, lest he cry against thee to the Lord and it be reputed to thee for a sin.”⁴

Also those
who do not
pay their
lawful
debts.

This kind of injustice is also committed by those who do not pay their debts when they can ; or who borrow money or make purchases, foreseeing that they will not be able to pay, thus injuring others and retaining what belongs to them. St. Francis

¹ Qui effundit sanguinem, et qui fraudem facit mercenario, fratres sunt. Qui aufert in sudore panem, quasi qui occidit proximum suum.—Ecc. xxxiv. 26, 27.

² Panis egentium vita pauperum est ; qui defraudat illum, homo sanguinis est.—Ibid. 25.

³ Non negabis mercendam indigentis et pauperis . . . sed eadem die reddes ei pretium laboris sui ante solis occasum.—Deut. xxiv. 14, 15.

⁴ Quia pauper est, et ex eo sustentat animam suam : ne clamat contra te ad Dominum, et reputetur tibi in peccatum.—Ibid.

of Paula was once brought into the treasury of the king of Naples, in which there were great heaps of money ; he put his hand into one of them, and filling it with money, pressed the pieces together, until the blood ran out of it between his fingers. If this saint could come down from Heaven, and seize in his hand certain hidden treasures, magnificent houses, fine clothes, costly furniture, silver plate, etc., do you not think, my dear brethren, that in many cases, blood would run out between his fingers, the blood of poor creditors, store-keepers and laborers, who have not been paid for their goods or their work ? But state and splendor must be kept up, while the store-keepers can write down the bad debts in their books, and the poor laborers must carefully refrain from even asking what is due to them, or else they will get nothing but hard words and harsh treatment. It is to no purpose that some say they are unable to pay just now what they owe, because they continue their usual extravagant style of living, although they are bound in conscience in their present circumstances to curtail their expenses.

Read the 18th chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew, and you will find one of those unjust debtors, in the parable of the king who demanded an account of his servants. Amongst others, there came to him one who owed him ten thousand talents : “ And as he had not wherewith to pay it, his lord commanded that he should be sold . . . and all that he had, and payment to be made.”¹ You may notice in this passage two expressions that seem to contradict each other, namely, “ as he had not wherewith to pay,” and “ his lord commanded that he should be sold, and all that he had, and payment to be made.” How are these to be reconciled ? If the servant had nothing, how could everything he had be sold ? There is no doubt that the servant had enough, but not enough to pay his debts ; he could gratify his sinful desires, his vanity, his gluttony, but he could not pay his debts. In fact, it turned out afterwards that he was rich enough ; for when he was on the point of being sold, he besought his master saying : “ Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.” It is just the same with those rich people who refuse to pay what they owe : if you look at the state they keep up, the number of servants they have, the magnificent dresses they wear, the sumptuous repasts they indulge in, it will certainly appear that they have enough. Their granaries are filled with corn,

Although
they are
bound to
pay them

¹ Cum autem non haberet, unde redderet, jussit eum Dominus ejus venundari . . . et omnia quæ habebat et reddi.—Matth. xviii. 25.

their cellars with wine, their coffers with gold, their yearly revenues are considerable, in a word, there is no doubt that they have enough ; but when there is question of paying their debts, they are as poor as possible ; they have not wherewith to pay. I might compare them to a hedge-hog ; that animal has a body, legs and feet like other animals, but if you go too near him, he curls himself up, and you see nothing but a prickly ball. These people say : I cannot pay my debts now. In other words, they roll themselves up like the hedge-hog. They have enough for themselves, but if anyone who has waited years perhaps for his money, ventures to ask them for it, they have nothing but hard words for him. What will those people do when they appear before the judge who searches the hearts of men, and who judges justice itself ?

Others who
in different
ways, keep
what is not
theirs.

They also are guilty of injustice who, when they have anything to share with others, or an account to square with them, and see that the latter are wronging themselves through error, either by not taking enough, or by giving too much, say nothing about it, and keep all they can. In the same way, if a certain portion of crops, for instance, has to be shared with another, such as the third, sixth or tenth part, it is wrong not to give him exactly what is his due. How many injustices are committed in this way ; especially by heirs, who refuse the proper share to their co-legatees, on the pretence that the latter have not appeared to claim it, or who do not devote to pious purposes the amount specified in the will. Ah, ye dead, rise from your graves, and see what is done with the property you so piously willed to churches and to alms-houses ! Perhaps you will still find it in the hands of those whom you have enriched. God knows what sort of consciences such people have ! Injustice is also committed by all who receive and purchase stolen goods ; or who appropriate things they find, without making diligent efforts to discover the owner. If I find a thing, and, as good Christians always do, advertise it publicly without loss of time, and if no owner appears to claim it after a considerable interval, I can then keep it with a good conscience. But if I fail to give public notice of the matter, or put off doing so for a long time, I can never become a lawful possessor of the thing, on account of my culpable negligence in looking for the owner, but must give it to the poor, in case the lawful proprietor does not appear. The same holds good of those who do not at once drive away strange animals that have strayed into their yards ; I mean animals such as

cows, pigs, poultry, etc., which are apt to find their way home again, if driven away at once, while if they are kept in a strange place a few days, they grow accustomed to it. Many a one says to himself ; oh, that sheep came to my flock of its own accord ; that pig came to my sty ; that hen to my poultry-yard : I did not drive it in nor did I shut the gate on it ; it can go back if it likes, or else the owner can come for it. No, Christians, that will not do ; if you see an animal of the kind straying into your yard, and do not drive it away immediately, it is the same as if you kept it, because the owner cannot know whether it has gone to you, or to some one else. In all these cases, the rule is: Give back everything you acquire unjustly. The third and last class of injustice is committed by those who, although they neither take away, nor keep the property of others, yet injure it deliberately. As we shall see in the

Third Part.

The chief of these are judges, lawyers, officials and others of the kind, who undertake the duties of their profession, knowing that they have not the knowledge, learning or ability necessary to fulfil them ; or if they have the ability, are careless and dilatory in performing their duty, or take more upon themselves than they can properly attend to. These act unjustly, because they are the cause of all the injury that others suffer on account of their ignorance, negligence, or the number of unnecessary things they have taken on themselves, by which suits are prolonged, or concluded too hurriedly ; an injury that they are bound in conscience to make good. The same is to be said of those who knowingly intrust such offices to incompetent persons. What a fearful responsibility is thus incurred, although generally men make light of it ! To this class belong notaries who sign invalid, usurious, or unjust contracts ; witnesses who give false testimony in a civil case ; those who are sent to examine into an affair, and who spin out the examination as long as possible, in order to make more money by it ; pettifoggers who although they know a case to be unjust, undertake to defend it, and urge an appeal against a judgment unfavorable to them, although they know that the appeal will be fruitless and that it will uselessly increase the expenses of their opponents.

With these mischievous thieves must be classed guardians who are careless of the property of their wards ; housekeepers, servants and others who do not look after what is intrusted to

Judges etc.,
injure the
property of
others.

And other
people of all
classes.

their care, or allow others to take it, when they can prevent them from doing so ; drivers who in order to make a short cut, drive over cultivated land and injure the crops ; boatmen who drink out of the casks of wine they have in their boat, belonging to other people and then fill up the cask with water, thereby doing great injury to others and receiving very small profit themselves ; all, of whatever condition they may be, who utter base coin, even if they themselves were already deceived by having the same coin passed on them ; all who harbor thieves ; all who by command, counsel, approval, or hindrance, are the cause of injury to others ; all who take or give away a part of a thing, without which part the thing is useless to its owner. These latter act like a hungry dog, which sees a piece of bread and butter in a child's hand ; it makes a spring at it open-mouthed, and missing the bread, snaps at the child's finger. Such are they who, for instance, destroy a whole coat for the sake of getting a small piece of cloth, or pull down a whole branch in order to get a few apples, etc. The day would be too short, my dear brethren, for me to speak of all the different ways in which injustice is practised.

All who act thus unjustly, must expect a severe judgment.

Oh, if all the injustice that is daily committed in the world were to meet its due, where would prisons enough be found ? But what escapes the eyes and ears of earthly justice, will one day be exposed to the whole world, examined, and condemned by the justice of God, and unless true penance has been done, and restitution made, it will be severely punished. St. Augustine, considering the sentence that will be pronounced against the wicked on the day of judgment, because they did not feed the hungry, nor give drink to the thirsty, nor clothe the naked, nor visit the sick and those in prison, cries out : " If he who did not give of his own, is to be cast into the fire, what will become of him who stole the property of others ? " ¹ If he is to be sent to hell to whom Christ can say : I was naked and you have not clothed Me ; what sort of a hell will be in store for him to whom He can say : I was clothed, and you have taken the clothes from off My body ? If he who refused to shelter Christ in the person of His poor, must take his place amongst the demons, what will become of him who by treachery and cunning has driven the poor from their homes ? In a word, if he who has not done good to his neighbor will be lost forever, how can he who has in any

¹ Si in ignem mittendus est qui non dedit propria ; ubi mittendus est qui rapuit aliena ?—S. Aug. de Sanctis, serm. 38.

way robbed and injured his neighbor, hope to get to Heaven?

Ah, my brethren, let us all write deep in our hearts the words of the commandment: "Thou shalt not covet anything that is thy neighbor's." ¹ It is forbidden even to desire, much less then is it allowed to take unjustly, to keep, or to injure what does not belong to us. The Almighty knows well that where there is desire, and an opportunity offers, the hand will soon be stretched out to seize the coveted object; therefore, even the desire of the thing is unlawful. Happy those households which resemble that of Tobias. This pious old man was blind, and not knowing what purchases his wife made here and there, he once heard a kid bleating in the house; he became uneasy at once, thinking that it was stolen: "Take heed, lest perhaps it be stolen," said he, "restore ye it to its owners, for it is not lawful for us either to eat or to touch anything that cometh by theft." ² Hear this, Christians, says St. Augustine, "he was unwilling to hear the sound of a theft in his house." ³ I hope you will all have the same delicate ears, and that you will avoid all injustice, so that the name even of theft may not be heard in your houses.

Exhortation and resolution to avoid all kinds of injustice.

If the greed of gain, and a favorable opportunity should excite in you a desire of appropriating anything unjustly, recall to your minds at once the words of the Holy Ghost: "Better is a little with justice, than great revenues with iniquity." ⁴ And in fact, experience teaches that ill-gotten goods never bring a blessing, for so God has justly decreed. We might say that they come in at one door, and go out at the other. They are like an uncooked morsel, which the stomach is obliged to reject, and with it the good food which it had begun to digest. Whatever just profit a man has made, generally disappears with what he has acquired dishonestly, as happened to the Israelites in the desert; if one of them took more than his just share of the manna, all he had, became corrupted in his hands. And even if ill-gotten goods did bring prosperity, would it not still be a foolish thing to take or keep what I know I must restore, besides being obliged to make good any loss I may have otherwise occasioned, if I wish to go to Heaven? And not only that, but the whole time I possess anything unjustly, I am at variance with God and with my conscience, and I run the risk of con-

For it can do us no good in time, and entails the loss of the soul.

¹ Non concupisces rem proximi tui.—Exod. xx. 17.

² Videte, ne forte furtivus sit: reddite eum dominis suis, quia non licet nobis aut edere ex furto aliquid, aut contingere.—Tob. ii. 21.

³ Nolebat sonum furti, audire in domo sua.

⁴ Mellius est parum cum justitia, quam multi fructus cum iniquitate.—Prov. xvi. 8.

demning to hell, not only myself, but my children and descendants, who will continue to possess the unjustly acquired wealth after me. Away, then, with such folly! Away with such a blind love of gain! I would rather beg my bread from door to door, than do a dishonest action; I do not wish to gain even a penny, or a penny's worth unfairly. I will do the best I can to keep and to increase what I have for me and mine; but I will never exceed the limits of justice. Have I much? Then I will possess and enjoy it with a quiet conscience. Have I little, or nothing? Then I will console myself with the thought that I have as much as God wishes me to have, and I shall live in the certain hope that having served God faithfully and contentedly on earth, I shall enjoy an eternal treasure in Heaven. Amen.

TENTH SERMON.

ON THE NECESSITY OF RESTORING ILL-GOTTEN GOODS.

Subject.

The restitution of ill-gotten goods, 1. Is necessary; 2. Is absolutely necessary, so that nothing can excuse one from making it.—*Preached on the thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Non est inventus qui rediret, et daret gloriam Deo.—Luke xvii. 18.

“There is no one found to return and give glory to God.”

Introduction.

To return and give thanks for having been restored to health, is certainly an obligation which the law of gratitude imposes on all men; but amongst ten, there was found only one who fulfilled this law, as Our Lord complains in to-day's Gospel: “Were not ten made clean? and where are the nine?”¹ Without further delay, my dear brethren, I will speak of the law of justice. On last Sunday, I explained that many men practise different kinds of injustice, and what I fear is, that out of every ten who do so, hardly one is found to come back and make restitution for what he has taken, kept, or injured of the property

¹ Nonne decem mundati sunt? et novem ubi sunt?—Luke xvii. 17.

of others ; and yet that restitution is absolutely necessary, as I shall now show.

Plan of Discourse.

The restitution of ill-gotten goods is necessary. Such is briefly the first part. It is absolutely necessary, so that nothing can excuse one from making it. Such will be the second part. Therefore every one should at once restore what he possesses without right. Such will be the conclusion.

To which, may the grace of God help all, through the intercession of Mary and the holy angels guardian, I hope this subject will affect but few of you, and that the greater number of you are free from injustice ; nevertheless, it will do good to you all, by inspiring you with a fear and horror of dishonesty, and such is my principal intention.

It is necessary to restore what I have unjustly taken, what I unjustly possess, or what I have injured of the property belonging to others ; this truth is so evident that it does not require much to prove it. All laws, human, natural and divine say : “ Pay what thou owest.” “ But if it were taken away by stealth, he shall make the loss good to the owner ; ”¹ and a hundred other texts of similar import in the Old and in the New Testament, which it is needless for me to bring forward. Even if all these texts were blotted out, the light of reason alone is enough to show that we must restore whatever we possess unjustly. As St. Augustine says : “ This law is written in the hearts of men,”² so that no one can doubt of this obligation. Even impious libertines and atheists, who despise all laws, human and divine, must submit to this law. The worst robbers and thieves acknowledge it. And it is a duty founded on the first principles of nature and human intercourse : “ Do not to another, what you do not wish to be done to yourself.” Now, just as I do not wish a stranger to come and take away or injure anything I have, so there is no one who does not desire to have his stolen or injured property restored to him. Thus, the same general law of justice, which forbids us to steal, commands us to restore what we have stolen.

The restitution of that which belongs to another, is commanded by the divine and natural law.

And what fearful disorders would arise, if one were allowed to retain what he acquires dishonestly. Stealing, usury, oppression, how common they are even now, when people know that

The common good requires it.

¹ Quod si furto ablatum fuerit, restituet damnum domino.—Exod. **xxii.** 12.

² Lex scripta in cordibus hominum.

they are bound to give back the stolen property ! How would it be if there was no such obligation amongst the many who are influenced by greed of gain ? How would it be, if after repenting of one's sin, there was no further atonement required, so that the thief might consider himself the lawful owner of what he has stolen ? Who could protect himself against robbery if such were the case ? It seems strange that God has attached such importance to acts of dishonesty, as to forbid them under pain of eternal damnation, although He sets such little value on worldly goods ; although Christ, His Divine Son, did not think it worth while to possess anything ; although He has scattered those goods everywhere over the world profusely, amongst heathens and Turks, as well as Christians, amongst his bitterest enemies as well as amongst His dearest friends ; nay, He even commands those who wish to save their souls to despise riches, while they who wish to be perfect must not only despise them, but also really give them up ; so that amongst the first Christians He wished everything to be in common, and no distinction to be made between mine and thine. It seems strange, I say, that in spite of all that, God has so strictly commanded that no one should injure another in his worldly substance, and if such injury is inflicted, that restitution for it be made at once. But the common good of the human race, and the conditions under which men live together, require such a strict command ; otherwise the world would be full of disorder.

When possible, it is a necessary means of salvation.

Following St. Thomas, theologians distinguish two kinds of necessity : necessity of precept, according to which a thing is done or omitted, because it is commanded or forbidden by God ; and necessity of means to salvation, according to which a thing is to be done because it is required to save one's soul. For instance, to love my enemy, to be meek and humble, to practise purity according to my state of life, etc., all these things are necessary because they are commanded by God under pain of sin ; yet they are not necessary as a means of salvation, that is to say, it does not follow that if I transgress in any of these particulars, I cannot save my soul. By no means ; for I can repent of having been guilty of pride, hatred, revenge, or impurity, do penance, and thus save my soul. On the other hand, the baptism of water, if I have the opportunity of receiving it, confession, when I have grievously sinned, and can go to confession, are necessary, not only because they are commanded by God, but also, because they are

the only means of salvation for which nothing can be substituted. Certainly, a man may save his soul by the baptism of desire, that is, by the perfect love of God, if he has no chance of receiving the baptism of water; he can also obtain forgiveness of mortal sin by making an act of perfect contrition, if he cannot find a priest to whom he can make his confession; but when the opportunity of receiving the baptism of water, or of making sacramental confession, is offered, neither a perfect love of God, nor perfect contrition will avail anything unless that opportunity is made use of. Such is the necessity of making restitution, when it is possible for me to do so, as St. Thomas teaches; so necessary is it to salvation, that without it, or at least the sincere intention of making it, I cannot save my soul, no matter what else I do.

There is no sin so great that the Catholic Church has not power to forgive, provided the sinner is truly sorry and firmly purposes amendment. I may have committed all kinds of impurity, I may have cursed my neighbor, without actually doing him any other injury, I may have beaten my father and mother, blasphemed God, and signed with my own blood a contract giving my soul to the devil; yet, fearful as those sins are, if I am sincerely sorry for them, and confess them to a priest who has power to absolve me from them, with a sincere purpose of amendment, I have done all that is required on my part to be freed from those terrible sins, and to become again a child of God. But if I have stolen a single dollar, and am in a position to restore it, but fail to do so, even if I were to weep tears of blood for my sin, and most solemnly promise never to do the like again, and confess the theft a hundred times, it is all of no use. If I do not make restitution when I can, not all the power on earth, neither priest, nor bishop can absolve me; and if I receive absolution a hundred times, it will do me no good; the owner of the stolen property is the only one who, if he wishes, can free me from the obligation of restitution. Our Lord said to Zacheus: "This day is salvation come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham."¹ On what occasion did Our Lord use those words? Zacheus was exceedingly desirous of seeing Him, and climbed up into a tree for that purpose; Jesus looked up and saw him, and told him to come down; but He did not yet tell him that he was a child of Abraham, that he was justified, and that he was in the way of

Without restitution sorrow and confession are worth nothing.

¹ Quia hodie salus domui huic facta est, eo quod et ipse filius sit Abrahæ.—Luke xix. 9.

salvation. Jesus went with him to his house, but not even then did He tell him that he was justified. At last Zacheus spoke to the purpose, when he said: "If I have wronged any man of anything, I restore him fourfold."¹ Then it was that he heard the joyful news: "This day is salvation come to this house," now is Zacheus a child of Abraham, a child of God. That merchant comes to hear Christ speaking to him in sermons, on Sundays and holydays, that he may learn how to do good; a pious man he must be, from all appearances; but I ask him, has he restored the unjust gain he made in his business by cheating and trickery of all kinds; if he has not, I am afraid that, although he has admitted the Saviour into his heart, salvation is not come to him. That man lives in a pious and Christian manner outwardly; that woman is looked upon as a saint; she goes two or three times a week to Confession and Holy Communion; very good signs indeed. But I ask, do these people pay their debts? Do they restore what they possess unjustly? If not, then no matter how often they receive their Saviour in the Holy Communion, I do not believe that salvation is come to them; they must first say: If I have wronged any one I will restore him what belongs to him. If they refuse to do that, there is no salvation for them.

The reason
of this
truth.

The reason of this undoubted truth is evident; in every act of theft, or unjust retention of what belongs to another, and in all dishonest profit, there is a twofold malice; the first consists in the grievous offence I commit against God, my Sovereign Lord, by despising His commands; and the other in the injury I do my neighbor, by taking from him unjustly what is his. These two different kinds of malice, which constitute one sin, and which cannot be separated from each other, give rise to two different obligations; one, that of atoning for the offence I have committed against God; the other, that of making good the injury I have done my neighbor. It will not do for me to try to satisfy one of these obligations without the other, I should still remain guilty of injustice. Sincere sorrow, Confession and a firm purpose of amendment, although they are sufficient for the remission of any other kind of sin, are not of the least use in a case of injustice, without the firm purpose of making restitution, when it is possible. As St. Augustine says: "Such a sorrow is only feigned; the sin will not be forgiven until restitution is

¹ *Si quid aliquem defraudavi, reddo quadruplum.*—Luke, xix. 8.

made.”¹ And nothing can excuse from this, but inability alone ; that is to say, if I have not the means of making restitution ; but even in that case, I must still have the sincere wish and intention of making restitution as soon as ever I can.

It is a remarkable thing, my dear brethren, that in this matter, God is more careful, so to speak, of the rights and the property of men, than He is of His own rights. He has appointed His priests as judges with full power to forgive all sins that are committed against His honor alone ; but He gives them no power to free any one from the obligations incurred towards others.

God will forgive the sin committed against Himself, but will not dispense any one from restitution.

Such is the fact. Priests of the living God, you are stewards and dispensers of the treasures and graces of Heaven, which you can give to the penitent sinner by sacramental absolution, when God’s honor alone has been injured ; but your power falls short when an injury has been done to another, unless restitution for it has been made ! You can often dispense, commute, take away altogether the obligations that your penitents have contracted towards God, such as vows, for instance ; but you have no power over the least thing that belongs to another man ; no dispensation, no commutation into another good work can free from the obligation of restoring the ill-gotten property.

Even mercy, religion, God Himself must give way, for such is His will, where there is question of the rights of God on one side, and the restitution of ill-gotten goods on the other, it being impossible to satisfy both together. For instance : I have promised God by a vow to give a hundred dollars to the Church, or to the poor ; I am certainly obliged to fulfil my promise if I can ; but if it so happens that I have injured my neighbor to the extent of a hundred dollars, I am bound to pay him first, before I give anything to the poor, or to the Church ; and further, if the only money I have to dispose of is a hundred dollars, I must let the Church and the poor look out for themselves, and make restitution to the man I have wronged. So strictly has God commanded restitution to be made. To give back what of right belongs to another, is necessary, absolutely and indispensably, and nothing can excuse from it, as we shall see in the

Nay, we must also prefer it to His rights.

Second Part.

This is acknowledged by all who wish to use their reason. If I were to ask every one here, all would say at once, that of course

On account of the difficulty of res-

¹ Non agitur poenitentia, sed fingitur ; non dimittitur peccatum, nisi restituatur ablatum.

titution,
people in-
vent all
kinds of
pretexts to
free them-
selves from
it.

restitution is necessary ; no one ever doubted that. But if I were to ask one who possesses dishonestly something of value and were to say to him : come now, give back what you know does not belong to you ; should I probably get the answer that the Philistines gave to the priests who exhorted them to atone for the injury done to the ark of the covenant : “ What is it we ought to render unto him for sin ? ”¹ we are willing to do all that is necessary ? Oh, I am afraid there would be a good deal of hesitation, and all sorts of excuses would be brought forward to show that either the obligation does not exist in this particular case, or that it is not urgent. So difficult is it, when once greed of gain has got the upper hand, to part with what one has got possession of. The same avaricious desires and inclinations that inspire a man with the idea of making an unjust gain, prevent him from making restitution, and suggest to his imagination a hundred plausible excuses to set his conscience at rest, so that he may retain the unjustly acquired property. The injury he has suffered from others, the fear of losing his good name by making restitution, his own wants and the requirements of his state of life, the necessity of supporting his family decently, these and similar false pretexts are brought forward to excuse him from fulfilling his obligation, so that he may retain possession of what does not belong to him. Let us examine the principal excuses that are given.

Some bring
forward the
harm that
others have
done them.

I myself am very often cheated and robbed ; many things are stolen from me ; people do not pay me what they owe me ; I have never known any one to make restitution to me, although I have often missed articles of value ; when restitution is made to me, I will make it to others ; I need not do so before. Such is the first excuse, but in my opinion, it is the most flimsy of all, it might hold good with a fool, but not with a sensible man ; still, a man's conscience is often stupefied by an inordinate greed of gain. And what sort of an excuse is that to make ? Is there the least sign of reason in it ? Because you have been wronged, you are allowed to wrong others ; because you have been robbed, you are allowed to steal from your neighbor ; no one pays you what is due to you, therefore you need not give back what you have belonging to others, nor pay what you owe them ? If that were true, we might do away with every law, human and divine. Tell me, did they who robbed you act rightly ? No, you will say, they were thieves and rogues. Nor are you yourself a bit

¹ Quid est quod pro delicto reddere debeamus ?—I. Kings vi. 4.

better, for you have stolen from others. They who do not restore what they have unjustly taken from you, are they in the right ? No, they will go to hell with their ill-gotten gains. And if so, how can you think that you, with your ill-gotten gains, which you still have, can go to Heaven, unless you make restitution ? How is it possible for those whom you have wronged, to prevent others from treating you unjustly ? Have they on that account less right to what belongs to them ? No, your excuse is worthless ; pay what you owe, give back what you possess wrongfully.

I know well that such an excuse is of no value, says a second : I acknowledge that I must make restitution ; but I cannot. And what prevents you ? My honor and good name are worth more than gold to me. If I made restitution, I should lose them, and should be looked upon as a thief.* That is indeed a plausible excuse ; your good name ! Which do you think the more valuable ; your honor in time, or the salvation of your soul in eternity ? Keep your honor by all means, but do not lose your soul for its sake. Why have you acted in such a way as to risk being looked upon as a thief, if it becomes known ? Who forced you to be dishonest ? Must the innocent suffer on that account, and lose their right to what belongs to them ? Try what your excuse will avail you at the judgment-seat of God ; say to Christ : Lord, I have been careful of my good name, and therefore I have kept what I have unjustly acquired. I, He will answer, have never wronged any one, and yet I have allowed Myself to be crucified like the worst of thieves. Is your honor then, of such account, that for the sake of it, you can take away from My servants, and keep what is theirs of right ? Besides, in what does a good name consist ? In being guilty of theft and injustice, or in fulfilling the law of justice and doing good ? To give back what one possesses unjustly, is a good, praiseworthy and necessary act of justice, which will not make you a thief or a rogue ; but to keep what you have stolen is the very thing that will make every honest man look upon you as a thief. Still, as you are so anxious about your good name, ask an experienced and prudent confessor to help you ; tell him clearly, as you are bound to, what, how much, and in what way, you have taken unjustly ; he will be able to tell you how to make restitution, and at the same time to preserve your honor intact, so that not a soul will know anything of it to your discredit, not even the person whom you have wronged. Therefore, in spite of your excuse, pay what you owe.

Others say
that their
reputation
would be
injured, if
they made
restitution.

Others, that they would fall from their position.

Yes, says a third, but if I were to give back all I have dishonestly acquired, I should be in a very bad position. I, says another, would become a beggar from being a rich man ; therefore, they to whom I should make restitution, cannot reasonably demand it. Granted that what you say is true ; although greed of gain supplies the imagination with many pretexts to avoid giving up what has once been acquired, pretexts that are not, and never will be true ; granted that your excuse is a true one, there are many circumstances connected with it, which require the help of a learned confessor ; some of them on the part of him who is to make the restitution ; others on the part of him to whom it is to be made. I shall give a short general explanation of the matter.

To what they are obliged who, before they committed injustice, were in a good position.

In the first place, you were in a good position before you committed the dishonest act, or else you raised yourself to the position you now occupy, by means of it. If you were in a good position before, and in case you made restitution, you would suddenly and certainly fall into poverty, then you are not bound in conscience to pay back the whole sum at once, unless the person whom you have wronged should find himself in a similar position. And here we must condemn the hard-heartedness and cruelty of those creditors, who act like the servant in the Gospel of St. Matthew, and compel their debtors to pay, dunning and importuning them by every means in their power, leaving them neither rest nor peace, and at last stripping them bare of all they have, and taking away their good name in the eyes of the world ; although the unfortunate people have humbly protested that it is impossible for them to pay, and have asked, like the servant in the Gospel, for a little delay ; “Have patience with me and I will pay thee all.”¹ That is not acting in a Christian manner, for it runs counter to the principles of sound reason and charity ; do unto others as you wish they should do unto you. Meanwhile, you who possess goods unjustly, are still bound in conscience to give back what you can, although by doing so you should gradually come down in the world a little ; you are bound to moderate your expenses in dress, food, servants, furniture, gambling, drinking, useless pastimes and other things of the kind, that you may be able to make restitution all the sooner ; for it is unjust to make a show before the world and to make merry with what belongs to another. We have a right to nothing except what is necessary to enable us to live decently ;

¹ Patientiam habere in me, et omnia reddam tibi.—Matth. xviii. 29.

no right at all to superfluities, much less to superfluities that we procure with what belongs to other people. Besides, do you know in what your state consists here on earth? It consists in being a good Christian, serving God faithfully, that you may save your soul. That is your only necessary care, that state you must keep up; and your worldly position must be sacrificed to it, if you cannot keep up that position unless by sinning against justice and risking your soul.

But if you have raised yourself to a good position by unjust means, then there is no escape for you; you must give back everything, although by doing so, you reduce yourself to beggary. For, your present position does not belong to you, you have attained it by the sin of injustice; you have built on ground that is not yours, and that too with deliberate malice, so that what you have built belongs to the owner of the ground. In what position would you have been, if you had not acted dishonestly? You must now be contented with it, for your acts of injustice do not give you a right to a better. Ah, how many there were in the times of the early Christians, how many there are now who willingly give up all they possess, and make themselves poor, that they may be more certain of Heaven, and better able to imitate the poverty of their Saviour; why should you, then, hesitate to restore what does not belong to you, when you are bound to do so under pain of eternal damnation? Finally, with regard to him to whom you have to make the restitution, if he is in the same circumstances as you, that is, if he will be forced to come down in the world, unless he gets back what you wronged him of, there is not the least doubt that you are bound to restitution, no matter what your position was before, or how low you will be reduced now; for, if either of you must suffer, it must be the guilty, not the innocent one. Therefore, pay what thou owest.

But, a fourth will say, what is to become of my children, if I must make full restitution? How can I ruin them? How can I see them not so well clad as formerly, and having less to eat? It would be like tearing my heart out. You are completely mistaken; if you refuse to make restitution, you will then ruin your children in reality; for you will place them in the unhappy state of sin. When you are in hell, your children will either make restitution, or they will not. If they fulfil their duty, what richer are they for what you have left them? None at all, but they have all the trouble that you should have taken, in restoring your ill-gotten gains to their lawful owner.

The obligation of those who have raised themselves to a good position unjustly.

Others say that their children will be impoverished if they make restitution.

These latter by not restoring, damn themselves and their children. Shown by an example.

If they do not fulfil their duty, although they know, or have a reasonable suspicion, that what they possess has been unjustly acquired, then you drag them, and perhaps their children's children, down to hell also ; because, no prescription, not even of a hundred thousand years, can justify any one in keeping property which is known to be the result of dishonesty ; the obligation of restitution still remains. Hear what St. Peter Damian writes : There was a certain nobleman in Germany, who had many castles and estates, and who was universally regarded as a very good and pious man, a reputation he enjoyed until his death. A religious prayed earnestly to God to reveal to him the state of that pious man's soul ; his prayer was heard, and he was carried in spirit down to hell, where he saw a long ladder, on the top rung of which was the unhappy nobleman surrounded by fire and hideous demons. The religious, thunder-struck at the sight, cried out : How did you come here ? How is it that you who led such an edifying life, are now in hell ? Alas, answered the soul, I am lost forever, because I kept some lands I inherited from my ancestors, although I knew from my private papers that they belonged of right to a certain citizen of Metz. You must know that I am the tenth of our family thus condemned to hell on account of that property. We are now descending deeper into the abyss in order to make room for our descendants. But go and tell my son to make restitution, or else I shall expect him here too. Hereupon the religious came to himself again, and delivered the message intrusted to him. Restitution was made, and the succession of lost souls on the hellish ladder was put an end to. Thus one property unjustly acquired, caused the eternal loss of ten generations of the same family. Remember this, you who now fear to make restitution, lest you should impoverish your children. Will you involve them in the same ruin with yourself ? If not, restore what is not yours ; restitution or damnation ; you have no other choice !

Good children will help to make such restitution.

If your children are pious, good and dutiful, if they honor and love their parents as they ought, they will be glad to do all they can to help you to save your soul, and of course they will look with horror and aversion on the money that would be the cause of your damnation. And, as they would not have the hearts of children if they were not ready to undergo any danger in order to save you from temporal death, so for a much stronger reason, they must be firmly resolved to save you from eternal death, and to purchase eternal life for you, by restoring

ill-gotten goods. If they are not so disposed, what blindness and folly it would be for you to sacrifice your soul for the sake of such children, who think so little of you and of your salvation, who are looking out for your wealth like birds of prey for carrion, and who will curse you in hell for all eternity, because you left them that unjust gain which caused them, too, to lose their souls. What will become of my children? Give back first what is not yours, look after your soul, and leave your children to the fatherly care of God's Providence, which does not forget to feed the worm of the earth and the sparrow of the air; how much more will It not take care of your children, who have been redeemed by the Blood of Christ and are adopted children of God? Certainly, that Providence will not allow any one who trusts in It and serves God, to perish of hunger. Pay what thou owest. You must know that your ill-gotten wealth will not help your children, even temporally; but will deprive them of the divine blessing and bring them to poverty all the sooner.

In Norway there is a lake into which flow twenty-four rivers, that are afterwards all led out through a channel; this channel is called the Devil's Gap, because all along it were found several caves in which some highway robbers had hidden their booty. But they did not long enjoy their treasures, for their hiding place was discovered by means of the smoke which came out at the top; the robbers were hanged, and their booty became the property of those who captured them. So it is too with ill-gotten goods; they are hidden, it is true, but in a Devil's Gap, in which they cannot long be safe; for, either the injustice will be detected, through the interposition of Divine Providence, or the goods that one lawfully possesses will melt away along with the unjust gain; so that those who inherit such property, lose more than they gain by it. Not in vain has God pronounced that threat by the mouth of the prophet Jeremias: "Woe to him that buildeth up his house by injustice."¹ You have built that house with money obtained by usury and fraud, that you may leave it to your children; but woe to you and to them. "They shall build up and I will throw down."² You wish to leave to your children that vineyard, that land you have acquired unjustly; they will sow in it, but God will not permit them to reap: "They have sown wheat and reaped thorns."³ Your children will inherit your wealth, but it will

Otherwise,
they will
find neither
luck nor
grace in
this life.

¹ Vae qui ædificat domum suam in injustitia.—Jerem. xxi. 13.

² Isti ædificabunt, et ego destruam.—Malach. i. 4.

³ Seminaverunt triticum et spinas messuerunt.—Jerem. xii. 13.

not prosper with them : “ They have received an inheritance, and it shall not profit them : you shall be ashamed of your fruits, because of the fierce wrath of the Lord.”¹ We read the same threat in the Book of Job : “ The riches which he hath swallowed, he shall vomit up.”² Mark the comparison ; if a man eats too greedily food which the stomach cannot digest, he is compelled to reject it again, and with it, the other food which would otherwise have been easily digested. Ill-gotten goods are an indigestible morsel ; not only are they hurtful in themselves, but also they generally bring about the loss of what has been honestly acquired. “ The riches which he hath swallowed, he shall vomit up, and God shall draw them out of his belly.” Experience teaches us that there are many families, the members of which toil and worry day after day, but cannot get things to prosper with them ; they are always in difficulties and cannot find the reason of it. Ah, you dead ancestors, come up out of the abyss, and show your descendants the cause of their poverty, show them that money, that property, which you gained by usury, bribery, injustice, and left to them. That is the hidden worm that is gnawing away their property, that is the indigestible morsel that compels them to part with the fruits of their honest labor. What will become of my children ? Give back what you have no right to, and you will merit for your children a blessing from that God, who gave back to his servant Job seven-fold all that he had lost. In a word, it is absolutely necessary to make restitution of property that is unjustly acquired, kept, or injured : and no excuse, no pretext, except impossibility alone, can dispense from doing what is commanded by the natural, divine and human law. Pay what thou owest !

Hence he acts foolishly who seeks to make an unjust gain.

From all this, my dear brethren, we can see how foolish and senseless it is to desire and seek for unlawful gain ; for I ask you again : Do you intend to make restitution or not ? If you do intend it, why do you take what you must give back, greatly against your will ? Why should you then burden your conscience, and offend God by such a foolish and unprofitable sin ? Do you intend to keep what you have got dishonestly ? Oh, then I pity your poor soul, for you are doing a still more foolish thing. Do you wish to be lost for ever ? Ah, merciful Saviour, cry out so that all will hear, those words of the Gospel : “ What

¹ *Hæreditatem acceperunt et non eis proderit : confundemini a fructibus vestris, propter iram furoris Domini.*—Jerem. xii. 13.

² *Divitias quas devoravit, evomet.*—Job. xx. 15.

doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul ?” What does it profit him, I will not say to make a few dollars unjustly, or to get possession of a princely estate, or to become a king or an emperor, but to gain the whole world and become master of it, and all its wealth, if he lose his soul ? What will he find in the whole world to compare with his immortal soul, I will not say, to give in exchange for it ? All the pearls of the Indies, all the diamonds and treasures that the sea conceals in its bosom, all the silver and gold of Peru, all the wealth of the world could not equal the value of one soul. And yet, blind mortals that we are, we sell our souls for the sake of making a shilling’s worth of unjust profit ! Poor soul, how you are to be pitied ; you are given up to the devil for a vile piece of money, although you are worth more than all the treasures of earth !

If one of you, my dear brethren, were condemned to the gallows and the chance of saving his life and reputation were offered him on condition of his paying two or three thousand dollars, would he not willingly part with that sum, if he had it, to save himself from a shameful death ? Of course he would ; and if any one should complain that he was reducing himself to poverty, or that he would have nothing to leave his children, he would pay little attention to the complaint, but would think himself fortunate in being able to save life and honor by the sacrifice of his money. O, Christian, if there is any one here, as I hope there is not, who possesses anything unjustly, I tell you in the name of God, or rather God Himself tells you, that you are sentenced to eternal death, that you will burn in hell forever, if you keep what is not yours. The only means of avoiding this shameful death is restitution, and will you hesitate to adopt it ? In order to preserve your temporal life, that will last, may be, only a few days, you are ready to give away all you have ; but to preserve your eternal life and to save yourself from hell, you hesitate about parting with a little money that does not belong to you ; money that death will soon take from you violently, hurling your soul down amongst the demons. Why do you not give it up at once to the great profit of your soul ?

Ah, I beg of you, for the sake of your salvation, pay what you owe. Give back to that storekeeper what you cheated him of ; make restitution to those customers with whom you have

How foolish to refuse to restore what belongs to others.

Exhortation and resolution to make due restitution.

dealt dishonestly ; give to those workmen and servants the wages you withheld from them ; make good the injustices you have committed in your office or employment, through malice, ignorance, or negligence ; give back to those poor people what you so cunningly cheated them of ; restore all that you have gained by usury and oppression. Pay what you owe, I beg of you again most humbly, for the sake of your soul ; if you do not grant what I ask of you now, death will come and will cry out to you in a far more terrible voice : leave the money that you made unjustly, the property that you never had a right to, give back the blood of the poor that you have gorged yourself with ; away, accursed one, out of the house of which you were never a rightful owner ; away with you to that hell which you yourself have chosen for the sake of your unjust gains ! Ah, do not wait for those fearful words ! Think now, and say from your heart, away with that money, I will save my soul, and go to Heaven. My worldly condition may suffer, but I shall save my soul ; my children may become poor, but I shall save my soul ; I may even lose my honor and good name, but I shall save my soul ; my friends may even laugh at me and despise me, but I shall save my soul. If restitution were merely a pious work of supererogation I might dispense myself from it ; if I could supply for it by prayer, fasting, and alms-deeds, I might have recourse to those means in order to save myself from eternal death ; but as it is, I have no means but restitution to avoid hell. Therefore I will adopt it ; away with that unjust gain ; this very day it shall leave my house ! Away with that money which has taken my God and His eternal riches from me ! With Thee will I remain, O my God, Thee will I serve in time, Thee will I possess in eternity ! This is my firm resolve. Amen.

ELEVENTH SERMON.

ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF RESTITUTION.

Subject.

Who has to make restitution, to whom has he to make it, what has he to restore, and when ?—*Preached on the fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Dedit illum matri suæ.—Luke vii. 15.

“And He gave him to his mother.”

Introduction.

Was there any necessity for Christ to give back the young man to his mother, after having restored him to life? “And he gave him to his mother.” Did the young man still belong to his mother? No, my dear brethren, once death has intervened, although one is restored to life by a miracle, all the bonds are loosed which during life connect men with each other, whether they arise from natural ties, or from mutual agreement. Thus, if to-day a husband dies, and to-morrow is restored to life again, his former marriage is annulled, and both husband and wife are freed from all obligations towards each other. Still, if a child restored to life should belong to any one, there is no doubt, that it is to his mother. Therefore “He gave him to his mother.” I return, my dear brethren, to the matter I have already spoken of. I have recently treated of restitution, and shown that it is necessary, and indispensably necessary, in order to avoid eternal damnation, so that inability alone can excuse one from making it. I have still one point to treat of, which will conclude the subject, and that is the manner in which one is bound to make restitution. So that we have now four circumstances to consider, namely, who, to whom, what, and when.

Plan of Discourse.

Who must make restitution? Such is the first question. To whom must it be made? The second question. What must be restored. The third question. When must it be restored? The fourth question. I shall answer each one separately. I do not at all suspect, my dear brethren, that much knavery and injustice is committed amongst us; my only design is to inspire every one with a horror of it.

To this end help me, O Virgin Mother, Mirror of justice, and you too, holy guardian angels.

With regard to the first question, it might seem as if I only wished to have something to talk about in order to pass away the time and to fill up the hour for the sermon, when I undertake to explain to you who is bound to make restitution. For, you will think, there is no difficulty about that; we all know that that obligation concerns those who take, keep, or in any way

It is generally petty thieves who make restitution.

injure what belongs to others, as we have already heard in another sermon. That is quite true; but would to God that all who know of this obligation would fulfil it when it concerns them, according to their knowledge! How many injustices are committed here and there in the world? How seldom do we hear of restitution being duly made for them? As St. John Chrysostom says, "Men are most eager to take the property of others, but very sluggish about restoring it."¹ Generally speaking, they who make restitution are those who resemble the small birds that plunder the vineyard by taking a grape here and there; but what of the wolves that tear down whole vines and do great damage? That is to say, restitution is generally made by such people as poor servants, or workmen who have taken a few shillings from their employers; when they hear injustice spoken of, their conscience at once begins to annoy them, and they try in their poverty to find the means of giving back secretly what they have stolen, or of making good any injury they have done others; and if they have no other means, they try to make up for the theft by increased diligence in their work.

Great ones
seldom do
so.

But what of the great thieves who commit gross injustices, who steal by hundreds and thousands in their offices or business dealings? St. Augustine in his Epistle to the Macedonians, asks: Where shall we find one, through whose carelessness or fraud a poor man has lost a law-suit for want of money to carry it on, whose conscience reproaches him, and who endeavors to repair the injury he has caused? Where shall we find one who, having undertaken too many charges through greed of gain, which he is unable to look after properly, is uneasy on that account, and ready to make good the harm he must have done to many? Where shall we find one who is willing to give up the fruits of the benefice he has acquired through simony, and enjoyed for many years? Where shall we find one who, having refused to do his duty and defend the rights of others, unless they fill his hands with bribes, feels troubled in conscience, and wishes to give back what he has thus unjustly received? Where shall we find one who, having enriched himself by usurious contracts, and oppression of the poor, is willing to make restitution? Where shall we find one who, having dishonestly supplanted another in his office and employment, so that the latter has suffered greatly thereby, is ready to atone for the injury inflicted? Where shall we find one who is willing to restore what

¹ Ad aliena rapienda avidissimi, ad reparanda frigidissimi.

he has unjustly extorted from poor widows and orphans? Where shall we find one who is ready to repair the harm he has done by his wicked counsel in subjecting whole districts and countries to unusually severe taxation? No, it is not easy to find people of that kind who are willing to make restitution, although they are bound to do so.

Besides, we must not forget that not only the people themselves who have taken, kept, or injured the property of others, but also their children, heirs and all who share in the unjust gain, are under the same obligation, if the former do not make restitution, and the latter are aware of the injustice committed. Yet, many a one thinks to himself; what is it to me if my ancestors, or others from whom I have received anything, have acquired unjustly what they have given me? Let them look to it; it is their own affair; I have not stolen; I have taken in good faith what they have given me; how could I prevent them from doing wrong? No, that will not do, my dear brethren; what is unjustly gained always cries out for its lawful owner,¹ as jurists and theologians say. Even if I buy a thing with my own money, and hear that it is stolen, I must give it back, and suffer the loss. The sin of injustice is the only one that binds the children and descendants of the guilty man to atonement. For instance; if my father and mother had been given to cursing and blaspheming, although I believe quite the contrary of them, I as their son should not have to answer for them; they must bear all the consequences of their own guilt, nor am I bound to anything on their account. If my father neglected to perform the penance enjoined on him in confession, I should not be obliged to perform it for him, and if I did so, it would not benefit him. If my mother injured the character of another, I should not be bound to restore that other's good name. But with regard to the restitution of another's property, there is a great difference. If my father left me a property, some of which I know to have been unjustly acquired, for which he made no restitution during his life, I would be bound under pain of sin, although I had no share in his injustice, to restore that ill-gotten property to its lawful owner, or in case I could not find the owner, I ought to give it to the poor. And if I do not fulfil my obligation, it passes on to all who inherit, or receive that property from me. God forbade the Israelites, by the Prophet Ezechiel, to make further use of the then common

Not only they who have committed the injustice, but their children and heirs are also bound to restitution.

¹ Res clamat domino.

proverb: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the teeth of the children are set on edge:"¹ that is to say, the children must bear their parents' sins. No, that must not be: "As I live, saith the Lord God, this parable shall be no more to you a proverb in Israel. Behold all souls are mine, as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine; the soul that sinneth, the same shall die,"² and no others on account of it. "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, and the father shall not bear the iniquity of the son; the justice of the just shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him."³ Therefore if the father is wicked, he alone has to bear the penalty. If the son is pious, all the better for himself. But in the matter of restitution, my dear brethren, of which we are now speaking, the proverb is quite true: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the teeth of the children are set on edge;" the children share in the sin of their parents, if they do not restore the unjustly acquired property left them by their parents.

Therefore
those par-
ents act
foolishly,
who seek
to enrich
their chil-
dren un-
justly.

From this, parents, you can see how foolishly you act when you try to enrich your children by dishonest means. You think that it is out of fatherly love and tenderness you are acting, when you endeavor to leave them a rich legacy; while in reality you could not do a worse thing for them than to leave them what you have made dishonestly. If you were determined against the law of nature, to make your children miserable, in time and eternity, you could not better carry out your cruel purpose, than by making them heirs of your unjust gains; for in that way you lay them under an obligation so grievous and so troublesome, that it is very unlikely that they will ever fulfil it properly, according to the words of St. Augustine: "They burden their children with the tears of poor widows, and thus instead of educating, they suffocate them."⁴ Poor children, how I pity you. I do not mean you who inherit not even a crust of bread from your parents dying in extreme poverty, for divine Providence, if you have confidence in It, will take better care of you than your father or mother could. But I pity you, rich and yet most miserable children, who have inherited from

¹ Patres comederunt uvam acerbam, et dentes filiorum obstupescunt.—Ezech. xviii. 2.

² Vivo ego dicit Dominus Deus, si erit ultra vobis parabola hæc in proverbium in Israel. Ecce, omnes animæ meæ sunt: ut anima patris, ita et anima filii mea est: anima, quæ peccaverit ipsa morietur.—Ibid. 3, 4.

³ Filius non portabit iniquitatem patris, et pater non portabit iniquitatem filii: justitia justi super eum erit, et impletas impii erit super eum.—Ibid. 20.

⁴ Obrunt illos lachrymis viduarum; hoc non est educare, sed suffocare.

your parents much wealth that was not all honestly made, and for which you will probably never make due restitution! Unhappy are you indeed, to be born of a father and mother, who by leaving you a few handfuls of money, condemn you to hell for all eternity! So that every one who possesses, or enjoys, or receives the fruits of what he knows to have been dishonestly acquired, in any way whatever, is bound to make restitution. To whom must it be made? That is the second question.

It seems to be an unnecessary one like the first; for there is no one who is not ready to answer that restitution must be made to him who is the owner of the stolen or injured property. Such too, is the case, my dear brethren, yet the contrary is very often done. Many men make a grievous mistake in this matter; they think they will satisfy their conscience and fulfil their obligation by giving the stolen money to the poor, or to the Church, or by having Masses said for it; nay, sometimes ignorant confessors advise their penitents, who accuse themselves of theft, to make restitution in that way. Certainly, if I do not know and, after diligent inquiry, cannot find out the person I have stolen from, or injured, then it is enough for me to give the stolen money to the poor, or to get Masses said for it; but I must devote to this purpose, not merely a part, but the whole of the money in question, and that I am bound to do in those circumstances, under pain of sin. But if I can find out the lawful owner, or the community I have injured, neither alms nor Masses will suffice, nor an offering to the Church; the rightful owner must have what belongs to him. It is a work of Christian charity to give alms, and no one will gainsay that; but they must be given from one's own, and not from what belongs to other people. The poor man, says St. Augustine, to whom you give an alms, rejoices and prays for you; but the man whom you have wronged cries out to Heaven for vengeance on you; which of these two will God hear? When you give alms, it is to Jesus Christ Himself you give them; but on the other hand you rob Jesus Christ in the person of your neighbor to whom you have acted dishonestly. Tell me, would you be satisfied if a man were to take your money from you and give it to the poor? No, you would say, if I want to give alms, I can do so myself.

It is not lawful to give to the poor the property of others, when the lawful owner can be found.

You have caught a thief in the act, and you bring him before the judge in order to recover what belongs to you. The thief goes secretly to the judge, and gives him the half, or the whole

How unjust to our Lord such almsgiving is.

of the stolen money ; the judge accepts the bribe and lets the thief go. What would you think of that ? Oh, what an unjust and wicked man, you would think ; are you a judge ? You are more of a thief than the other. And you would be quite right in thinking so. But you try to make our Lord act in that way ; you have robbed others, and enriched yourself with the blood of the poor, who cry out to Christ our Judge, for restitution to be made them. Now what do you do ? You give alms instead ; that is, you try to bribe Christ your Judge, that He may let you free, and not condemn you to hell. Thus, wicked man that you are, you wish to make Christ an unjust judge who will help you to steal the property of others ! How can you be so reckless ?

Shown by a
comparison.

Imagine you see the Patriarch Jacob, when Joseph's coat, stained with blood, was brought to him, and they said to him : "See whether this be thy son's coat."¹ What grief the old father must have felt ! Alas, he said with bitter tears, I know it, "an evil wild beast hath devoured Joseph."² Unjust possessor of the property of others, what do you do when you give alms to the Almighty with what is not yours ? You place before Him the blood money of His child, you show him the coat of a poor orphan, the goods you have robbed others of. There, you say to Him, see if you recognise that. Ah, if God could feel pain, certainly an alms of that kind would cause him a bitter pang. "An evil wild beast hath devoured Joseph" ; you are that evil beast, who by your usuries and thefts have taken away what belonged to My servants and children. Certainly I know that money ; it belongs to that merchant, to that poor citizen, to that workman, to that widow, and you dare to lay it as an offering at My feet ! Unchristian, wicked alms, you call on Heaven for vengeance, instead of mercy !

It is also un-
merciful to
the poor.

It is cruel, I know, not to help the hungry and naked, when one can ; but it is still greater cruelty to throw them stinking carrion, in the shape of other peoples' money. If the poor are good Christians, they must protest against it and cry out with St. Ambrose : "Do not feed us with the blood of our brethren."³ The pelican feeds its young with blood, and the eagle too ; but what a difference between them. The pelican tears open its own breast, in order to give its blood to its young : but

¹ Vide, utrum tunica filii tui sit, an non.—Gen. xxxvii. 32.

² Fera pessima devoravit Joseph.—Ibid, 33.

³ Nenos alas de sanguine fratrum nostrorum.

the eagle gives to its young the flesh and blood of other birds and beasts. If you feed the poor, you must do it like the pelican, and not like the eagle. The elder Tobias said to his son : " Give alms out of thy substance : " ¹ do not give them out of what belongs to others. St. John Chrysostom uses these emphatic words : " Christ has said : give alms, and not avarice ; what is given out of the property of others, is no alms, although it be given to the needy. He who takes what belongs to others is certainly not merciful, although he gives endless treasures to the poor : if you have stolen only a farthing, and give a talent of gold in alms, still you have not yet restored the farthing." ² In a word, unjust Christian, if you have given a hundred times more in alms, than your stolen property is worth, you are, therefore, not freed from your obligation ; you are still bound under pain of eternal damnation to restore what you have stolen, to its lawful owner provided you can discover him. If you want an example, you have one in Zaccheus after his conversion : " Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor ; " Certainly a rich alms ! But he says " of my goods," ³ and he adds, " And if I have wronged any man of anything, I restore him four-fold." ⁴

I will have Masses said for it, you think, and many others with you. Fine Masses they will be ! A nice sacrifice that, which you offer to God with other people's money ! It is to such as you that St. Chrysostom applies the words of the Prophet Malachias. " You have covered the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping and bellowing, so that I have no more a regard to sacrifice, neither do I accept any atonement at your hands." ⁵ Now you wish to have Masses said, and to bedew the altar of the Lord with the tears of the poor whom you have deceived and wronged ; must not the Most High reject such a sacrifice with disgust ? Certainly, for according to the Wise Man : " The victims of the wicked are abominable to the Lord," ⁶ because they come from injustice. Stolen incense is

They also act wickedly who have Masses said with the money that belongs to others.

¹ Ex substantia tua fac eleemosynam.—Tob. iv. 7.

² Christus dixit : date eleemosynam, non avaritiam ; quæ ex alieno datur eleemosyna non est, quamvis egentibus impendatur. Aliena rapiens non est profecto misericors, licet infinita largiatur ; quod si vel obulum rapueris, et talentum reddas, vix ita quoque resarciatur.—S. Chrys. Tom. 3. hom. 80. in Joan.

³ Ecce, Domine, dimidium bonorum meorum do pauperibus.—Luke xix. 8.

⁴ Et si quid aliquem defraudavi, reddo quadruplum.—Ibid.

⁵ Operiebatis lacrymis altare Domini, fletu et mugitu ita, ut non respiciam ultra ad sacrificium, nec accipiam placabile quid de manu vestra.—Malach. ii. 13.

⁶ Hostiæ impiorum abominabiles.—Prov. xv. 8.

not accepted in Heaven ; the sighs of the poor find a hearing before the prayers of the priest. God looks upon such a sacrifice as an abomination, not certainly in itself, for the Holy Mass is a most pleasing sacrifice in the eyes of God ; but because it is offered with money unjustly gained and with the blood of the poor. We read in the Book of Ecclesiasticus those terrible words: "He that offereth sacrifice of the goods of the poor, is as one that sacrificeth the son in the presence of his father."¹ What a horrible thing it would be to see a murderer tearing a son out of his father's arms, killing him, and then throwing the mangled body at the father's feet. Such, according to the Holy Scriptures, is the act of him who steals from another and offers the stolen goods to God. "The victims of the wicked are abominable to the Lord." So that the conscience is as little helped, the obligation is as little fulfilled by that means, as by alms-giving. We may apply to this the words that Christ uses in another sense in the Gospel of St. Matthew: "If therefore thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee." I say, if you remember that you owe your brother anything: "leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother." I say, go and give your neighbor what belongs to him ; "and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift."² Then, if you wish, you may have Masses said.

And also
they who
give it to
the Church.

I will give the money to the Church, thinks a third, I will keep a lamp burning constantly, or will have an altar put up. And what good will it do you, to give to the Church the money that belongs to other people ? That, says St. John Chrysostom, would be a present like the one Judas offered, when he threw down in the Temple, the thirty pieces of silver, the blood-money, for which he sold Our Lord ; a present that deserves the answer that St. Peter gave to Simon the magician, when the latter wished to purchase from him the power of giving the Holy Ghost: "Keep thy money to thyself to perish with thee."³ Those vestments that you give to the Church are made of materials belonging to one who has perhaps not means enough to clothe himself decently ; the silver lamp that you keep burning is

¹ Qui offert sacrificium ex substantia pauperum, quasi qui victimat filium in conspectu patris sui.—EccI. xxxiv. 24.

² Si ergo offeres munus tuum ad altare, et ibi recordatus fueris, quia frater tuus habet aliquid adversum te, relinque ibi munus tuum ante altare, et vade prius reconciliari fratri tuo, et tunc veniens offeres munus tuum.—Matth. v. 23, 24.

³ Pecunia tua tecum sit in perditionem.—Acts viii. 20.

made of the sweat of the poor workmen whom you have defrauded of the whole or the part of their wages ; that chapel you have built with money gained by usury. Away with such gifts ! They will only help you to destruction. Do not imagine that you can purchase pardon from a just God at such a price. Surius, in the Life of St. Gall, writes of a poor and simple-minded but pious man, who was very anxious to make an offering to St. Gall, but had not the means of doing so. At last he thought of a plan: he stole from a certain rich man a bee-hive filled with wax and honey, thinking that it was no harm to take that much from such a rich man, for such a holy purpose. He brought the wax home, melted it, and carried it to the Church of St. Gall. But when he was on the point of making his offering, he found the wax turned to stone. Terrified at this, he told his companion what he had done, and the latter at once warned him of the necessity of doing penance, and told him that he must not be generous to the Saints with other people's goods. You may see from this, O unjust man, that if God worked a miracle to show his displeasure at a gift that was offered to him with a good intention and through simple piety, solely because it was stolen ; how can you expect that the same God will accept the gift that you have so maliciously and unjustly taken from another ? Away with your gift ! Restore what does not belong to you. But to whom ? To its rightful owner and to no one else. Give back the money you made by charging unjust interest in times of scarcity ; give back to your workmen the wages you still owe them ; make restitution to those whom you have defrauded of their rights, by accepting bribes from their opponents. Give it all back ; but to no one except its lawful owner ; and if he is no longer alive, give it to his heirs, or to his children. But if none of these can be found, then you can, and must give it to the poor not as a charitable alms, but as a debt that you are obliged to pay under pain of sin.

The third question is, what must be restored ? But it is a question that answers itself. We must restore whatever we have taken, kept, or injured. There can be no doubt of that ; but we must not forget that all has to be restored, when possible ; it will not do to give back the half or any other part only. How rarely are instances found of such exact restitution. Olaus writes that in the North Sea there are different whirlpools that swallow up not only the water, but often ships as well. Of these ships hard-

Everything
must be re-
stored to the
lawful own-
er

ly anything ever comes to the surface again, except perhaps, a few pieces of shattered timber ; the rest remains at the bottom of the abyss.¹ The same thing happens with restitution ; avarice makes some people like the raging whirlpool, they swallow down the property of others whenever they get a chance. Of how many shipwrecks are they not the cause ! The hard work of the laborer, the wages of servants, the money owed to store-keepers, the usurious interest paid by the poor, etc., all are swallowed up in that whirlpool, which gives nothing back. Weeks, months and years go by before an uneasy conscience, or the claims of creditors compel some thing to be disgorged. Restitution is then thought of ; but at the same time a hundred excuses are invented to prevent its being made in full. The documents that prove the debts are mislaid or torn ; when there is no chance of denying the debt, every means is tried to force the creditor to be content with part payment, etc. The Wise Ecclesiasticus says of such people : “ And if he be able to pay, he will stand off, he will scarce pay one-half, and will count it as if he had found it.”² But is that right ? Is that the way to pay what one owes ? Suppose a robber attacked me, and demanded all my money (although I am not in a great fright about that, for he would find little on me), and that I managed to persuade him to be satisfied with the half, which I offer to give him freely ; do you think that robber would have a right to that half ? No, you would say, he has not, because he has robbed you of it. Yes, but I have made an agreement with him, I have given it to him. No matter, you would answer, that agreement is like throwing bread to a dog that he may not bite you ; it is the result of fear and violence, and is not made with your free will. Such is the way in which many debtors act, who are well able to pay all they owe, but keep their treasures hidden, and pretend to be poor, until at last their creditors, afraid of getting nothing otherwise, gladly accept the half, or part of what is due to them, and remit the rest of the debt. Are the debtors thus released in conscience and before God, from the obligation of paying the whole sum ? They will find that out when the affair is examined at the divine tribunal ! It remains then true, that complete restitution is to be made at once if possible, and if not, it must be made by degrees, as well as one can.

¹ *Naufragiorum reliquæ perraro redduntur, et si sere redduntur, videntur attritæ et comminutæ.*—Olaus 1. 2, c. 7.

² *Si autem potuerit reddere, adversabitur : solidi vix reddet dimidium, et computabit illud quasi inventionem.*—Eccl. xxix. 7.

Besides, not only must restitution be made for what one has unjustly taken, kept, or injured ; but also all the harm suffered by the lawful owner, on account of being deprived of his property, must be made good. For instance : I have stolen a hundred dollars, and kept them for ten years ; at last my conscience begins to trouble me, and I make restitution through my confessor. Thanks be to goodness then, that I am relieved of that load. But wait, the load is not quite got rid of yet ! But how is that ? I have given back the hundred dollars I stole ? Quite so ; but you must remember that the owner of that money could have made profit with it during those ten years, had he had it. So that, that profit has to be restored to him, although the money has been lying idle all the time in the possession of the thief ; for the latter is the cause of the loss that the owner suffered by not being able to make his legitimate profit. Nay, if the owner were unable to carry on his business, for the want of the hundred dollars I have stolen, so that he has become poor, I am bound to reinstate him. So that I shall have made a fine profit by my theft ! And it is a not unfrequent consequence of unjust gain that the stolen thing has to be restored, two, three, or four times over, before one's sin can be forgiven. We have an example of this again in Zaccheus, who promised to restore four-fold any wrong he had inflicted on others ; that is, he was ready not only to give back what he had taken unjustly, but also to make good all the loss caused by his act.

Finally, the fourth question is, When is restitution to be made ? The answer is, As soon as possible, so that no unnecessary delay is allowed. Theologians teach that he who commits a theft, has the guilt of it on his soul as long as he defers making restitution, when it is in his power to make it ; nay, that the sin is renewed as often as he remembers that he has what belongs to another, and renews his determination not to restore it yet. This teaching is based on the natural law of justice, which forbids us to wrong any one. For, he whom I have stolen from has always the right to his property, a right that I violate as long as I am determined to keep his property against his will ; and, as I do him wrong by stealing from him, so also I wrong him by unjustly hindering him from using what is his own ; but that I do every day and hour that I put off restitution, when it is in my power to make it. This holds good, not only for actual thieves, but also for all those who borrow money and without just cause, defer repaying it beyond the time appointed. There is only this

And besides
all losses
must be
made good.

Restitution
must be
made as
soon as pos-
sible.

difference between the highway-robber, and one who borrows money or makes purchases without paying, that the former takes the money by violence and keeps it without further troubling the person from whom he has taken it, while the latter receives the goods, or the money as a friend, and to the great chagrin of the lender, or seller, keeps it without any attempt at restitution. There are many, says the Wise Ecclesiasticus, who are very skilled in this kind of trickery ; they are able to live in grand style and to keep up a fine appearance with other people's money. "Many have looked upon a thing lent as a thing found, and have given trouble to them that helped them."¹ If they wish to borrow or buy anything, they bow and scrape in the most humble manner, and are full of honied words and promises : "Till they receive, they kiss the hands of the lender, and in promises they humble their voice ; but when they should repay, they will ask time."² And if the creditor presses for his money, "they will return tedious and murmuring words and will complain of the time. And if he be able to pay, he will stand off."³ Finally, after long waiting, the unfortunate creditor, instead of getting his money, is put off with abuse and hard words. "He will defraud him of his money, and he shall get him for an enemy without cause ; and he will pay him with reproaches and curses, and instead of honor and good turn will repay him injuries."⁴ If this is right and just, what will be reckoned as an injustice.

Therefore they act foolishly who defer restitution to a future time, or even to the hour of death.

I will make restitution, many a one thinks, but not yet. And when will you do it ? Some other time. Why not now, since it is in your power ? It is evident that you are not yet willing to be converted and to return to God, and to leave off sinning. I will make restitution when I am dying ; I will put it in my will. When you are dying ? That is a fine penance indeed, that you put off to your death-bed. Of a hundred such penances there is hardly one that is of any good. Very meritorious indeed it will be for you to restore on your death-bed, what you can no longer possess, and which leaves you, instead of you, leaving it. A restitution of that kind is like throwing goods

¹ Multi quasi inventionem æstimaverunt foenus, et præstiterunt molestiam his, qui se adjuverunt.—Ecl. xxix. 4.

² Donec accipiant, osculantur manus dantis, et in promissionibus humiliant vocem suam ; et in tempore redditionis postulabit tempus.—Ibid, 5, 6.

³ Loquetur verba tædii et murmurationem, et tempus causabitur ; si autem potuerit redde-re, adversabitur.—Ibid, 6, 7.

⁴ Fraudabit illum pecunia sua, et possidebit illum inimicum gratis, et convitia et maledicta reddet illi, et pro honore et beneficio reddet illi contumelliam.—Ibid, 8, 9.

overboard out of a ship in a storm, in order to prevent her from sinking. How earnest you can be in making it, I leave you to imagine. The hour of death is a time of terrible storm, the mind is full of trouble, anxiety and torment ; is that the time you choose for conversion, and for restoring ill-gotten gains ? From what motive will you act ? Hardly from love of God and of justice, but because you cannot help yourself, and because you are afraid of death. I will leave it in my will. But suppose you die without making a will, what is to become of your soul ? If your will is already made but your children and heirs defer restitution, like yourself, what will become of your soul ? It has been so hard for you to make it, hitherto, that you have been living all this time in the state of sin, and in danger of eternal damnation ; will your children and heirs have less difficulty than you, in giving back not what they have stolen, but what they have received from you ? Must they be more zealous for your salvation than you yourself ?

Suppose that your children intend to make the restitution according to the terms of your will, or your dying injunctions, how do you know that God will give you the great grace of being ready to make due restitution in the hour of death ; since you refused to make it so constantly during life ? Is it probable, nay, is it possible that such will be the case ? Ah, I am afraid it will be with you as it was with the usurer mentioned by Cardinal John of Abbeville ; this usurer was often warned by the priest during his life, to be converted and to make restitution, but he always answered, “ I will do so, but there is still time.” He grew dangerously ill, and was again exhorted to penance and restitution ; he again made the same answer, “ I will, but there is time enough, there is no danger yet.” The priest continued to warn, and the usurer to make the same answer, until death came on, when he fell into a faint, as if his soul had really left his body. He came to himself again, and the priest renewed his entreaties, but the dying man cried out in a despairing voice : “ O penance, where art thou ? Now I can no longer do penance, according to a just decree of the Supreme Judge, because while it was in my power to do it I neglected it,”¹ and he immediately gave up his unhappy soul.

O man, whoever you are, who have still restitution to make, are you sure that you will fare better in your last moments ?

For then it is seldom made. Shown by an example.

Even if it is made on one's death-

¹ O poenitentia, ubi es ? de cætero poenitere non valeo, hoc judicante justo iudice, quia dum facere poenitentiam potui, non volui.

bed, it is
foolish to
defer it so
long.

Still, granted that it will beso, and that as you now intend, you will then sincerely repent, and make full restitution, what do you gain by the delay? Nothing but to make it harder for yourself later on; because desire increases by continued possession, and the longer it lasts, the more difficult will it be for you to part with your unjust gains. Besides, the longer restitution is put off, the greater the injury done, and of course, you will have to give back much more later on. Along with that, you are always uneasy, you cannot receive a sacrament; any confessions and communions you make are sacrilegious, the absolutions you receive are invalid; for no one can absolve you, unless you are really determined to make at once, whatever restitution is in your power. Therefore, why do you put it off? Pay what thou owest; and at once.

Exhortation
and con-
clusion to
make resti-
tution at
once.

Say now with Zaccheus: "If I have wronged any man of anything, I restore him fourfold;" he does not say, I will restore, or I have the intention of restoring on my death-bed, or at some other time, or to-morrow; but I restore now, at once, this very moment I will get rid of my unjust gains and give them to the lawful owner. This is the only means by which you can provide for the salvation of your soul, nay, it is the only way to insure the happiness of your household and your descendants.

As soon as Zaccheus made that heroic resolve, Christ said to him those joyful words; "This day is salvation come to this house."¹ One might think that He should have said, "This day is salvation come to this man;" for it was Zaccheus alone who did the meritorious work. True, the merit was for him alone; but the consequences of his act were extended to his whole family, whose salvation was thus made more easy; for in the family which is burdened with the obligation of restitution, all the members are in danger of eternal damnation; because, as we have seen, the obligation is handed down by the parents to their children, so that the danger of eternal ruin becomes a sort of perpetual legacy in the family. Therefore, restore at once whatever you possess unjustly, that you too may say with a holy joy, "This day is salvation come to this house;" this day I have freed myself and my family from a heavy burden, and from the certain danger of damnation; this day is the beginning of my salvation.

My dear brethren, in order to avoid all this trouble, let us never seek to make any unjust gain; and that is the chief object

¹ Hodie salus domui huic facta est.

I wish to secure by all I have said on this subject. Better is it to have only a little, better to have nothing at all, with God as our friend, and a quiet conscience, than to have much money, nay, all the treasures of the world, with God as our enemy, and an uneasy conscience. Better be poor and just, than rich and unjust. But what am I saying? Can I be called poor, if I have God? Can I be any richer, if I can say with truth that the Supreme Good belongs to me? Him I shall always strive to possess, Him alone will I serve; I will try to enrich my soul by directing all my actions to God with a pure intention, and so heap up supernatural treasures; the rest according to the divine promise, will not be wanting: "Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you,"¹ according to the will of God; with that I shall always be content. Amen.

¹ Quærite ergo primum regnum Dei et justitiam ejus, et hæc omnia adjicientur vobis.—
Matth. vi. 33.

ON LUST.

TWELFTH SERMON.

ON THE FOLLY OF IMPURE DESIRES OF SENSUAL PLEASURES.

Subject.

The impure man who seeks to gratify his desire for sensual pleasures finds nothing ; for he seeks a pleasure, which 1. Cannot be called a pleasure, and, 2. Which should rather be called a pain.—*Preached on the eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Offerebant ei paralyticum jacentem in lecto.—Matth. ix. 2.

“And they brought to Him one sick of the palsy lying in a bed.”

Introduction.

By the diseases of the body, which we read of in the Gospel, that our Lord cured, are signified the diseases of the soul, the healing of which was the chief reason why the Son of God came down on earth, and became man. And what are those diseases? St. Ambrose in his homily on the Gospel tells briefly what they are : “Our disease is avarice, our disease is ambition, our disease is impurity.”¹ There we have according to the testimony of the Apostle St. John, the three chief maladies of the soul, from which all other sins and vices spring. And that is the reason why I have tried to inspire you and myself with a hatred for them. You have already heard enough about ambition and avarice. But there still remains a vice to consider which occasions the eternal death of most men, namely, the vice of impurity. I will follow the order hitherto observed, my

¹ *Febris nostra avaritia est, febris nostra ambitio est, febris nostra libido est, etc.*

dear brethren, and show first the vanity and nothingness of impure pleasures. I have said that an ambitious man who seeks honors, and an avaricious man who seeks riches, find nothing; now in the same way I say—

Plan of Discourse.

The impure man who seeks to gratify his desire for sensual pleasures, finds nothing. Why so? Because he seeks a pleasure which cannot be called a pleasure; as I shall show in the first part. He seeks a pleasure which should rather be called a pain; as I shall show in the second part.

O Mary, Immaculate Virgin Mother of God, and you pure Spirits of heaven, holy angels guardian, one thing I beg of you in such a delicate and dangerous subject, which caused me much hesitation and reflection before venturing to speak of it, place prudent and chaste words in my mouth, that I may not hurt pure hearts and ears by the very means I make use of to inspire myself and others with a fear of that horrible vice.

It is a common saying among philosophers that a little may be regarded as nothing; ¹ a short pleasure is looked upon as no pleasure. And such is really the case. Who would consider me a rich man, because I have a penny for a long time, or a thousand dollars for a few minutes? In the first case I should have too little, in the last case my wealth lasts too short a time for me to deserve the name of a rich man. Who would say that he really enjoyed himself because he had spent a day looking at a beautiful picture, or a moment tasting something sweet? The first is too small, the last too short to cause real enjoyment. And what better would that rich man have been, who was buried in hell, and who asked Abraham to send Lazarus to him with a drop of water, if his request had been granted.

A little is regarded as nothing.

So it is, my dear brethren, with impurity; the pleasure it gives is so short, that it ends as soon as it has begun; hardly is it tasted when it is gone. Have you ever noticed how eagerly little children run after butterflies in the summer time? They run about for hours and hours; they strive to grasp them in their hands, or to catch them in their hats; and they wonder at what they think to be beautiful birds, with variegated wings. But how short-lived their joy is: for it consists in catching the butterfly after a deal of trouble. And when they have caught

The pleasure of impurity is very short-lived.

¹ Parum pro nihilo reputatur.

it, what have they? Nothing but a nasty worm which soils their hands; so that their pleasure is at an end. Such, it seems to me, is the case with the impure; they are attracted either by beauty, which in reality merely conceals the food of worms; or their own imaginations draw flattering pictures of pleasure for them, and immediately the passions are excited, the mind is agitated, and there is neither rest nor peace until the imaginary pleasure is enjoyed. And when they have gained the object of their desires, what have they beyond the memory of a short-lived pleasure? If I have acquired great riches, I have certainly an empty good, still I can enjoy it for many years, nay, for my whole life, and my only care need be to prevent it from being stolen, or otherwise taken away from me. If I have attained great honors and dignities in the world, I must acknowledge that I have gained nothing but an empty breath of air; still, the vain pleasure I feel lasts as long as I am in an honorable position. Amongst all pleasures the epithet *momentary*, is especially applicable to impurity. Daily experience confirms this. Acknowledge the truth of it, impure man, who perhaps this very morning have offended God by your sensuality; you have enjoyed that pleasure by consenting to an impure thought, by impure conversation, by unchaste looks, by acts that no one dares to name; say, what have you now of your pleasure? What is left of it? Ah, you must confess, nothing remains of it; it has vanished completely; and has left behind it only mortal sin!

How foolish then, to commit sin for the sake of a momentary pleasure.

And is it then worth while for a man to barter a happy eternity for its sake? Poor Jonathan, how you were to be pitied for having against your father's command, merely tasted a few drops of honey; as you yourself complained: "I did but taste a little honey with the end of the rod which was in my hand, and behold I must die;"¹ that short-lived pleasure costs me my life! Unfortunate Esau, who gave up your birth-right for a mess of pottage, in order to satisfy your gluttony, you had reason to regret your folly in resigning your privilege and your father's blessing, and to bewail it bitterly: "And he wept with a loud cry!"² Oh, how much more you are to be pitied, unhappy sinners, who in order to taste a drop of honey, to enjoy a momentary pleasure, forfeit your heavenly birth-right, and

¹ Gustans gustavi in summitate virgæ, quæ erat in manu mea, paululum mellis, et ecce ego morior.—I. Kings xiv. 43.

² Irrugit clamore magno.—Gen. xxvii. 34.

incur the everlasting pains of hell ! Filled with compassion at such folly, St. Augustine cries out : “ O truly miserable condition, in which the pleasure quickly passes away, and the pain lasts forever.”¹ Oh moment ! Oh eternity ! Oh short joy ! Oh long sorrow ! Oh impurity, how quickly your pleasure passes ! Oh flames of hell how long and how fiercely you burn ! Oh miserable mortal who for the sake of the one, expose yourself to the other, how can you be so blind ?

And when you have enjoyed this short-lived and vile pleasure, what remains to you ? You are like the children who catch the nasty, winged grub in their hands. What a vile enjoyment it is ! One feels ashamed even to name it ! Even the most impure, when they are in decent company, try to veil their allusions to it under figurative language, lest they should be put to shame ; for it is this very vice and almost this alone, which can transform a reasoning being into a mere animal ; as we read in the Holy Scriptures, which compare those who indulge in gluttony and impurity, to dogs, swine, wolves, horses and mules. David says in the Psalms : “ And man when he was in honor, did not understand ; he had been compared to senseless beasts, and is become like to them.”² Pride is the sin of the angels ; envy, and jealousy, and tempting others to offend God, is the sin of the devils ; avarice and vindictiveness is proper to man ; but impurity belongs to beasts alone.

It is a hideous and brutal pleasure.

See what a short and degrading pleasure you indulge in, O impure man, and how you defile the temple of the Holy Ghost, of which St. Paul says : “ Know you not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own ? For you are bought with a great price. Glorify and bear God in your body.”³ From this temple you have driven away God, by your impurity, in order to introduce into it the evil spirit ; and you have defiled the members of Jesus Christ, as the same apostle says : “ Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ ?”⁴ Members which He has united to Himself in baptism, and which He so often feeds with His own Flesh and Blood in the Holy Communion.

They act wickedly therefore, who defile their bodies with it.

¹ Vere plagenda nimis et miseranda conditio ; ubi cito præterit quod delectat, et permanet sine fine quod cruciat.

² Et homo, cum in honore esset, non intellexit : comparatus est jumentis insipientibus, et similis factus est illis. —Ps. xlviii. 13.

³ An nescitis quoniam membra vestra templum sunt Spiritus sancti, qui in vobis est, quem habetis a Deo, et non estis vestri ? Empti enim estis pretio magno. Glorificate, et portate Deum in corpore vestro. —I Cor. vi. 19, 20.

⁴ Nescitis, quoniam corpora vestra membra sunt Christi ? —Ibid. 15.

ion. Hear this, O Christian, and learn therefrom your great dignity, and also your shameless wickedness in dishonoring Jesus Christ. Your eyes are the eyes of Christ, and you sully them with impure looks ; your ears are the ears of Christ, and you allow them to be filled with the filth of impure conversation ; your tongue is the tongue of Christ, and you defile it with unchaste discourse ; your hands are the hands of Christ, and you use them to offend Him ; your heart is the heart of Christ, and you besmear it with foul thoughts and desires ; your body belongs to Jesus Christ, but you, like a foul animal, allow it to wallow in the mire of impurity ! Wicked Balthasar, men still condemn you when they remember that you profaned the sacred vessels of the temple of Jerusalem, by using them as drinking cups. Godless heretics, all good Christians are horrified at the sacrileges you commit, when you break into Catholic churches and desecrate the sacred chalice and monstrance ; although they are merely gold or silver vessels which have only an external holiness. But far more wicked are you Christians, who defile the temple of God and the members of Christ in yourselves by the degrading crime of impurity !

And their
souls, too.

In this temple, you have sullied that beautiful image, your soul, which is made to the likeness of God, and which is so beautiful, that it attracted the love and admiration, not merely of men, but of the angels, of the Mother of God, and even of Our Lord Himself ; whose beauty led the Almighty God, to give up His Only begotten Son to become incarnate, and to suffer extreme poverty, and a painful and shameful death ; whose beauty forces even the demons to perform the lowest services for men, and to give them the whole world, if they could, in order to gain one soul. This beautiful soul you have so disgraced by your shameful lust, that it is now an abomination to God and His angels, and would be intolerable to all creatures, if they could only see it. Disgraced ? That is too weak a word ; for every mortal sin does that. You have completely blotted out that image. Take a beautiful picture, and cut it here and there with a knife ; it is spoiled ; but still the main features may be traced in it ; but throw it into the fire, and you will utterly destroy it. It is true that every mortal sin defiles the soul ; still there are some lineaments of the former likeness left ; it is the fire of impurity alone that completely blots out that image, turns it into that of a beast, and burns it up, so that there is nothing divine left in it. “ My Spirit shall not remain in man forever,

because he is flesh,"¹ and lives according to the flesh ; such are the words of God himself. By your own acts, O unchaste man, you testify to the deformity of the vice of impurity, for you dare not gratify your desires, unless in private, so that you must be ashamed even of yourself, if you are not dead to all shame ! And it is to a thing of this kind that you give the name of pleasure and enjoyment ! Is that what men seek with so much trouble and anxiety ? Alas, it is ; and for such a short-lived, detestable, and disgraceful pleasure, the human heart allows itself to become so infatuated and blinded, that honor and good name, and one's mortal soul, and the riches and eternal joys of Heaven, and God Himself, the Highest Good, are all sacrificed so that hell alone remains as the lot of the impure man for eternity ! Why should it be called pleasure ? Is it not rather a bitter pain ? It is so in reality, my dear brethren, for the unchaste find the very contrary of that which they seek ; as I shall now prove.

Second Part.

Cardanus writes that Queen Fennella gave King Kenneth of Scotland, a golden apple, which was so constructed, that when it was held in the hand for a certain time, it sent forth sharp arrows which inflicted a mortal wound ; the king, ignorant of the danger, took the apple and lost his life by it. Impure and sensual desires offer a similar dangerous gift to men. St. Gregory of Nyssa says that "Lust is a cruel and tyrannical mistress, that always pierces the souls of its slaves with sharp arrows ;"² And is it not true ? With how many arrows is not the heart pierced, before the unchaste man is able to gratify his desires ? Oh ! cries out St. Bernard, how many uneasy and anxious thoughts, how many plans and contrivances, how many abasements and humiliations are required by that passion ! If the impure man has still some thought and fear of God left, what uneasiness and terror he has in his conscience ! All the principles of faith and right reason are against him ; the all-seeing Eye of God, that is looking at him ; the severe justice of the Almighty Judge, that he has to expect ; the terrible uncertainty of death, that he has to fear in the very moment of his guilt ; the miserable eternity that awaits him ; the fire of hell that he deserves ; the loss of heaven, that he has incurred ; what frightful

Luxury is
full of bit-
terness be-
fore it is en-
joyed.

¹ Non permanebit spiritus meus in homine in æternum, quia caro est.—Gen. vi. 3.

² Crudelis domina et rabiosa luxuria est, quasi stimulis servilem mentem exagitans.

phantoms those are that haunt him ! His conscience, if it is not deadened, cries out to him ; Ah, unhappy man, what are you about to do ? Where is your shame ? What about your soul ? Where is your God ? He is present with you ; He goes with you to the very place in which you intend to commit your abominations ! What if He were to avenge Himself on you in the very moment of your crime ? What if death surprised you then, and your soul were hurled down to hell ? Can that be called a pleasure which in the very moment of enjoyment, fills the soul with such bitter thoughts ? Is not that torment of the conscience enough to terrify any reasonable man, and to keep him from committing such a dreadful sin ?

Shown by
an example.

We read in the Bollandists an account taken from Caesarius, of a person living in a religious house, who was so blinded by impure desires, that he made up his mind to go back into the world and there gratify his passions. Acting on this determination, he was on the point of going out at the door of the church, when a crucifix placed itself in his way ; nothing daunted, he proceeded to another door and there was met by a picture of the crucified Saviour ; he was somewhat frightened at this but not converted, so he went on, and again encountered the same picture, which looked at him threateningly, as if to warn him from carrying out his design. (All Christians, my dear brethren, should keep Jesus crucified before their eyes when they are tempted to impurity ; one look at the cross should more than suffice to keep them from yielding to sin, and to lead them back to the way of virtue. For the thought must suggest itself : this head was crowned with thorns for me, those feet and hands were pierced with nails for me, this whole body was scourged and covered with wounds and blood for me. Why then do I not take a scourge and chastise myself, that I may do something for the love of Him who so loved me ? At least, O God, do not allow me to insult Thee by committing this vile sin before Thy very eyes. So should each one think, when tempted to impurity.) Ought not that person to have entered into himself, after having been three times warned by Christ Himself in such a remarkable manner ? But no ; notwithstanding all that, he went to the side door, saying : How much trouble it takes for me to enjoy myself only once in my whole life ! With these words he passed a marble statue of the Blessed Virgin, which stretched out its arm and dealt him such a terrible blow, that he lay half dead on the floor. He spent the night in a state of the

greatest alarm, and from that moment had such a horror of impurity; that he would rather undergo death itself than do the least thing contrary to chastity. All men whose consciences are not hardened have the same fear and dread to experience, although not in a miraculous manner, when they make up their minds to commit a sin of impurity. But even if the unchaste man has hardened his conscience, and forgotten God, he must still carefully hide his excesses from the eyes of men; he must have recourse to a hundred contrivances to keep his sin concealed, and he must condescend to the most slavish and degrading actions, before he succeeds in gaining his end; he must bear all his fears and labors alone.

But if all this trouble is in vain, and he fails in inducing the other party to consent to his sinful proposals, he is despised and looked down upon (and how justly do not all servants of God treat such infamous proposals with the contempt they deserve, instead of listening to them; repelling them even with violence if necessary). And what a disgrace that is to him! What hatred and rage he feels at it! And to what a pitch of desperation it drives him to have to hate the person whom he wished to love, and by whom he wished to be loved! Consider, says St. John Chrysostom, how the unchaste wife of Potiphar became the slave of her inordinate desires; she who was mistress of her house, threw herself at the feet of her servant, and spared no effort to win his love. Would she not have been a thousand times happier if she had never allowed her desires to get the better of her? Joseph, who feared God more than he did his mistress, took to flight and left his mantle behind him. How great the rage of the slighted woman, when she saw herself rejected in that manner! Hatred filled her heart instead of love, and forced her to accuse Joseph falsely and have him cast into prison. Consider how Ammon fared, when he became a victim to his incestuous passion. He faded away and looked like a dead man, so that everyone who saw him asked: "Why dost thou grow so lean from day to day, O son of the king?" Is that to be called a pleasure, I ask again, which, before it is enjoyed, fills the heart with such bitter cares?

And full of
pain after
enjoyment.

And suppose the unchaste man succeeds in his attempt; does not the gratification of his passion, which he so much longed for, torture and afflict him? What sharp thorns pierce his heart! His wicked desires are like so many executioners that torture him; nay, we might say that if all the pain and sorrow that the

Even the
very enjoyment of im-
pure love
causes un-
easiness and
torment.

other passions cause one to feel, were put together, they would not equal the tyranny with which the impure passion treats the heart it has mastered. Nor does that passion give to its votaries the joy and pleasure that the other passions sometimes bring with them. All the care and anxiety of the miser in keeping and increasing his store ; all the uneasiness and jealousy of the ambitious man in seeking for honors ; all the bitterness of the vindictive man against his enemy ; all the venom that gnaws at the heart of the envious man ; all the chagrin and discomfort that torments the impatient man, and drives him to cursing, swearing, and blasphemy ; all these things together must the impure man bear in the prosecution of his evil designs.

As all who
are given
to impure
love experi-
ence.

Unfortunate man, says St. John Chrysostom, how you are to be pitied ! Show me one hour out of the twenty-four in which you really enjoy peace and rest ; count the numberless desires that unceasingly torment you, when the object of your sinful passion is absent ; count the sleepless nights, the disquieting dreams that break your sleep ; the cares that plague you ; the trouble and anxiety, the despair that takes possession of you, if anything occurs to prevent you seeing the object of your passion ; count the uneasy thoughts that assail you when that object is present, knowing that your love is unlawful and cannot last ; the very consolation of those who love each other unlawfully consists in the sighs which testify to their mutual anxiety ; count the suspicious and jealous thoughts that fill the mind ; the envy, rage, hatred and vindictiveness, if there is the least cause given for jealousy ; consider the pain caused by the very object of the unlawful love, the least sign of neglect or forgetfulness, a change of manner, a look, a word, even silence itself is enough to fill the heart with melancholy, sorrow, and even despair ; the revenge on the favored rival is nothing but an increase of the secret and intolerable torment ; if anything happens adversely to either of the guilty parties, the other feels it just as keenly. All this you must acknowledge, impure man ; you sing of it in your love-songs, and you declare openly that there is no greater torment than a sinful passion. It is experienced even by those who have sworn constant fidelity to each other in the holy sacrament of matrimony, and who therefore, are bound to love each other. How much more, then, must that torment be felt by those whose love is unlawful, and forbidden by God under the penalty of eternal damnation ! “ Oh, how bitter are the fruits of

lust," says St. Jerome, "they are more bitter than gall, more cruel than the sword!"¹

Since impure love re-unites all the pains and bitterness of the other passions, it can enjoy none of their sweets and comforts. The proud and ambitious man, after all the trouble and care he has, can enjoy the position he has gained; the avaricious man, although he plagues himself immensely, has a pleasure in his riches; the revengeful man, although he is tormented with bitter thoughts, has some satisfaction in avenging himself; the glutton has pleasure in eating and drinking; and all these pleasures may be had together; but there is nothing of the kind in unchaste love; for there is no satisfaction in money or honors, or eating or drinking when the beloved person is absent; this absence alone turns every joy into a sorrow. You may talk to the impure man hundreds and thousands of times of the eternal joys of Heaven, he will not feel the least desire for them. He would willingly give them up, if he could satisfy all his wishes on earth. He cannot even imagine a joy which does not consist in impure love. He is inclined sometimes to envy the beast of the field, and to wish that he had neither reason nor freedom, that he might gratify his passions without shame, or the fear of eternal damnation. So that he has lost all pleasure in, and taste for everything; nay, his ruling passion itself gives him no content, because his desires increase more and more, and the greater they are the harder it is to satisfy them. According to Peter of Celle, "the impure man becomes more full of desire the more he gratifies himself, and with the desire the torment he has to suffer increases also."² I no longer wonder at the teaching of St. Augustine; just as the tyrants in former times, he says, urged on the executioners to torture the martyrs of Christ, so also the devil makes use of impure desires to torture his martyrs. He himself had to acknowledge, that before his conversion his experience taught him that "the unchaste man is more tortured by his passion, than the martyrs were by shedding their blood."³ And this he said while he was still given to impurity.

When the enjoyment is passed, and the occasion of it is taken away by death or other separation, what happens then? Disgrace before the world, shame of one's self, gnawing remorse, which according to St. Augustine, is almost like the pain of hell;

For they have no real satisfaction in their impure pleasures.

After the sin follow pain, remorse and shame.

¹ O quam acerbus est fructus luxuriæ; amarior felle, crudelior gladio!

² Imples luxuriam et adhuc esurit; sustines poenam et adhuc crescit.

³ Plus torquetur libidinosus voluptatis amore, quam martyr Christianus sanguinis effusione.

such are the fruits of impurity ; bitter repentance follows on satiety. I have sinned ! All the pleasure is gone ! My honor, my innocence, my soul, my God, Heaven, all is lost ! If I were to die now ? If the earth would open and swallow me up after I have fallen into the hands of the devil ? Such are the cries of conscience that the impure man hears day and night. And besides this, there is another torment, namely that of having to tell his sin with all its circumstances in confession, a thing that appears most difficult, nay, impossible to some ; so that they prefer to remain for ten, twenty, thirty years at enmity with God, and making sacrilegious confessions and communions, nay, they sometimes actually choose to go to hell, rather than disclose their shame to one unknown man, who is bound to the strictest secrecy ; or else if they get an extraordinary grace and resolve to tell their sins, they have to disclose all their past sinful lives, to their ten-fold confusion, because all their former confessions were bad. See, there you have the fruits of that short, shameful and bitter pleasure !

As they
themselves
acknowl-
edge.

With reason did Demosthenes say to a lewd woman, who tried to tempt him, and every Christian should make the same answer when similarly tempted : “ I do not wish to buy repentance at so dear a rate ;”¹ away with you ; I am not so foolish as to expose myself to bitter suffering for such a short pleasure ! Some time ago, outside confession, as otherwise I could not say anything about it, and in another place, a person acknowledged to me that he had lived for some years in unlawful intercourse, and that he was so infatuated, that if he had seen hell open before his eyes, he still would refuse to be converted ; now the occasion of sin was taken away, and he was freed from his passion, and, said to me, in a most impressive manner : Father, if this bowl (alluding to one he was holding) were filled with money and it was all to be given to me on condition of my allowing myself to be enslaved by such a passion, even if it were not forbidden by God, I would not consent, solely on account of the continual torment that I should have to suffer. Now since I have done penance, I can live contentedly ; before, my life was like a hell on earth. So it is, says St. Augustine : “ Thou hast commanded, O Lord, and therefore, every inordinate desire punishes itself.”² “ I will go after my lovers,”³ says the lewd woman in

¹ Tanti poenitere non emo.

² Jussisti, Domini, et sic est, ut sua sibi poena sit omnis inordinatus animus.

³ Vadam post amatores meos.—Osee ii. 5.

the Book of Osee ; thinking perhaps, that she will have much enjoyment ; but the Lord says : “ Wherefore I will hedge up thy way with thorns ; ” ¹ I will overwhelm you with such bitterness that it will utterly poison the short joy you seek.

Nevertheless, such is the infatuation produced by this passion, that unless the occasion is taken from them by violence, those who are infected with it, like the person I have spoken of, find it almost impossible to be converted. They are to my mind like the bear that belonged to a certain prince ; the prince one day caused a pot full of boiling honey to be placed before the bear which rushed at it eagerly, but the scalding honey burned the animal's mouth, and made him retreat from the pot, growling fiercely ; still he did not forget the sweet taste, and he came back again with the same result as before, and repeated this three or four times, until the scalding honey was too much for him, and he fell down dead at last. That is a true picture of the impure man ; like a madman, he swallows down poisoned draughts of pleasure, until his heart, his mind, his conscience, his honor all are gone, and still he cherishes his fatal passion until death puts an end to it, or some other violent means takes away the occasion of it. See what they gain who seek impure pleasure ! They look for joy and find sorrow.

Oh, certainly they are martyrs of the devil ! Accursed sin, what misfortune thou causest ! Accursed lust, thou art the pestilence that has infected the souls of most men, and for the sake of a few moments of vile pleasure, hast given them over to the torments of hell ! Ah, I should rather weep bitter tears for those unfortunates, than speak to them, for words will do them no good ! Mercy, O God, mercy ! Pity so many of Thy creatures who are made to Thy image and likeness, and whom Thou hast redeemed by Thy blood, but who are so blinded by shameful lust, that they cannot see their misery, so that they become an easy prey to the devil ! How long, O Lord, how long wilt Thou permit the loss of so many souls ? Ah, even one drop of Thy blood is enough to extinguish the fire of passion in us all ! Holy angels, save from this vice the innocent children intrusted to your care, that they may not hear or see anything to scandalize them ! And you who are still innocent, guard your senses if you wish to preserve your purity ; call every day upon the Blessed Virgin and your guardian angels, to save you from all dangerous occasions, and to inspire you with a lasting horror

And yet they cannot refrain from that bitter pleasure. Shown by a comparison.

Therefore we must deplore their miserable state, and beg of God to free us all from impurity.

¹ Propter hoc, ecce, ego sepiam viam tuam spinis.—Osee, ii. 6.

¶ even the least impure thought. Think and say in all temptations with the chaste youth, Casimir: I would rather die than commit such a sin; ¹ I will serve my God in purity of heart and soul, and I will love him above all things in time and eternity. Amen.

Another Introduction of the same Sermon for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

Text.

Ab æterno ordinata sum.—Prov. viii. 23.

“I was set up from eternity.”—*From the Epistle of to-day*

And so it is; from all eternity it was decreed by God that sin should never have the least part in Mary, that not even for a moment was she to be subject to the stain of original sin, but that she should always be pure and immaculate; because she was chosen to be the mother of Him who takes away the sins of the world. All true Christians and servants of Mary know well that it is unworthy of her dignity for them to question this truth; and it is unnecessary now-a-days to spend longer time in proving it; for to doubt it even in thought, would be a sign of very small love for the Mother of God. To-day's feast, my dear brethren, inspires me with a two-fold wonder; the first is, what a shameful and disgraceful thing it is to be infected with original sin alone; since God did not allow His Mother to be under that stain even for a moment; nay, according to the testimony of the holy Fathers, Mary had such a clear knowledge of the malice and deformity of original sin, that if the choice were given her, either to be the Mother of God, and to have all the graces and privileges attending that dignity, with original sin, or to be free from original sin without that dignity, she would choose the latter. The second wonder is, how little we mortals make of the deformity, not merely of original, but of actual sin; since we so often sacrifice grace, God, our souls and Heaven, for the sake of a momentary and sinful pleasure. Both these things are to be wondered at; Mary's love of purity, and our folly and blindness. This last I will consider to-day, it concerns particularly those who are given to impurity, and who give up God and all His graces, their souls and their salvation, and for what? For an imaginary and false pleasure, nay, for a troubled and painful pleasure. Such is the subject of the present sermon. Plan of discourse, etc., continues as before.

¹ *Malò mori quam foedari.*

THIRTEENTH SERMON.

ON THE INCURABLENESS OF THE VICE OF IMPURITY.

Subject.

1. There is no vice which so blinds the human understanding.
2. None which so hardens the human will in wickedness, as the vice of impurity.—*Preached on the twentieth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Incipiebat enim mori.—John iv. 47.
“For he was at the point of death.”

Introduction.

That is a time when one requires help, when one is at the point of death. But it is also a time when great skill is required to help; and it is a certain sign that a disease is incurable, when nothing but a miracle on the part of God can cure it. With reason then did the ruler, in to-day's Gospel, beg of our Lord to come: “Lord, come down, before that my son die;”¹ there is no time for delay, because he has already begun to breathe his last. A malady of that kind, my dear brethren, is impurity, of which I have already spoken; and it is an incurable and desperate malady, so that he who is infected with it has already begun to die an eternal death. For when it has once become deep-rooted, it can hardly be cured, unless by a miracle of divine grace. The reason of that is—

Plan of Discourse.

There is no vice which so blinds the human understanding. Such is the subject of the first and longer part of my sermon. No vice which so hardens the human will in wickedness, as the vice of impurity. Such is the subject of the second part. I have no hopes that what I am about to say will do any good to those who are addicted to impurity, because there is hardly any chance of their conversion; so that I address myself chiefly to the innocent, in order to warn them against this frightful vice.

Help me to do so, O Immaculate Virgin, and you too, holy guardian angels.

¹ Domine, descende prius quam moriatur filius meus.—John iv. 49.

Impure
desires represent
only what is flatter-
ing to
the pas-
sions.

Zeuxis once painted a picture of a young man carrying grapes, so naturally, that the birds came and pecked at the canvas, thinking that the grapes were real. All who saw the picture praised it, and wondered at the skill of the artist. Zeuxis alone was dissatisfied at it, on account of a great fault he observed in it. And what fault was that? If, he said, the grapes are painted so well that the birds come and peck at them, the boy who is carrying them, must be very badly painted, or else the birds would be afraid to come so near him. Now, what do I mean by this, my dear brethren? A similar picture is drawn before the human understanding by sensual desires; but they paint in vivid colors only what is pleasing and flattering to the senses; so that the ardent desire of enjoying those pleasures may not be interfered with by shame or fear.

And conceal
what is cal-
culated to
deter from
sensual in-
dulgence.

Meanwhile, all the bitterness and torment that such pleasures cause, and everything that could frighten men away from them, is carefully kept in the background, so that the understanding is blinded, and neither sees nor desires to see any of those deterrent causes; nay, once it has become enslaved by impurity, it is incapable of seeing or recognizing them. Thus, the impure man is not frightened by the omnipresence and Almighty power of God, from whom nothing is concealed, and who can annihilate him in an instant, during the actual commission of his shameful crime, (O great God, who can dare to despise and insult Thee before Thy very eyes!) nor by the uncertainty of death, which may surprise him in the midst of his wickedness, and hand him over to the devil as it has done with many already, (what a terrible thing to die in the very act of sin, or at least in the state of sin, and thus to enter into eternity!); nor by the strictness of divine justice, before which even the Saints have trembled, and which he may have to face with his sin still fresh upon him; nor by the thought of the beauty and endless joys of heaven, which he barter so miserably for a momentary gratification, (what folly, to give away eternal and unspeakable joys for the sake of indulging a brutish passion!); nor by the terrors of hell, which follow on the loss of Heaven; it is enough to make one's hair stand on end to think of burning in a fire forever, without any hope of being released! Yes, these are truths which he often thought of formerly, and they inspired him with a fear of sin; they caused him to feel a bitter remorse the first time he gratified his impure desires, and they kept him for a time in constant uneasiness; they are truths

that can terrify any other sinner, no matter how wicked he is, and bring him to repentance and amendment of life.

But the unchaste man, who has become addicted to sensual pleasures, or who has been immeshed in the toils of an impure attachment for any creature, is no more impressed by those truths, than he would be by the fables of the old pagan poets. He does not even think of them; if his blinded understanding is still capable of having a thought of the kind, he puts it away at once. He has no eyes, as St. Augustine, an experienced witness, says, for anything but the filth in which he is immersed. The Holy Scriptures say of the two impure judges, who wished to lead the chaste Susanna into sin: "They perverted their own mind, and turned away their eyes, that they might not look unto Heaven, nor remember just judgments."¹ St. Ambrose writes of a man who was so given to this vice, that it really made him blind, and when he saw that his sight was leaving him day by day, he cried out: "Farewell, friendly light;"² I will rather become blind altogether than give up my pleasures. Farewell, beautiful sun. I shall no more enjoy your light, but it does not matter, so long as I can gratify my passion! The same might be said by all who are resolved to give themselves up to impurity, and to indulge in unlawful affection: good-bye, friendly light of my soul, I do not want you any longer. Eternal principles, divine truths, inspirations of the Holy Ghost, salutary rays of grace, inspirations of my guardian angel, warnings and sermons of the servants of God, farewell! your light will never shine on me again. God will sometimes send you into my heart, but I shall not perceive you; you will knock, and I will not open to you; it will be of no use to send lights from above into my soul; for I shall henceforth wander about in my blindness, although it leads me into the darkness of hell.

The unchaste put away every thought of God and His truths.

The same may be said of all works of devotion; farewell, friendly light. Prayer and good works, I have hitherto been attentive to you with zeal and heavenly consolations; but now I must leave you; I have no more taste for you. Holy Sacrament of Penance, I have often cleansed my conscience by your means, but now I have done with you; it is impossible for me to repent of my sins of impurity, since I love them more than anything else.

They lose all taste for piety and devotion.

¹ *Everterunt sensum suum, et declinaverunt oculos suos, ut non viderent cœlum, neque recordarentur iudiciorum justorum.*—Dan. xiii.

² *Vale, amicum lumen.*

Precious Food of Angels, Flesh and Blood of my Saviour Jesus Christ, with which I have hitherto strengthened my soul once or twice a month, I desire you no longer; I prefer, like the prodigal, to satisfy my hunger with the husks of swine, rather than sit at the Table of God, and eat the Bread of Angels. Word of God, which it has been my pleasure and joy to hear, to the great profit of my soul, farewell; I cannot bear you now, for you speak to me of things that I hate to hear of, and you threaten me with eternal damnation for what I most love and am determined not to leave; good-bye, I have heard the last of you! Spiritual books, Lives of the Saints, in the reading of which I used to spend an hour every Sunday and holyday, away with you; I can no longer collect my thoughts, for they constantly turn to where my treasure is. You, O Saints, please me no longer, for your chaste lives are a constant reproach to my excesses! Tender love and devotion to the Mother of God, O what a consolation you were to me often, you were always my refuge in temptation, my helper in want, my consoler in afflictions, my only hope after God when I was doing penance for my other sins; farewell; I have no taste for you any more! I still say the Rosary every day, but I have no hope, nor confidence in it, because I know, O Mary, that thou hatest this impure heart of mine from which those prayers come. God, and all that belongs to His service, farewell; I cannot think of you any more, for you disturb me in my pleasure! Divine light of my soul, farewell!

King David
is a proof of
that.

And so it is in reality, my dear brethen. What a holy and perfect man David was; I wonder as often as I think of it; a man after God's own heart, who always walked in the presence of God: "My eyes are ever towards the Lord;"¹ whose mouth was always filled with the divine praises: "Seven times a day I have given praise to Thee;"² whose heart with all its thoughts and desires was occupied all day long with the law and the commandments of God: "Thy law is my meditation all the day;"³ who used to break his rest during the night, in order to praise God: "I rose at midnight to give praise to Thee;"⁴ who used to value the divine inspirations more than all earthly sweetness: "How sweet are Thy words to my palate, more than honey to my mouth;"⁵ who was so full of the love of God that he could

¹ Oculi mei semper ad Dominum.—Ps. xxiv. 15.

² Septies in die laudem dixi tibi.—Ibid. cxviii. 164.

³ Lex tua tota die meditatio mea est.—Ibid. 97.

⁴ Media nocte surgebam ad confitendum tibi.—Ibid. 62.

⁵ Quam dulcia faucibus meis eloquia tua : super mel ori meo !—Ibid. 103.

swear that he would never forget Him nor His commandments : “ I have sworn and am determined to keep the judgments of Thy justice.”¹ “ Thy justifications I will never forget, for by them Thou hast given me life.”² David, I say, had hardly looked with a lustful eye on Bethsabee, and committed sin with her when, as the Sacred Writer tells us, he spent some years without thinking of God, although after the death of Urias he had taken her to wife, and could have a lawful affection for her. So much was he infatuated with this vice, that he did not even see how wicked he was until the Prophet Nathan explained it to him by the well-known parable of the poor man’s ewe lamb ; then his eyes were opened, and he remembered his God, and how grievously he had sinned, and he cried out : “ I have sinned against the Lord.”³

If there are any unfortunates here present, who are victims of an unlawful passion, I call them all to witness if such is not their own experience ? No matter how pious, devout and zealous they were in the divine service, as soon as they were ensnared by impurity, did they not at once lose all taste and inclination for piety and good works ? It cannot be otherwise ; St. Paul says : “ But the sensual man perceiveth not those things that are of the Spirit of God ; for it is foolishness to him, and he cannot understand ; ”⁴ the light of his understanding is gone out, and he no longer finds joy or pleasure in anything, but the gratification of his brutish passion. While thus blinded, he pays no attention to his other duties and obligations ; his honor and good name, his position and authority, his office and dignity, farewell to them all, once his desires get the upper hand. The father forgets what he owes his children, the child what he owes his parents ; the husband forgets his wife, the wife her husband ; the man of high position forgets the character he has to keep up before the people ; the religious and the priest forget the holiness and dignity of their state ; the young man forgets his advancement, the young girl her virginal honor. All these things are utterly disregarded when unlawful love gains the upper hand.

In this blindness sins are heaped on sins with the utmost recklessness. The demon of impurity is called in Holy Scrip-

Daily experience teaches that the unchaste forget all their duties.

And think nothing of the number of sins they commit.

¹ Juravi, et statui custodire judicia justitiæ tuæ.—Ps. cxviii. 106.

² In æternum non obliviscar justificationes tuas : quia in ipsis vivificasti me.—Ibid. 93.

³ Peccavi Domino.—II Kings xii. 13.

⁴ Animalis autem homo non percipit ea, quæ sunt Spiritus Dei ; stultitia enim est illi, et non potest intelligere.—I Cor. ii. 14.

tures, Asmodeus, which means in Hebrew, an abundance of sins ; to signify that the unchaste body is like a heap of countless sins of all kinds. And such is really the case. The thief does not steal every day ; the murderer is not always taking away people's lives ; the passionate man is not always cursing and swearing ; the vindictive man does not always seek revenge ; the drunkard is not always intoxicated ; but the impure man who is entangled in the snares of a guilty passion, commits so many sins every day, that his life is like a stormy sea, in which one mountain-wave of sin drives away another. Let us try to count up, my dear brethren, the fearful number of sins committed by such a man, in thought alone ; on the supposition, which is likely to be true, that he thinks of impure things wilfully only ten times a day, that makes already three hundred mortal sins in a month, and more than three thousand six hundred in a year ; what will it be if he continues that mode of life for two, three, five, ten years, or longer ? And yet, I have only reckoned ten sins of thought in a day. As a matter of fact, all his thoughts from morning till night, and even the night is not free from them, are about impure subjects ; he is always, as far as in him lies, ready to gratify his passions, and it is only the want of opportunity which prevents him from carrying his desires into effect. What a countless number of sins are thus committed in thought alone ! I will not speak of sins committed by immodest looks and conversations, by impure letters, by unchaste touches, and in other ways that I dare not name. I will not speak of the different kinds of sins, which arise from impurity committed with married people, with relatives, or with persons consecrated to God. They hardly do anything but sin, so that their whole lives, while they are addicted to an impure affection, are one continued sin. We might say that with other vices, the devil fishes for sins with a hook ; he has to wait a long time often, before the bait is taken ; but with impurity he catches sins as it were, in a net, and by the hundred. If the impure man wishes to confess his sins, he cannot count them all ; it is, humanly speaking, impossible to do so, and his confessor has only to ask how long, how many weeks, months, or years he has been in the habit of impurity so as to be able to give a guess at the vast number of sins, thought, word, and deed he has committed.

No sin too
great for
them, if
they can

In this blindness, there is no sin too great for the unchaste man to commit, if it is necessary to his ends ; if it is required to make an enemy of his best friend, he does so ; to trouble

his brothers and sisters, he makes little scruple of that ; to dishonor his father and mother, he does so without hesitation ; if he must keep up appearances by receiving the sacraments sometimes, sacrilegious confessions, communions, and masses heard without profit, through want of true sorrow, are small matters to him. He has no respect for holy places consecrated to God, if he can there satisfy his lust by impure looks and desires. The blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle does not frighten him any more than if It were a dead thing; for in Its very presence his heart is filled with filthy thoughts, and his eyes seek for new objects of gratification. Mention any of the greatest sins, such as murder, parricide, heresy, idolatry, which he is not ready to commit, for the sake of his impure love.

King David, the holiest of men, imbrued his hands in the blood of Urias, his most faithful and innocent soldier, on account of an impure passion. King Solomon, whose wisdom the world wondered at, bent his knee before idols of wood and stone, and offered incense to them; to such a degree of folly was he brought by impurity. Tertullian says of him : “Solomon lost the glory that he had with God, by women who brought him into idolatry.”¹ The city of Lubeck, as Drexelius narrates,² was shocked by the example of a young man of good family, who after a long indulgence in impurity, became so infatuated with a person of beautiful appearance, that neither the entreaties of his mother and his relatives, nor the fear of God, nor his decaying health, nor the loss of his wealth could bring him to repentance; so that he at last was reduced to poverty and distress. His mother, who had hitherto supplied all his wants, seeing the bad use he made of what she gave him, refused to do any more for him; so that the young man, blinded by his passion, rushed on her with drawn sword, threw her down and threatened to take her life, unless she gave him money to carry on his infamous amours. When his crime became known, he was afraid of being severely punished for it, so he withdrew with his companion into a house of public shame, and lived there until he had spent all the money he had extorted from his mother, as well as what he could get by selling his clothes; until at last being reduced to the extreme of destitution, in a fit of madness he thrust a long knife into his breast and

¹ Solomon quam habuit in Deo gloriam, amisit per mulierem, in idololatriam usque pertractus.—Tert. l. s. contr. Marc.

² Drexel, Vicet L. 2, c. 12.

kept turning it round and enlarging the wound (as was verified after by an examination of the dead body) until he breathed forth his accursed soul. In our own times religious and priests have been known to leave their convents, and to forget their sacred character, to deny their faith and become heretics, and nearly always that they might indulge in impurity. If there are any real atheists amongst Christians (that there are real atheists who do not believe in God there is unfortunately no doubt) but if there are any such amongst Christians, they are those who are blinded by the passion of impurity, to such an extent that although they make outward profession of Christianity, they really do not believe properly in God or in any of His truths. This is almost the only vice which makes a man have recourse to witch-craft and devilry, and brings him so far as to deny God and His Saints, and make himself a slave of the devil, for the sake of gratifying his passions, as is proved by many examples, which time does not suffer me to narrate.

They are then blinded in their understanding.

Oh, how I pity poor Tobias, when he lost his sight ! “ Joy be to thee always ; ” ¹ said the Angel Raphael to him. Alas, said the blind man, “ What manner of joy shall be to me, who sit in darkness and see not the light of Heaven ? ” ² But I could weep tears of blood, through heartfelt compassion for those unfortunates, who are so blinded by their filthy passion, that they cannot see their misfortune, and actually love it ! O unfortunate souls, how are you to be helped ? I hardly know how ; for as there is no vice which so blinds the understanding, so there is none which so hardens the will in evil, as we shall see in the

Second Part.

Hence they are also hardened in the will, and do not think of amending.

This follows necessarily from the first part, and therefore does not need much proof. For, as the will cannot work unless the understanding goes before with its light and knowledge, it is evident that when the understanding is blinded to good, as is the case with those who are given to impurity, the will cannot be led on to good. There is a great difference between the maladies of the body and those of the soul ; if I am attacked by a dangerous fever, I may be cured although I know nothing of the nature of my illness, nay, even if through the violence of the disease, I am utterly unconscious, it is enough if the doctor

¹ Gaudium tibi sit semper.—Tob. v. 11.

² Quale gaudium mihi erit, qui in tenebris sedeo, et lumen cœli non video ?—Ibid, 12.

knows what to do to cure me. But if I am sick in the soul, that is, in the state of sin, it is not enough that God, the only Physician of souls, knows my miserable state and can cure it; I must first see the malice of my sin, and the misery of my condition, in order to help in the work of my cure by repentance and a purpose of amendment. But what hope of repentance can an unchaste man have? How can he have it, since he is so blinded, that he does not even know the malice, misery and danger of his state, and therefore pays no attention to it?

Besides, even if he did open his eyes and see his misery, it is almost an impossibility for him to resolve to abandon it, and to hate above every evil what he hitherto loved more than anything else; nay, humanly speaking, it is an impossibility for him to renounce an impure passion and affection, as long as he is in the occasion of it. We know that bad habits become a sort of necessity; but there is none that takes a quicker hold of the heart, strikes deeper root and lasts longer than impurity, when once one has become addicted to it. Have you never remarked what the ivy does to the oak? It first creeps over the outside of the bark, and as it gets stronger, it grows into the oak and forms but one tree with it. Try now to separate them from each other, and you will find that you cannot tear down the ivy without bringing away the bark of the oak, and so killing it. So it is with carnal pleasures. The desires of them increase with continued indulgence, until they become a second nature, so that it is easier to separate the soul from the body, than to take them out of the heart. This is the vice of which God says in the Book of Job: "His bones shall be filled with the vices of his youth, and they shall sleep with him in the dust. For when evil shall be sweet in his mouth, he will hide it under his tongue."¹ "His sin even to hell."² I know well that there is nothing impossible to the Almighty, but if anything were impossible to Him, it would be the conversion of one who is entangled in the meshes of an impure love; for what means could God use to bring him to true repentance, as long as he is in the occasion which foment his passion? When camphor is once set alight, it defies all efforts to put it out, and burns even under the water. Agricola says: "The nature of camphor is so suit-

And humanly speaking, will not amend.

¹ Ossa ejus implebuntur vitilis adolescentiæ ejus, et cum eo in pulvere dormient. Cum enim dulce fuerit in ore ejus malum, abscondet illud sub lingua sua.—Job xx. 11, 12.

² Usque ad inferos peccatum illius.—Ibid, xxiv. 19.

able to fire, that when it is once alight, it burns until it is altogether consumed, and will burn even under water."¹ See the unhappy state of an impure man. Isaias says, using the words of the Holy Ghost: "You shall conceive heat, your breath as fire shall devour you. And the people shall be as ashes after a fire."² And the Prophet Ezechiel: "Thy uncleanness is execrable; because I desire to cleanse thee and thou art not cleansed from thy filthiness;" that, I have not been able to do; "Neither shalt thou be cleansed before I cause my indignation to rest in thee."³

Shown by
an example.

It is a terrible thing that Father Veja relates of a Sicilian merchant, who went to the Indies in pursuit of wealth, accompanied by his paramour. After a few days they were overtaken by a fearful tempest, which so frightened them, that they resolved to be reconciled to God in the Sacrament of Penance, and to separate from each other. The tempest ceased, and they arrived safe at Manilla. There they forgot their resolution, and recommenced their former sinful life. After some time they again embarked, and such a great storm arose that the ship was driven on a rock and nearly all on board perished. The merchant, by a special act of divine goodness, was enabled to hold on to a piece of the wreck and so to keep his head above water, and what is still more to be wondered at, his companion in sin was enabled to do the same. In this dangerous condition, they floated about for some time, cursing the wicked life they had been leading, and, shedding tears of bitter sorrow, they promised God earnestly that if He would save them, they would never again offend Him by the sin of impurity. The merciful God heard their prayer and on the following day they reached land, and again arrived at Manilla. Who would not think that now at least, the sinful man would have entered a monastery, and the woman, like another Magdalen, have done penance in a cave? And yet they returned to their former mode of life. But God was still patient with them, and found another means of trying to bring them to do penance; He sent a mortal illness to the merchant, so that according to the opinions of the physicians,

¹ Camphoræ natura adeo est amica ignibus, ut si eos semel conceperit, usque dum tota consumatur ardeat. et accensa non extinguatur, ardens in aquis.—Georg. Agricola, de Nat. Fossil., cap. 4.

² Concipietis ardorem, . . . spiritus vester ut ignis vorabit vos. Et erunt populi quasi de incendio cinis.—Isa. xxxiii. 11, 12.

³ Immunditia tua execrabilis, quia mundare te volui, et non es mundata a sordibus tuis, sed nec mundaberis prius, donec quiescere faciam indignationem meam in te.—Ezech. xxiv. 13.

there was no hope of his recovery. What shall I do now, said the sick man? How can I prepare myself for death? There is no hope for me; I am lost. He gave the same answer to the priest who went to give him the last Sacraments; still the latter was so far successful, that the dying man was induced to send away his accomplice in guilt, after which he confessed his sins and received the other Sacraments. Now, at last it seemed as if he had finally made his peace with God, but, oh terrible power of impure desire! no sooner had he begun to get a little better, so that the doctors told him he was out of danger, than he began to repent of having turned his paramour out of doors, and sending for her, he begged her pardon for having done so, throwing the blame on the stupidity of the priest, as he phrased it, who had frightened him with the danger of death; then taking her by the hand, he leaned forward to embrace her, and in so doing, gave up his sinful soul to the devil. So true are the words, "His sin even to hell," so that penance even in the last moment can hardly be a real supernatural penance.

I no longer wonder at that which the Abbot Rupert at first found so strange; namely, that when Noe heard from God that the world was to be destroyed by a deluge, he did not have recourse to the divine mercy in prayer: "The end of all flesh is come before me; the earth is filled with iniquity through them, and I will destroy them with the earth."¹ Noe knew well that he was pleasing to God, and that his prayers would be heard, why then did he not try to avert such a terrible punishment from the human race? Could he not at least have asked God to mitigate it a little, and to destroy only some families? Certainly, Moses acted quite differently when God in His anger threatened to destroy all the people of Israel; for he offered himself as a victim to appease the divine anger: "Either forgive them this trespass, or if thou do not, strike me out of the book that Thou hast written;"² Noe, on the contrary, never said a word to prevent the destruction of the whole world: "Noe, a just and perfect man, remains silent and does not pray for the unjust," says Rupert, "nor try to appease the anger of God that they may not be punished."³ This is the reason, my dear

Unless God gives them a wonderful grace which He gives to few.

¹ Finis universæ carnis venit coram me: repleta est terra iniquitate a facie eorum, et ego disperdam eos cum terra.—Gen. vi. 13.

² Aut dimitte eis hanc noxam, aut si non facis, dele me de libro tuo quem scripsisti.—Exod. xxxii. 31, 32.

³ Audit Noe vir justus atque perfectus, et tacet, nullamque precem pro injustis offert, ut Deum teneat, ut viam ejus suspendat.—Rupert, de Vict., l. 2, c. 29.

brethren. The sin of the Israelites in the desert was idolatry, a far greater sin than impurity, but not so difficult to repent of and to avoid, and therefore, after the first promise on the part of Moses, idolatry disappeared. On the other hand, at the time of the deluge, the vice of impurity had gained the upper hand: "The sons of God seeing the daughters of men, that they were fair, took to themselves wives of all which they chose."¹ Noe saw that there was no hope of repentance in such a case, and therefore he did not think it worth his while to pray. The event justified his anticipations, for we do not read of a single one being converted, in spite of the threatened punishment. Hence, all spiritual writers agree in saying that it requires a miracle of grace to make an unchaste man leave off his vicious habits and unlawful amours, and be really converted. What a great happiness it was for you, Augustine, to get that wonderful grace through the prayers and tears that your holy mother Monica offered for you during the space of seventeen years! You acknowledge yourself that you so often wished to be free from the burden, and yet, that you could not overcome yourself nor give up your vicious habits: "I groaned under the iron bondage of my own will."² You acknowledge that God, in His mercy, drew you out of the abyss, as it were, by the hair of the head. Oh, you who now-a-days are converted, and have given up your impure habits, you too can speak of your happiness! Certainly you have great reason to return humble thanks every day of your lives to God, for the extraordinary grace by which He freed you from the occasion of sin, either through the death of your accomplice, or by some other act of His power. Is it not true, that if that occasion was not taken away, it would be impossible for you to resolve to quit it? You must acknowledge in your conscience that such is the case; that you neither could, nor would have done so.

But they do not even desire such a grace.

But you, unhappy people who are still living in sin, do not expect that God will give you a grace which He bestows upon hardly one in a hundred. Yet, what am I saying? You do not even wish for that grace! A physician once said to a sick man, who was asking him for something to allay his thirst: "Wait, and I will give you what you want." "Good," said the sick man; "but I do not wish the thirst to be taken away altogether."³ He

¹ Videntes filii Dei filias hominum quod essent pulchræ, acceperunt sibi uxores ex omnibus, quas elegerant.—Gen. vi. 2.

² Suspirabam ligatus ferrea mea voluntate.

³ Sed ita ut non omnino tollatur sitis.

wished to feel a little thirsty, that he might have more pleasure in drinking. So it is with the impure; they do not wish to be freed from their desires, that they may have the pleasure of gratifying them. St. Augustine says of himself: "I prayed to Thee, O Lord, and yet, I was afraid Thou wouldst hear me too quickly, and free me from the disease of concupiscence, which I preferred to gratify rather than to overcome."¹

How can there be any hope of conversion under such circumstances? Terrible are the words of the Prophet Osee; they should make one dread even the name of this vice: "They will not set their thoughts to return to their God;"² that is, not only will they refuse to be converted, but they will not even once turn their thoughts to God. And why not? "For the spirit of fornication is in the midst of them, and they have not known the Lord."³ And will they then never think of conversion? No, not even in old age; when their bodily strength has left them, their hearts will still be full of impure desires. But will they not think of God on their death-beds, when most men try to think of Him? No, not even then, and even then least of all; their sin is even to hell. Would to God, my dear brethren, that this were not confirmed by bitter experience!

Therefore they are rarely converted, even on their death-beds.

Passing over the numerous examples that are given in books, I will relate one that was told me by one of our Fathers who is still living. He was once called to a dying man, who confessed his sins, and received the last Sacraments with every mark of fervor, so that the Father went away consoled, thinking the man well prepared for death. Hardly had he left the house, when the maid-servant came running after him, calling him back. What is the matter? asked the Father, is he dead already? No said the maid-servant, with pallid countenance; it is with me that the sick man used to sin; when you went away I had to go into his room for something, and as soon as he saw me, he made impure proposals to me, saying that if I consented, he would die satisfied. The Father ran back at once, but found the man speechless; he tried his best to arouse him to renew his sorrow for sin, but while he was so engaged, the man died. Father Segneri relates a nearly similar example of a girl who lived in improper intimacy with her intended husband (unfortunately such sins are only too common before marriage), God in his

Shown by examples.

¹ Timebam Domine, ne me cito exaudires, et cito sanares a morbo concupiscentiæ; quam malebam expleri, quam extingui.—S. Aug. Confess., l. 8, c. 7.

² Non dabunt cogitationes suas, ut revertantur ad Deum suum.—Osee v. 4.

³ Quia spiritus fornicationum in medio eorum, et Dominum non cognoverunt.—Ibid.

mercy sent her a dangerous illness, in order to put a stop to her crime; the illness lasted some months, so that she had time to repent. She profited by the opportunity and often renewed her sorrow and detestation of her sins, with a firm purpose of amendment. At last she asked her confessor's leave to speak to her partner in guilt, and to warn him to repent, that he might not lose his soul. The priest incautiously consented, not suspecting any evil, and suggested to her what she should say to warn him; but hardly had she laid eyes on her lover, when she forgot all she had intended to say; the old, impure flame burst forth anew, and she cried out with all the strength she had left: I have always loved you with my whole heart, and it is now that I can best prove my love for you; I know that I am to be damned for your sake, but no matter; I am quite willing that it should be so. With these words she fell back exhausted and gave up her unhappy soul! The priest and the young man, who were standing by, were almost frightened out of their lives. O desperate passion! "O infernal flame of impure love!" (I might cry out with St. Jerome), which can hardly be extinguished until it is buried in the flames of hell.

Conclusion
and dif-
ferent ex-
hortations.

Unfortunate souls, what shall I say to you? I can be sorry for you, and that is about all; unless the Almighty God in His mercy, gives you some wonderful grace and opens your eyes! Innocent souls, it is to warn you that I have undertaken to speak of this subject; it is for you also that I repeat the conclusion of my last sermon: Bless God, and thank Him for the special grace by which he has hitherto preserved you from this accursed vice; but be all the more careful to preserve the precious treasure of your purity. The very first thing you learn from this vice, is hurtful to your innocence; a single moment in dangerous company, may be for you the beginning of an unhappy eternity; a single immodest look, or any other occasion, may be the first unhappy moment of an accursed life: a single immodest conversation, or an impure love tale may be the cause of your having to weep and gnash your teeth in hell; a single impure thought, wilfully indulged in, may be the cause of final impenitence to you! Do not tire of the constant violence you must use in combating the desires of the flesh; victory will be followed by an exceeding great reward. What glory for you, chaste souls, to be able to offer a pure sacrifice to the Almighty! The angels in Heaven will honor you as their dearest friends;

¹ O ignis infernalis luxuria!

the Immaculate Virgin and Mother of God will take you under her special protection, as her beloved children ; Jesus Christ, the Spouse of chaste hearts, will invite you to His eternal and joyous marriage feast ; the calm and peace of your own consciences will give you more comfort and pleasure, than all earthly delights, that the world and the flesh can give, and you can rejoice in the sure hope that you are dear children of God, who will follow the Lamb into eternal joys. Amen.

FOURTEENTH SERMON.

ON THE ANGER OF GOD AGAINST THE VICE OF IMPURITY.

Subject.

1. There is no vice which so excites the anger of God. 2. None against which God has given more proofs of His anger, than the vice of lust and impure love.—*Preached on the twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Iratus Dominus ejus, tradidit eum tortoribus.—Matth. xviii. 34.

“And his lord being angry, delivered him to the torturers.”

Introduction.

It was a great act of mercy on the part of this lord to grant the humble petition of his servant, and not only to let him go free, and unpunished, but also to forgive him his debts. This parable, my dear brethren, is an image of the great mercy of God, in admitting to His friendship the sinner who has been guilty of countless crimes, on the sole condition of his being really sorry for them, a sorrow that he may have in a moment of time ; and the sins thus forgiven, are forgiven for ever. Eternal praise and thanks to Thee, O most merciful God ! What a happiness for me and other poor sinners, that we have to do with a God of such infinite goodness ! Alas ! how could I pay the debts I have contracted towards Thee by my sins, if Thou wert not so generous in forgiving them ? But, oh, how ungrateful we are ; it is this very goodness which makes many sinners offend with all the greater audacity and heap debt upon debt,

thinking that they will have no difficulty in obtaining pardon afterwards. Such presumption, my dear brethren, seems to be found chiefly among those who unfortunately form the largest class of sinners, I mean those who are addicted to impurity, and unlawful indulgence in sensual passion, as we have seen in the last sermon. What harm is it, they think, to gratify myself this once? It is a mere human failing; a natural weakness, which God must take pity on; it is a sin that He will easily forgive, as He knows how weak we are, etc. In that way people make nothing of it. I mean to speak against that erroneous and presumptuous opinion in to-day's sermon, and to show that there is no sin that deserves less patience, and towards which God has shown less patience, than the sin of impurity, and that generally speaking, God deals with the impure, as the master in to-day's Gospel did with his servant, when the latter incurred his anger the second time; "And his lord being angry, delivered him to the torturers." To this end I say—

Plan of Discourse.

There is no vice which so excites the anger of God, as the vice of lust and impure love. That I will show in the first part. There is no vice against which God has given more proofs of His anger, than the vice of lust and impure love. That I will show in the second part.

O God of justice, grant that the threats of Thy anger and punishment may inspire us with a horror of this odious vice, that we may serve Thee with chaste bodies and souls; this we ask of Thee through the intercession of Thy Immaculate Mother, and the holy angels guardian.

The malice of every sin consists in its turning away the heart of man from his Creator to creatures.

What is the reason that the good and infinitely merciful God, whose nature is goodness itself, and who loved us men even unto death, is so exasperated by one sin, that He pursues the sinner with His bitterest anger, as the Wise Man says: "To God the wicked and his wickedness are hateful alike;"¹ so that He punishes that sin with hell? The nature of this sin itself is the answer to my question; for it is a contempt of God, or, as theologians say: "A turning away of the heart from the Creator," whom we should love above all things, "and attaching it to creatures,"² whom we should love only for God's sake. Every vice has the same bad quality; the ambitious man turns

¹ Odio sunt Deo Impius, et Impletas ejus.—Wis. xiv. 9.

² Aversio a creatore, et conversio ad creaturas.

away from his Creator, to whom alone honor is due, and seeks empty esteem and praise from rational creatures. The avaricious man turns away his heart from God, who is the greatest good, and fixes it on lifeless things, such as money and worldly goods. So that it is true of all vices, that, "To God the wicked and his wickedness are hateful alike."

But there is hardly any sin which so turns away the heart of man from God, and attaches it to creatures, as the sin of impurity and unchaste love. St. Thomas says: "Lust especially turns man away from God;"¹ for it makes him forget God altogether, and despise Him, for the sake of a vile pleasure; as the Almighty Himself complains by the Prophet Ezechiel: "Thou hast cast Me off behind thy body."² To make this clearer; there is no one who doubts that idolatry is a detestable sin, by which God is denied and abandoned; for by it, man subjects the Most High to the judgments of his own mind, and adores senseless stocks and stones as gods. But, due proportions being observed, this is what the impure man does, whose heart is attached to a creature by an unchaste passion. Is it not so? I take all to witness who have experienced this passion, and I ask them, if they do not show far more honor to the object of their idolatry, than to God? They have no longer any relish for God, and for divine things, as I have shown in a former discourse; they have no zeal for piety and good works, no desire for heavenly goods, no fervor in prayer; their only desire is to stifle the reproaches of conscience, and to forget God, that they may sin without anxiety and thus lose God altogether. Their forgetfulness of God goes so far, that they value the love of the object of their sinful passion more than the love of God; so that they are prepared to give up all hopes of Heaven, and to forfeit all the divine promises of eternal joys, provided God leaves them the creature on whom they have fixed their hearts.

Such is especially the case with impurity.

We never hear an avaricious man say to his money, or an ambitious man to his dignity, thou art my God. It is only impure passion which can bring a reasoning being to such a degree of madness. My heart, my soul, my treasure, such are the titles given to a miserable worm of the earth! And what is that but placing one's last end, and highest good in creatures? What is that but denying the true God, and adoring an earthly

He who indulges an impure passion denies God and adores a creature.

¹ Per luxuriam maxime recedit a Deo.—D. Thom. 1. 2. qu. 73, a. 5.

² Projecisti me post corpus tuum.—Ezech. xxlii. 35.

idol ? Nay, according to Tertullian, there is a far greater degree of malice in impure love, on the part of a Christian, than in idolatry and denial of the faith. And he is quite right. Why ? Because the Christian who denies God, and adores an idol, does so through fear of torture ; while the unchaste man gives up God freely in order to gratify his passion. The unchaste man acts with full determination of the will ; the apostate Christian acts through fear of pain. Which of the two, asks Tertullian, has the most to answer for ? “ Which is the worst apostate : he who denies Christ in torments, or he who denies Him in pleasure ? ”¹

He is worse than others who deny Christ.

Unhappy Christians, who, through fear of a tyrant, denied God, and adored stocks and stones ! You have committed a fearful sin ; but I pity you with all my heart, for the drawn swords that were to take your lives away, the crosses, wheels and gibbets on which you were to be tortured to death, the red-hot irons and burning caldrons, the melted lead, the terrible rack and other instruments of torture, were held out to terrify you ; and certainly they were enough to make the bravest hang back and deny his faith. Therefore, it is not so much to be wondered at if you outwardly apostatized. But you, wicked Christians, who reject your God, and adore a wretched creature, what excuse have you ? What has forced you to do so ? What torments have you had to fear ? None ; nothing but the wilfulness of an untamed passion has brought you to such a degree of impiety. Whose apostasy is the more shameful ? Who are more deserving of the anger of God, you, or the renegades of old ?

He takes his heart away from God altogether, and gives it to his idol.

Besides, in what consisted the honor shown by the apostate Christians to idols ? In bending the knee, or bowing the head, or burning a little incense ; that is all they did to show their adoration of a creature ; in most cases, their minds and hearts were still attached to the true God. But, impure man, what do you keep for your God ? Nothing. And what do you offer to your idol ? Everything without exception, that you can offer. Holy Job says : “ I made a covenant with my eyes that I would not so much as think on a virgin.”² And why, O holy Prophet, were you so careful ? “ For what part should God above have in me, and what inheritance the Almighty from on high ? ”³ If

¹ Quis magis negavit, qui Christum vexatus, an qui delectatus amisit ?

² Pegiği fœdis cum oculis meis, ut ne cogitarem quidem de virgine.—Job xxxi. 1.

³ Quam enim partem haberet in me Deus desuper, et hereditatem Omnipotens de excelsis ?
—Ibid. 2.

I allowed my eyes to wander at will, I should soon become a prey to impure desires, and then, what part would God have in me? In other sins and vices man leaves something for God; if the soul is stained, the body is not defiled; if the mind is turned away from God, the senses at least are free from sin. Impurity alone infects the whole being like a pestilence; eyes, ears, tongue, hands, memory, imagination, understanding, heart and will, all are occupied in lustful excesses; all are sacrificed to the sinful idol. Money and wealth, honor and good name, authority and dignity, sleep and rest, freedom and health, you are all counted as of no value; you are sacrificed at once for the sake of a miserable creature!

All natural inclinations, tendencies and proclivities, no matter how violent they are, are restrained, nay, even eradicated, if the object of the sinful passion requires it; a vindictive man forgives his enemy, if his idol intercedes for him; an irascible man becomes as meek as a lamb; a proud man is ready to humble himself; a coward grows bold; a brave man, as timid as a child; a miser turns into a spendthrift; a drunkard becomes temperate, and conquers the desire for drink, that he would otherwise hardly hope to conquer; even the impious man reforms in everything that concerns the other vices, if his idol expects it of him.

Holy law of God! Gospel of Jesus Christ! Life of the Incarnate God! Example of the Saints of God! Inspirations of the Holy Ghost! Exhortations of the angels guardian! Word of God, you cry so loud and so often, and command so earnestly the mortification of the passions, the denial of one's self, true humility and meekness, patience in trials, love of one's enemies. moderation in eating and drinking, and contempt of earthly goods! And what do you effect? Nothing at all in most cases; all your commands are neglected, all your power is insufficient to move the human heart. Men close their ears and refuse to listen to you; they look on it as an impossibility to do as you command. But when a brutish passion speaks, when a miserable creature shows by a look or a smile that such is her pleasure, oh, then, everything is easy, there is no difficulty any more in any act of obedience! Every joy and sorrow, and suffering and satisfaction of soul and body is shared with the object of unlawful love. What an idolatrous dependence of one's whole being on the whim of a mere creature!

And has not that jealous God, who wishes to be loved above all things, a right to be angry at such a crime? O God of in-

To please this idol, he restrains all his other evil inclinations.

Which he would never do for the sake of God and his love.

Therefore God must be most

wroth with
such a
crime.

finite perfection, 'Thou hast created man for Thyself alone ; Thou hast placed one great command above all others, and Thou sayest to each one, "Thou shalt love ;" whom ? None but the Lord thy God. Thou hast given us a heart, a soul, an understanding, a memory, a will, outward senses and bodily strength, and of these things our whole nature is made up, and with all these Thou commandest us to love Thee : "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind." ' See, O Lord, how despite of Thee, the impure man does quite the contrary ; his whole heart and mind and all his faculties of soul and body are given up to lust, and not even the least part of them is given to Thee ; they are all devoted to the love of a wretched creature. And can any one call that a small vice, or try to make little of it ? Can a sin of that kind be considered as a mere human frailty, which the merciful God will surely pardon ? No, Christians ; if every mortal sin excites the anger of God, because it means a turning away of the heart from Him in order to fix it on creatures, it follows as a matter of course that the vice of impurity and unchaste love is more deserving of the divine anger than any other sin, because it takes away the whole heart, the whole being from God, and devotes it to the love of a creature. And so it is, my dear brethren, as we learn from experience, for since the beginning of the world no vice has been so severely punished by God, as the vice of impurity and unchaste love. as I shall show in the

Second Part.

All the
divine per-
fections are
worthy of
admiration.

There are none of the divine perfections which I find so hard to understand as the mercy and patience of God in bearing with sinners. An Almighty Lord, who by one act of His will created Heaven and earth out of nothing, and who could create infinite numbers of them with just as little trouble ; a Lord of infinite wisdom, who knows every movement of all His creatures from the highest angel to the lowest worm that crawls the earth, and whose knowledge extends to all the past and the future, without being disordered or wearied by the multiplicity and variety of its objects ; an all-wise Lord whom the heavens and the earth cannot contain, and whom no space can enclose ; an all-wise Lord who created so many different creatures in such beautiful order,

¹ Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo, et in tota anima tua, et in tota mente tua.—Matth. xxii. 37.

that each has its appointed work to do, and without whose Providence not even a snow-flake falls to the ground ; a Lord of infinite justice who cannot allow the least good act to go unrewarded, or the least bad one to be unpunished ; a most holy Lord, at whose name all in Heaven and on earth and under the earth must tremble ; a Lord infinitely happy, who is not in want of any creature to increase His happiness ; a Lord of infinite beauty, from whom comes all that is beautiful, who has in Himself infinite good, and is worthy of infinite love for His own sake ; these are perfections that our weak understanding must wonder at, but still it must acknowledge that they all belong to God in the highest degree.

But that such a great Lord should allow a creature, whom He can annihilate at any moment without any loss to Himself, to despise and treat Him contemptuously by mortal sin, while He bears the insult with the greatest patience, and even longs for the offending creature to return to Him ; that is what I find most difficult to understand. Try to remember, O sinner, how many years you have been at enmity with this great God ! Count the sins you have committed. See what harm God has done you during that time, nay, reckon up rather the benefits He has been constantly heaping upon you, when He could have easily hurled you into hell ; and then you may cry out, O God of patience and long-suffering, how inconceivably great is Thy mercy, to me a wretched sinner !

Least of all can we understand God's patience in dealing with sinners.

What am I to conclude from this, my dear brethren ? That impurity must be an intolerable vice in the sight of God, for it is the only vice almost, which makes God forget His patience and mercy, and which has at all times, provoked Him to pour out the vials of His bitterest wrath on the sinner. Read the Old and New Testaments, and you will find the words of St. Thomas of Villanova verified : “ We read that the crime of lust is punished more severely than other crimes.”¹ Nay, you will find that nearly all the remarkable examples of the divine anger recorded in Scripture are due to lust alone.

Hence God has a special hatred of impurity, since he always punishes it so severely.

You will find in the sixth chapter of the Book of Genesis, the history of that fearful punishment, the Deluge, in which the whole human race was destroyed, with the exception of eight individuals ; and the most of those who thus perished, were in the state of sin, and were condemned to hell. “ My spirit shall not remain in man forever, because he is flesh,” said

As is seen in the history of the deluge.

¹ *Luxuriæ facinus præ aliis atrociori vindicta punitum legimus.*

God in His anger to Noe ; And being touched inwardly with sorrow of heart, He said : “ I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth, from man even to beasts, from the creeping thing even to the fowls of the air ; for it repenteth me that I have made them.”¹ Certainly those expressions make the divine anger sufficiently evident. As Lessius says, the world was at that time in the bloom of its youth, and was more populous than now, because people lived then to be seven, eight, and nine hundred years old, and were allowed to practice polygamy ; so that we can easily imagine what a vast number of people were born in the sixteen hundred years that elapsed between the Creation and the Deluge. Doubtless there were many innocent people amongst them, at least as little children. And yet that vast multitude found no mercy from God, because it had to bear the punishment of impurity. Even while they were engaged in their sensual gratifications, the Deluge overwhelmed them and swept them all away, innocent and guilty together ; as St. Matthew says : “ For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, even till that day in which Noe entered into the Ark and they knew not till the Flood came and took them all away.”² The waters gushed up from the earth, and poured in torrents down from the heavens ; houses were carried away, the highest trees afforded no refuge, not even the mountain tops were safe resting places, “ For the water was fifteen cubits higher than the mountains which it covered.”³ With the exception of the few who were in the Ark, all human beings, as well as beasts, birds and every living thing, were destroyed ; “ And all men and all things wherein there was the breath of life on the earth, died.”⁴ Thus God punished the impurities of the world by such a vast number of deaths, and washed away its filth by the waters of the Deluge.

That is
shown by
the fate of
Sodom and
Gomorrha.

You will read in the nineteenth chapter of Genesis, of a whole country, seventy miles in circumference according to Cornelius a Lapide, in which Sodom, Gomorrha and other towns were sit-

¹ Non permanebit spiritus meus in homine in æternum, quia caro est . . . Et tactus dolore cordis intrinsecus, delebo, inquit, hominem, quem creavi, a facie terræ, ab homine usque ad animantia, a reptili usque ad volucres cœli : poenitet enim me fecisse eos.—Gen. vi. 3, 6, 7.

² Sicut enim erant in diebus ante diluvium comedentes et bibentes, nubentes et nuptui tradentes, usque ad eum diem, quo intravit Noe in arcam, et non cognoverunt, donec venit diluvium, et tulit omnes.—Matth. xxiv. 38, 39.

³ Quindecim cubitis altior fuit aqua super montes, quos operuerat.—Gen. vii. 20.

⁴ Universi homines et cuncta, in quibus spiraculum vitæ est in terra, mortua sunt.—Ibid. 21, 22.

uated, being destroyed by fire sent from Heaven, and reduced to ashes, so that after so many thousand years, the fruit of that country is still nothing but ashes inside, an undying evidence of the implacable hatred that God bore to the sin of its inhabitants. And what was that sin? Nothing else but brutal lust; and therefore "The Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrha brimstone and fire from Heaven. And He destroyed these cities and all the country about, all the inhabitants of the cities, and all things that spring from the earth." ¹ Before this terrible punishment was inflicted, Abraham, that faithful servant and friend of God, exhausted himself in prayers and tears to avert the divine anger from those unfortunate cities. How often did he not pray to God? With what persistency did he not ask Him to forgive those people? But all his prayers and tears could not avert the punishment. God, who is otherwise so ready to hear the prayers of His servants, and who allows Himself as it were to be compelled to grant them, was not in the least moved on this occasion, to mercy and pity. Those impure people were to be consumed by fire, so that all impure men might learn from their example to dread the fire of hell which awaits them.

You will read in the twenty-fifth chapter of the Book of Numbers, how twenty-four thousand of the chosen people of God were condemned to die, some by the cross and gibbet, others by the sword. What a terrible act of justice! Twenty-four thousand people would make a not inconsiderable town, and had they all to die a violent death? What grief there must have been amongst the spectators of that fearful tragedy! How the women wept and lamented on seeing their husbands, fathers, brothers, children and friends crucified, or hanged, or cut to pieces with the sword! How many brave generals of the Israelite army were thus massacred! How many of the noblest families utterly extinguished! Yet the command of God had to be obeyed; the noblest were condemned to the gallows, the others were slain by their neighbors and friends: "The Lord being angry, said to Moses: Take all the princes of the people and hang them up on gibbets against the sun, that my fury may be turned away from Israel." ² Still the punishment was not enough; "And Moses said to the judges of Israel: Let every man kill his

By what
happened
to the
Israelites.

¹ Dominus pluit super Sodomam et Gomorrhā sulphur et ignem a Domino de cœlo; et subvertit civitates has, et omnem circa regionem, universos habitatores urbium, et cuncta terræ virentia.—Gen. xix. 24, 25.

² Iratus Dominus, ait ad Moysen: Tolle cunctos principes populi, et suspende eos contra solem in patibulis, ut avertatur furor meus ab Israel.—Num. xxv. 3, 4.

neighbors. . . . ; And there was slain four and twenty thousand men.”¹ The principal reason of this severe punishment was the impurity of the people : “ The people committed fornication with the daughters of Moab.”²

And to the
tribe of
Benjamin.

You will read in the twentieth chapter of the Book of Judges, that only a few of the men of Gabaa were found guilty of impurely abusing a poor woman, and what was the consequence ? Punishment was inflicted, not only on the evil-doers, but also on the whole town of Gabaa and the surrounding country ; eighteen thousand were slain before the gates of the town, and five thousand were killed in flight, and soon after, two thousand more ; so that in one day five and twenty thousand men were slain on account of the sin of impurity. Lest we should think that this was merely the result of accident and not a punishment of lust, God has shown that He was the Author of it, and that it was His Almighty power which strengthened the arms that wielded the sword : “ And the Lord defeated them before the children of Israel, and they slew of them in that day five and twenty thousand, and one hundred, all fighting men.”³ Besides this, all the towns and villages of the tribe of Benjamin were burned down, and all the people who were left were cut down remorselessly ; not even the dumb beasts were spared. Thus that once populous country was filled with dead bodies, and only six hundred men of the whole tribe escaped, who had to keep to the mountains for one hundred and twenty days. Thus fire, bloodshed and devastation were the punishments inflicted on so many for the impurity of a few, and that by a most just, and at the same time, a most merciful God ; “ The Lord defeated them.”

And to the
Ninivites.

In the third chapter of the Book of Jonas you will read the terrible prophecy that resounded through Ninive, the great city of three days journey ; “ Yet forty days, and Ninive shall be destroyed.”⁴ A prophecy that would surely have been fulfilled, and, as interpreters say, solely in punishment of impurity, if the inhabitants from the greatest to the least had not done penance in sack-cloth and ashes ; “ And the men of Ninive believed in God ; and they proclaimed a fast and put on sack-

¹ Dixitque Moyses ad iudices Israel : Occidat unusquisque proximum suum, . . . et occisi sunt viginti quatuor millia hominum.—Num. xxv. 5, 9.

² Fornicatus est populus cum filiabus Moab.—Ibid. 1.

³ Percussitque eos Dominus in conspectu filiorum Israel, et interfecerunt ex eis in illo die viginti quinque millia et centum viros, omnes bellatores.—Judges xx. 35.

⁴ Adhuc quadraginta dies, et Ninive subvertetur.—Jonas iii. 4.

cloth, from the greatest to the least.”¹ How would it have been for them if they had not done penance?

We read in profane history that the greatest monarchies of the world were destroyed through this vice. Sardanapalus lost Assyria; Balthassar, Chaldea; Darius, Persia; Cleopatra, Egypt; all through indulgence in carnal pleasures. Salvianus shows that the dismemberment of the Roman Empire took place when the vice of impurity was most prevalent. “God wished to show thereby,” he says, “how hateful and intolerable this vice is in His sight.”²

And from
profane
history.

Do you think, my dear brethren, that God hates it less now, than in former times? Were not the men of old made of flesh and blood, were they not weak mortals, as we are? Those who perished by water, fire and sword, what Holy Scripture had they to teach them chastity? What sacraments had they to strengthen them against temptation? Where was the Blood of Christ, by which we are now saved from the yoke and attacks of the devil? They defiled their bodies, but they were not made members of Jesus Christ by baptism; they had not become temples of the Holy Ghost, as we Christians have. They sinned, but they had not solemnly renounced the flesh and the devil in baptism as we have. If then the anger of God was so great against impurity in those times, what sort of punishment must unchaste Christians expect, since their sin is three and four-fold greater, so to speak, than the sins of those of ancient time?

Impurity is
worse in
Christians,
than in
older times.

Oh, if we could only see the cause of the chastisements and trials that afflict whole countries and provinces! If we were to ask: whence come the miseries and poverty that are now desolating Europe? Whence come the wars, the bad harvests, the scarcity and famine, the plagues and sicknesses, the inundations, the miserable mortality amongst cattle, the general poverty and want? They are, as Salvianus says, heralds of the divine anger, which is punishing the world on account of impurity; “God wishes to show how hateful and intolerable to Him is this vice.” Many a time has the Almighty given proofs of His anger against impurity, by miraculous signs. In England, as Ballard writes, a field of wheat ready for the sickle was once eaten up in a night by a swarm of most hideous flies; some of those flies were caught, and were found to have the words “ira,” on one wing, and “Dei” on the other; “ira Dei,” that is, anger of God: as if to

And there-
fore the
anger of
God against
them is
greater.

¹ Et crediderunt viri Ninivitæ in Deum, et prædicaverunt jejunium, et vestiti sunt saccis a majore usque ad minorem.—Jonas iii. 5.

² Ostendere Deus voluit quam odissit carnis libidinem.—Selv. l. 1, de Provid.

say: The cause of the destruction of your crop is the anger of God ; do not think we have come here by accident ; the anger of God has sent us.

And their
punishment
more
severe.

I will say nothing of the punishment that the impure suffer individually ; it is a matter of daily experience. They suffer in their health by disgusting maladies which their excesses cause ; in their lives, which they shorten : in their honor which they sometimes lose by public disgrace ; in their repose, which is disturbed by remorse of conscience and mental anxiety, as I have already explained. And even if they had not those things to suffer, if they were left free and unhindered in the gratification of their passions, would not that be punishment enough ? Can a more fearful punishment be well imagined than the blinding of the understanding and the hardening of the will which all follow on this vice as its consequence, and do not cease until the soul is buried in hell ? O my God, I know that I have deserved Thy anger ; punish me in this life, I beg of Thee : behold, I offer Thee my head, my eyes, my ears, my tongue, my hands and feet and my whole body ; strike with Thy fatherly rod, as long as it pleases Thee ; but one thing I ask of Thee, “ Rebuke me not in Thy indignation, nor chastise me in Thy wrath ; ” ¹ do not allow me to be blinded and hardened by my own wicked desires, for that is the worst punishment of all ; it is the punishment Thou inflictest on impure Christians, by which the most of them are lost forever.

Conclusion
for the im-
pure.

Ah, blind mortals, who are not yet terrified by those fearful chastisements, who still make so little of the shameful vice of impurity, and look upon it as a small fault that arises from human infirmity, and that God will easily pardon ; blind mortals, woe to you ! One day, when it is too late, you will learn that no vice so exasperates the Almighty, and incurs such severe punishment from Him in this life and in the next, as that very vice, which you fear so little to commit, and for which you hope to find pardon so easily !

For those
who were
formerly
impure, but
have re-
pented.

To you who were perhaps formerly given to this vice, but who now, through a special grace of God, are freed from it, I have little to say, except that you must not be surprised if God sometimes sends you a fatherly chastisement in the way of crosses and trials. Oh, do not complain that you are treated harshly or unjustly ! Remember how you have treated the Almighty God ; think of the numbers who are now in hell for the very sins, and perhaps for fewer sins than you have committed. Say then,

¹ Ne in furore tuo arguas me, neque in ira tua corripias me.—Ps. vi. 2.

with humble hearts, in all trials : O my God, I accept this cross from Thy fatherly hand ; I know that I have deserved it, and a thousand times more ! May Thy holy name be blessed !

In the meantime, my dear brethren, that we may have none of ^{For others} these things to fear, let us fortify our hearts and minds once for all against this odious vice, and make a firm resolution rather to die a thousand times, than for the sake of such a short, brutish and dangerous pleasure, to offend God even by an impure thought, not to speak of impure words and actions. Such is the resolution we mean to keep with Thy help and grace O God. Amen.

Another Introduction to the same sermon for the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin.

Text.

Postquam impleti sunt dies purgationis ejus secundum legem Moysi.—Luke ii. 22.

“And after the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished.”

O most pure and Immaculate Virgin, Mother of the Word Incarnate, how did the law of Moses, regarding this ceremony, affect thy sacred person, so that thou hast wished to submit to it? It was a hard law, the observance of which must necessarily have seemed derogatory to thy virginal purity ; for thou hadst to present thyself to the priest, like an ordinary woman, and to beg to be made clean. There is no doubt, my dear brethren, that she who conceived by the Holy Ghost, the Author of all sanctity, and who brought Him stainless into the world, was not bound by that law ; still, since she saw that her Son submitted to the law of circumcision, like a sinner, she wished to follow His example, and to submit to the law of purification, as if she needed it. Oh how pleasing a spectacle that was in the sight of Heaven ! But what am I to say of the multitudes of men who remain buried in the filth of impurity for years and years, and never even think of doing penance and cleansing their souls from that stain ? What an abomination they must be in the sight of God ! Yet, they think, what harm is it to gratify myself this once, etc.—*continues as before.*

ON ENVY.

FIFTEENTH SERMON.

ON THE FOLLY OF THE ENVIOUS.

Subject.

1. What envy is, and how common a vice. 2. It contradicts especially one's love for one's self, and thereby shows the folly of the envious.—*Preached on the sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Et ipsi observabant eum.—Luke xiv. 1
“They watched Him.”

Introduction.

Why did the Pharisees watch Jesus Christ? Not to admire and praise His wonderful works, but to envy, blame and condemn the good He was doing. So that not even piety itself is free from the attacks of envy, which despises holiness and sanctity, when occasion offers. This is a very common vice nowadays, my dear brethren, and I mean to show how common and how foolish it is.

Plan of Discourse.

What envy is, and how common a vice, I will show in the first part. It contradicts especially one's love for one's self, and therefore the envious are very foolish people, as I shall show in the second part. Let us not be so foolish as to be guilty of such a sin; such will be our conclusion.

With Thy grace, O Lord, which we expect through the intercession of Mary and of our holy guardian angels.

Envy or grudging is defined by St. Thomas and by all theologians, as "Sorrow at another's good, inasmuch as it diminishes our own honor and excellence."¹ From this it follows that not every sorrow at another's prosperity, is envy; for I may regret that prosperity for many reasons. Thus, I may be troubled at the success of another, because he is my enemy, and has grievously insulted and injured me; this is, properly speaking, hatred and vindictiveness. Or I may be sorry that one who has hitherto persecuted me, is raised to a high position, in which I see that he will have many an opportunity of annoying me. This is not envy, but rather a well-founded fear of misfortune. Or I may regret that a dignity has been conferred on one who is not fit for it, and who therefore can do a great deal of harm to the community. This sorrow may sometimes arise from a just and pious zeal; as was the case with the Prophet David, when he said: "I had a zeal on occasion of the wicked, seeing the prosperity of sinners."² Still, this zeal, no matter how righteous it appears, must always be joined with an humble submission of our judgment to the decrees of God's providence. For it is God who rules all things in this world, and who, from some all-perfect reason known to His providence, but not to us, often permits the most wicked and godless sinners to enjoy honor, fortune and prosperity; and therefore the Holy Ghost suggested another thought to David: "Be not emulous of evil-doers, nor envy them that work iniquity;"³ but attribute everything to the decrees of Providence. I can also be secretly disquieted and troubled when I see that another is very rich and prosperous, not because it is good for him to be so, for I wish him well with all my heart; but because I wish to be equally prosperous. That is not envy, but rather emulation; a very dangerous thing in worldly matters, as it can easily degenerate into envy; but if it concerns piety and the practice of virtue so that I am troubled because I am not so good and virtuous as others, then it is a praiseworthy and holy zeal, that we all should have, in order to strive to imitate the virtues of others, according to the exhortation of the Apostle: "Be zealous for the better gifts;"⁴ Hence the company of the wicked is dangerous and hurtful, while that of good and pious Christians is profitable in the highest degree. The same may be said of

What envy is.

¹ Tristitia de alieno bono, prout est diminutivum propriæ excellentiæ.

² Zelavi super iniquos, pacem peccatorum videns.—Ps. lxxii. 3.

³ Noli æmulari in malignantibus; neque zelaveris facientes iniquitatem.—Ibid, xxxvi. 1.

⁴ Aemulamini autem charismata meliora.—I Cor. xii. 31.

reading the lives of the Saints, because it encourages us to tread in their foot-steps, and makes us ashamed of our tepidity and sloth. Finally, if I am troubled at my neighbor's prosperity, wealth, honor, or praise, merely because I imagine that my own prosperity or honor will be lessened thereby, that is envy, or grudging. And it is a vice that comes from pride, inasmuch as I cannot bear to see another equal or superior to me in a certain thing, my wish being to excel in that thing myself.

A vice common to all classes of people. To the higher classes.

Nothing is more common in the world among men of all classes and conditions, than this odious vice. "I considered all the labors of men," says the Wise Preacher, "and I remarked that their industries are exposed to the envy of their neighbor." ¹ Envy rules amongst soldiers; if one is renowned for his courage and heroic actions, he cannot bear to see another equally favored by fortune, showing himself brave also and holding the field against the foe, thus gaining great renown too, in the eyes of the world. This creates a feeling of enmity between the two men; the praise given to one, grates on the ear of the other, who looks upon that praise as diminishing his own glory. Thus Cæsar and Pompey could not bear each other. Cæsar could not tolerate a superior, Pompey could not brook a rival. Belisarius was the Emperor Justinian's general-in-chief, and was unsurpassed in military powers; after he had driven the Goths out of Italy, and conquered the Persians and Vandals, whose king he brought to Constantinople to grace his triumph, Justinian showed him every mark of esteem, and amongst others, he had a silver coin made, on the one side of which was the effigy of Justinian, on the other that of Belisarius with the inscription, "Belisarius, the glory of the Romans." ² But how long did he enjoy those honors? The envy of those who could not bear to see him so prosperous, effected his ruin by calumny, and not only deprived him of his well-earned dignities, but had both his eyes plucked out, and reduced him to such misery that he was forced to find shelter in a poor hut, and to beg for alms in the well-known words: "Give an obolus to Belisarius, who was exalted by his valor, and deprived of sight by envy." ³

To others, and even to people of ordinary station.

Envy reigns amongst courtiers; if one of them is honored by the special favor of his sovereign, he is at once a cause of secret discontent and envy to the others. One lawyer envies another

¹ Contemplatus sum omnes labores hominum, et industrias animadverti patere invidiæ proximi.—Eccles. iv. 4.

² Belisarius decus Romanorum.

³ Date obulum Belisario, quem virtus extulit, invidia obcecavit.

who has been more successful in his case. One physician envies another whose medicines are more efficacious in healing. The merchant envies his more prudent and more successful rival. The tradesman is jealous of the superior skill that another displays in the same branch of work. Envy is found amongst musicians and painters, on account of the greater skill of their rivals in the same profession; amongst families, because the children of the one are more beautiful or more clever than those of the other; amongst women, when one is dressed in better style than the other. It is found also amongst scholars, when one is better able to learn and has gained a higher place in school than the others; in private families, when one child is favored more than the others by its parents; and amongst servants, when the master or mistress shows a preference for the one more than for the others. Envy is not wanting even amongst brothers and sisters, when one marries better, or can keep up greater state than the others.

Nay, (and who would believe such a thing possible) even the most holy and zealous servants of God are sometimes envious of each other, when one does more than the other for the glory of God and the salvation of souls; that is to say, when one is more praised or admired than the other, or is looked upon as having more influence for good, or as doing more for the conversion of sinners, etc. All this comes from secret pride and vanity, which makes one fear that his honor or the esteem in which he is held, is about to be lessened. Josue, in spite of his piety, was much troubled on hearing that two of the common people, Eldad and Medad, were endowed with the gift of prophecy. Why, said he to Moses, do you permit that? Tell those people to be silent, for we look on you alone as our prophet. "Josue the son of Nun, the minister of Moses, and chosen out of many, said: "My lord Moses, forbid them."¹ But Moses answered: "Why hast thou emulation for me? O that all the people might prophesy, and that the Lord would give them His Spirit."² In the same way, the disciples of St. John the Baptist were envious of our Lord Himself, because the people had more recourse to Him than to their master; and therefore, they complained: "Rabbi, he that was with Thee beyond the Jordan, to whom Thou gavest testimony, behold he baptiseth, and all

Nay, to people who seem pious and zealous servants of God.

¹ Statim Josue filius Nun, minister Moysi, et electus e pluribus, ait: Domine mi Moyses prohibe eos.—Num. xi. 28.

² Quis tribuat ut omnis populus prophetet, et det eis Dominus Spiritum suum?—Ibid, 29.

men come to him ; ”¹ But John explained to them the reason of that : “ A man cannot receive anything unless it be given him from Heaven. You yourselves do bear me witness, that I said : I am not Christ, but that I am sent before him. This my joy, therefore, is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.”² He must be exalted, but I must be lowered. So cunning is this vice, that it can introduce itself under the appearance of sanctity, even into the holiest actions.

Even in the
solitude of
the desert.

Reason have we to be astonished when we read in the lives of the hermits of old, how the devil penetrated into the wilderness and overcame, by means of envy, those men who led such mortified lives, whom no other temptation could seduce from the service of God. To pass over many other examples, I read of an old grey-haired hermit in the desert of Scythia, who out of charity, once gave hospitality to a young hermit who had just arrived in the desert. This young stranger had received from God a special gift of interpreting the word of God, so that many of the brethren came to him to get instruction in the truths of salvation ; whereupon the old hermit became filled with envy. How is this, he said to himself, I have been so many years in the desert and the brethren seldom or never come to me, or if they do come, it is only on great feast days ; whereas this young man has such a crowd of visitors nearly every day ? Go, he said to his disciples, and tell that brother in my name, that he must leave my cell at once, as I want it for myself. But the stranger did not leave, because the disciples did not venture to give him his master’s message, and the old man took a great stick in his hand and went to the cell where the other was, with the intention of expelling him by force ; but the latter came to meet him, fell at his feet, and by his humility showed him how the demon of envy had befooled him. In a word, it is hard to find a man who is not sometimes tempted to envy, as St. Augustine says ; a man envies his equals, because they are equal to him, his superiors, because they are above him, and even his inferiors, through fear that they may become equal to him.³ But how great the folly of those who allow themselves to be overcome by this vice ! For

¹ Rabbi, qui erat tecum trans Jordanem, cui tu testimonium perhibuisti, ecce, hic baptizat, et omnes veniunt ad eum.—John iii. 26.

² Non potest homo accipere quidquam, nisi fuerit ei datum de cœlo. Ipsi vos mihi testimonium perhibetis, quod dixerim : Non sum ego Christus, sed quia missus sum ante illum . . . Hoc ergo gaudium meum impletum est.—Ibid. 27-29.

³ Paribus quod ei coæquantur, superioribus quod ei non coæquantur, inferioribus ne sibi coæquantur.—S. Aug. de gen. l. 11, c. 24.

there is no vice which more contradicts one's love for one's self; and consequently there is no vice that displays more the folly of men than envy. I shall prove this in the

Second Part.

To love one's self is to wish one's own good, to seek one's own profit, and to avoid carefully all that could be a source of discomfort or inconvenience. Now my dear brethren, he who allows himself to be influenced by envy, does exactly the contrary of all this. He does not seek or gain the least good or profit for himself by envy; on the contrary, he occasions himself a great deal of bitterness and pain. Is not that a foolish thing to do? For, in the first place, what does he seek? What profit can he find in grudging his neighbor's prosperity? All evil inclinations can be called madness, when one gives way to them, as they disturb the heart and the mind; still, a man seeks by them what appears at least to be good or pleasureable to him; the ambitious man seeks honor; the avaricious man, money; the impure man, sensual gratifications; the glutton, fine eating and drinking; the vindictive man, revenge; the slothful man seeks his ease and avoids labor. All these things have certain attractions to induce a man to consent to them; but envy is such a foolish passion that through it man offends God, and yet has not the least inducement to lead him into sin; he gains no honor before the world; nay, his very envy forces him to acknowledge to himself with shame, that his honor is lessened by the growing reputation of the other; nor does he seek money or wealth, for the riches of another, that excite his envy, will not in that way become his; nor does he seek comfort or convenience, for envy is nothing else but trouble, or bitterness of heart; nor is pleasure in eating or drinking the object of his desires, for his envy takes away his appetite for food; nor does he want revenge or satisfaction, because all his envy cannot hurt the object of it, or take away his wealth; and that is a reason why he is all the more disturbed at seeing the other continuing in the enjoyment of prosperity. He sins, then, and knows not why; he offends God, and deserves hell, without having either pleasure, honor, or profit by it.

Besides, he deliberately brings on himself the evil that all men hate and avoid, and that he himself would also try to shun, if he were not envious; and that is, trouble, mental anxiety and bitterness of heart, which plague him to no purpose. Amongst

This vice contradicts one's own love for one's self because one can derive no profit from it.

And rather tortures himself by it.

the punishments that God threatened the High-priest Heli with, was this, that he should see his rival in the enjoyment of happiness and prosperity: "And thou shalt see thy rival in the temple, in all the prosperity of Israel."¹ And how was that a severe punishment? Because envy fills the heart with bitter torments, that are caused by grudging another's good fortune, so that the unhappiness of Heli was to be increased by seeing a stranger in possession of his rank and dignity. "Envy," says St. Peter Chrysologus, "always tortures those who are influenced by it; it torments the mind, annoys the external senses, and gnaws at the heart. What need is there of saying any more? He who is infected with this vice, punishes himself, because he makes himself his own executioner;"² The Wise man in the Book of Proverbs says: "Envy is the rottenness of the bones;"³ or, as the Septuagint has it, "a worm gnawing away the bones." Hence, envy is depicted in the likeness of a fury, with serpents instead of hair on her head, and holding her own heart in her hand at which she gnaws with her teeth, in order to show that this passion is a hellish madness which eats away the heart of the envious man, and dries up the very marrow of his bones. Theologians generally agree in saying that many of the evil spirits dwell in the air, and there undergo their tortures; according to the words of St. Paul to the Ephesians, in which he calls the devil a prince of the air: "And you when you were dead in your offences and sins, wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of this air, etc."⁴ Now, I do not wish to inquire the reason why the air has been assigned as a place of torment to the evil spirits, but St. Bernard lays down a reason, which will suit my subject admirably. He says that the devil roams about through the air, "that he may see," the people on earth who have been redeemed by the Blood of Jesus Christ, "and may envy their happiness and be tortured by this envy." So that the devil is tortured by seeing our happiness and envying it. Therefore, St. Augustine reads the words of the seventeenth

¹ Et videbis æmulum tuum in templo, in universis prosperis Israel.—I. Kings ii. 32.

² Invidia suorum carnifex semper extitit, torquet animos, disruiat sensus, corda corrumptit. Quid pluris? Hanc qui receperit sua sustinet sine fine supplicia, quia in se domesticum semper diligit habere tortorem.—A Chrysos. serm. 72.

³ Putredo ossium, invidia.—Prov. xiv. 30.

⁴ Et vos, cum essetis mortui delictis et peccatis vestris, in quibus aliquando ambulastis secundum sæculum mundi hujus, secundum principem potestatis aëris hujus, etc.—Eph. ii. 1, 2.

Psalm: "The sorrows of hell encompassed me;"¹ "the sorrows of envy;"² as if these three torments, of hell, of the devil, and of envy were one and the same. In fact, the envious man, like the wicked spirit, bears his own torture about with him, when he sees and envies the prosperity of others. Such was the case with Cain, who through envy at the favor with which God received the sacrifice of his brother Abel, became pallid and emaciated: "Cain was exceedingly angry and his countenance fell."³ Aman became ill through envy of Mardochai; Saul became mad through his envy of David. So true is it that the envious man is his own tormentor. That is in accordance with an all-wise arrangement of the Almighty God, by which he makes that odious passion punish those who give way to it, for offending Him so foolishly. "Envy alone," says St. Gregory of Nazianzen, "is the most unjust, and at the same time, the most just of all the passions; it is the most unjust, because it is opposed to all good; it is the most just, because it torments and troubles him who gives way to it."⁴

And why does the envious man torment himself? Has he been the victim of misfortune? Has his property been stolen? Has death deprived him of a dear friend? Has he been insulted or injured? No, nothing of the kind has occurred. And what is the matter then? Some fellow-man has been lucky; his neighbor's affairs are in a flourishing condition; some acquaintance of his has been praised and made much of; his brother or sister is better off than he; another one is better dressed, or is more clever, or more beautiful, or more skilful, etc. But is that a reason for troubling himself? Should he not rather rejoice at it? These benefits are desired and sought after by nearly every one. But it is these very benefits which make the envious man suffer so much. What folly! With justice does St. Bernard say: "Consider, I beseech you, how his own evil things will afflict an envious man, since the good things of others cause him so much pain."⁵

Yet, this is not the only torment of the envious man. The prosperity of others often exists only in his imagination, or he forms an exaggerated idea of it, and so increases his trouble.

And that on account of a good at which he should rejoice.

This good he exaggerates in his own mind.

¹ Dolores inferni circumdederunt me.—Ps. xvii. 6.

² Dolores invidiæ.

³ Iratusque est Cain vehementer, et concidit vultus ejus.—Gen. iv. 5.

⁴ Solus ex omnibus affectibus iniquissimus et æquissimus invidia est; iniquissimus, quia bonis omnibus adversus est; æquissimus, quia dominos suos exest et conficit.

⁵ Considerate absecro, qualiter invidos punitura sunt mala sua, quos etiam bona puniunt aliena.

and thus in-
creases his
torment.

He is like the blind man of Bethsaida, to whom Christ restored sight; the blind man opened his eyes after Our Lord had placed His hand on them, and looked about him. Jesus asked him if he saw anything. "I see men, as it were trees, walking,"¹ he said; he thought that every one he saw exceeded him in stature as much as a tree does a human being; the streets looked to him like forests in which the people were walking about like so many trees. Poor man, your eyes see, it is true, but they do not see aright. How astonished you must have been at your mistake when Christ restored you your sight fully! Envious people, my dear brethern, have the same imperfect sight; everything they are jealous of seems great and mighty to them, and they themselves alone appear small in their own eyes.

We have
examples of
this in the
Sacred
Scriptures.

We have many examples of this in the Sacred Scriptures; how jealous king Pharaoh was of the Hebrews, for fear they would revolt against him and hurl him from his throne! He called together all his councillors and spoke to them of his difficulty: "He said to his people: Behold the people of the children of Israel are numerous and stronger than we. Come let us wisely oppress them;"² But how could Pharaoh think that the Israelites outnumbered the Egyptians? They must have been far less in number; because otherwise they would not have borne the cruel treatment they had to suffer. For as the Sacred Scripture says, "He set over them masters of the works to afflict them with burdens;"³ They had to build cities every-where, "And the Egyptians hated the children of Israel and afflicted them and mocked them; and they made their life bitter with hard works in clay, and brick, and with all manner of service, wherewith they were overcharged in the works of the earth;"⁴ This the Egyptians would never have dared to do nor would the Israelites have submitted to it, if the latter had really been as numerous as Pharaoh said. Why then was Pharaoh so anxious? Denis the Carthusian, answers this question by saying that, as the Israelites had been much favored by former kings, and had received from them a most fertile piece of country, their prosperity was an occasion of envy to Pharaoh, who allowed himself to be so blinded by it, that he looked on them as more powerful than his own people.

¹ Video homines velut arbores ambulantes.—Mark viii. 24.

² Ait ad populum suum: Ecce, populus filiorum Israel multus, et fortior nobis est. Venite, sapienter opprimamus eum.—Exod. i. 9, 10.

³ Præposuit itaque eis magistros operum, ut affligerent eos oneribus.—Ibid, 11.

⁴ Oderantque filios Israel Aegyptii, et affligebant illudentes eis; atque ad amaritudinem perducebant vitam eorum operibus duris luti et lateris, omnique famulatu, quo in terræ operibus premebantur.—Ibid, 13, 14.

“The passion of envy made him have an exaggerated idea of their prosperity;”¹ such are the words of Denis the Carthusian.

When Saul gave way to envy, how he exaggerated the importance of David ! He looked upon him as a mighty king ; he mistook the shepherd’s garment for a purple robe, and the crook for a sceptre, while he considered the people who followed David, as subjects doing homage to their king. “What can he have more but the kingdom ?”² he said. And why did David assume such large proportions in the eyes of Saul ? Simply because a few women praised him for having overcome Goliath, and put their enemies to flight ; “And the women sung as they played, and they said : Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten-thousands.”³ This praise was more than Saul could bear, it seemed to him as if David were already made king over him. “And Saul was exceedingly angry, and this word was displeasing in his eyes, and he said : They have given David ten thousands, and to me they have given but a thousand. What can he have more but the kingdom ?”⁴

In the same way do all envious people act in our day ; if one whom they do not wish well, gains a high position, Oh, they say, he is a favorite child, he can get anything he asks for ! If they see any one better dressed than they themselves are, Oh, they cry out, where did all that finery come from ? If a man succeeds in his business, they are jealous of his good fortune. If they hear another praised in company, they affect to wonder at it, and feel as if they were neglected. And so it is always with the envious ; they look at men as if they were as big as trees ; and exaggerate their importance to an absurd extent. With what result ? With the result of increasing their own torment, and nothing more.

Would it not be better for the envious man to consider how things are with himself, instead of troubling himself about the affairs of others ? My dear man, I would say to him, why do you not enjoy what God has so generously given you, and enjoy it in peace and quiet ? Consider what you have yourself, do not mind what other people have. That man is richer than you, but you have better health than he ; he has more servants than

¹ Ex passione invidiæ, prosperitas eorum videbatur ei major, quam fuit.

² Quid ei superest, nisi solum regnum ?—I. Kings xviii. 8.

³ Et præcinebant mulieres ludentes, atque dicentes : Percussit Saul mille, et David decem millia.—Ibid, 7.

⁴ Iratus est autem Saul nimis, et displicuit in oculis ejus sermo iste, dixitque : Dederunt David decem millia, et mihi mille dederunt : quid ei superest, nisi solum regnum ?—Ibid, 8.

you, but you live more peacefully than he does; he has a more important charge than you, but he has also more care and anxiety; he has more means of procuring enjoyment, but you have less difficulty in saving your soul and going to Heaven. Therefore, I repeat, enjoy in peace and quiet what the good God has given you, and do not worry yourself about what He gives to others. But there is no use in talking; envy will not allow him to listen. His passion has brought him so far, that he cannot enjoy what he has, on account of the exaggerated idea he has of the prosperity of others.

As is seen
in the case
of Saul.

Let us again take Saul as an example. The giant Goliath, who had caused him and his whole kingdom the greatest alarm, is slain; the hostile army, before which Saul and his forces had to hide themselves in caves, was utterly routed; and Saul was thus enabled to rule in peace; the people rejoice exceedingly, and the whole land is full of jubilation; Saul alone, who had more reason to rejoice than all the others, is filled with bitterness and discontent, in spite of his good fortune, and gives way to those feelings until they bring him to the verge of madness. The praise given to David embitters all his prosperity, and his only wish now is, that David and his whole army were destroyed, so that he would not hear those praises that torment him so much. Amalekites, Philistines, you are no longer enemies of Saul; David is the enemy for whom he reserves all his hatred and fury, and on whose death he is resolved!

And of
Aman.

Aman was exalted in dignity above all the princes of King Assuerus, as the Sacred Scriptures say: "King Assuerus advanced Aman, and he set his throne above all the princes that were with him. And all the king's servants that were at the doors of the palace, bent their knees and worshipped Aman."¹ He spoke to his friends of his riches and glory, and told them how the king had exalted him.² Fortunate Aman, could you have possibly risen to a higher degree of worldly honor? Yet Aman was filled with trouble and discontent, and he said to his wife: "Whereas I have all these things, I think I have nothing." And why? "As long as I see Mardochai the Jew, sitting before the king's gate;"³ I am so annoyed at this, that I look upon all my wealth and honor as nothing!

¹ Rex Assuerus exaltavit Aman. . . . et posuit solium ejus super omnes principes, quos habebat. Cunctique servi regis, qui in foribus palatii versabantur, flectebant genua, et adorabant Aman.—*Esther* iii. 1, 2.

² Exposuit illis magnitudinem divitiarum suarum . . . et quanta eum gloria super omnes principes et servos suos rex elevarasset.—*Ibid.*, v. 11.

³ Et cum hæc omnia habeam, nihil me habere puto, quamdiu video Mardochæum Judæum sedentem ante fores regias.—*Ibid.*, 13.

It is a strange misery, that of the envious man, says Salvianus: How miserable, and therefore how foolish, are the envious. "He does not care to be happy, unless he whom he envies is unhappy."¹ He is rich, honored and prosperous, but envy leaves him as little power of enjoying these blessings, as if he had them not. How emphatically, O holy Apostle Paul, dost thou not tell Christians, that they are not to be attached to earthly goods: "It remaineth that they also who have wives, but as if they had none, and that they that rejoice, as if they rejoiced not, and they that buy, as though they possessed not, and they that use this world, as if they used it not."² But how do the envious observe this rule? Preach the Gospel to them and they will have a great difficulty in understanding it; but envy places that particular rule so clearly before their minds, that they are, as it were, forced to observe it, for they find no pleasure in the goods they themselves possess, and nothing but chagrin and vexation in the possessions of others, so that they are miserable either way. Moreover, since they cannot hinder the happiness of others, their misery is hopeless and beyond relief. What madness thus to plague and torture one's self! Certainly all sinners are called fools in the Holy Scriptures; but in my opinion, the envious are the greatest fools of all; for who would not look on that man as beside himself, who persists in being ill, because his neighbor is in good health, or who puts out his eyes because another has good sight, or who makes himself unhappy, because he sees that another is happy?

Far from us, my dear brethren, such folly as that; let us never offend God, and lose our souls, for what cannot profit us in the least, but rather causes us trouble and annoyance! We must not value worldly goods or pleasures so highly, as for their sake to commit sin, much less should this be the case when there is neither profit nor enjoyment to be had in the sin. If we do not love our neighbor, as the divine law obliges us, let us at least not hate him. We have trials and crosses enough, why should we increase them by giving way to envy? If we have nothing else to cause us trouble and sorrow, the consideration of our sins should give us enough to grieve for, and it would be a most profitable grief indeed. Let every one then be content with what God has bestowed on him, and not grudge

Conclusion and exhortation to fly envy.

¹ Novum et inæstimabile malum. Parum est si ipse sit felix, nisi alter sit infelix.—Salvian. de Provid. l. 5.

² Reliquum est, ut et qui habent uxores, tanquam non habentes sint: . . . et qui gaudent, tanquam non gaudentes: et qui emunt, tanquam non possidentes: et qui utuntur hoc mundo, tanquam non utantur.—I. Cor. vii. 29-31.

others what they possess. As often as you feel inclined to envy others on any account whatever, think and say to yourselves at once, what the soldier said in olden times, when his petition to be received amongst the body-guard of the Spartan king, was rejected: "I congratulate my country," said he, "on its having three hundred better men than me;"¹ Such, namely, was the number of the body-guard. I rejoice, you must also say, O Christians, that others have a better position than I, that they are richer, more beautiful and more clever than I; I rejoice that God is so good to them, and that they prosper so well, etc. In that way, although you may not have the same good fortune as they, yet you will at least be free from the gnawing pangs of envy. O what a happy and contented life we could all lead, if every one was so minded, if every one rejoiced, as a Christian ought, in his neighbor's success! For then not only would each one enjoy what he himself has, but he would also find satisfaction in the goods of others. "What a great treasure charity is," says St. Augustine, "for by it we make the goods of others our own, without any labor."² I will remember this charity (such should be your conclusion with me), whenever an envious thought occurs to me, and I will immediately thank God for having bestowed on others as much, nay more than he has bestowed on me. Eternal thanks, praise and love be to His liberality for all His gifts, no matter to whom He gives them! Amen.

Another Introduction to the same sermon for the Feast of the Holy Apostles SS. Philip and James.

Text.

Non turbetur cor vestrum.—John xiv. 1.

"Let not your heart be troubled."

Christ remarked that His disciples were troubled, anxious and afraid for two reasons; first, He had foretold them that one of them would betray Him, that He would be delivered into the hands of the Jews, and that Peter would deny Him thrice; so that they thought, if Peter who seems as strong as a rock, is to act in such a cowardly manner, what can we who are so weak, expect of ourselves? In order to relieve them of this fear, Christ said to them, "Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God.

¹ Gratulor patriæ quod trecentos habeat meliores me.—Plutarch.

² Quantum bonum charitas, quæ sine labore nostro aliena bona nostra facit.

believe also in Me ;”¹ for I am equal to my heavenly Father ; place your trust in Me, and I will not fail you. They were troubled also, because Christ said that He was going to the Father, whither Peter was to follow Him, while He said nothing of the others. Then they feared that they might be excluded from Heaven, that is, from His Father’s house. But Our Lord said to them : No, let not your heart be troubled on that account ; do not imagine that Peter alone is to follow me thither, as if there was room for no one but him ; you must know that “in my Father’s house there are many mansions ;”² you will also find a place there, for “I go to prepare a place for you, and if I shall go . . . I will come again, and will take you to myself, that where I am, you also may be ;”³ Such is the explanation that Cornelius a Lapide gives of to-day’s Gospel. The disciples, my dear brethren, had two just reasons for being troubled ; for on the one hand, they were afraid of committing sin, and on the other, they were afraid of losing Heaven. Would to God, that we were all penetrated by this fear, for then we should be more careful of avoiding sin, and be more earnest in working for the glory of God, and the salvation of our souls. But how many Christians there are who have no fears of the kind ; nay, what is still more foolish, who trouble and annoy themselves, not on account of any harm they have suffered, but on account of the prosperity and good fortune of others ! And these are the envious, of whom there are many nowadays, and who are very foolish people indeed, as I shall now show, etc.—*continues as before.*

SIXTEENTH SERMON.

ON THE MALICE OF ENVY.

Subject.

Of all the vices envy is the most malicious in combating the love of one’s neighbor ; from that the malice of this sin may be inferred.—*Preached on the twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost.*

¹ Creditis in Deum, et in me credite.—John xiv. 1.

² In domo Patris mei mansiones multæ sunt.—Ibid, 2.

³ Quia vado parere vobis locum. Et si abiero, . . . iterum venio, et accipiam vos ad me ipsum, ut ubi sum ego, et vos sitis.—Ibid, 2, 3

Text.

Sic et Pater meus cœlestis faciet vobis, si non remiseritis unusquisque fratri suo de cordibus vestris.—Matth. xviii. 35.

“So also shall my heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts.”

Introduction.

If he is to be delivered over to the torturers, who does not forgive from his heart the debt his neighbor owes him, what will become of him who looks with envious eyes and bitterness of heart on the prosperity of him who owes him nothing, and who never injured him; that is, one who grudges another's happiness? This is a diabolical vice, my dear brethren, and unfortunately it is too common. I have already shown that it contradicts one's love for one's self, since the envious man torments himself without gaining anything thereby, and therefore is guilty of the greatest folly. I now say—

Plan of Discourse.

Of all vices, envy is the most malicious in combating the love of one's neighbor; from which the malice of this sin may be inferred; such is the whole subject of to-day's sermon, let us then love each other sincerely, so as to avoid all envy. Such shall be our conclusion.

With Thy grace, O God of love, which we beg of Thee through the intercession of Mary and our holy guardian angels.

What is required by the law of charity to one's neighbor.

“Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself;” such is the law of charity which God has obliged all men to observe, and much more all Christians, under pain of eternal damnation. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, that is, you must wish him well as you would yourself; you must try to do him good, as you would to yourself; you must rejoice at his good fortune, as if it were your own; you must sympathise with his misfortunes, as if you suffered them; and, as St. Paul says, this love should work such a union amongst us, as if we had but one heart and one soul, so that we wish and desire for every one, no matter who it is, just what we should wish and desire for ourselves. “Loving one another with the charity of brotherhood, with honor from preventing one another;” “Rejoice with them that rejoice, weep with them that weep, being of one mind one towards another; to no man rendering evil for evil; having

peace with all men.”¹ Such is the law of charity that Jesus Christ, Our Saviour, so often and so emphatically preached to His disciples, and in their person, to us all. “These things I command you that you love one another;”² “this is my commandment that you love one another;”³ it is the commandment that I attach most importance to; “A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another, as I have loved you.”⁴ This is the charity which he wishes us to extend even to our worst enemy, who hates, persecutes and tries to injure us; “But I say to you: Love your enemies.”⁵ This is the love which is to characterise His Apostles, His followers, and all true Christians. “By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love one for another.”⁶ It is that love alone which shows that we are children of our heavenly Father.⁷ In the observance of this charity He has placed the fulfilment of the whole law. This is the charity which St. John in his old age preached every day to his disciples. “My little children, love one another, for such is the command of the Lord, and if you keep it, you will have done enough.” “He that loveth not, abideth in death.”⁸ “If any man say I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.”⁹

From this, my dear brethren, you can infer the wickedness of the envious man. There is nothing in that sacred precept of charity which is imposed on us so solemnly by Jesus Christ and His Apostles, that he does not violate in every way, and at once by the sole sin of envy. Instead of wishing well to his neighbor, he wishes him ill; instead of rejoicing at the prosperity that his neighbor actually has, and wishing him still more, he grudges him the possession of good things and wishes him evil; instead of rejoicing at his happiness and sympathizing with his misfortunes, he does the very opposite, by being troubled at his success, and glad of his failures; instead of doing good to him and

This law is broken in every respect by the envious man.

¹ Caritate fraternitatis invicem diligentes; honore invicem prævenientes; Gaudere cum gaudentibus, flere cum flentibus; idipsum invicem sentientes; ... nulli malum pro malo red-dentes; ... cum omnibus hominibus pacem habentes.—Rom. xii. 10, 15-18.

² Hæc mando vobis: Ut diligatis invicem.—John xv. 17.

³ Hoc est præceptum meum: Ut diligatis invicem.—Ibid. 12.

⁴ Mandatum novum do vobis, ut diligatis invicem, sicut dilexi vos.—Ibid. xiii. 34.

⁵ Ego autem dico vobis: Diligite inimicos vestros.—Matth. v. 44.

⁶ In hoc cognoscent omnes, quia discipuli mei estis, si dilectionem habueritis ad invicem.—John xiii. 35.

⁷ Ut sitis filii Patris vestri, qui in cœlis est.—Matth. v. 45.

⁸ Qui non diligit, manet in morte.—I. John iii. 14.

⁹ Si quis dixerit: quoniam diligo Deum; et fratrem suum oderit, mendax est.—Ibid. iv. 20.

warding off harm from him, as far as possible, his only desire is to deprive him of the good that he has, and to do him what harm he can. He thus completely perverts the Apostle's precept, "Rejoice with them that rejoice," for, as St. Jerome remarks, he weeps with them that rejoice, and rejoices with them that weep.¹ His happiness consists in the misfortunes of others, his distress in their well-being. How unjust, how fearfully wicked to be thus disposed towards one who never did him any harm, and whose only fault is, that he has received more understanding, or riches, or happiness, or honor from God !

And with
greater
malice than
all the other
vices.

I have said that the law of charity is violated in the most outrageous manner by envy ; for in the first place, there is no vice which offers such determined opposition to charity. Avarice, for instance, although it occasions many a grievous sin against charity, by theft and injustice, yet does not cause the thief to be troubled at another's prosperity ; in fact, he rather rejoices at it, because he will have more opportunity of taking something worth while. Nor does he commit a theft merely to injure his neighbor, but to benefit himself, and if it were possible for him to do so, he would steal without doing harm to any one. Impurity gives rise to grievous injustice and violation of charity, by causing the sin of adultery to be committed ; still, he who commits that sin, seeks nothing but the gratification of his unbridled desires ; he is not troubled, but rather glad if the person whom he has wronged, prospers in other matters. Hatred and anger are certainly directly opposed to charity, and lead to cursing, abusing, and assaulting the object of one's hatred ; still the only idea of the angry man is to have satisfaction for the injury that he imagines he has suffered, and thus to appease his resentment. Envy alone is so odious and so wicked, that it makes a man grieve at his neighbor's good fortune and be troubled at it, without gaining, or seeking anything thereby.

From envy
come nearly
all other sins
against
charity. As
is seen in
the example
of Cain and
the brothers
of Joseph.

Again, nearly all the offences against charity occasioned by the other vices, accompany envy. Whatever harm a man is inclined to do his neighbor through injustice, anger, hatred, or vindictiveness, the envious man attempts to do without any reason, and therefore with all the greater malice. When Cain became jealous of his brother Abel, he was not merely grieved that God had accepted the sacrifice of the latter, but he could not even bear the sight of him, through hatred and anger, and he went about thinking how he could be revenged ; nor did he rest

¹ S. Hieron. in c. 12. ad Rom.

until he had killed his brother. How wicked and cruel the sons of Jacob were to their innocent brother Joseph. "And his brethren," says the Holy Scripture, "seeing that he was loved by his father more than all his sons, hated him and could not speak peaceably to him."¹ They spoke sarcastically to him, whenever they met him; they took counsel with each other as to how they could best take revenge on him, and at last they resolved on the inhuman crime of fratricide. "And when they saw him afar off, before he came nigh to them, they thought to kill him. And said one to another: Behold the dreamer cometh; come, let us kill him, and cast him into some old pit, and we will say: Some evil beast hath devoured him."² In fact they did throw him into a deep pit, with the intention of allowing him to die of hunger, but they afterwards changed their minds, and sold him for a few pieces of money as a slave to strangers. All these grievous sins against charity arose from envy alone. And what was the reason of that? What harm had Joseph done them? None; his only fault was that he was his father's favorite, and they were afraid from some dreams he had, that he would one day rule over them; for they said, after having resolved on his death: "It shall appear what his dreams avail him."³ But what injury did the father's affection, or the dreams of Joseph do them? The free will of the latter had nothing to do with either. Did any one ever see a man put upon his trial for a dream? Envy is the only unjust and cruel judge that can condemn an innocent person.

How long and how unrelentingly Saul persecuted David, although he often acknowledged that David was innocent of any attempt to injure him! How often did he not, in his madness, try to pierce him through with a spear! With what cruel cunning did he not promise to give him his daughter in marriage, if he succeeded in slaying a hundred Philistines! His only object in making that promise, was that David might be overwhelmed by the number of his foes, and be killed. He followed him with his whole army, from place to place, and would certainly have put an end to him, if God had not interposed, and prevented that wicked intention from being carried out. What

And in that
of Saul and
Joab.

¹ *Videntes autem fratres ejus, quod a patre plus cunctis filiis amaretur, oderant eum, nec poterant ei quidquam pacifice loqui.*—Gen. xxxvii. 4.

² *Qui cum vidissent eum procul, antequam accederet ad eos, cogitaverunt illum occidere; et mutuo loquebantur: Ecce somniator venit. Venite, occidamus eum, et mittamus in cisternam veterem, dicemusque: Ferra pessima devoravit eum.*—Ibid, 18-20.

³ *Apparebit quid illi prosint somnia sua.*—Ibid, 20.

was the occasion of all this hatred? Nothing but jealousy and envy at the praises that were given by the women to David, after he had overcome Goliath. Why did Joab kill Amasa so treacherously? Through envy alone. David had intended to depose Joab, for having slain Absalom and Abner against his orders, and to make Amasa general in his stead; Joab knew of this, and conceived such a violent hatred against Amasa, that he slew him treacherously; “And Joab said to Amasa: God save thee my brother. And he took Amasa by the chin with his right hand to kiss him. But Amasa did not take notice of the sword which Joab had, and he struck him in the side, and shed out his bowels to the ground . . . and he died.”¹

In that of
Aman, and
of the Jews
who cruci-
fied Christ.

The gibbet that Aman had erected, was intended for no one but Mardochai, whom he wished to see hanging thereon in his death-throes. What cruelty, envy was the occasion of, in this instance, and solely because Mardochai, who refused to bend the knee before the envious Aman, was held in esteem in the court of King Assuerus! What was it that drove the high-priests, Scribes and Pharisees to commit the crime of deicide, and to rage so ruthlessly against the Son of God, that they were not satisfied until they saw Him dying on the shameful cross? It was nothing but envy, as Pilate himself confessed, when he tried to have Jesus set free; “For he knew that for envy they had delivered Him.”²

From daily
experience.

How many murders would we not see now a-days, if all envious people could glut their rage with impunity! And meanwhile, what a number of other sins and violations of charity are committed every day, through envy alone, by persons of all classes! The envious man is ready to sin by thoughts of anger, hatred, suspicion, and rash judgment; he interprets in an evil sense all that his neighbor does; he wounds charity by his outward behavior, by his black looks, by his biting words; he has not a peaceful word for any one; he is always ready to contradict, to abuse and vilify the object of his envy when present, to calumniate and detract him when absent. Charity is injured by wicked deeds; all kinds of tricks and devices are resorted to in the hope of lessening another's dignity, or depriving him of his employment, or ruining him in his business or trade, and doing

¹ Dixit itaque Joab ad Amasan: Salve mi frater. Et tenuit manu dextera mentum Amase, quasi osculans eum. Porro Amasa non observavit gladium, quem habebat Joab, qui percussit eum in latere, et effudit intestina ejus in terram . . . et mortuus est.—II. Kings, xx. 9, 10.

² Sciebat enim, quod per invidiam tradidissent eum.—Matth. xxvii. 18.

him all possible harm. Alas, says St. Peter Chrysologus, considering this, "where shall there be an end of sin, when the prosperity of another and his happiness become the envious man's punishment and torment?"¹ St. John Chrysostom sums up in a few words all that can be said about envy: "Envy is the mother of all evils."²

The cruelties that this venomous mother gives rise to, surpass those of the most savage beasts. How so? Hear what occurred to Daniel: he was accused of having transgressed the king's command, and the latter was so influenced by the persistent misrepresentations of his courtiers, that at last he ordered Daniel to be thrown into the lions' den. When this order was carried out, the den was closed with a large stone on which the king set his own seal and also the seals of his nobles.³ Why? "That nothing should be done against Daniel."⁴ Now I ask, what was the king afraid of? Why did he think that any one could have hurt Daniel, who was in the midst of the lions? Certainly the king's seal could not protect Daniel from the fury of those animals; so that the reason of the precaution must have been to prevent any one from entering the den. Did the king then fear that the Prophet was in greater danger from men, than from the lions? And, besides, had he any reason for imagining that any one would dare to venture down amongst the hungry beasts, for the purpose of injuring him? There is no doubt of it, my dear brethren. Darius knew well that Daniel had been accused through sheer envy, and he thought therefore, that his innocence would be safer amongst the savage lions, than amongst his treacherous and wily accusers, who certainly would not have hesitated to venture their lives for the sake of putting him out of the way; so bitter was their envy. Therefore the king put his own seal on the mouth of the den, "that nothing should be done against Daniel."

The world is still shocked at the inhumanity of Tullia, the daughter of Tullius Sextus, king of Rome. This infamous woman was once going at full gallop through the streets in her chariot, when her charioteer suddenly came to a full stop. What is the matter? she asked, why do you not go on? Madam, said he, I cannot, there is a dead body in the way, and as I see now, it is that of your father. No matter said she, go on, can

Envy is cruel.

Shows by a simile taken from history.

¹ Quis malorum finis, ubi alterius bonum poena est, ubi cruciatus aliena felicitas?

² Malorum omnium mater invidia.

³ Quem obsignavit rex annulo suo et annulo optimatum suorum.—Dan. vi. 17.

⁴ Ne quid fieret contra Daniele.—Ibid.

you not drive over it ?¹ Even if it is my father's body, the street is still free to me. What heartlessness ! To save herself the trouble of making a slight detour, she allowed her royal father's body to be trampled under her horses hoofs ! There, my dear brethren, you have an example of the cruelty that envy occasions ; it triumphs, so to speak, over the dead body of a neighbor, nay, of a brother or a sister ; it rejoices at another's moral death, at his disgrace, or loss of employment, or poverty ; it exults when calumny injures the fair fame of another, it takes a malignant pleasure in the persecutions, humiliations, oppression, misery and tears, nay, even in the untimely deaths of those whom it hates. It triumphs over their dead bodies, and thinks nothing of all they had to suffer ; the more they have to suffer, the better pleased is the envious man, whose only desire is to have them out of his way.

Confirmed
by other ex-
amples.

Metaphrastes, in the life of St. Joannitius, describes a fearful conflagration which reduced to ashes all the trees and gardens that were situated on a certain hill ; and this conflagration was not the result of accident, but of envy. The holy Abbot Joannitius lived on this hill, and as he could not long conceal his great learning and virtue and wonderful miracles, crowds of people flocked to him from all parts. Another monk, named Epiphanius, could not bear to see this, as very few came to him ; and the more the reputation of the holy Abbot increased, the greater grew the envy of Epiphanius, until at last he set fire one night to the forest on the hill, on which Joannitius lived, with no other intention than that the latter should perish in the flames.² But he was disappointed, for the holy abbot escaped from the fire, and went out to meet his enemy, with all humility, intending to convert him. Why did you regard me as an enemy,³ he asked. The envious man, instead of answering, attempted to run him through with a spear, but God again saved His servant from being hurt. In spite of all this, Epiphanius did not cease his machinations against him, until a sudden death put a stop to them. A still more surprising consequence of envy is that it makes a man deliberately incur any misfortune, as long as he can injure his rival. James Cardinal of Vitry relates⁴ that a certain king once gave permission to an envious man and to a

¹ Annon duces currum etiam per corpus mortuum ?

² Comatum illum et frondosum montem exussit, ut simul cum silva sanctum quoque depasceret gamma. Metaphrast in vita S. Joannit. apud Sur. 4. Novembris.

³ Cur ei velet esse inimicus ?

⁴ Joan. Junior in Scala coeli ex Jacob Vitriac.

miser, to make any request they wished of him, on the sole condition that the last who put forward his request should receive double. The two hesitated, each one wishing to be the last, in order to get more. At last the king told the envious man to begin; and what request do you think he made, my dear brethren? Envy did not permit him to ask for anything good lest the other should receive a greater good, and so he asked the king to have one of his eyes put out, so that the other man might lose both his eyes. Could anything more cruel be imagined?

What a terrible sin envy is. It is, as St. Augustine says, a sin unto death; not merely because it causes the death of the soul like all mortal sins, but because it is a sin that deserves more than all others to be refused forgiveness and to be punished eternally in hell, for that is the proper dwelling-place of envy, which is also one of the torments of the damned. It is a sin against the Holy Ghost, who is a Spirit of love, and beneficence, who desires to bestow His gifts and graces on all men, a generosity which the envious man cannot bear, because it pains him to see others receiving benefits from God. "It is a vice of the devil," says St. Augustine; "for one cannot accuse the devil of adultery or theft, but of envying man."² St. John Chrysostom says that "envy is a poisonous evil which turns man into a devil and a most cruel devil; for the devil carried out all his plans in paradise, and carried them out to perfection; he rejoiced therefore, when he heard the words: "Dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return."³

Therefore it is a fearful and diabolical vice.

Nay, continues St. Chrysostom, "the envious man is even worse than the devil, for the latter envies men alone and not his own companions; but you, oh man, envy your fellow man, you hate your own nature, which the devil does not do. How then can you hope for pardon of your sin, what excuse can you bring forward, when you grow pale with envy at your brother's good fortune?"⁴ Envy is not so cruel in the devil as in man, as we

The envy of man is even worse than that of the devil.

¹ Peccatum ad mortem.

² Vitium diaboli est; non enim diabolo dicitur ut damnetur, adulterium commisisti furtum fecisti, sed homini invidisti.—S. Aug. de disciplin. Christiana, c. 1.

³ Invidia pestiferum malum, hominem in diaboli conditionem, ac in dæmonem immanissimum convertit; diabolus quidem omnes in paradiso insidias exascavit summa votorum assecutus est; non sine tripudio audivit, terra es et in terram ibis.—S. Chrysos. in diversis orat.

⁴ Invidus ipso diabolo magis diabolus; invidet Satan, sed hominibus, socio jam nemini; tu vero homo cum sis, hominibus invides, odium adversus genus naturam que communem exerceas, quod ne Satan quidem facit. Quam igitur veniam assequeris? quam tandem excusationem prætendas, si fratris successum videns pallescas?—Ibid.

can see from the Holy Scripture. Both the evil spirit and the Jews were envious of Our Lord ; they both brought Him to the top of a mountain and to the summit of the temple, but with this difference, that the devil asked Him to throw Himself down ; “ And he set Him on a pinnacle of the temple and he said to Him : If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down from hence.”¹ He did not dare to do any more, and had to content himself with giving this insidious advice. But the Jews went farther. “ They brought Him to the brow of the hill, that they might cast Him down headlong ; ”² their intention was to lay violent hands on Him. The envious man gives vent to his bitterness, like the wicked spirits, against the generosity and paternal decrees of God. Why do you envy your neighbor ? asks St. John Chrysostom, he has done you no harm. It is not his fault that you have less than he. You must go to the Author and Giver of all gifts, and pour out your bitterness against God, for it is He who has so arranged things. God has exalted your neighbor above you, He has given him the riches, wisdom, happiness, and authority, on account of which you are envious and troubled. But, says St. Prosper, what a fearful and more than diabolical malice is that of the envious man, “ who hates and detests the gifts of God in his fellow man.”³ What else is it but to vie with the devil, who since he cannot injure God, nor lessen His mercy and goodness wreaks all his resentment on men who are the image of God, and who share in His benefits ? That the Lord should open His hand and dispense His blessings freely, that He should cause the sun to shine on the just and unjust is indeed a desirable thing, for which every one feels grateful to Him ; but it is the very thing which the envious man is more displeased at than Satan himself. It is the very thing that afflicts him, because he sees that others receive more than he from their heavenly Father ; nor will he be satisfied until God gives less to others than to him. “ Is thy eye evil, because I am good ? ”⁴ Our Lord could say to him, as the master of the vineyard said to the laborers who grumbled because they were not better paid than the others : Am I treating you unjustly because I give others as much or more than you ? Am I not master of my gifts, and can I not dispense them to whom, and how I will ?

¹ Et statuit eum super pinnam templi, et dixit illi : Si Filius Dei es, mitte te hinc deorsum.—Luke. iv. 9.

² Duxerunt illum usque ad supercilium montis, . . . ut præcipitarent eum.—Ibid, 29.

³ Quale hoc malum ? quo invidius donum Dei persequitur in homine.

⁴ An oculus tuus nequam est, quia ego bonus sum ?—Matth. xx. 15.

Woe to the envious on the last day. When the Judge shall utter the sentence of condemnation on those who did not do good to others, who did not feed them, nor give them drink, nor clothe them, what will they have to expect who envied their neighbor what he had, who grudged him the clothes on his back, the bread in his mouth, the very eyes in his head? Who if they could, would have prevented God from giving him those things? Certainly they who cannot bear to see others prosper, are not deserving of any blessing from God; and it generally is the case that God allows the envious man to suffer loss in this life, in the very things that most excites his envy against others. How humbly the children of Jacob had to prostrate themselves on the ground and kiss their brother's feet, after they had sold him into slavery, in order to prevent him from becoming their master. Was not Aman hanged on the gibbet that his jealous rage had made him erect for Mardochai? Saul was hurled from the throne and lost his life while he was engaged in persecuting David through jealousy. Unhappy Jews, you are to this moment a living proof that the misfortune you wished to avoid by putting the Son of God to death, has come upon you. Thus by a just judgment of God, the envious man falls into the pit he has dug for another.

Woe to the envious on the last day, as well as in this life.

O my dear Christians, I conclude in the words of St. Augustine: may "God avert this plague from all men, not to say from all Christians,"¹ for it is the worst foe to the precept of charity. Parents, be careful that your affection and favor are equally divided amongst your children and servants, as far as possible, so that by favoritism and undue partiality you may not cause dissension and envy in your household; for if those things once creep in amongst young people, it will be very hard to get rid of them afterwards. Recall often what you have heard of the children of Jacob; how much unhappiness was caused by the preference that Jacob showed for Joseph. You can read in the Book of Genesis what happened to Jacob and Esau: "Isaac loved Esau . . . and Rebecca loved Jacob;"² Jacob was a beautiful, amiable and affectionate son, who never left his mother's sight: "Jacob a plain man dwelt in tents."³ Esau on the other hand was of a harsh and stern disposition, and spent the most of his time wandering about the fields and forests:

Conclusion, and warning to parents.

¹ Avertam Dominus hanc pestem a cordibus hominum, nedum Christianorum.

² Isaac amabat Esau . . . et Rebecca diligebat Jacob.—Gen. xxv. 28.

³ Jacob autem vir simplex habitabat in tabernaculis.—Ibid. 27.

"Esau became a skilful hunter and husbandman."¹ Therefore the mother fixed all her affections on Jacob, while the father's preference was for Esau, since the latter was of greater help in supporting the family: "because he eat of his hunting."² But what was the consequence of this partiality? Continual dissension and disunion between the brothers. One of them lost his birth-right, the other was forced to leave his father's house, for fear of being murdered by his brother; in a word, they could never bear each other. See there, Christian parents, what hatred and envy you can cause amongst your children by favoritism! Therefore, in the training of your children, learn from God Himself, of whom the Prophet David says: "For God loveth mercy and truth,"³ or, as the Hebrew text has it, "God the sun."⁴ Why is God called the sun? Because it shines on all men alike; it does not take away its light from one who is blind, or whose sight is bad, nor from him who is crippled and feeble, nor from him who is stupid and ignorant; but it gives its light to all alike. So should your love be towards your children, that you may not give rise to hatred and envy amongst them.

To those
who are
envied.

But you, who see that others envy your good fortune, do not be annoyed thereat, much less should you give way to secret anger against them; you should rather heartily pity those unfortunate people who are punished enough by their envy. Thank God humbly for what He has given you, whether it is equal to, or greater than that He has bestowed on others, and try to practise Christian charity by doing good to those that hate you, so that, as Our Lord says, you may be children of your Father who is in Heaven.

To others.

If you are sometimes assailed by a thought of envy at hearing others praised, or seeing their good fortune, put away that thought at once, as a temptation to the odious sin of envy; and to prevent your giving consent to it, it would be well for you to practise at once the contrary virtue, that is, to speak in a friendly manner to the person whom you are tempted to envy, or to pray that God may increase his prosperity, and always to speak in his praise; by thus overcoming yourself you will practise Christian charity. Let us all impress deeply on our minds the command of Jesus Christ, "These things I command

¹ Factus est Esau vir gnarus venandi, et homo agricola.—Gen. xxv. 27.

² Eo quod de venationibus illius vesceretur.—Ibid, 28.

³ Misericordiam et veritatem diligit Deus.—Ps. lxxxiii. 12.

⁴ Sol Deus.

you that you love one another ; ” so that we may not violate it even in thought, much less in word or act ; but that we may all faithfully serve God together here with united hearts, and merit to live in the city of eternal peace hereafter, where there is no envy or jealousy, but peace and joy in the Lord. Amen.

*Another Introduction to the same sermon for the Feast of
St. Matthew the Apostle.*

Text.

Videntes Pharisei, dicebant discipulis ejus: Quare cum publicanis et peccatoribus manducat Magister vester?—Matth. ix. 11.

“ And the Pharisees seeing it, said to His disciples : Why doth your Master eat with publicans and sinners ? ”

It was impossible for Our Lord to please the envious Pharisees ; they found fault with everything He did. If He ate and drank with men in order to have an opportunity of instructing them, He was called, “ a wine drinker ; ” ¹ if He drove the devil out of the possessed, they accused Him of having done it by witchcraft, and the same interpretation they put on the evident miracles by which He healed the sick, cured the blind and lame, cleansed lepers, and raised the dead to life. If He converted sinners, and, as we read in to-day’s Gospel, did them the honor of sitting down to table with them, they said He was a friend and supporter of the wicked. “ And the Pharisees seeing it, said to His disciples : Why doth your Master eat with publicans and sinners ? ” So wicked is envy, that it pours out its poison even on the holiest works of the holiest men. My dear brethren, I have already spoken of the folly of envy, and shown that it is only a source of trouble and annoyance, and that it can bring no profit. To-day I will speak of its malice, and I say, etc.—*continues as before.*

¹ Potator vini.—Matth. xi. 19.

ON GLUTTONY AND DRUNKEN- NESS.

SEVENTEENTH SERMON.

ON THE NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF GLUTTONY.

Subject.

1. In what the vice of gluttony consists. 2. How to know that one is addicted to this vice.—*Preached on the first Sunday in Lent.*

Text.

Cum jejunasset quadraginta diebus et quadraginta noctibus.—Matth. iv. 2.

“And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights.”

Introduction.

If fasting and frequent mortification of the desire of eating and drinking is a salutary, nay, necessary means for most men to tame the insolence of the flesh, and to overcome many temptations, as I shall prove on another occasion, if fasting and abstinence from flesh meat is commanded by the Church for the same purpose, at different times of the year, and under pain of grievous sin, what will those Christians have to answer for, who I will not now say, violate the law of the Church regarding fasting, but who are so given to gluttony that they are always gratifying their desire for the pleasures of the table? A vice that is common enough, especially amongst idle people, who spend their time uselessly; for, as St. Augustine says, this vice is one of the consequences of idleness. “By idleness we are inflamed with lust, puffed up with pride, inclined to vanity in

dress, made slothful in rising in the morning, and strongly tempted to gluttony,"¹ I will speak of this vice, my dear brethren, in to-day's instruction.

Plan of Discourse.

In what does the vice of gluttony consist? That I will explain in the first part. How can one know that he is addicted to this vice? That I will show in the second part. The object of this instruction is, that we may learn to mortify our desire for food and drink, at least sufficiently for the observance of the fasts of the Church during Lent.

Give us Thy grace to this end, O Lord, which we ask of Thee "by Thy holy fasting,"² through the intercession of Mary and the holy angels guardian.

In the first place, the vice of gluttony does not consist merely in eating and drinking, for we must eat and drink in order to preserve life, since the natural heat of the human body always causes some consumption of vital energy, and the loss must be supplied by food taken at proper times. To that end food and drink have been given to us by the Almighty God, in the greatest abundance and variety; and as he who, being in sound health, refuses to take a proper amount of nourishment, may be regarded as making an attempt on his own life, and is guilty of a grievous sin, so he who is in the state of grace can make eating and drinking a supernatural work, if he has the proper intention, can serve God thereby, gain merit in Heaven, and increase his glory for all eternity.

The sin of gluttony does not consist in eating and drinking.

In the second place, gluttony does not consist in the quality, excellence, or costliness of the food and drink, provided it is not of a forbidden kind otherwise; for, a poor laborer, who has nothing but a plate of vegetables and a piece of bread, can commit gluttony; while on the other hand, a rich man, who has the most costly and the best prepared viands on his table, may not exceed the bounds of temperance, and so may perform a meritorious work by eating and drinking. Thirdly, gluttony does not always consist in enjoying the taste of good food, as some pious souls imagine, who believe that if they enjoy their food, they are guilty of a venial sin of sensuality. No, it is

Nor in the quality or costliness of food and drink.

¹ Per hanc accendimur ad luxuriam, per hanc animamur ad superbiam, per hanc suffocamur pretiose vestiti, per hanc ad superfluum dormitionem trahimur, per hanc tentamur delicate pasci.—S. Aug. Sermo 10, de Otio.

² Per sanctum jejunium tuum.

one thing to eat and drink with relish, and another to eat and drink merely for the sake of the pleasure one has in it ; this latter, as we shall hear presently, is to gratify one's sensuality, and is a sin of gluttony, but not the former. For, just as the eye, when it is in a healthy state, sees the beauty of some object that is presented to it, and cannot take away that beauty from it, so a healthy taste must necessarily find a certain amount of enjoyment in food, and cannot prevent the food from having that quality which gives the enjoyment.

Nor in eating or drinking much.

Finally, gluttony does not always consist in eating and drinking a great deal. For, one man requires more than another to keep up his strength ; so that of two men who are sitting at the same table, one who eats and drinks a great deal may observe the virtue of moderation, while he who eats less may sin by gluttony. Nay, the same man may to-day eat and drink, without sin, because he is in good health, much more than he could on another day, when he is not so well, and when he could commit gluttony, although he consumes a far less quantity of food.

But in an inordinate manner of eating and drinking.

The sin of gluttony consists then in nothing else but an inordinate manner of eating and drinking ; when the action, namely, is not directed to the end for which God created food and drink. The only end for which man should eat and drink, is to support his life, health and strength, so as to be able to serve God all the better and all the longer, since that is the end for which God has created food and drink. From this it follows that I must not eat or drink oftener or more than I believe to be necessary to that end, that is, to the support of the health and strength necessary to serve God according to my condition ; just as medicine, which is used only to recover lost health, or to avert sickness, is never employed but when it is believed necessary for that purpose.

When and how one sins in this respect.

Again, it follows that whenever my intention in eating and drinking cannot be reconciled with that end, or whenever I eat or drink in such a manner as to prevent me from directing my action to that end, I am guilty of gluttony. Thus, I cannot have a good intention, when I eat or drink what is forbidden by the law of God or of the Church ; such as would be the case, if I were to eat meat without a dispensation on the days on which it is prohibited, or if I were to ask for a dispensation without just cause, as many Christians do, or if I were to eat more than is allowed in the collation, etc. For in such circum-

stances, there is no doubt that it is not the will of God for me to indulge myself in that way. That was the sin that our fore-father Adam committed in Paradise, when he ate the fruit of the forbidden tree, that was given him by Eve; and that sin is the origin and cause of all the evils that the human race has to suffer. Nor could I have a good intention, if I eat or drink what I know by experience, or by the advice of a physician, to be prejudicial to my health. Nor when I eat or drink so much that I overload the stomach, or dull the intellect so that I cannot attend to the duties of my state; and so on. Every fault and sin that is committed in any of these ways comes from an evil source, that is, from the gratification of the sensual appetites. For, he who seeks that alone, does not care whether the food or drink is wholesome or not, whether it is allowed or forbidden, or whether it is enjoyed with moderation or to excess; as long as it is pleasing to the palate, he is satisfied. Therefore, theologians generally define gluttony as, "An inordinate appetite, or desire of food or drink, for the sake of gratifying the sense of taste."

There we have, my dear brethren, in a few words, the nature and characteristics of this vice, which brutish, as it is, is yet amongst people of all classes, so that few could be found who do not sometimes sin in that way. For, on the one hand, a sad necessity forces us to eat and drink, and to find a gratification of the sense of taste in doing so, a gratification which we cannot dissociate from the use of food and drink; while on the other hand, our inborn sensuality impels us violently to seek what is pleasing to it, and therefore, even the most pious people find it difficult to avoid all excess in this matter, and to keep their intention pure, and fixed on the only end for which we should eat and drink, according to the laws of Christian moderation.

The great St. Augustine publicly acknowledges his shortcomings in this respect, when he thus complains to God: "Thou hast taught me O Lord, to take food as I would medicine."¹ But how often am I not deceived herein by my own sensuality, so that I exceed the requirements of necessity! Besides the intention of supporting my strength, which alone should animate me in eating and drinking, another, that of gratifying my sensuality, also manages to introduce itself; so that, although I am determined to eat no more than is absolutely necessary, yet

It is a common vice.

To which even the holiest people are liable to yield sometimes, as St. Augustine testifies of himself.

¹ Hoc me docuisti, ut quemadmodum medicamenta, sic alimenta sumpturus accedam.

sensuality comes in uninvited, and claims its share also. Further, when I believe that I have barely satisfied the wants of nature, I find on examination, that the sensual appetite has committed a theft on me ; so that sometimes I do not know what intention I have, nor why I eat and drink, whether it is for my health's sake, or solely for pleasure, or for both together. "Daily have I to fight against these temptations, and I call upon Thee, O Lord my God, to help me, because I am at a loss to know what to do."¹ I hear the voice of God saying : And take heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting ;² and I have heard Thy voice also crying out : Go not after thy lusts, but turn away from thy own will.³ But in spite of all my care, I find myself often carried away by sensuality. O my God, what miserable mortals we are ! Who is there who places a bit and bridle in his mouth, that he may never exceed the bounds of moderation ? And who is there who does not sometimes go beyond the requirements of necessity ?⁴ If there is any one so far advanced in virtue, certainly he is a perfect man, and he may praise and glorify Thy holy name ; as for me, I acknowledge that I am only a sinful man, and that I am far from such perfection.⁵ Thus far St. Augustine.

And of his
holy mother
Monica.

The same Saint writes of his holy mother, Monica, who was brought up as a child in the greatest austerity, so that no matter how thirsty she was, she would not take a drop of water out of the usual times ; and yet, when occasion offered, she allowed herself to be conquered by a fondness for wine. Whenever her parents sent her for wine she used at first to taste just a few drops, but as time went on, she grew so accustomed to it, that she could drink it by the glassful. However her parents found her out, and having given her a sharp reproof, cured her of the bad habit.

How much
more then,
are sensual
and worldly
people lia-
ble to this
vice.

From this, my dear brethren, I must conclude, that if such great saints were not freed for this vice, although they constantly endeavored to mortify and overcome themselves, and always took the greatest pains to eat and drink with a good intention, and not to exceed the bounds of Christian mortification, so that they took food as if it were a medicine, what must we think of

¹ His tentationibus quotidie conor resistere, et invoco dexteram tuam ad salutem meam, quia consilium mihi de hac re nondum stat.

² Attendite autem vobis, ne forte graventur corda vestra in crapula.—Luke xxi. 34.

³ Post concupiscentias tuas non eas, et a voluntate tua avertere.—Eccl. xviii. 30.

⁴ Quis est Domine, qui non rapitur aliquando extra metas necessitatis ?

⁵ Quisquis est magnus est ; magnificet nomen tuum ; ego autem non sum, quia peccator homo sum.—S. Aug. Confess. l. 10, c. 31.

worldly-minded people who deliberately seek their bodily comfort, convenience, and pleasure in all things? Who are shocked at the very name of Christian mortification and penance? Who look upon a fast of forty days, commanded under pain of mortal sin by the Church of God, as an intolerable burden, and think it next to an impossibility to keep it to the end? Do not these people sin by gluttony every day almost? "By their fruits you shall know them,"¹ said Christ of the false prophets. Even so, it may easily be seen whether one is addicted to the vice of gluttony, and whether he seeks his pleasure in eating and drinking, by the following effects of gluttony, which are characteristics, or to speak more correctly, ways and means of gratifying one's sense of taste, as I shall explain in the

Second Part.

It is not I, but St. Thomas of Aquin, and with him the holy Pope St. Gregory, who have given the following signs of gluttony: *præpropere, laute, nimis, ardentè, studiose*; to eat or drink too early is one sign; to be too delicate in eating or drinking, is another; to eat or drink too much is the third; to eat or drink too eagerly is the fourth; to be too careful about good eating and drinking is the fifth sign that one does not take food or drink for the proper end, but rather to satisfy the sense of taste, and that therefore, one is guilty of gluttony.

First, then, *præpropere*, means, as St. Thomas says, "to eat and drink before necessity obliges."² Thus Jonathan was sentenced to death by his father, because he tasted a little honey before the proper time, as St. Gregory says.³ This sign is to be seen in those who have no proper time fixed for their meals, and who regard their appetite and their desire as their clock, and not hunger or necessity. They are always ready to eat, as often as they find anything that suits their taste. Early or late, morning, noon, or evening, between meals, it is all one to them. There are some who, before they have finished dressing in the morning, nay, immediately on awaking, and while still in bed, must have tea, coffee, a pipe of tobacco, or something else, ready for them; they eat and drink before they hear Mass, or say their morning prayers, nay, before they make the sign of the Cross, or a good intention, or even think of God. An evident

Signs of
gluttony.

The first is,
to eat at im-
proper
times.

¹ A fructibus eorum cognoscetis eos.—Matth. vii. 16.

² Cum quis manducando indigentiae tempus prævenit.—D. Thom. r. 2. q. 148. 2-4.

³ Mortis quippe sententiam patris ore Jonathas meruit, quia in gustu mellis constitutum edendi tempus antecessit.—S. Greg. 30 mor. c. 27.

sign amongst those who are in good health, and have no valid excuse for anticipating the usual time, is, that they eat and drink not through necessity, and for the sake of preserving their strength for the service of God, but merely to satisfy their sense of taste, and that therefore they are guilty of gluttony. Metaphrastes, in the life of St. Pachomius, brings forward a miraculous occurrence to prove that eating in this way outside of the ordinary meal-times is the work of the demon of gluttony. Pachomius, visiting once a certain monastery, saw an evil spirit sitting on the top of a high fig-tree enticing young boys to climb up and eat the fruit; he recognized him at once as the demon of gluttony, and ordered the tree to be cut down, so as to take away the occasion of sin. The gardener was very sorry at this, and begged that the tree might be spared, as it was so fruitful. Pachomius granted his request and allowed the tree to remain, but, behold, on the next morning it was quite withered. "Mark," says St. Humbertus, "those who are fond of eating fruit and the like between meals. Was it not a sin of that kind on the part of our first parents that caused the ruin of the world? Did not that nun who ate lettuce in the convent garden, swallow down the devil with it? as St. Gregory relates in his dialogues."¹ This consideration induced St. Sabbas to make a resolution never to eat fruit; for having once plucked an apple from a tree, when he was on the point of eating it, he remembered the fall of our first parents in paradise, and knowing that the devil was tempting him, he blushed with shame at his weakness and at his intention of committing gluttony, and throwing the apple on the ground, he trampled it under foot, and thus conquered his desire for such things. The holy Abbot Esaias therefore advises his disciples "never to eat the least thing out of meal-times, lest from a small sin of gluttony they might go on to great ones."²

The second sign is, to be too delicate in eating.

Laute, that is to say, to be too delicate in eating, is the second sign of gluttony, and it is to be observed in those, who, although they do not eat out of meal-times, yet insist on having everything cooked in a particular manner, so as to suit their taste, and if that is not done, they have no words hard enough for the cook; they are never satisfied with common food, no

¹ Nota de iis qui extra horam prandii comedunt, quales sunt, qui fructus quoscunque et similia comederent extra mensam. Nonne totus mundus damnatus est, propter hujusmodi comestionem primorum parentum? Nonne monialis transiens in hortum, et comedens lactucam, cum lactuca comedit diabolum, sicut refert Gregorius in dialogo?—Humbert. c. 5-7. in c. 6.

² Ne quidquam licet pauxillum sit, comede præter tempus, ne paulatim ex minimis ad deteriora prolabare.

matter how good it is ; they must always have the best of everything, no matter what it costs. Amongst other things, the Holy Scripture says of the children of Heli : “ Also before they burnt the fat, the servant of the priest came, and said to the man that sacrificed : Give me flesh to boil for the priest, for I will not take of thee sodden flesh, but raw.”¹ Now why did the wicked priests ask for raw meat ? Would not the cooked meat have been better for them, as it would have saved them the fuel and the labor necessary to cook it ? The commentators of the Sacred Scriptures answer this question by saying that the priests acted thus through gluttony ; “ The sons of Heli,” says St. Isidor, “ took raw meat from those who offered it, contrary to custom, that they might cook it afterwards so as to suit their own taste.”² St. Gregory agrees with this : “ The first sin of the Children of Heli consisted in the commanding their servant not to take the cooked meat, according to the established custom, but to ask for uncooked meat, that they might prepare it as they wished.”³ For according to the law of God, the flesh thus offered should be simply boiled in pure water. The sensual and gluttonous priests were not content with this ; they wished to have the meat roasted, or cooked in some other way, so as to suit their taste better. Therefore, they said ; “ I will not take of thee sodden flesh, but raw ;” and if the man who offered sacrifice, did not give them what they asked, they took it by force ; “ Thou shalt give it me now, or I will take it by force.”⁴ Therefore, says the Sacred Scripture, “ The sin of the young men was exceeding great before the Lord, because they withdrew men from the sacrifice of the Lord.”⁵ See, my dear brethren, how far one may be brought by gluttony. It is in our own days frequently the case that more is given for one dinner, than is earned in a whole week. There are many who consume in one supper all they will make for some days after ; nay, very often the poor children and servants have to go hungry or to content themselves with very coarse food, on account of the gluttony of one man.

¹ Etiam antequam adolerent adipem, veniebat puer sacerdotis, et dicebat immolanti : Da mihi carnem, ut coquam sacerdoti : non enim accipiam a te carnem coctam, sed crudam.—I Kings ii. 15.

² Filii Heli extra morem crudam ab offerentibus carnem tollebant, quam sibi accuratius præpararent.—Isid. de diff. Spir. l. 2, c. 35.

³ Prima filiorum Heli culpa suborta est, quod ex eorum voto sacerdotis puer non antiquo more coctas vellet de sacrificio carnes accipere, sed crudas quæreret, quas accuratius exhiberet.—S. Greg. l. 30. moral..c. 13.

⁴ Nunc enim dabis, alioquin tollam vi.—I Kings ii. 16.

⁵ Erat ergo peccatum puerorum grande nimis coram Domino ; quia retrahebant homines a sacrificio Domini.—Ibid, 17.

Oh, how many feasts and entertainments the devil will bring forward at the last day, as a testimony against those who gave them, and who, not having paid their debts, were guilty of so many acts of injustice and theft ! Surius writes that in the year 1511, there was a giant in Venice, who used to eat every day for his dinner a sheep and a calf ;¹ certainly he must have been very fat, and must have had a wonderful appetite, since he was able to eat at one meal as much as would have sufficed to feed a whole family for some time. Yet, my dear brethren, there are some of those delicate eaters who consume even more than that gluttonous giant ; for they eat up all the substance of their children and leave them in poverty. In this class, however, I do not mean to include the sick, or the delicate, or those of high station who place exquisite viands before their guests, according to the requirements of necessity, Christian charity and courtesy. But generally speaking, the satisfying one's self with food of that kind, can hardly be called anything but gluttony and sensuality.

Thirdly :
eating too
much.

This ordinarily gives rise to the third sign, *nimis*, that is, eating too much. He who measures the quantity of his food by his appetite and taste, cannot but exceed the bounds of moderation, and will eat more than necessity requires. There are some to whom one might with truth apply those words of the Prophet Isaias : “ Most impudent dogs, they never had enough ; ”² They eat and drink as if they could never satisfy themselves ; as long as they like the food, and have plenty of it, they continue to gorge themselves, until the overloaded stomach refuses to bear any more. These people, says St. Gregory, are worse than oxen, horses and mules, that never eat more than is necessary to satisfy their hunger. This is therefore the most odious and most injurious form of gluttony. Shame, cries out the so-called Author of the Imperfect Work, “ One should eat in the day what natural reason requires, and not what sensuality demands.”³

Fourthly :
eating too
greedily.

The fourth sign of gluttony is, *ardenter*, that is, a too great eagerness in eating, the sin that Esau committed, when he so far forgot himself that he sold his birth-right for a mess of pottage ; as St. Gregory says : “ Esau lost the glory of his birth-right, because he gave way to his desire for that vile food, for the sake of which he sold his dignity as first-born ; thus

¹ Sur apud kirch, in mundo subter. l. 2.

² Canes impudentissimi nescierunt saturitatem. — Isa. lvi. 11.

³ Tanto quis uno die manducet, quantum ratio naturalis exigit, non quantum lascivia carnis impellit.

showing what an influence gluttony had on him,"¹ From which he concludes, that it is not the costliness of the food, but the too great desire for it which constitutes gluttony.² As Hugo of St. Victor remarks, the most remarkable sins of gluttony were caused, not by delicately prepared meats, but by coarse and common food: "The first man was tempted, not by the well-cooked flesh of a swine, but by a raw apple; Esau, by a dish of lentils, not by a roast fowl;" and, he adds, "The devil tempted Our Lord by a piece of dry bread, and not by a well prepared dish."³ Caesarius writes that there was once a soldier who could never perform his sacramental penance, because he found it too difficult; until at last his confessor asked him if there was anything he would undertake to do instead. Yes, answered the soldier, I have an apple tree, the fruit of which is so bitter that I cannot bear the taste of it; put it upon me as a penance never to eat any of that fruit as long as I live. The priest, who knew well that our corrupt nature is only too much inclined to do what is forbidden, and that the devil would not fail to tempt the soldier to eat that fruit, sour as it was, agreed to the proposal, and imposed the required penance. The soldier went his way rejoicing, and thinking that he would not have any difficulty now in performing his penance. But, wonderful to relate, he never passed by that tree, without feeling a strong inclination to eat some of the fruit; however, he remembered his obligation, and restrained his desire. On one occasion he was standing by the tree, when the temptation came so strong upon him that he actually stretched out his arm to pluck an apple, but he drew it back again at once. This struggle against the temptation lasted nearly the whole day; But he was strengthened by divine grace, and he resisted so valiantly, that the effort cost him his life; he fell down dead under the tree. So true is it, that it is not the quality of the food, but a too great eagerness for it that constitutes gluttony. They sin, who, while they are eating, are so completely absorbed in what they are doing, that their eyes, hands and their whole bodies, as well as their mouths are fully occupied, they swallow down one mouthful after another, as if they were afraid the table would fly away

¹ *Primogenitorum gloriam Esau amisit, quia magno aestu desiderii vilem cibum, scilicet lenticulum concupivit, quam dum vendendis etiam primogenitis prætulit, quo in illam appetitu anhelaret, indicavit.*—S. Greg. ubi supra.

² *Neque enim cibibus, sed appetitus in vitio est.*

³ *Primus homo tentatus est non de porco sed de pomo; Esau non de gallina, sed de lenticula; Salvator noster, non de carne, sed de pane.*—Hugo Victorin. in cap. 6. reg. S. Aug.

from them, unless they make haste. An evident sign of gluttony, and indeed of rudeness, which is not only contrary to Christian temperance, but is also very injurious to health. People should remember the warning of the Wise Ecclesiasticus : “ Use as a frugal man the things that are set before thee ; lest if thou eatest much, thou be hated ; ”¹ that is to say, eat with prudence, modesty and decency.

Fifthly :
to be too
careful
about good
eating and
drinking.

The fifth sign is, *studiose*, that is, to be too careful about good eating and drinking, as is the case with those who are always feasting, as if they did not eat to preserve life, but were on the earth for no other purpose than to eat and drink. Of such people St. Paul says : “ Whose God is their belly ; ”² they are nearly always thinking of eating, drinking and feasting. It was for living in that way that the rich man in the Gospel was condemned to hell ; for the Gospel does not say that he was guilty of any other sin but gluttony ; “ There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and feasted sumptuously every day ; ”³ This is the way to swallow up one’s yearly income, so that very often one’s heirs have no legacy to expect beyond the trouble and anxiety to find the means of continuing such a luxurious and indolent life. What will be still harder to answer for at the judgment-seat, is that those who live in that way, have hardly anything left wherewith to give alms, although the poor are suffering hunger and thirst. There was a certain French courtier, as Mazarin writes, who had built for himself a magnificent house like a palace ; when the king saw it he could not sufficiently admire the skill of the architect, the beauty of the furniture, etc. But when he went into the kitchen, and saw that it was very small and that it had only one fire-place, he was amazed, and asked how such a mistake was made, to put a small kitchen like that in so large and fine a house. Your majesty, answered the courtier, it was no mistake ; for it was done at my special order ; “ a small kitchen makes a large house, but a large kitchen makes a small house.” It is not hard to understand what he meant by that.

Gluttony
may be
committed
in desire.

Finally, one may be addicted to the vice of gluttony, although one does not eat out of meal-times, nor too delicately, nor too much, nor too greedily, nor too luxuriously. And how is that ?

¹ Utere quasi homo frugū his, quæ tibi apponuntur, ne, cum manducas multum, odio habearis.—Eccī. xxxi. 19.

² Quorum deus venter est.—Philipp. iii. 19.

³ Homo quidam erat dives, qui induebatur purpura et bysso, et epulabatur quotidie splendide.—Luke xvi. 19.

A beggar may be avaricious, although he does not own a farthing; a poor girl may be proud, although no one has any regard for her; namely, in heart, and through an inordinate desire of riches and honors. In the same way one may be guilty of gluttony, and many in fact are guilty of it, who have hardly enough to support life, and yet long for good living and envy those who can sit every day at a well-furnished table, while they think themselves unhappy in being deprived of that pleasure.

Like the Israelites in the desert, who longed for the flesh-pots of Egypt, and who were tired of the manna that was sent them daily from heaven: "Our soul now loatheth this very light food;"¹ so these people long for the means of indulging in the pleasures of the table. And how severely the Israelites were punished for their sin! "Wherefore the Lord sent amongst the people fiery serpents;"² to bite and kill them, and to teach them, and us also, how hateful to God is the vice of gluttony.

The Israelites were punished for a gluttony of that kind.

Think of this, my dear brethren, and reason thus with yourselves: if a merciful God punished His chosen people so severely for a gluttony that they committed only in desire, how will not the same God chastise the gluttony that is actually committed in so many ways and daily by Christians living under a holy and perfect law? What have those tepid and half-hearted Christians to expect, who refuse to mortify their sensuality sufficiently even to observe the Lenten fast in a manner becoming Catholics, and who, for the sake of satisfying their gluttony, eat three full meals every day, without scruple, so that one hardly knows whether it is Lent or carnival time with them? What have they to expect who look upon it as an intolerable penance to fast even during Holy Week, so that even this short time seems too long for them, and who like the Jews, hanker after their flesh-pots? What, I ask, have such Christians to expect by way of punishment? Let that religious tell us, whose gluttony cost him so dear; he was once wearied after a journey, and, as it was a day of abstinence, his friend, who gave him hospitality, offered him fish to eat; the religious was not satisfied with it, and asked his friend to have a fowl cooked for him; his request was granted, but the first bit of the fowl that he took, stuck in his throat and choked him. Oh, how many Christians would die suddenly nowadays, if the first bit of

The gluttony of Christians deserves a more severe punishment.

Anima nostra jam nauseat super cibo isto levissimo.—Num. xxi. 5.

² Quamobrem misit Dominus in populum ignitos serpentes.—Ibid. 6.

meat they eat on days of abstinence were to choke them! Therefore, the chief object of my present instruction is to remind you, and myself as well, that we must mortify and overcome gluttony, at least so far as to observe all fasts?

Conclusion
and exhortation
to Christian
temperance.

But, besides this, whenever we enjoy the gifts of God in the shape of food and drink, we must not forget the good intention, nor lose sight of the end for which we should eat and drink, which is to preserve our strength for the service of God; and if we do that we shall at once overcome all gluttony. There are opportunities of mortifying ourselves in that respect, even at a well furnished table; for instance, we might allow one or two morsels of something we are very fond of, to remain untasted, and offer them up to God in thought; or we might now and then abstain altogether from the dish we like best, or what is still better, keep it for Jesus Christ, that is, for the poor, as we read of St. Louis, king of France, whose biographer says of him, that he always kept the best food for the poor, while he himself was contented with the worst; or we might leave the table before having fully satisfied our appetite, etc. Mortifications of this kind, when practised with perseverance, and daily, are of more profit than fasting occasionally for whole days together. Let us often recall those words of the Apostle to the Romans: "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but justice and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in this serveth Christ, pleaseth God."¹ Therefore, according to the example of the same Apostle, who says elsewhere, "I know both how to abound and to suffer need;"² let us try to practise temperance that we too may be able to say of ourselves with truth, I know how to eat and to be hungry; I know how to act when I have abundance and when I am in want. They who have to be content with coarse and homely food, must be resigned to the will of God, and thank Him for what He has given them. They who have abundance, must learn how to keep themselves within the bounds of Christian temperance. And with regard to this matter, let us all remember the words of Christ: "The kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away;"³ and so we shall learn to reserve our greatest appetite for the heavenly banquet which will satiate us for all eternity. Amen.

¹ Non est enim regnum Dei esca et potus; sed justitia et pax, et gaudium in Spiritu sancto; qui enim in hoc servit Christo, placet Deo.—Rom. xiv. 17, 18.

² Scio et abundare . . . et penuriam pati.—Philipp. iv. 12.

³ Regnum cœlorum vim patitur, et violenti rapiunt illud.—Matth. xi. 12.

Another Introduction to the same sermon for Sexagesima Sunday.

Text.

In fame et siti, in jejuniis multis.—II. Cor. xi. 27.

“In hunger and thirst, in fastings often.”

If fasting and hunger are so general amongst holy Christians, who thereby subdue the flesh, and keep it in servitude, as we see from to-day's Epistle to have been the case with St. Paul who says of himself that he performed his apostolic office “in hunger and thirst, in fastings often,” if fasting and frequent mortification of the desire of eating and drinking, etc.—*continues as before.*

EIGHTEENTH SERMON.

ON THE INJURIOUS EFFECTS OF GLUTTONY.

Subject.

Nothing is more injurious to one's bodily health and well-being, than gluttony and an immoderate love of the pleasures of the table ; therefore he who wishes to enjoy a long life and good health must practise Christian temperance.—*Preached on the second Sunday in Lent.*

Text.

Bonum est nos hic esse—Matth. xvii. 4.

“It is good for us to be here.”

Introduction.

Most people agree with Peter in wishing to spend their lives where they feel happiest ; still there are not many who would be satisfied with the pleasures of the sense of sight alone, as was the case with Peter, who rejoiced in the sight of the glorified humanity of Our Lord. No, we are not satisfied unless all the senses have their pleasure ; and the greatest of these pleasures, as we imagine, consists in eating and drinking. Hence, whenever we hear a man say that he enjoyed himself, we generally understand that good eating and drinking had something to do with it. Still, my dear brethren, I am of the opinion that they

who are given to gluttony and who seek pleasure in eating, do not at all find what they seek. For, I ask, what is the object of their eating and drinking? Is it not that they may be happy, that they may live long and enjoy themselves? Now the very contrary of this follows on gluttony and immoderate eating and drinking, as I shall now show.

Plan of Discourse.

Nothing is more injurious to one's bodily health and well-being, than gluttony and an immoderate love of the pleasures of the table; for there is nothing which tends more to shorten life. Therefore, he who wishes to enjoy a long life and good health, and to be able to do much good, must practise the virtue of Christian temperance. Such is the whole subject of this sermon.

Grant us all, O God, through the intercession of Mary and the holy angels guardian, the grace to observe temperance, at least so far as not to break prescribed fasts.

Every excess is injurious.

My proposition may seem strange and contrary to general experience, for it is usually said, that good eating and drinking keep body and soul together; that is, that it lengthens human life, which cannot subsist without a certain amount of food and drink. And in fact, as we have seen already, food and drink are ordained by God to keep up the health and life of the body. How then can gluttony, which consists in the enjoyment of those things, be injurious to health and shorten life? Still, my dear brethren, there is no doubt that it does so. Medicine is taken, either to cure a sickness from which one is actually suffering, or to avert the danger of it; is not that so? But if the medicine is not taken in the proper quantity, if, for instance, the sick person takes three spoonfuls instead of one, of what good will the medicine be then? It will only make matters worse, and will sometimes even cause death. And is not that equally true? You pour oil into a lamp; to what end? To keep the light burning, which would otherwise go out, through the wick consuming itself. Yet if you pour in too much oil, you will extinguish the light by drowning the wick.

We generally exceed in the use of necessary things.

It is the same with eating and drinking; what oil is to the lamp, and medicine to the sick body, food is to him who is in good health, for it maintains his strength and his life. If we never exceeded the proper quantity, nor took our food too often, then we should have nothing to fear. But we act in this as we do in almost everything; we use the means that God has given

us to support our lives, against the end for which he has instituted it, and we make ourselves guilty of deliberate excess. For instance, we require a certain amount of sleep in order to rest our weary limbs and to relieve ourselves from the many thoughts and cares that oppress us during the day; we require clothing in order to maintain a suitable appearance and to protect ourselves against the cold; we stand in need of days of rest and recreation in order to renew our fervor in the service of God, and to be all the better able to fulfil the duties of our state, etc. But the mistake is that we seldom confine ourselves to what necessity requires in those things; thus, sleep is often abused through sloth and sensuality, so that it is prolonged sometimes far into the day, and as a consequence of that, the understanding is dulled, the head becomes heavy, and one is incapable of cheerfulness. Clothing is made the occasion of useless expense, pride and vanity, nay, it sometimes becomes an occasion of sin and scandal to others. The days of rest are made an excuse for squandering away one's time in idleness and useless pleasure; visits and idle talk are multiplied and prolonged, gambling and other foolish pastimes are made a daily custom, while the duties of house-keeping, the care of children and the most important business of the soul are neglected. Thus, means that are in themselves useful and necessary, are perverted into injurious and unlawful abuses, which are contrary to the end for which God instituted those means, and that, because moderation is not observed in the use of them.

So it is also with food and drink; our sensuality is not content with what merely satisfies the wants of nature; and, as the old proverb has it, it would be easy to satisfy the stomach, if the eyes were not so big. If gluttony has once taken possession of a man, so that he eats and drinks to gratify his sensuality, he will hardly ever be content with merely satisfying nature; for he will either eat and drink what does not agree with him, or he will eat and drink a number of different things, or he will not observe the proper time for meals, or he will give way to greediness, or to excess, and will eat more than he can digest, as I have already explained.

It is thus that the health suffers so much, and is injured instead of being preserved, while life is shortened. The words of the Holy Ghost in the Book of Ecclesiasticus, must be infallibly true: "Be not greedy in any feasting, and pour not out thyself upon any meat. For in many meats there will be sick-

And in the use of food and drink.

This injures the health, according to the words of the Holy Ghost.

ness, and greediness will turn to choler. By surfeiting many have perished ; but he that is temperate shall prolong life.”¹

And according to the testimony of medical men.

It is the opinion also of all medical men, that most illnesses are caused by excess in eating and drinking. If a pantry in which different articles of food are stored, is kept closed, it soon becomes full of worms, flies, wasps and all kinds of vermin ; so the stomach that is overloaded with different kinds of food, must necessarily be filled with bad humors arising from indigestion, which lessen and destroy the natural heat of the body. Others compare the stomach to the hopper of a mill, into which the grain is poured in order to be ground ; if the miller does not know his business, and puts in too much at once, the corn will be ground but very imperfectly, so that it will not make good meal, nor good bread. In the same way, if the stomach is overloaded with food and drink, it cannot digest properly ; so that ill health must be the consequence. A bad digestion causes evil humors, in the head, and bad blood in the veins, from which nearly all diseases come. Hence the well-known saying : “ Gluttony kills more than the sword.”² That is the reason why the celebrated physician George Huebner gives the following advice to all : “ If you care to be in good health, do not eat with both jaws, like a cat ; but always remember to leave the table before having fully satisfied your appetite, and filled your stomach to repletion ; drink, so as to be still thirsty ; eat, so as to be still hungry.”³

Experience shows that this was true in the first ages of the world.

The truth of this is proved by the experience of all ages, which shows that temperance is the best means of prolonging life, according to the testimony of the Holy Ghost : “ He that is temperate shall prolong life.” We know from the Sacred Scriptures that in the first ages of the world, men lived to be four, five, six, seven, eight, and nine hundred years old ; now what kind of food had they in those days ? The word of God assures us that they required nothing but bread and water : “ The chief thing for man’s life is water and bread and clothing.”⁴ It is the general teaching of the Holy Fathers, that from the beginning of the world to the Deluge, people who had any fear

¹ Noli avidus esse in omni epulatione, et non te effundas super omnem escam : in multis enim escis erit infirmitas, et aviditas appropinquabit usque ad choleram. Propter crapulam multi oblerunt ; qui autem abstinentes est, adjiciet vitam.—Eccl. xxxvii. 32–34.

² Plures occidit gula quam gladius.

³ Si sanitatem ames, ne vores, ut felis, ambabus maxillis ; sed illud spectes semper, ut mensam deseras appetentia nondum expleta, stomacho nondum plene saturato ; sic pota ut sitias ; sic ede ut esurias.

⁴ Initium vitæ hominis aqua et panis, et vestimentum.—Eccl. xxix. 28.

51 God, never ate meat, although they had flocks and herds in abundance, but contented themselves with fruits, vegetables and milk-meats; of wine they knew nothing. And yet with such plain food, they were able to live so long! We might think, my dear brethren, that they lived so long in those early days through a special decree of Providence, in order that the world might become peopled all the sooner, and such is really the case. Still, in those days God allowed nature to take its course, as He does now, so that we must necessarily come to the conclusion that excessive and costly food is not required to preserve life and strength.

Be that as it may, however, we shall now come a little nearer to our own time. Celius Rodiginus writes of Galen, the prince of physicians: "It is said that Galen, the philosopher and physician, lived to be a hundred and forty years old."¹ How did he manage that? Had he discovered some wonderful medicine, which he kept for himself alone in order to prolong his life? There is no doubt he had. And what was it? One that all can use without the trouble of sending to the apothecary's for it; "He was so temperate in eating and drinking, that he never satisfied his appetite at table;" he managed so that he always felt some desire to eat; "Thus he died of old age alone, without suffering any other malady."² Luigi Cornaro, a Venetian noble, in his book on temperance, proposes himself as an example to the world: "Believe me, dear reader, for I speak from experience, from my youth up to my thirty-fifth year, during which time I was accustomed to indulge my appetite, I was never in good health; so that the food and drink with which I used to satisfy my appetite, occasioned me much discomfort and illness, and so did me more harm than good. But at last I resolved to live more temperately, and although it cost me a great deal at first to keep that resolution and overcome my sensuality, yet I succeeded at last. Since then I am never sick; I am now eighty years old, and am so healthy and strong that I expect to live a long time yet." And his prophecy turned out true, for when he was in his ninety-fifth year he received a serious injury from a fall; but he was so strong and robust that he recovered without difficulty, as there were no evil humors in his body to interfere

And also in
our own
time.

¹ Proditum est Galenum, philosophum et medicum singularem, centum quadraginta annos vixisse.

² Tanta in cibo et potu abstinentia utebatur, ut ad statietatem nunquam comederit, sicque citra ullam affectionem sola defecit senectute.

with the working of the medicines used to cure him. There is another proof that he who is temperate prolongs his life.

Saints became very old, in spite of their austerities.

If I said anything of those holy servants of God who lived in the greatest austerity and mortification, and yet reached a ripe old age, you would say, as people generally do in such cases : Oh, they were saints ! Certainly they were saints, but what if they were ? Does holiness of life change human nature, and serve as food and drink ? By no means. Paul, Anthony, Hilarion and many other hermits, who lived in the desert, in holes and caves in the mountains, practising the greatest austerities and mortifications, allowing themselves only a very short sleep on the bare ground, and spending all their time in prayer and meditation, were human beings the same as we are, and like us they required food and drink to sustain life ; nay, many of them, according to Cassian, were of noble birth and delicate constitution, and had been brought up in luxury ; and how long did they live amidst the austerities of the desert ? Hilarion, as St. Jerome says, went into the desert when he was fifteen years old and lived to be over eighty. Anthony, according to St. Athanasius, lived to be a hundred and twenty years old, although he entered the desert in his youth. Paul, the first hermit, as St. Jerome testifies, spent ninety years in the desert, and was over a hundred and thirteen when he died. During all that time, these holy men were always in good health, they were never in need of a physician ; they never required medicine. How did they manage that ? What strengthening, nutritious and costly food and drink they must have had to be able to preserve their health so long and to live to such a miraculous old age ! No doubt their food and drink were very healthy, or they would not have lived so long, nor have been so free from illness. Do you wish to know in what it consisted ? Wild herbs, roots, and the buds of trees, were the usual evening meal of St. Hilarion ; salt, bread and water, that of St. Anthony ; they never ate at mid-day, or took more meals than one. Once a day St. Paul used to eat dates and drink water, until the raven brought him half a loaf daily. They all looked on it as a sin even to desire flesh-meat. Such was the medicine of those great servants of God. They were always in good health and reached a ripe old age, in spite of the austerity of their lives, because they were so temperate in eating and drinking. “He that is temperate shall prolong life.”

While they

This is well worth the consideration of those self-indulgent

Christians, who, blinded by gluttony and sensuality, imagine that they cannot observe the forty days fast of Lent, and persuade themselves that they must have meat, or else they will get sick. (Poor people, how I pity you !) Nor should it be forgotten by those half-hearted Catholics, who having a dispensation to eat meat once a day in Lent, or who, after having made a good dinner with other nutritious food, are not satisfied unless they eat a good supper also, so that they may not go to bed hungry. How many of those people act thus in order to preserve their health ; they lead such self-indulgent lives, and gratify their palates whenever they can ; they would not think on any account of suffering the least hunger, although they can sleep in their comfortable beds till sunrise : they are unwearied in the search after pleasures and pastimes ; they most carefully avoid all labor, difficulty and annoyance that could in the least injure their health ; how many of them, I ask, live in constant enjoyment of good health to a ripe old age, like the hermits of old, whose only food was bread and water once a day ? Not many ; for if we were to ask, who are they who are most in need of the physician ; who are they who have to patch up their health with all sorts of medicine ; who are the most profitable customers of the apothecary ; who complain oftenest when they feel a draught, or a breath of cold air ; who are most in the habit of dispensing themselves from going to church, especially in winter time, on account of actual weakness or the fear of getting ill ? Where are we most likely to find these people ? Amongst poor laborers and mechanics, who have to work hard every day to gain a poor and scanty living ? No, certainly not ; no sensible person would seek them amongst that class, or at all events, he would find very few. They are to be found amongst those who are given to gluttony, and who are intent on gratifying their sensuality in eating and drinking.

who indulge
in gluttony,
are general-
ly weak and
sickly.

How does it happen that so many men in the prime of life, nay, in the very bloom of youth, are subject to catarrh, vertigo, chest-diseases, dropsy and similar complaints, from which they die prematurely ? It is true that these diseases may come from other causes ; but, would they be so frequent, if gluttony were not so common, and if food and drink were always taken in proper quantities, for the proper end, and only as far as necessity requires to sustain health ? We need not puzzle much over this ; what the Holy Ghost says is and must be true : “ By surfeiting many have perished, but he that is temperate, shall prolong life.”

Nearly all
diseases
come from
excess in
eating and
drinking.

How foolish it is, to give way to gluttony, and what a responsibility is incurred thereby.

Are we not foolish mortals? There is nothing we desire more than bodily health; nothing that we wish more heartily for ourselves and our friends than a long and happy life, and yet, we are so misled by gluttony that we do our very best to destroy our health and shorten our lives, as if death, which we naturally fear and dread, were a most welcome guest, whom we eagerly invite, and urge to hasten his steps in our direction! If we are ill, we spare neither trouble nor money, we weary Heaven, so to speak, with our prayers, we get others to pray, we have Masses said, and practise different devotions, for the sole purpose of being free from our illness and recovering our former health. If we are in good health, we do all we can by excessive eating and drinking, and by indulging our gluttony, to destroy our health. Could there be any greater folly or madness than this? Alas, what a strict account we shall have to render at the judgment seat of God for the precious time of life of which we are not masters and owners, so that we can spend it as we wish; for that time is given to us by the Providence of God, that we may keep it as best we can, and use it for the sole purpose of serving God longer, increasing our merit daily, and laying up a greater reward for ourselves in Heaven. Christians, think of what a responsibility it must be to shorten this precious time by wilful gluttony and intemperance!

Gluttony destroys not only the health of the body, but also that of the soul.

I have said that we must lay up a greater reward for ourselves in Heaven, for I do not intend to say much now of the harm that gluttony does to our spiritual health, nor to show how it prevents us from going to Heaven. Let it suffice to remind you that a life of luxurious indulgence does not lead to Heaven, for there is no other way thither but the way of penance, the way of the Cross. Read the works of the Holy Fathers, and you will see what names they give to the fruits of gluttony. St. Thomas Aquinas asks if gluttony is worse than other sins, and he gives the following answer: The enormity of a vice may consist in the matter of the sin, and in that way, gluttony is a small sin, because its matter is eating and drinking; or it may consist in the person who sins, and so, a rich man who commits a theft, is more guilty than a poor man who commits the same theft, because the former had far less reason for stealing, than the latter. In this way too, the sin of gluttony is not great, because every one is in need of food and drink, in order to sustain life. Or else it may consist in the effects which follow from the sin. "And in this sense," says the Angelic Doctor, "the sin of

gluttony is certainly a great one, because it gives rise to many different kinds of sins.”¹ “How many evil effects follow from gluttony and intemperance,” says St. Laurence Justinian, “it stirs up concupiscence and is the arch-enemy of chastity, it occasions loquacity, calumny and detraction, etc. ; in a word, it is the mother of all vices.”² But enough of this for the present.

Why then, one might ask, has God created so many different kinds of animals, fowls and fishes, and other articles of food in such pleasing and almost endless variety, if the enjoyment of them is so hurtful to soul and body ? Would it not be better to have but one or two kinds of food, and not to have so many temptations and occasions for gluttony ? We see that other animals, although they may be much larger than man, yet have generally only one kind of food ; some eat nothing but grass, etc., others nothing but a certain kind of fruit, and so on, while nearly all without exception drink nothing but water. On the other hand all the elements, earth, air and water, supply food to man. Why is that ? When a king or prince invites a foreign potentate to dinner, he has his table loaded with the most costly dishes and the rarest wines ; for what reason ? Does he expect his guest to taste all the dishes and drink of all the different kinds of wine ? No, he does not expect any thing of the sort. His only object is to show how rich he is, and at the same time to prove how he esteems his guest, since he provides him with an abundance of food, from which he may select what is most pleasing to him. So it is also with the great King of Heaven. We men are placed on earth as princes and lords, so to speak, over all unreasoning creatures ; He is the great Sovereign who entertains us as His guests, and in order to show His endless glory and the great love He has for men, who are made to His image, He is pleased to prepare for them a richly furnished table, and so he has created a vast quantity of different kinds of food and drink, for our enjoyment and support, not that we should use them all to excess, but that we should take as much of them as is helpful and necessary to preserve life.

Therefore, we must use for our sustenance the different articles of food that God has given us.

Besides, as God created a most beautiful tree whose fruit was most pleasing to the taste, in order to give our first parents,

And also for the purpose of increasing our virtue.

¹ Et secundum hoc vitium gulæ quandam habet magnitudinem, in quantum ex ea occasionentur diversa peccata.—D. Thom. 2. 2. q. 148. a. 3.

² Quid namque mali ex gulæ inordinatione et ventris repletionem oritur ; est enim fomes libidinis, naufragium castitatis, tempestas linguæ, etc. ; flagitiorum omnium mater.—S. Laur. Justin. de ligno vitæ, c. 10.

Adam and Eve, an opportunity of practising self-denial and obedience in Paradise, so He has also, with the greatest liberality, given us many kinds of food and drink, that we may find thereby an opportunity of practising virtue. Thus the poor, who cannot have abundant or nutritious food, and who see the forbidden tree only from afar, as it were, have the opportunity of practising patience and resignation to the divine will; the rich can practise mortification, self-denial and charity towards the poor; while all can thus gain greater merit by temperance, since it is most meritorious to deny one's self the gratification that it is in one's power to have. Such is the intention of our heavenly Father.

Conclusion
and exhortation to
temperance.

Let our conclusion then be, to act according to this intention, my dear brethren. You who are poor, remember the words of St. Paul: "But having food and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content;"¹ No matter how poor you are, you must thank God that He has freed you from many temptations to gluttony and from the evils that follow on that vice both for soul and body, and you must console yourselves with the promise of Jesus Christ: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill;"² you will be filled with the eternal joys of Heaven. You, who are rich and wealthy, never forget the advice of St. Peter: "Be sober and watch; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour;"³ Never allow yourselves to be misled by gluttony so far as to violate the fasts of the Church. Help Jesus Christ in His poor out of your abundance, so that they may one day receive you into eternal tabernacles, where every want of body and soul will be perfectly satisfied, and where you will be able to say to your great joy and contentment: "Lord, it is good for us to be here." Amen.

Another Introduction to the same sermon for the sixth Sunday after Pentecost.

Text.

Ecce jam triduo sustinent me, nec habent, quod manducent.—Mark viii. 2.

"For behold they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat."

¹ Habentes autem alimenta, et quibus tegamur, his contenti sumus.—I. Tim. vi. 8.

² Beati, qui esuriunt et sitiunt iustitiam, quoniam ipsi saturabuntur.—Matth. v. 6.

³ Sobrii estote et vigilate, quia adversarius vester diabolus tamquam leo rugiens circuit, querens quem devoret.—I Pet. v. 8.

How these poor people put us Christians to shame ! They followed Christ everywhere over mountain and valley in order to hear His doctrine and preaching, so that they forgot to eat and drink ; for three whole days they remained with the Lord in spite of the hunger they suffered, until Christ, taking pity on them, relieved them by a miracle. How do we act, my dear brethren, we who profess to be followers of Christ ? How often do we not depart from Him and from the teaching of His Gospel for the sake of eating and drinking ? Nay, how many there are who give up His friendship and the salvation of their souls, that they may eat what is forbidden at certain times, or else gratify their gluttony by excessive eating and drinking. And why do they act thus ? What is the object to which their eating and drinking tends ?—*continues as before.*

NINETEENTH SERMON.

ON HOW THE FASTS OF THE CHURCH WHICH ARE VIOLATED BY GLUTTONY, ARE TO BE OBSERVED.

Subject.

We are all bound to fast in the manner prescribed by the law, a duty which is neglected by many Christians.—*Preached on the first Sunday in Lent.*

Text.

Cum jejunasset quadraginta diebus et quadraginta noctibus, postea esuriit.—Matth. iv. 2.

“And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards He was hungry.”

Introduction.

To do penance, to deny one's self, and to mortify the flesh is most necessary ; necessary, because we are sinners who have inherited the sin of our forefather Adam, and who are banished to this vale of tears, that we may regain the Heaven we have lost, by doing penance and following the rugged way of the Cross ; necessary, because we are sinners who after having received baptism, have often offended God by sin, and must atone for our sin by penance ; necessary, even if we are

innocent, because it is still possible for us to sin, so that we must strive by penance to keep ourselves in innocence and in the state of grace ; necessary, because we are living under a Head who was crowned with thorns, and we must be like Him, if we hope to be with Him in Heaven. A truth, my dear brethren, which I will explain more in detail on another occasion. The Gospel of to-day reminds us of a special manner of doing penance, of which Jesus Christ, the Son of God, gives us an example : “ When he had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards He was hungry.” The example of Jesus Christ is there to encourage all Christians to fast, abstain and endure hunger ; and it is to that, that the Catholic Church binds her children during this season under pain of sin, that they may imitate Christ to a certain extent. Are we then bound to fast ? Certainly. And how ? That is what I am now about to explain.

Plan of Discourse.

We are all bound to fast in the manner prescribed by the law, a duty which is neglected by many Christians ; such is the whole subject of the present instruction and exhortation.

Jesus Christ, Model and Pattern for all who fast, help us to imitate Thee, at least in this respect, with Christian zeal, though at a long distance ; this grace we beg of Thee through the merits of Thy mother who suffered with Thee, and through the intercession of the holy angels guardian.

Man is
bound to
fast.

If I had to deal with heretics, or with so-called liberal Catholics, I should divide my sermon otherwise, and first prove that we are bound to fast, and then explain how we are to fast. For that is the very thing that our opponents are most determined on denying ; they do not refuse to acknowledge that Our Lord fasted forty days, but they maintain that it is impossible, or at least useless, or even superstitious to imitate Him according to our ability, in that respect. That it is, which liberal Catholics, or half-atheists who are unfortunately numerous enough, can not get into their heads, because it does not suit their stomachs. Why should we fast, they say ? Why should we not eat and drink what is set before us, as long as we have a good appetite for it ? God has given His gifts to men, that they may use them at pleasure. Does He not say : “ Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man.”¹ But they interpret that

¹ Non quod intrat in os, coinquinat hominem.—Matth. xv. 11.

text falsely, and in an arbitrary manner, and if I had to deal with them, I should show that there is not one, but many laws which bind all under pain of sin, to fasting and abstinence at certain times.

For, in the first place, there is the natural law. Are you a human being? I would ask. Then if you are, you are often bound to fast. And why? I will tell you. The fire in your stove is burning so brightly, that the flame is going up the chimney; if you let it go on like that, it will set fire to the house. What will you do in order to avert that danger? You do not think long about it; you at once take away the wood which feeds the flame. You have a horse in your stable, says St. Augustine, which you require now and then to go to another town on business; but you feed him very well, and leave him a long time idle, so that he has become quite stubborn, and rears, and plunges if any one attempts to mount him. What is to be done? There is not much difficulty in the matter. Shut up your corn-bin; do not give him so much to eat;¹ Let him suffer hunger for a few days, and then give him nothing but a little hay and some green stuff, and he will soon become tame enough. My body, continues St. Augustine, is my horse, which must carry the soul about; my intention is to use it to reach the heavenly Jerusalem; but when it is too well fed, it becomes restive, like an untamed horse; and God Himself warns us not to allow that to happen; "Do not become like the horse and the mule who have no understanding."² It revolts against the spirit and refuses to obey reason in many things; so that there is nothing left but to take away its food, to be more moderate in eating and drinking, and to subdue it by fasting and abstinence; otherwise it will leave the road which leads to Heaven, and enter on the broad path which leads to hell. The concupiscence of the flesh is like a blazing fire, which threatens to consume the beautiful and precious soul with its impure flame. How is that mischief to be prevented? Take away the fuel, the nourishment of that flame; the body must learn to fast, it must be subdued by hunger and thirst, or else it will bring the soul to eternal flames.

Another question I might ask is this: are you a Christian? Do you adore the true God? If so then you must often fast, because the divine law makes fasting obligatory. The first com-

Proved
by the nat-
ural law

By the
divine law
in the Old
Testament.

¹ Ferocienti pabulum subtrahas.

² Nolite fieri sicut equus et mulus, quibus non est intellectus.—Ps. xxxi. 9.

mand that God gave to man, was that of fasting and abstinence; for immediately after having created our forefather Adam, He told him that he was not to eat the fruit of a certain tree, under pain of death. Thus, says St. John Chrysostom, the law of fasting is as old as the world. Ah, Adam, if thou hadst observed that abstinence better, we, thy unhappy descendants, would not now have to fast for forty days, and would be free also from many crosses and trials; but because thou hast hearkened to thy appetite more than to the voice of God, we must do penance to this day for thy gluttony! Hence Tertullian concludes that on account of the gluttony alone which was the cause of all our misfortunes, we should be bound to fast, even if there was no law to that effect. For if God obliged Adam to abstain while he was still innocent, how much greater must not our obligation be, since we have so often offended God? If fasting and abstinence were necessary in the earthly Paradise, in order to show the necessary obedience to God, how much more necessary are they not in this miserable vale of tears? If fasting was prescribed as a medicine to keep Adam in good health, while he was still in a state of innocence and justice and had no sickness to fear, how much more necessary is it not for us, who are exposed to as many sicknesses, as we have evil inclinations and desires? If fasting and abstinence were a safeguard in the time of peace when no enemy dared show himself, how much more necessary is it not for us to have recourse to them now, when we have to sustain at all hours the attacks of formidable enemies? Therefore, God says by the Prophet Joel: "Sanctify ye a fast."¹ Therefore the Jews had appointed days on which it was unlawful for them to eat the least thing until late in the evening, when the stars had risen in the sky.

And by the
New Testa-
ment.

It will not take long to find this command in the New Testament. Jesus Christ, the Lawgiver, goes before us by His example; He tells His followers what they must do after His death. "The days will come," He says in the Gospel of St. Matthew, "when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then they shall fast."² In the time of the Apostles the rule was to live "in hunger and thirst, in fastings often;"³ Theophilus of Alexandria, a very ancient writer, says of the Christians who came after the Apostles: "We observe a forty days

¹ Sanctificate jejunium.—Joel i. 14.

² Venient autem dies, cum auferetur a eis sponsus, et tunc jejunabunt.—Matth. ix. 15.

³ In fame et siti, in jejuniis multis.—II Cor. xi. 27.

fast as ordered and appointed by the Apostles.”¹ Therefore, our custom of fasting is not an erroneous and superstitious invention of the “Romish” Popes and Bishops, as our adversaries falsely assert ; but a law which Jesus Christ has instituted and imposed on His followers.

Finally, I would ask a liberal Catholic : Are you a Catholic ? And by the law of the Church. at least you profess to be one, and so you are bound to fast. There is no doubt of the law of the Church in this respect ; it is promulgated throughout the whole world, and is constantly observed ; it has always been a mark and sign of the true religion and of the true faith in Jesus Christ, and fasting is still a means of distinguishing in our days, a Catholic from a Lutheran, or a Calvinist. Hence he who, without a dispensation justly obtained, does not observe the fast, is not only disobedient to the Church, but he also denies her in a certain sense ; for, if I see a man who is in good health, eating meat on forbidden days, I look upon him at once, if he is unknown to me, as a Lutheran or a Calvinist. But why should I take so much trouble, my dear brethren, to prove what I said I could pass over in silence ? There are none but Catholics present here ; we are all bound to fast ; none of you will deny that, and we are bound to fast under pain of sin. This law we all acknowledge.

But do we all fast in the manner prescribed by that law ? The manner of fasting consists, first, in abstinence from flesh-meat. Every Catholic knows how the fast is to be observed ; namely (with the exception of those who are excused by weakness or illness, or convalescence, or poverty, so that they have nothing except forbidden food to eat, or have a justly obtained dispensation), all Catholics of every class and condition are bound under pain of grievous sin, first, to abstain from flesh-meat, and then to eat a full meal only once a day, besides a small collation in the evening, (those being again excepted who are too young or too old, or who have to work very hard, or who are exempted by weakness or illness, etc.) See, that is all that is required. That is the forty days’ fast, which seems so difficult to many Christians, that they are terrified at the very name of it, and look upon it almost as a sentence of death.²

How many abuses and acts of disobedience are caused by this imaginary difficulty, even amongst Catholics who seem to be All sorts of excuses are in-

¹ *Habemus Quadragesimam ab Apostolis institutam et ordinatam.*

² It is needless to observe that the manner of keeping the fast is very different now from what it was in the author’s time, and also that it varies in different countries.—*Translator’s note.*

vented to obtain a dispensation from this.

fervent enough in other respects ! All kinds of pretexts and excuses are sought for, to obtain a dispensation privately from the ecclesiastical authorities, if the Church has not granted a general and public one. Health is endangered by fasting ; the stomach cannot bear fish ; the constitution is so delicate that it can not keep such a long fast ; the head suffers from it ; the night's rest is disturbed by unpleasant dreams ; fasting makes one so weak, that it is impossible to attend to one's duties, etc. These pretexts are suggested by gluttony and sensuality, and yet they must suffice to obtain an exemption from the general law of the Church ! Of what value they are in the sight of God, will appear before the whole world on the last day.

These excuses are valid in some cases, but not in most.

I know that there are many who are so delicate in health, or who are otherwise so circumstanced that they can and must in justice be dispensed from the obligation of abstaining from flesh-meat ; and therefore those pious and over-anxious souls, who are told by the doctor, and advised by a prudent confessor, and who consequently obtain a dispensation from the proper authority, need not fear that they commit a sin by eating meat, no matter how much inclined they are to that groundless fear. They must rather humbly submit their judgment, and obey those who understand the matter better than they, and not be obstinate in following their own opinion. Our holy Founder, St. Ignatius, as you have often heard, was once, after having strictly observed the Lenten fasts, taken ill in Holy Week ; the doctor told him that he must eat meat, he obeyed without a murmur, and at once ordered a fowl to be prepared for him. Now I see, said the doctor, that Ignatius must be a holy man. There is no doubt, then, that instead of being a sin, it is a good thing to eat what is otherwise forbidden on fast days, when necessity requires it. Nor is it a sin to make use of a general dispensation granted by ecclesiastical authority ; but I do not think that there is sufficient cause for many of the private dispensations that are asked for, in default of a general dispensation ; for in most cases the excuses alleged are merely imaginary. To be afraid of weakness or illness without reason, is to take counsel from one's sensuality, and gluttony, and not from the will of God.

The excuse of weakness which is alleged, is invalid.

Delicate constitution, weakness, headache, interrupted sleep, who thinks of you, when there is question of spending whole nights in gambling, dancing and other amusements ? We do not want to rest from those things, nor do we complain of not

being strong enough for them, although it may sometimes take us days to recover after them. But when it becomes necessary to do anything for God, to atone for one's sins, to mortify and chastise the flesh, and to fast and abstain according to the custom observed in the Church for so many centuries, oh, then the weakness appears at once, and the strength vanishes ! If one were to say to those delicate people who try to avoid the fast without sufficient cause : See, I will give you two dollars for every day that you abstain from meat, on condition that you give one dollar to the poor when you do not abstain ; is it likely that there would be many cases of weakness then ? I think not ; on the contrary there would be a great deal of competition in a fast of that kind. And yet, it is not a vile piece of money that is promised as a reward for fasting, but the kingdom of Heaven, that God Himself will give. Oh, but that is another matter altogether ; we are too weak to earn Heaven by fasting ! However that may be, it would be well to remember the warning of the Holy Ghost in the Book of Proverbs : “ If thou say: I have not strength enough ;” I am too weak, even if you persuade your doctor or your confessor to agree with you, “ He that seeth into the heart, He understandeth, and nothing deceiveth the Keeper of thy soul ;” God will know well enough the value of your excuses, “ and He shall render to a man according to his works.”¹ With reason, then, do ecclesiastical superiors refer to their parish-priests and confessors, those who seek to be dispensed from the law of fasting.

Others again say : My stomach cannot bear fish ; my health does not permit me to fast, I should surely become ill. What a pity that would be ! But what becomes of this great anxiety about their health with those who often drink to excess, either because they have got into a habit of it, or because they do so through sheer conviviality, although they know that it injures their health, and as experience tells them, even shortens their lives ? Oh, they do not trouble much about their health in such a case as that, they must keep up their old habits ! But when there is question of practising temperance, of abstaining from unnecessary food and drink, and of fasting according to the Christian law, then they begin to fear for their health, then is the time to look out for a dispensation. What becomes of this great anxiety about their health with those women, who gratify

And also
that of fear
for one's
health.

¹ Si dixeris: Vires non suppetunt; qui inspector est cordis, ipse intelligit, et servatorem animæ tuæ nihil fallit, reddetque homini juxta opera sua.—Prov. xxiv. 12.

their sensuality whenever they get a chance on the occasion of a visit, and spend their time in drinking tea, coffee or chocolate, although the doctor has forbidden them to do so? What becomes of it with those who do not hesitate to conform to the most scandalous fashions, even in the depth of winter, and thus to open the way to diseases and complaints of different kinds? These are almost the only ones who have to look after their health, and who cannot bear to eat fish, when Lent comes on. And what are we to say of those business men, who risk all kinds of dangers by sea and land, for the sake of a temporal gain? They think nothing of their lives even, not to speak of their health. But to abstain from meat for forty days, and to eat nothing but fish during that time, oh, that is altogether too dangerous for the health.

The major-
ity of men
preserve
their health
without eat-
ing meat.

Ye poor beggars and laborers, who in so many countries constitute the bulk of the population, with all your hard work, you can get a bit of meat only once or twice a year, while you never get fish at all, and some of you have nothing but a little dry bread and water even for your Easter dinner; oh, how I pity you; how can you preserve your health? How is it that you are still alive? If you had some of that fish which others, as they say, cannot bear, what a grand meal you would make of it! And yet, in spite of your continual abstinence from meat, and your poor diet, which consists of vegetables, bread and water the whole year round, you are strong and healthy. Holy hermits, Paul, Anthony, Macarius, Simeon, Hilarion, you lived to be eighty, ninety and a hundred years old, and even more; did you always eat meat in order to preserve your health, and to live so long? Bring, I beg you some of your food to the tables of those delicate Christians of our day, and see how they will look at it! Herbs and roots, peas and carrots boiled without seasoning or salt, and that only once a day, and on the occasion of some great feast: such was the food on which you lived so long! Holy servants of God, who have bound yourselves to Him in the religious life, and have taken a vow never to eat meat as long as you live, and who in addition to this, wear a rough hair shirt, often take the discipline, and are content with the coarsest kind of clothing; who sleep at night on a hard bed, and often interrupt your sleep in order to pray and sing the divine praises in choir; how can you be in good health? And yet among you there are weak and delicate virgins who often live to be seventy or eighty years old! And still they who are in the prime of

life, and are of a strong and robust constitution, and who have nothing to do but to idle about and amuse themselves, find it a terrible thing to abstain from meat for a few days, and say that it would injure their health!

It is not right then, for you to say that fasting injures your health; you should say rather that it is disagreeable to your comfort and sensuality. Martial one day felt the pulse of a young man named Tangilius, who said that he was sick, in order to get better food. Oh, said Martial, I know what is the matter with you; doctors might probably say that it is fever, but it is gluttony that ails you.¹ The same might be said with truth to those delicate Christians, who pretend that the state of their health excuses them from fasting; it is not your health; it is sheer gluttony and a desire of satisfying your sensuality that makes you ask to be exempted from the fast.

Therefore it is only on account of gluttony that they try to excuse themselves.

How many there are who cannot get rid of the complaints and diseases from which they suffer, but by temperance, abstinence and fasting? Besides, as God has promised a long life to those who honor their parents and are obedient to them: "Honor thy father and thy mother that thou mayest be long-lived upon the land;"² how could the same God allow our health to be injured and our lives to be shortened by our obedience to our holy Mother, the Catholic Church, when we submit to her law of fasting without seeking to be excused from it, and thereby prove ourselves her obedient, dutiful and zealous children?

Generally, fasting does not injure, but benefits the health.

In the first chapter of the Book of Daniel you will find the history of those young men who were chosen to wait upon King Nabuchodonosor, and who had first to be fed for some years on food from the king's own table. Four of them, amongst whom was Daniel, begged to be excused from taking that food, as it was unlawful for them to touch it, according to the Jewish law. "And the prince of the eunuchs said to Daniel: I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed you meat and drink; and if he should see your faces leaner than those of the other youths, your equals, you shall endanger my head to the king."³ Do not be afraid, said Daniel, try it only for ten days, and give us during that time nothing but vegetables and water, and you will see whether we

Proved by Holy Scripture.

¹ *Novi hominis mores, febrim creditis esse? gula est.*

² *Honora patrem tuum et matrem tuam, ut sis longævus super terram.*—Exod. xx. 12.

³ *Et ait princeps eunuchorum ad Danielelem: Timeo ego dominum meum regem, qui constituit vobis cibum et potum, qui si viderit vultus vestros macilentiores præ ceteris adolescentibus coævis vestris, condemnabit caput meum regi.*—Dan. i. 10.

shall be thinner.¹ “And after ten days,” says the Holy Scripture, “their faces appeared fairer and fatter than all the children that ate of the king’s meat.”² And they continued that mode of life for three years longer.

Therefore
others also
can and
must pre-
serve their
health, al-
though they
abstain.

Delicate Christians, you are afraid that Lent will injure your health and strength, although it does not condemn you to live on vegetables and water, and merely requires you to abstain, according to our Christian law, from flesh-meat. Do not fear, I say to you ; try fasting for once, and see whether you cannot hold out for the forty days ; see whether the Almighty God, who gives nourishing properties to all kinds of food, cannot also enable you to preserve your health by means of the fasting diet, as well as by the flesh-meat that is forbidden to you during those days. That is what the Church prayed for last Saturday : “That this solemn fast, which is instituted for the good, not only of the soul, but also of the body, etc.”³ If so many servants of God, and so many pious citizens of this city, can fast, and at the same time preserve their health, why can you not do the same ? Try it, I repeat, and leave the care of your health to the fatherly Providence of God. Think of death, which you perhaps imagine you can keep off longer by eating meat ; remember that the body which you now pamper will one day be the food of worms ; think while you are enjoying an abundance of food and drink, that you may perhaps be with the rich man in the flames of hell, and that like him, you may ask for a drop of water, and not be able to get it. These thoughts will make a fast easier for you, so that, as is unfortunately too often the case nowadays, fasting will not be turned away from every door, and be forced to take refuge in convents, and in the houses of the poor. Still, if there is a general dispensation given to eat meat as is now the case on account of the pressing necessity of the troublous times in which we live, well and good then ; you commit no sin, as I said before, if you all avail yourselves of this dispensation, provided you practise other works of penance and devotion, as is prescribed ; but I must also tell you that it is not a mortal, nay, not even a venial sin, although the dispensation is given, to abstain from meat for God’s sake. Therefore, good and pious Christians do their best to conform to the general law

¹ Dentur nobis legumina ad vescendum, et aqua ad bibendum.—Dan. i. 12.

² Post dies autem decem apparuerunt vultus eorum meliores et corpulentiores præ omnibus pueris, qui vescebantur cibo regio.—Ibid, 15.

³ Ut hoc solemne jejuniū, quod animabus corporibusque sanandis salubriter institutum est, etc.

of the Church, and that with all the greater merit for themselves, since they are not bound to do so under pain of sin. It is well to do a good thing, but better still to do a better thing. Still, this is not to my subject just now. What I mean to say is, that all are bound to abstain from forbidden food, at least on those days for which there is no dispensation.

The second point, besides the abstinence from meat, which the Church wishes her children to observe, is, that on all days during Lent, Sundays excepted, they eat only one full meal besides a small collation in the evening. Is that observed faithfully by all Catholics, who are not excused by some of the causes mentioned before? I fear not, and I fear too that they are even less observant of this point, than of the other. How many there are who entertain the erroneous opinion that, if they overcome themselves so far as not to eat meat, they have done enough, and it makes no matter if they eat two meals a day! How many there are who have a number of dishes placed on their tables in the evening, and take a bit of this, and a bit of that, until in the end, they have eaten what would make a hearty meal for many a poor, hungry man? How many there are who contrive to make the one meal of dinner and collation, by having dish after dish brought in, and sitting at table all the time from mid-day till evening? Oh, they say, we eat only one full meal! That is true; but they remain eating so long that they are not at all hungry when the time comes for the collation. It is not my purpose now to explain whether those people sin grievously against the law of fasting. I only ask any sensible man if he thinks that that is the way to fast according to the intention of the Church? For in what other way could they eat to satiety on days when there is no fast?

The manner of fasting consists, secondly, in eating but one meal in the day. This is even less observed than the first point.

Oh, holy Christianity, which flourished in the early ages of the Church, where art thou gone? I dare not say now how exactly this law of fasting was then observed. But if some of the early Christians were to appear amongst us, and to compare our law-ful way of fasting with theirs, what would they think and say? Do you call that fasting? they would ask. If so, the law was far too strict in our days. We could eat only once a day, and that after sundown, that is, three or four hours after midday; we knew nothing of a collation (and St. Bernard testifies that, in his time, that was the ordinary manner of fasting amongst Christians of all classes) we were forbidden to use wine, as well as meat; we could eat nothing but vegetables and pulse boiled in

How strict the law of fasting was in early times.

oil : nay, as long as this penitential season lasted, most of us were not content with merely observing that strict law, but we added other austerities of our own. Read St. John Chrysostom and he will give you an idea of our zeal in this respect ; he will tell you that in his time, in Constantinople, where he used to preach, the Christians were accustomed to vie with each other in fasting. Some of them ate only once in two days, others every day, but nothing except a small piece of bread and water ; and so they continued for the whole Lent. Read what St. Augustine says about the custom in his time, and he will tell you, that it was not unusual for men, women, and even tender maidens to remain for three days, and even longer without food or drink.¹ Read in the seventeenth chapter of the Ecclesiastical History of Nicephorus, what happened at Constantinople in the reign of the emperor Justinian ; that city suffered from famine to such an extent that the people could hardly find bread ; and on the approach of Lent, the emperor caused the butchers' stalls to be thrown open, and told the people that, since there was no other food, they could eat meat. And what use did they make of the permission so justly accorded by the emperor ? O happy times ! Would that we had only a spark of the fervor that characterised them ! In that vast and populous city, in the midst of a terrible famine, there was not one Christian who made use of the permission granted by the emperor ; nay, the people went in a body to the palace and begged him with tears in their eyes to recall it, and to command the old custom to be observed ; and they protested that they would rather die of hunger, than depart in the least from the general and holy practice of the Catholic Church.

They put
the Chris-
tians of the
present day
to shame.

Ah, Christians of our own day, have we not reason to be ashamed of ourselves ? The Church, like an indulgent mother, has been forced to mitigate the ancient severity of the law of fasting, on account of the decrease of fervor and charity on the part of her children. She concedes now as much to our weakness, as if she tried to adapt herself to our sensuality. The way in which we fast, according to which we are allowed to use wine, and to make a full meal every day on eggs, butter, and milk-meats, along with all kinds of fish, and besides that a collation in the evening, ought to be called rather a means of preserving health, than a work of penance. And yet we make such a difficulty of it, we seek to avoid it in every possible way ; easy as the law is, we refuse to obey God and the Church of Christ, or

¹ Totum triduum et amplius sæpissime sine cibo et potu.

at least we do not obey fully, as we ought. Now we have in addition, a dispensation, according to which it is allowed to eat meat once a day ; is there any one then, who will refuse to observe a strict abstinence on those days on which meat is forbidden, and to observe every day the law regarding the collation ? What are we thinking of ? Does our religion teach us to adore a crucified God, or does it not ?

Ah ! my dear brethren, let us show that we have at least some of this religion left. If we think we have reason to make use of the dispensation accorded to us let us do so in God's name ; but in other things let us observe strictly what the Church prescribes. With regard to the collation, there is no fixed rule, as to whether we are allowed to use warm meats, or several kinds of cold meats ; every country has prescribed different customs contrary to the law of the Church. The best thing for us to do, is to follow the example of the majority of good and pious Christians ; if we do so, we shall not go wrong. But in any case, let us fast in such a manner, that the words of the Preface in the Holy Mass during this season, may be verified in us : “ O Lord, who by our corporal fast, destroyest vice, raisest our minds to Thee, and grantest us virtue and its reward.”¹ Let us fast, I say, so that we may thereby do penance for our sins, avert from us the anger of God and His just punishments, raise our hearts to Heaven, increase our merit, and earn the reward of eternal glory. Amen.

Conclusion and exhortation to observe the law of fasting strictly.

TWENTIETH SERMON.

ON THE END AND OBJECT OF FASTING, WHICH IS FRUSTRATED BY GLUTTONY.

Subject.

We are all bound to fast in the way prescribed by the law of the Church ; an obligation which is fulfilled by very few.—*Preached on the second Sunday in Lent.*

Text.

Hic est Filius meus dilectus, in quo mihi bene complacui: ipsum audite.—Matth. xvii. 5.

“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased : hear ye Him.”

¹ Qui corporali jejunio vitia comprimis, mentem elevas, virtutem largiris et præmia.

Introduction.

These are the words in which the Eternal Father proposed His Incarnate Son, on a lofty mountain, as an example to the whole world, whom men must imitate and resemble, if they wish to share in His glory ; as St. Paul writes : “ For, whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born amongst many brethren.”¹ “ This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him ;” be attentive to His words, and follow His example. What does Jesus Christ teach us by words ? Hear what He says in the Gospel of St. Luke : “ And He said to all : if any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”² What does He teach by example ? We find nothing in His whole life, but a poor, humble, patient, suffering, dying God. “ Hear ye Him ;” follow His example. What does this Divine Son teach us during this season of Lent, my dear brethren ? We have already heard it in the Gospel of last Sunday ; He fasted forty days and forty nights, and suffered hunger ; hear ye Him ; we are Christians and children of God, and we hope to have a part with Him in eternal glory, therefore we must hear Him and follow His example. Mortification, fasting, abstinence, hunger, that is what we must learn from Him, and that too in the manner prescribed by the law of the Church. This I have explained last Sunday ; but there is still another point to consider.

Plan of Discourse.

We are all bound to fast in the way prescribed by the law of the Church ; an obligation which is fulfilled by very few. Such is the whole subject of the present instruction.

O Divine Son, whose life we are bound to imitate, help us to attain the proper end by our fasting. This we beg of Thee through the merits of Thy Mother Mary, and through the holy angels guardian.

The principal end of the Lenten fast is partly the mortification of

The first and principal end for which our holy Mother, the Catholic Church, has instituted the forty days’ fast, is to mortify the flesh and do penance, partly as a solemn remembrance of the bitter passion and death of Jesus Christ, Our Saviour, and partly

¹ Nam quos præscivit et prædestinavit conformes fieri imaginis Filii sui, ut sit ipse primogenitus in multis fratribus.—Rom. viii. 29.

² Dicebat autem ad omnes : Si quis vult post me venire, abneget semetipsum, et tollat crucem suam quotidie, et sequatur me.—Luke ix. 23.

as an atonement for our sins, for which Christ had to suffer and die. Hence as a sign of general mourning, in all the churches throughout the Catholic world, the altars and tabernacles are veiled during this time, and Lent is known as a season of sorrow, of tears and of penance. Go to the widow clothed in mourning, who is lamenting the loss of her husband on the anniversary of his death, because she loved him as her own heart, and ask her to take part in a banquet, or to appear in company and enjoy herself ; the mere invitation to do so in her present circumstances, is a fresh pang for her heart, and renews her grief. No, this is no time for her to make merry ; she must be left in peace with her sorrow ; entertainments, dancing, laughing, feasting, are out of place for her now ; the bare thought of them is insupportable to her ; tears and sighs are her only consolation. In the same way, let the vain world, according to its wont, speak to the Church of God, or to a pious and obedient child of the Church, during the holy season of Lent, when she is celebrating the anniversary of the death of her Spouse, Jesus Christ, on the cross ; let it speak to her, I say, of forbidden meats, of sumptuous repasts, of gluttony and drunkenness, of amusements and pastimes, of creature comforts and luxuries ; oh, all these things are now out of place ! they are not at all suited to this time of mourning.

With regard to the atonement for past sins ; you remember, my dear brethren, the fable of the fox, who with great difficulty crept through a narrow hole into a hen-coop. Ha, he thought, this is the place for me ; I shall not easily find such a good opportunity again ; and he began without loss of time to devour one fowl after the other, until he could eat no more. He then thought it was time to go home, but when he tried to get out at the hole, he found that he had grown too fat, and could not manage it ; so he began to cry and moan, and shout for help. Another fox happening to pass by, and hearing the noise inside, asked what was the matter. Ah, said the other, I am a prisoner here ; I have eaten so much that I cannot get out, and if the owner of the fowls catches me here he will surely kill me ; try to help me out. There is no use in my trying, was the answer, there is nothing else for it but to remain where you are, and fast until you are as thin as you were before, and then you will have no difficulty in getting out. Christians, many of us have grown fat during the year on forbidden meat, that is, we have committed different sins against the commandments of God. Some are

Partly in
atonement
for our past
sins.

still held captive by the devil in bonds of sin, and are in danger of eternal death. If the Master were to come and call them away while they are in that state, what would become of their souls? There are others who have already obtained forgiveness of their sins in the Sacrament of Penance, and have bewailed them with a true sorrow; still, if they were now surprised by death, they would have many an old debt to pay off, and a long punishment to endure. What is to be done? We must mortify ourselves and do penance so as to free ourselves from the captivity in which the devil holds us, and to satisfy the divine justice. This is the time that the Catholic Church has appointed for that purpose; now it is that she commands us to bewail our sins with a supernatural sorrow, and to subdue the flesh by fasting and abstinence, that we may appease the anger of God, and make satisfaction for our sins. There you have the first end and object of the forty days fast, according to SS. Theodoret, Augustine, John Chrysostom, and others.

Therefore the excuses of those who complain that they are weakened by fasting, are unavailing.

Where are you now you faint-hearted cowards, with your vain excuses? I cannot fast; I must eat meat, or if I manage to overcome myself sufficiently to abstain from it, I cannot go to bed hungry; I must have something to eat, or else I shall grow weak; I feel that my strength is leaving me, and I shall become quite sad and melancholy; I suffer from stomach-ache during the day, and I cannot sleep well at night; in a word, I find fasting altogether too difficult. Well then, granted that what you say is true; is not that the reason why fasting was instituted? It must be difficult; it must be disagreeable to the stomach; it must moderate superfluous sleep; it must disturb and interfere with vain pleasures and comforts; it must weary the body and lessen the strength of the unruly flesh; that is the reason why you have to fast. If you had no difficulty in fasting, if it left you just as comfortable as before, how could it chastise and mortify you? What good would it be as a penance? What satisfaction could it make for sin? How could it help you to a compassionate sorrow with your suffering and dying Saviour? Would it be an imitation of the forty days fast and hunger that He endured for your sake? You say that you cannot eat fish; well, do not eat it then! Nobody compels you to do so; there are other things that you can eat. But you say, it is not easy for you to be satisfied with them. I quite agree with you; but that is the proper way for you to fast; the reason why abstinence is commanded is that the body may feel some inconvenience. If you were

commanded to eat nothing for the forty days, but dry bread, and to drink nothing but water, as many poor people must do their whole lives long, who would be glad indeed if they were always sure of having enough even of such food, would that be too much to do for a God, who for your sake died an ignominious death on the cross? Would it be too much to do, in order to escape the eternal fire of hell, and to atone for your sins? Our Fathers in the faith, who had to observe such severe fasts, as you have heard in my last sermon, were also tired and worn out by fasting; but they did not complain on that account, nor did they ever dream of asking for, or accepting a dispensation, or mitigation of the law. But now we are so faint-hearted, that we make a difficulty of doing even the little that is required of us. We are willing to do penance, but on condition that it does not hurt us; we are ready to fast, but in such a way that will cause us no discomfort. Is that fasting for the proper end and object, to subdue the flesh, to do penance and to imitate the sufferings of Our Lord?

Again, we see from this, how far they fall short of the proper end of fasting, who, in order to avoid discomfort, remain so long at dinner, and eat so many different things, that they are not at all hungry in the evening, so that the smallest collation is no mortification to them. They act, says St. John Chrysostom, like the commandant of a fortress who makes provisions for a siege; he has victuals enough brought into the fortress to enable him to stand the siege without the garrison having to suffer hunger. Many Christians act in the same way nowadays; I must fast this evening, they think, and shall not be able to make a full meal; I will therefore eat as much now as will enable me to fast without inconvenience. There was a laborer once who said that he never fasted as much during the whole year as he did on Ash-Wednesday, because he had eaten so much on the three days previous, that he actually felt a disgust for all kinds of food. Thirdly, we see that they fail to attain the end of fasting, who to avoid or lessen the slight inconvenience it causes, make up for the abstinence from meat and the evening collation by entertaining others, or gambling, or other amusements, while they take some warm, nourishing drink in the morning, and indulge too freely in wine in the afternoon. "Command that these stones be made bread,"¹ said Satan to Our Lord;

Many faults are committed against the end of fasting.

¹ Dic, ut lapides isti panes fiant.—Matth. iv. 3.

command that these fishes be turned into meat, think those over-delicate Christians; if we must abstain from meat, then we must try to satisfy our sensuality in some other way, so as to avoid the inconvenience of fasting. "That is not the way to fast and to mortify the body," says St. Augustine, "it is only changing one excess for another."¹ At all events, it is not according to the end of the law of fasting, which is the mortification of the body and of sensuality. What have pleasures and amusements of all kinds to do with a time of sorrow and repentance?

How unbecoming that is.

A disciple of the holy Abbot Palaemon once prepared for his master, at the end of Lent, a dish of vegetables cooked in oil; the holy man turned to him with tearful eyes, and said: "How is this? My Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, and must I eat oil with my food?"² Christians, as I have said, Lent is a season of repentance and sorrowful remembrance of the bitter passion and death of Christ; let us then try to recollect these few words until Easter, and whenever gluttony tempts us to forbidden meats, or sensuality to dainties, or greediness to eat too much, or worldliness to pleasure, let us say those beautiful words to ourselves: My Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, how then can I give way to my sensual desires? The sin that Adam committed by eating the forbidden fruit, cost my Saviour His life; can I then have the heart to eat of what the Church has forbidden during this season? My Saviour fasted from all food for forty days; can I not at least abstain, as a good Catholic should, from flesh meat, when I am not in want of it, although I am permitted to use it? My God died for me; how can I indulge my sensuality, during the time fixed for the solemn recollection of His death? My God died to atone for my sins, which He could never have committed; ought I not at least to atone for my own sins by a little fasting and abstinence? The Church mourns and does penance during this time; shall not I, who boast of being her child, sympathize with her sorrow? Jesus Christ allowed His innocent flesh to be torn with scourges, in order to tame the rebellious tendencies of mine; and shall I now pamper this flesh with all kinds of delicacies?

Resolution to observe the end of fasting.

No, my dearest Saviour, we owe Thee much more than that, for many reasons! We do not wish to be delicate members under a thorn-crowned Head; we will show by observing the fast, that we are zealous Catholics, and we will encourage

¹ Non enim est hoc suscipere abstinentiam, sed mutare luxuriam.

² Dominus meus Jesus Christus crucifixus est, et ego nunc oleum comedam?

others to the same zeal by our example ! Thou, O Lord, wilt give a blessing to the meagre diet that, out of love to Thee and obedience to the Church, we prefer to the most delicate food ; so that we may learn by our own experience that Thy yoke is not so heavy as is imagined ; Thou wilt sweeten our penance and mortification by Thy inward grace and consolation, as is Thy wont with Thy faithful servants ; so that when Easter comes round, we shall be able to say that we never found the fast easier, than when we kept it fully, and in the proper manner, for the proper end, as Christians ought.

The second end and object of fasting is shown in the prayer of the Church, that I quoted in my last sermon, *qui corporali jejuni*o, etc., it consists namely in destroying the vices that we should otherwise be subject to, in raising up our minds to heavenly things, and in acquiring and increasing virtue and heavenly glory. The Church in this way, acts like a physician who cures a disease by a remedy that is altogether opposed to it ; thus heat is cured by cooling medicines, and cold by those that are apt to stimulate the natural heat. Now there is nothing which so much inclines one to vice, especially to the vice of impurity, as excess in eating and drinking. Diogenes once met a young man about midday, who was dressed up very carefully and was apparently going out of town ; Diogenes asked him where he was going. To a banquet, answered the other. Oh, said Diogenes, go, but you will be worse when you come back. ¹ The mere light of reason taught this heathen that a single sin of excess in eating or drinking was fatal to virtue ; how, then, is it possible that Christian virtue and perfection will not suffer, when one feasts the whole year round and drinks wine to excess ? But why do I go to a heathen philosopher for a proof of this ? God Himself says by the Psalmist : “ Their iniquity hath come forth, as it were from fatness.” ² “ The beloved grew fat and kicked ; he grew fat, and thick and gross, he forsook God who made him, and departed from God his Saviour.” ³

Excess in eating and drinking leads to impurity.

Besides, there is nothing which so degrades and brutalizes the human mind, and makes it so incapable of spiritual thoughts, as gluttony. No matter how sharp and clever a young man is, even though he is looked upon as the hope of his family, and great things are expected of him, if he indulges in excessive

And degrades and brutalizes the mind.

¹ Vade, sed deterior reverteris.

² Prodit quasi ex adipe iniquitas eorum—Ps. lxxii. 7.

³ Incrassatus est dilectus, et recalcitravit : incrassatus, impinguatus, dilatatus, derelinquit Deum factorem suum, et recessit a Deo salutari suo.—Deut. xxxii. 15.

eating and drinking, it will be the ruin of him ; his brain will soon get fogged, the best part of his time will be spent in sleep and indolence, and he will be incapable of study or reflection. “In the same way too,” says St. Jerome, “the soul will be made incapable of raising itself to sublime and heavenly things, when the body is surfeited by food and drink.”¹ It will be like those birds which cannot fly when they have eaten too much. When Adam gave way to gluttony and ate of the forbidden fruit, the Scripture says that he hid himself from the face of the Lord, because he could not bear it after the sin he had committed. When the Israelites grew tired of the manna in the desert, they took no thought of its being a heavenly food, and they longed for the onions and garlic of Egypt. Finally it follows from this, that there is nothing more hostile to merit and virtue, than gluttony ; for when the door is opened to vice and the mind becomes incapable of spiritual thoughts, there is an end to true virtue and piety.

On the contrary, vicious inclinations are subdued by fasting and abstinence.

All these evils we can and must heal by the contrary remedy of fasting and abstinence, which deprives the body of superfluous food and drink. “Fasting,” says St. Thomas of Aquin, “not only blots out past sin, but also guards against the sins that we might commit in the future.”² No matter how deep-rooted our evil habits, how violent our bad inclinations, they will be tamed and kept in check by fasting. Diodorus Siculus relates that in former times some hunters once caught a huge dragon and brought it to king Ptolemy in Alexandria, as a present. It was a fearful thing to look at ; its flaming eyes, its sharp teeth, its open jaws inspired all who beheld it with fear. Whatever came within reach of its chain, was at once devoured ; it spared neither man nor beast. And yet, this terrible monster became so tame that it would lick the hand of the man who brought it its food. How was this wonderful change effected ? “He was gradually deprived of his food,” says the historian, “and thus his strength was lessened and his ferocity subdued to such a degree, that all were amazed at his tameness.”³ It was fasting alone that wrought such a surprising change in him ; the gradual deprivation of food reduced his strength, and with his strength, his ferocity disappeared ; when he began to fast, he began to grow

¹ Ad nihil subtile ac cœleste assurgere possunt.

² Jejunium non solum delet peccata præterita, sed et repellit futura, quæ committere poteramus. — Diodor. Sicul. l. 4, c. 3.

³ Deducto paulatim ad conterendas vires cibo, feritas ejus remissior reddita est, ut ejus omnes mansuetudinem obstupescerent.

tame, and when he felt the pangs of hunger, he learned how to fawn and caress. Fasting can work the same change in a human being ; there is no passion so violent, as to be able to resist the deprivation of nourishment, and thus the flesh is subdued, the desires are restrained, and all inclination to sin disappears. So true is it, that “Fasting not only blots out past sin, but also guards against the sins that we might commit in the future.”

To these words of St. Thomas I add, that fasting not only prevents sin, but also protects and strengthens us against the attacks of the devil. Even the Son of God, says St. Ambrose, although He could not sin, and therefore required no such protection against His enemy, yet chose to make use of this salutary means, “before He allowed Himself to be tempted by the devil in the wilderness ;”¹ in order to teach us, poor mortals, who are exposed on all sides to the attacks of enemies both visible and invisible, how we must have recourse to fasting, as a shield to protect ourselves against, and to defeat all the temptations of the devil. “Fasting is the fortress in which we can defend ourselves against the attacks of the devil.”² Fasting and temperance, says St. John Chrysostom, keep us always cheerful, they prepare the soul to receive heavenly gifts, and they are the true support of all virtue ; therefore, he gives this advice to all : “Fast because you have sinned ; fast, that you may not sin ; fast, that you may receive ; fast, that you may keep what you have received.”³ See there, my dear brethren, you have the end and object of the Lenten fast, which consists partly in the sorrowful recollection of the sufferings and death which Our Saviour endured for us, and in doing penance for our sins ; and partly in guarding against future sin, and in acquiring virtue.

It strengthens us against the attacks of the devil.

Further, in order to attain this two fold object, it is not enough to mortify merely the mouth and stomach by fasting and abstinence ; our whole being must have its part in the fast. St. Bernard explains this beautifully : “If your mouth and your stomach,” he says, “have sinned by eating and drinking, make them fast and do penance, and you will do well ; but if the other members of your body have sinned, why should not they also fast ?”⁴ Make them fast therefore ; “Make your eyes fast,

To attain the twofold object, the whole man must fast.

¹ Contra dæmonem pugnaturus longo se armavit jejuniō.

² Castra nobis sunt nostra jejunia, quæ nos a diabolica impugnatione defendunt.

³ Jejuna quia peccasti ; jejuna ut non pecces ; jejuna ut accipias ; jejuna ut permaneat quæ accepisti.

⁴ Cur non jejument et ipsa ? S. Bern. Serm. 3, in Quadrag.

because they have robbed the soul.”¹ Make your ears, hands, feet, tongue and your soul itself fast, because they all have frequently transgressed the divine commands, and might again lead you into sin. Make them fast; let every member do its own separate penance, by being forced to abstain from that which is agreeable to it, and which could be to it an occasion of sin. Your eyes have often sinned by dangerous and impure looks; make them fast; forbid them to look, not merely on dangerous and sinful, but even on pleasing objects. Your ears have often sinned by listening to uncharitable and impure conversation and songs; make them fast, so that in future they will be deaf to all vain and idle talk. Your loquacious tongue has often brought you into sin, and into grievous sin, by cursing and swearing, by contumely and abusive language, by criticising the faults of others, by lying and deceit, by dangerous and scandalous words; make it fast, and learn to keep still and silent. Your hands and feet have often sinned, the former by impure touches, the latter by dancing and idle gadding about in company, and in places which are highly dangerous to the soul; make them fast, keep them in retirement at home. Your body has sinned by vanity in dress, and thereby acted in an unchristian manner, and given scandal; let it fast; make it now, at least during this season of penance, when pious Christians are often accustomed to chastise it by disciplines and hair-shirts, make it observe the laws of modesty. It has sinned too, by idleness and unnecessary sleep and thereby lost much precious time; make it fast; make it rise early in the morning to praise God, as the Church exhorts us in the Divine Office during Lent: “Let us then be more temperate in words, in eating and drinking, in sleep and amusements.”²

No fasting will be of much good unless the soul abstains from sin.

“But,” says St. Bernard, “much more should the soul fast and keep itself free from all sin,”³ for otherwise, all our fasting will be of little avail. It is useless to bind up the wound, while the sharp knife is still sticking in it; not the best medicine in the world is of any good, as long as one continues to take poison. “What does it avail,” says St. Augustine, “to keep the body empty of food, if the soul is full of sin?”⁴ What does it

¹ Jejunet ergo oculus qui depredatus est animam.

² Utamur ergo parcius verbis, cibis et potibus, somno, jocis, et arctius perstemus in custodiâ.

³ Sed et multo magis anima ipsa jejunet a vitis.

⁴ Quid prodest vacuare corpus ab esculis et animam replere peccatis?—S. Aug. tract. 17, in Joan.

avail you to have your face grow pallid from fasting, if your heart is swollen with impure love, with hatred and envy, with rage and vindictiveness? What does it avail to abstain from excess in the use of wine, when you are almost drunk with anger and jealousy? What does it avail you to abstain from meat, which is at all events created by God for your sustenance, if your sharp tongue tears at and destroys your neighbor's good name? What does it profit you to abstain from the flesh of an animal, in order to observe the Lenten fast, if you do not hesitate to insult the Lamb of God by cursing and blasphemy? What good is it to you not even to allow a piece of meat to be seen in your house, for fear of giving scandal, if you dress so immodestly that you are an occasion of sin to others? Many a one says: I cannot fast, nor can I bear to eat fish; well and good; God will accept your excuse, if it really is as you say, if you are really ill and delicate. But if you forgive from your heart, according to the divine law, him who has offended you, and meet and speak to him in a friendly manner, will that injure your health? Will it give you headache, disorder your stomach, or make you sick? Another says, I cannot fast properly because I am poor and must eat what others give me out of charity; I cannot fast, says a third, because I must work hard to earn my daily bread. Very well then, God does not require it of you; but this much he insists on, that you restrain your wicked and talkative tongue, that you do not spend the greater part of what you have earned during the week, in drinking on Sundays and holydays; this you can do; it is a fast that you are bound to observe. In a word, if we are bound during Lent to keep from many things that are quite lawful at other times, are we not much more bound to abstain from that which can never be lawful for us at any time?

Therefore, you should resolve with St. Augustine: "So let us abstain from food, that we may all the better keep from sin."¹ This latter fast is the end and object of the first, and is the reason why the Church has instituted it. The Church now cries out to us in the words of the Apostle; "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold now is the day of salvation."² Woe to us Christians, if we turn those days of grace and salvation into days of wrath and condemnation, either by breaking the fast in the matter of food and drink, or by not fasting spir-

Conclusion
and exhortation to
observe the
fast for the
proper end.

¹ Ergo sic jejunemus a cibis, ut multo magis jejunemus a vitis.

² Ecce, nunc tempus acceptabile: ecce, nunc dies salutis.—II Cor. vi. 2.

itually from sin and vice ! When we were told at Shrove-tide that we must range ourselves under the banner of Jesus Christ and be steadfast in observing temperance and purity, there were not a few who came forward with the usual excuse : Oh, it is Shrove-tide, it is a time for merry-making, we must do like the rest of the world, and eat, drink, dance and amuse ourselves. But what a false and empty excuse that is, on the part of the vain and frivolous world ! As if there were any time in the year at which it is allowed to forget God and religion ! Still, vain as that excuse is, I will now make use of it for my conclusion ; for, if it helps, poor as it is, to give an appearance of lawfulness to the sinful customs of the children of the world, they must admit it as valid for my purpose. You say, we must live as others do ; we must conform to the customs of our time. Very good, then ; let us do so now ; let us all conform our lives to this holy time.

That is to
fast with
Christ, and
do pen-
ance.

Lent, is, as I have said, a time for sorrow, and for recollecting the passion and death of Christ ; let it be then for us a time of penance, of tears and of mortification of the flesh ; let us observe all this as we ought, exactly. It is a time at which we should die with Christ in a moral sense, by extirpating our vices, raising our hearts to God and practising virtue. If we must live according to the time, let us observe what this time requires of us. Is it right for us to conform to the customs of a season that may be to us an occasion of sin, and to neglect the custom of that time which prescribes penance and mortification ? Why should we be more willing to observe practices that will lead on to the broad road to hell, than to do what will bring us on the narrow way to Heaven ? Therefore, I repeat, let us live according to this time of salvation, according to this favorable time, according to the end and object which the Church proposes to us. Let us fast honestly, as well as we can, by abstaining from food and drink, so as to mortify the body ; but especially by abstaining from sin, that we may save our souls, and after this life of sorrow, and fasting, and penance, rise gloriously with Christ, and celebrate our happy Easter in Heaven, amidst eternal joys. Amen.

TWENTY-FIRST SERMON.

ON THE UNACCOUNTABLE FOLLY OF THOSE WHO INJURE
THEIR HEALTH BY EXCESSIVE DRINKING.

Subject.

Many deliberately injure their health, and shorten their lives by excessive drinking; what folly, what wickedness.—*Preached on the third Sunday in Lent.*

Text.

Cum fortis armatus custodit atrium suum, in pace sunt ea, quæ possidet.—Luke xi. 21.

“When a strong man armed keepeth his court, those things are in peace which he possesseth.”

Introduction.

The fasts of Christians, says St. Ambrose, are our fortresses and bulwarks, with which we defend ourselves from the attacks of our hellish foes, and keep our souls in peace.¹ We have already seen that, my dear brethren, as far as fasting and abstinence in food especially are concerned. But as fasting is useful, nay, even necessary to all in order to restrain gluttony in food, so, in my opinion, temperance in the matter of drink is even more necessary to most people, in order to avoid excess in that respect; because excess in drink is more fruitful of evil, than excess in eating. But I am afraid, at the very outset, that I will do little good by speaking of this matter; so very many of you are accustomed to excessive drinking, that no amount of preaching will help you to overcome it. Therefore, as there is no use in asking you to abstain from drink, I will not do so; but one thing I will ask, and you will not, I hope, refuse me, and that is, that none of you will drink more than he is able. But what a strange thing to say, you will think? Who ever drank more than he was able to drink? From an act we may well conclude its possibility, as philosophers say:² I drink, therefore I can drink.

Ah, my dear brethren, would to God that the conclusion were always true in the right sense! How many of those who are addicted to excessive drinking, nay, almost all of them with-

¹ *Castra nobis sunt nostra jejunia, quæ nos a diabolica impugnatione defendunt.*

² *Ab actu ad potentiam bona est argumentatio.*

out exception, drink more than they can ; that is, more than their health can bear, more than their income can bear, more than their honor and good name can bear, more than their souls' salvation and the divine law can bear ? Whatever way we look at it, we must acknowledge that they are guilty of great folly and wickedness. To day I will confine myself to the first point, and I say—

Plan of Discourse.

What an unaccountable folly it is to drink more than one's health can bear, as most people do. Such is the whole subject of to-day's sermon.

O my God, forgive me for using such an apparently merely natural argument in explaining Thy holy word ! Yet I should rejoice at having done much for Thy honor and glory if, even by such an argument as that, I succeeded in converting a single soul from the habit of excessive drinking, and thus saving him from the many evils that follow from it. Thou, O Lord, art the Ruler of hearts ; effect this by Thy grace, which we beg of Thee through the intercession of Mary and the holy angels guardian. Those women who are present, and who think that this subject does not apply to them, can profit by it with regard to the refreshments they indulge in at morning and midday when paying or receiving visits, by which they sometimes injure their health, interfere with their house-keeping, and even ruin their souls. Still there are also drunken women to be found ; what a shame !

Of all natural gifts, there is none more useful to man than health.

Of all the natural gifts that a man can possess on earth, there is none so precious, so useful, and agreeable as health and strength, and there is none God has so strictly commanded man to be careful of. There is nothing more useful, because, what better am I for being rich, and owning all the treasures of earth, if I have lost my health and must lie ill in bed, and so cannot enjoy my riches ? What would it avail me to be a great lord, or king, and to rule over many lands, if I am weak and sickly, and have to suffer pain day and night ? What pleasure can I have in agreeable company, in exquisite food, in the delights of friendship, or in the beauty of creatures, if my health is gone, and illness turns everything to bitterness for me ? No, a piece of dry bread gives more pleasure and satisfaction to a poor man who is in good health, than the daintiest food to a rich man, who is ill and suffering.

Nothing is more desirable in this mortal life, than health, as is evident from the great care we take of it. How cautious we are about going into a house in which there is a person sick of a contagious disease ! If it is not absolutely necessary to go there, we prefer to remain away, so great is our dread of breathing an infected atmosphere, and carrying the germs of disease away with us. How we dread exposing ourselves to the cold, damp air ! That fear is sometimes so great, that we dread going to church to hear a sermon, or to assist at devotions, lest we should catch cold and be laid up. What a common thing it is to ask for leave to eat meat during Lent, for fear of injuring the health by eating fish. There is nothing more precious in the natural order than health, as we see at once when we begin to lose it. What mourning and lamentation, what wishing and desiring ! And what is it all about ? Oh, about the health we have lost, and wish to regain ! Money, silver, gold and anything that can be called wealth, is so dear to the man of the world, that no journey is too long for him, no mountain too high, no sea too dangerous for him to cross in search of it. No watchings and labors are esteemed too difficult, as long as he can add to his treasures by means of them. Lawsuits and contentions, hatred and enmity, arise amongst near relations solely on account of the difference between mine and thine. But when there is question of regaining health, although there may be only the faintest spark of hope, all these things are sacrificed without hesitation ; if it takes twenty coffers of gold to buy the necessary medicines, they are sent to the apothecary's at once ; no matter how bitter the medicine is, the patient readily overcomes his dislike and swallows it. Blood-letting, thirst, burning, cutting, all are endured without a murmur, despite the pain they cause ; and even he who inflicts those torments is paid for doing so, and thanked into the bargain. And why ? Solely for the sake of regaining health. So much do men value that blessing.

Besides, there is nothing which God has commanded us to look after more carefully than our health and strength. He has even renounced the right He has to our service, when we cannot serve Him without injuring our health. All the laws of His Church are suspended, when one cannot observe them, either on account of actual illness, or through a reasonable fear of it. All Christians are bound under pain of grievous sin to hear Mass on Sundays and holydays ; but if you are sick, although you might manage to get as far as the church, or if you are recover-

Nothing more desirable than health.

God has commanded man to look most carefully after his health.

ing from illness, but still so weak that the cold air might bring on a relapse, then you may remain at home ; the law does not bind you ; nay, you would even displease God and do wrong by going to Mass under the circumstances. On certain days all Christians are bound under pain of grievous sin to abstain from flesh-meat, and they who have attained the required age, are obliged moreover to eat only one full meal in the day ; but if you are sick, and your health really requires it, you may eat whatever, and as often as you please ; you are not obliged to fast ; the law does not bind you under those circumstances. I, and all priests are obliged under pain of mortal sin to say the Divine Office every day, and in fact they who have a benefice must make restitution for that day on which they have culpably omitted their office. But if I am ill, if my health is likely to suffer, if I would get a violent headache by reciting the office, I am not bound to do so ; I may put my breviary away ; God does not wish me to say it ; my health has to be considered before His service ; even if I have made a vow to recite the office, I am not bound to keep it. In the same way, as theologians teach, those religious who make a vow never to eat meat, are not bound to keep it in case of sickness, when there is a necessity for eating meat in order to regain health. Nay, many maintain that there is an obligation under pain of sin to eat meat, in such a case, when it is required to prolong life ; although that obligation can rarely be enforced, on account of the difficulty of deciding with certainty that the use of meat is necessary. However that may be, there is no doubt that God has commanded us most strictly to preserve our health and strength.

Yet it is
wantonly
injured by
excessive
drinking.
Shown from
the Holy
Fathers and
Scripture

And yet, O precious health, so useful to man, so important in the sight of God, how many there are who recklessly ruin and destroy thee ! By what ? By frequent and excessive drinking. The life that is so precious, and that would not otherwise be readily exposed to danger by any one, is deliberately and wilfully shortened and brought to a premature end by drunkenness. I do not imagine that it will require much to prove that excessive drinking ruins the health, and thereby shortens life. Holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church, you could not understand how it could be possible for one who is addicted to drinking too much, to remain healthy for a long time ; and therefore you ask with St. Basil “ How can a body be healthy, when it is filled with too much drink ? ”¹ And with St. Ambrose you say :

¹ Quomodo corpus multa potatione plenum sanum poterit existere ?

“Drunkenness is most injurious to the bodily health;”¹ Therefore with Tertullian, you call drunkenness “A premature old age, and a sudden death.”² But I am not in need of your testimony. O Sacred Scripture, thy words are infallible; what dost thou say? “It goeth in pleasantly,” I read in the Book of Proverbs, “but in the end it will bite like a snake, and will spread abroad poison like a basilisk.”³ “By surfeiting many have perished,” says the Wise Ecclesiasticus, “but he that is temperate shall prolong life.”⁴

I appeal to reason itself and daily experience. Most, nay nearly all diseases come from ill-digested humors in the stomach; these humors must necessarily arise frequently in a stomach that is constantly surcharged with wine and other strong drinks, which are of their nature apt to heat the blood, and to render the work of digestion very difficult and tedious. Hence the dumb beast, that will not drink unless it is thirsty, and poor people who are not accustomed to exceed in this particular, are not subject to near so many diseases, as those who are wont to gratify their sensuality on every occasion. How must it then be with those who drink to excess, and even intoxicate themselves every day? All sorts of fevers, diseases of the chest and lungs, dropsy, consumption, palsy, apoplexy, gout, trembling of the limbs and impurity of the blood, although they may in some cases have a different origin, are mostly the effects of excessive eating and drinking, and temperate people are not apt to be subject to them.

Petrarch explains this in a poem: The gout, he says, and a spider once met in the street; the spider ran along quickly, but the gout with its lame legs had to hobble along on crutches. They asked each other where they were going. I, said the spider, am going out of town in despair; I cannot stop there any more, I used to live in the house of a rich man, who was accustomed to sleep till midday, in order to get rid of the effects of the wine he had drunk over night, and every evening he would repeat his potations, so that I was in hopes that, since he was thus occupied the whole day, he would let me weave my web in peace; unfortunately, he has such a number of servants, that every morning, when their master is asleep, they go around with brooms and

From experience.

Shown by a fable.

¹ Noxia res est salutis corporis ebrietas.

² Senectus immatura, mors momentanea.

³ Ingredditur blande, sed in novissimo mordebit ut coluber, et sicut regulus venena diffundet.—Prov. xxiii. 31, 32.

⁴ Propter crapulam multi obierunt; qui autem abstinens est, adjiciet vitam.—Eccl. xxxvii. 34.

sweep away every vestige of my work they find, so that I am not even sure of my life; therefore I have to seek another home. It is the very same thing with me, said the gout; I tried to live with a poor laboring man, but like you I fared badly. Bread and water at noon, bread and water in the evening, bread and water from one week's end to the other, and hard work besides; I assure you, I nearly died of hunger and thirst, and had to leave. Very good, then, said the spider, I know what we can do; let us change; do you go to the rich man, who will give you enough to eat and drink every day, and I will find peace with your former host. And they acted on this advice. Therefore, concludes the poet, the gout and similar maladies are at home with those who pass their days in eating and drinking to excess, and thus shorten their lives. They themselves acknowledge this to be the case. They often complain of being indisposed; sometimes they have a headache, at other times they complain of the stomach, or of loss of appetite; there is always something wrong with them. And no wonder! If you keep a kettle always on the boil you must not be surprised to see steam coming from it.

Neverthe-
less many
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drunken-
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The Providence of God has wisely ordained that excessive drinking should be its own punishment, and should cause all those evils to those who are addicted to it, in order that, if they are still capable of using their reason and following its dictates they may be deterred from indulging in that evil habit. Yet how many there are who are utterly uninfluenced by this consideration! If we drink too much, they say, what else can we expect but to suffer for it? And so they go on drinking down disease after disease, if not at once, at least little by little. Father Drexelius writes in his *Prodromus* that he once saw in a certain church-yard in Germany two graves that had the same inscription; one was that of an old man, and over it were written the words; *Et mortuus est*: "And he died;" the other was that of a young man who died in the bloom of youth, it had the same inscription as the first, but there was a note of interrogation placed after it, so that it read; *Et mortuus est?* "And did he die?" In my opinion they might have left out the note of interrogation, or else have placed it in the inscription over the grave of the old man; for what happens often is not by any means astonishing or wonderful, and it is a well known fact that more people die young, than old. The astonishing thing is that they who are anxious to live long, and to reach a ripe old age, should not have patience to

await the arrival of death, but must hurry it on and shorten their lives in their best years by excessive drinking.

What unaccountable folly that is; nay how wicked it is! Food and drink are given to us by our bountiful Creator for the sole purpose of preserving our health and strength, and they are abused through intemperance, and made the means of destroying health and shortening life. How will they who thus become their own murderers, answer to God for what they have done? What is the difference between killing a man with one thrust of a dagger, and taking his life by slow poison, when death is sure to follow in either case? Is it a lesser crime to drink one's self to death, than to commit suicide by drowning? Edward IV., king of England, had condemned his brother George, Duke of Clarence, to death; the latter when he heard the sentence, begged as a last favor, that he might be put to death by being drowned in a butt of Malmsey wine. His request was granted; he was put into a large butt filled with his favorite drink, and was drowned therein. What an extraordinary choice he made! Did he lose his life the less in that way, than if he had been executed in the ordinary manner? Still, death was not voluntary on his part; he was put into the wine by force, and kept there until he lost his life. How great then is the malice of those who will not wait until sentence of death is passed upon them by God, who is the Master of our lives, but of their own free will drown themselves in wine, that is, drink to such excess, that a premature death must necessarily follow? Worldly-minded people sometimes accuse poor religious of cruelty, because they shorten their lives by all kinds of austerities, by fasting, and disciplines, by watching and prayer; but it is one thing to mortify one's self and to keep the flesh in subjection to the spirit, for the love of God, and another to pamper the body and so make the spirit subject to it. And if the religious commits a sin, if he must render an account to God for having injured his health and shortened his life by his indiscreet austerities; what kind of a sin is he guilty of, what sort of an account will he have to render, who ruins his health and destroys his life by excessive drinking, solely for the purpose of gratifying his passions?

Further, what blindness it is, to drink more than one's health can bear! Tell me, why do you drink so much? Is it not to satisfy the sense of taste? But do you not see that by your excesses, you are lessening the pleasure that this sense is capable

What unaccountable malice this is!

What great blindness!

of feeling, that you are ruining your head and stomach, and that you will have little pleasure left when your health is gone? Put a cask of wine in the public market-place, and let it be well guarded by strong men armed with good cudgels; let every one who wishes, drink of it to his heart's content, but on condition, that after every glass, he must get a good drubbing with a cudgel; I think you would not find many anxious to drink on such a condition as that. Yet it is exactly the case of the drunkard, who has to pay for his excesses by a disordered head and stomach. How can one then continue in such folly? The servant, says St. Basil, runs when he sees his master coming after him with a stick, "but you will not run away from wine, although it gives you many a knock on the head."¹ What greater folly can there be?

How wrong
it is to force
others to
drink too
much.

And here I cannot refrain from expressing my astonishment at an extraordinary custom prevalent in Germany; a man invites a number of friends to a feast, and compels them to drink more than they are able to bear, and if any of them refuse to do so, they immediately draw down upon themselves the displeasure and ridicule of the others. So that the unfortunate people are obliged to drink until they incur all the disagreeable consequences of perfect ebriety! There is no respite granted, all must drink till they can drink no more. I must say that I am quite at a loss to understand this. Can you give me any intelligible reason for it? Why do you invite your friends? Is it not to give them pleasure and to show your esteem for them? But how can it please them to be compelled to drink against their will, and to fill themselves up with wine, until they become sick? What sort of friendship is that which shows itself by forcing a man to get drunk, and taking from him the most precious natural good he has, namely, his health? You invite your friend to a feast, says St. Ambrose, and then make him take away his life. You ask him to sit at your table, and then force him to drink as if your greatest wish were to see him carried off to his grave! You offer him the best wine you have, but in such excess, that you convert it into a virulent poison which will destroy body and soul! You call him your dearest friend, and wish him many happy years as you drink his health, and at the same time you sow in him the seeds of a premature death! This is called drinking his health!

To do that,
is to shorten

"He who compels another to drink more than is good for

¹ *Tu vero non recedis a vino, quod quotidie contundit caput tuum.*

him," says St. Augustine, "does him more harm than if he were to wound him with a sword;"¹ for he thus compels him to lose the health of body and soul. What thanks do you expect from your friend next morning, when he awakens with a splitting headache, for which he knows you are to blame? How can you expect him to be grateful to you, when you have made him sick by dint of drinking his health? In olden times there was a law in Lombardy which forbade the drinking of healths, *annos socii nequis bibat*. The reason of that law, as Paulus Diaconus writes, was the sudden death of four people at once. These four were drinking together, and they agreed that, as a mark of friendship, each one should drink as many glasses, as his neighbor was years old; they were all pretty well advanced in age, and of course they had to drink a great many glasses. They all held out until they had drunk the prescribed amount; but with the last glass the four of them drank in death, for they died that very day. A fine way that, of showing friendship, whereby a man takes away his own life along with that of his friend! In former times there was a laudable custom in Germany of offering what one was about to drink to another, that he might bless it, with the words, "I offer it to you," whereupon the other answered, "God bless it for you." How different that from the present custom which compels a man to drink to intoxication! Would it not be a thousand times, I will not say more edifying and Christian-like, but more courteous, pleasant and agreeable, to allow every one full liberty as regards drinking, so that no one need drink more than he cares for? In the Book of Esther we read of the great feast of King Assuerus; "Wine also in abundance and of the best was presented, as was worthy of a king's magnificence. Neither was there any one to compel them to drink, that were not willing, but as the king had appointed, who set over every table one of his nobles, that every man might take what he would;"² Was not that a better way of enjoying one's self at a feast? In that manner every one could please himself, and show friendship and love to his neighbor; but as for the other custom, if a man compels me to drink more than I care for, I am not inclined to think much of his friendship.

the lives of others, on the pretence of wishing them happiness.

¹ Qui alterum cogit ut se plusquam opus bibendo inebrietur, minus malum ei erat, si carnem ejus vulneraret gladius.—S. Aug. serm. 231, de temp.

² Vinum quoque, ut magnificentia regia dignum erat, abundans, et præcipuum ponebatur. Nec erat, qui nolentes cogeret ad bibendum, sed sicut rex statuerat, præponens mensis singulos de principibus suis, ut sumeret unusquisque, quod vellet.—Esth. 1. 7-8.

How foolishly they act who allow themselves to be persuaded to drink too much.

Finally, how great the folly of those who allow themselves to be persuaded into drinking more than they can bear, to their own great discomfort, and to the detriment of the health that is so precious to themselves and to their families! Oh, they say, I must do as others do; I do not wish to be the first to interfere with an established custom; I would be ashamed to acknowledge that I could not drink any more, and if I did so, I should be laughed at. But what a senseless excuse that is! Let fools laugh, if they will; you have no reason to be ashamed of acting wisely. Place a piece of iron of some thousand pounds weight on your servant's back, and tell him to carry it, and when he finds it too heavy and says, Sir, I am not able to carry it, laugh at him; tell him it is a shame for him to be so weak; and see whether your laughing will make him any stronger! No, he still gives you the same answer: he is still unable to carry the heavy weight. And is that any shame for him? Why then should you be ashamed if you are unable or unwilling to drink as much as others? Is it an honor to be able to drink more than others? If so, it is an honor which belongs also to a large wine-cask, which holds more than a smaller one. If it were not so large, it would have nothing to boast about more than the smaller one. It is, as Demosthenes says, an honor that a sponge might claim, because it can absorb a great deal of water.

It is a vain excuse to say that one must drink to the health of one's friend, or employer.

But, they answer, I cannot refuse to drink the health of my friend, of my employer, etc.; and I must drink it in a brimming bumper in order to show my respect for them. What a ridiculous thing! How foolish the customs of the world are! Tell me, what good do you do your friend thereby? What honor or respect do you show your master by pouring wine down your throat? How does it help his health, if you injure yours by drinking more than you can bear? Prince Radziwill relates, that in his pilgrimage to Jerusalem, a Turk holding a knife in his hand, and with the upper part of his body bare, and covered with cuts and bleeding wounds, met him, and offered to cut himself with the knife in honor of the Roman emperor, for one Turkish penny. The prince took pity on the poor barbarian, and gave him a piece of money, telling him that he need not perform that act of savagery, as it would do no good to the emperor. But when the foolish man got the money, he persisted in showing his respect for the emperor by cutting and hacking at himself until he was covered with blood. Who would not be shocked at such madness, my dear brethren? And yet, the man was

only a heathen and a barbarian. Far greater is the madness of a Christian, born and bred under the mild law of Jesus Christ, who, to show honor to a mere mortal, fills himself to excess with wine, and so inflicts a grievous wound on both body and soul ; thereby showing, in reality, as little honor to the other, as the Turk showed the emperor by mangling his body. Nay, it very often happens that the wine thus swallowed in honor of another, has to be rejected again, as the stomach cannot digest it. A nice way indeed of showing respect ! If instead of drinking to excess, one prayed for one's friends, or gave the superfluous wine to the poor, much more good would be done for their souls.

Again, if it were the custom to eat to a person's health, as it is the custom to drink to it (and I do not see any reason for one, more than for the other) would you show great respect for a man, by eating too much in his honor? Suppose that after you have eaten enough, a man were to bring you a large plateful of porridge, and tell you that you have to eat it up in honor of some great man ; would you do it, think you ? I do not believe you would be so foolish. And if the other tried to compel you, you would say at once I am not able. Why then do you not say so when you are asked to drink more than you can bear? No reasonable man will be offended at your refusing to eat more than you are able, nor can any one find cause for offence if you do not drink what you know is not good for you. Father Faber tells us of a certain Pole who acted in this manner ; this Pole was once invited to a German feast, at which, according to custom, one health after another was drunk ; he drank the healths as well as he could, until at last, he began to think : If it goes on like this all the evening, what will be the end of it ? Gentlemen, he cried out, I beg of you to excuse me, I cannot drink any more. Hereupon one of the guests filled a large glass with wine, and offered it to him, saying that he should drink it to the health of a certain prince in whose service he was. The Pole, finding no other way out of the difficulty, took up an enormous cheese, and holding it out to the other, said : There, eat that to my prince's health ! But what do you mean ? answered the other, I am not a wolf to be able to eat so much. Neither am I an ox, replied the Pole ; so that I cannot drink as much as you ask me ; and why should you try to force me to drink to my prince's health, when you refuse to eat to his health ?

Just as foolish as to eat to a person's health.

Conclusion
and resolution
not to drink more
than is good
for the
health.

A clever and sensible answer truly ! Do not forget it, you who are likely to have occasion to profit by it. If ever an attempt is made to compel you to drink, relate at once what you heard in the sermon about the Pole ; think, and say : you may bring me as much as you like, I will not drink more than is good for me. My health and strength are too precious and useful to be thrown away in that unchristian fashion, and against my will too. I often allege my health as an excuse when the law of the Church obliges me to fast, when the bell rings for Mass on a cold winter's morning, or when devotions are held in the church at such an early hour that I fear to injure my health by going. Why then should not the same excuse avail me, when there is question, not of devotion, or of the divine service, but of being compelled to indulge in drunkenness and intemperance contrary to the law of God ? Therefore, I will in the future act on that, and no sensible man can think the worse of me for so doing ; rather will I, as St. Augustin advises me, be a martyr of temperance, although I thus incur the ridicule of foolish men, than ruin my health and become a torment to myself, through a foolish desire of excelling others in drunken excess. Thus I shall preserve not only the health of my body, but also that of my immortal soul ; thus I shall avoid much evil, and what should be of much greater importance to me, I shall observe Thy law, O God, and fulfil Thy will. Give me Thy grace to keep this resolution. Amen.

TWENTY-SECOND SERMON.

**ON THE SHAMEFUL MALICE OF THOSE WHO IMPOVERISH
THEMSELVES AND INJURE THEIR GOOD NAME BY
EXCESSIVE DRINKING.**

Subject.

There are many who drink more than their incomes allow ; what folly and wickedness. 2. More than is good for their honor and reputation ; what a shame and disgrace.

Text.

Unde ememus panes, ut manducent hi ?—John vi. 5.
“ Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat ? ”

Introduction.

Poor people, who were reduced to such extremities that they were hungry and had not bread to eat ! as we read of the crowd in to-day's Gospel ; and yet, it was their zeal in following Christ in order to hear His word, that brought them to such a pass ; therefore, our Lord, who never abandons His servants who trust in Him, took pity on them, and wrought a miracle to supply them with food. My dear brethren, how many there are nowadays, who bring themselves to the direst poverty, so that they must cry out : “ Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat,” not through zeal in following Christ, but through a wilful desire of satisfying their inordinate appetites, through which they and their families must often suffer the pangs of hunger ! Certainly God will not work a miracle to help such people ! I allude to those inveterate drunkards who drink until they reduce themselves and those belonging to them to beggary. Last Sunday I spoke of the folly of drinking so as to injure the health ; to-day I will speak of the second evil effect of drunkenness, and I say—

Plan of Discourse.

There are many who drink more than their incomes allow ; what folly and wickedness. Such will be the first part, to which I shall briefly add the third evil effect, namely, that many drink more than is good for their honor and reputation ; what a shame and disgrace. Such will be the second part ; my object is to deter all decent people who are here present, from this abominable habit.

Strengthen my words to this effect, O Lord, and give us all Thy light and grace through the intercession of Mary Thy Mother, and our holy angels guardian. The first point may be applied to all, even women, who ruin their families by idleness, luxury in dress, and other superfluities, and also to parents who bring up their daughters in idleness and do not teach them housekeeping, so that when the latter get married they are unable to look after their domestic affairs, through want of experience, and thus cause their families much harm, and do a great deal of injury besides.

It is a well known fact that an industrious and diligent father of a family, who lives decently according to his condition, but practises due economy, can save a great deal and support him-

Excessive
drinking
leads to

poverty, as
the Holy
Scripture
teaches.

self and those who depend on him with very little expense. It is quite the contrary with inveterate drunkards and those who spend their time in idleness; they squander away all they have, until they are not able to meet their household expenses, and have to be satisfied with very poor fare in the end. There is no proof required to show the truth of this; "Be not in the feasts of great drinkers," says the Holy Ghost in the Book of Proverbs, "nor in their revelings who contribute flesh to eat: Because they that give themselves to drinking, and that club together, shall be consumed, and drowsiness shall be clothed with rags."¹ And again in the twenty-first chapter: "He that loveth good cheer shall be in want; he that loveth wine and fat things shall not be rich."²

Reason
shows this
clearly.

The reason of this is clear and patent to all; for he who drinks frequently and copiously, must often pull out his purse, as he cannot expect the wine to flow into his house for nothing. Or, if he has a vineyard of his own, he still consumes money's worth, and so makes away with his property as if he were a sieve, which lets out all the more, the more is poured into it. Besides, a drunkard can never repair his losses; because, even if he got his drink for nothing, he makes himself incapable of attending to his business by which he has to support himself and his family. No matter how successful a shopkeeper is in business, if he once gets fond of drink, then, good-bye to his prosperity; he will not keep his books properly, his customers will begin to desert him, his clerks will have it all their own way, he will neglect to push his business and will lose his credit, in a word, he will not be long in ruining himself. How can an official, or a lawyer, attend properly the cases entrusted to him, if his brains are always muddled with wine? And who would give an important case to such a man? Oh, no, people would say, I am not going to leave myself in the hands of a drunkard like that! No one would even venture to ask his advice, or to intrust him with a secret; for according to the proverb, "When the wine is in, the wit is out." What can a laborer do to support himself and his family, if he is addicted to drink? The work is neglected, the fields are untilled, the last penny is spent for drink, and his house is falling to pieces for want of repairs. In a word, as St. John

¹ Noli esse in conviviis potatorum, nec in comessionibus eorum, qui carnes ad vescendum conferunt, quia vacantes potibus et dantes symbola consumentur, et vestiatur pannis dormitatio.—Prov. xxiii. 20, 21.

² Qui diligit epulas, in egestate erit; qui amat vinum et pingula, non ditabitur.—Ibid, xxi. 17.

Chrysostom says, "The drunkard is unfit for any kind of business;"¹ he is good for nothing but drinking and spending money. What can this lead to but ruin? No matter how great a treasure is, if there is something taken out of it every day, and nothing added to it, it must soon be exhausted.

The worst of this wretched vice is, that the more one indulges in it, the more inveterate the habit becomes, and the stronger the desire for drink. There are many other ways of being extravagant and of spending money, such as dressing too expensively, having showy and costly furniture, giving unnecessary entertainments, spending one's time in gaming, idleness, etc., all these things bring nothing in, and make away with a great deal; still, it is not difficult to remedy the mischief they cause in that way; one can be more economical in dress, more cautious of gambling, more sparing of entertainments, more diligent in looking after one's domestic concerns. But when a man has once become addicted to the wretched vice of drunkenness, his cure is almost hopeless. His carousing over night makes him thirsty again in the morning, because it affects the liver and the stomach, and he is like one who has swallowed sea-water, which increases instead of taking away thirst, as the Holy Ghost says in the Book of Proverbs: "Look not upon the wine when it is yellow, when the color thereof shineth in the glass. Thou shalt be as one sleeping in the midst of the sea; . . . And thou shalt say: When shall I awake, and find wine again?"² This is the case even with those women who indulge too much in dainties and hot drinks; the next morning they feel quite unwell, and their first thought is for the tea-pot, although they have not yet made their morning offering, or the sign of the cross, or said their prayers: so great is their hurry to get something to drink. Thus the desire for drink is preferred, not merely to one's household duties, but even to God Himself; and as one day ends in drinking, the following day is commenced in the same way. Have you ever seen a dog, says Seneca, standing by while his master is eating? His mouth waters, and his eyes are always fixed on his master; if the latter throws him a bit of bread, he snaps at it and swallows it down in a moment, and just as greedy as before, he stands there waiting for another bit. The same

And also the nature of the vice, which grows stronger, the more it is indulged in.

¹ Ebriosus ad omnia negotia ineptus.

² Ne intuearis vinum, quando flavescit, cum splenduerit in vitro color ejus. Eris sicut dormiens in medio mari . . . Et dices: quando evigilabo, et rursus vina reperiam?—Prov xxiii. 31, 34, 35.

thing, continues the philosopher, occurs with the drunkard ; he is never satisfied ; what he drinks to-day lasts only until he has slept it off, and when he has done so, he longs for more. Thus, one fit of drunkenness succeeds another, so that it is impossible to find him sober except in the forenoon, or early in the morning. What, I ask again, can be the result of that, but extravagance, ruin and poverty, which will eventually compel the drunkard to give up his bad habit for want of means ?

And experience too.

Diogenes once saw an acquaintance of his, who had formerly been in good circumstances, but had brought himself to poverty by hard drinking, sitting at a table in an inn, and eating a few dried olives. "Oh," he said, "if you had always dined like that, you would not now have to be content with such a poor supper." ¹ On another occasion he passed by an empty house that was offered for sale ; "Aha," said he, "I knew long ago, that this house, being always full of wine, would soon vomit forth its owner ;" ² The saying, "this man has been plucked by wine" ³ derives its origin from an Athenian who spent all he had in drink, so that at last, he was forced to go half naked. Oh, how many there are nowadays, who deserve the same reproach, who from masters have become servants, and beggars from rich men ! How many sons there are, who inherited a rich property from their thrifty parents, and who now have to go about in rags like the prodigal son ! To give instances of this in order to prove that there are such people, would be like opening the graves in order to show that people die. Of all such people we may say with truth, that they are plucked by wine, for drunkenness has brought them to poverty.

What folly this is.

What madness it is, says St. Augustine, to pour down one's throat in a day, what should suffice to supply one decently with food and drink for three or four days, and to exhaust in a few years by excessive drinking, what could have supported one's self and family for a whole life-time ! And here I must express my heartfelt pity for those citizens and workmen, who have a wife and family to support, and have no other means of doing so but their daily labor, but who being given to drink, send the few pence they earn to the public-house and generally drink in one Sunday all they have earned for the week ; as St. Ambrose says : "They drink in one day the labor and sweat of

¹ Si sic prandisses, non ita coenares.—Diogenes apud Laërtium. 1. 6.

² Sciebam domum istam, vino ebriam, dominum evomituram.

³ Hic a vino deplumatus est.

many days ;”¹ meanwhile they have hardly a decent coat to their backs, or bread and water enough to keep body and soul together during the week : and when they come to old age, or sickness comes on, so that they are unable to work, they have not a penny in their pockets to buy a piece of bread for themselves and their families.

But far greater is my pity for the unfortunate wives and families who are brought to extreme poverty by those drunken men, and who have to suffer hunger and thirst at home, while those who should provide for them, are swilling wine or beer in the tavern, thus verifying the words of St. Paul to the Corinthians : “ And one indeed is hungry, and another is drunk ;”² What a crying injustice that is ! They to whom God has intrusted a wife and children, to be supported as well as possible according to their condition, are the very ones who make away with what belongs to their wives and children, and reduce them to beggary ! And unfortunately, that is of only too common occurrence ! It is a sin of injustice to steal even the least thing from a rich man, who would not miss it ; what a fearful sin it must be for a father thus to rob his own children, whom he has begotten, and his wife, with whom he should be one body and one soul !

The early Christians were horrified at the cruelty of the pagans, who used to sacrifice their own children at their feasts, and drink their blood out of goblets. An enormity of that kind is most revolting to our nature. But you, drunken Christians, act far more cruelly to your children ! You have found a way of gnawing at your children’s flesh, and drinking their blood, not only without horror and disgust, but actually with joy and pleasure, when you spend in drinking and carousing what should be devoted to their support. Do not think that I am saying too much, or speaking too severely. It is the Holy Ghost who uses the same expressions, and calls those unnatural fathers murderers of their own children : “ Merciless murderers of their own children, and eaters of men’s bowels, and devourers of blood ;”³ Cruel fathers, if you gave to the poor the money that is necessary for the decent support of your wives and children, you would commit a grievous sin against charity and justice, which bind you to provide for them before you give

How great the wickedness of those who spend in drink what should go to the support of their families.

What cruelty they are guilty of.

¹ Uno die bibunt multorum dierum labores.

² Alius quidem esurit ; alius autem ebrius est—I. Cor. xi. 21.

³ Filiorum suorum necatores sine misericordia, et comestores viscerum hominum, et devoratores sanguinis.—Wisdom. xii. 5.

anything even to Christ Himself in the persons of the poor ! But you spend in sinful excess, in drinking and carousing, that which should go to support, and clothe and educate your families. What wickedness that is !

They are the occasion of much sin to their families.

Even if temporal poverty and distress were the only evils you cause, it would not matter so much. But your cruelty goes farther than that ; you bring eternal death on your families and occasion the loss of their souls, a not unfrequent result of your drunken excesses. I do not speak now of the scandal you give when you come home in a state of intoxication, and curse and swear and ill-treat your wives and children ; nor of the sins into which your children are led by your neglecting to give them a proper Christian training ; I speak only of the contempt that they must feel for you, although they are bound to honor you ; of the hatred they must have for you, although they are bound to love you ; of the curses they call down on your heads, although they ought to pray for you ; of the little care they will take of you, when they have succeeded in raising themselves by their diligence, out of the poverty into which they were plunged by your drunkenness and intemperance. For how could they have any affection for a father who has shown so little love and tenderness to his own flesh and blood ? How can they act as children to him, who has not been as a father to them ? How can they acknowledge their obligation to support and help him, who by his drunkenness has left them nothing but poverty and misery as their portion ?

And sometimes drive them to despair. Shown by an example.

Nor do I speak of other terrible sins, such as despair, to which they are often driven by the poverty caused through your intemperance. Father Ambrose Cataneus relates a terrible example of this. There was once a poor young woman who had three children, two of whom were just able to walk, while the third was still in the cradle. She had nothing for them to eat, because her husband used to spend all his earnings in drink. The poor woman, driven to extremity, ventured once into the tavern where her husband was, and falling down on her knees, said to him: Oh, my dear husband, I beg of you to take pity on us ; your children and I have not eaten anything for two days, and we are dying of hunger. Her husband, already half intoxicated, grew furious at being thus addressed, and drove his wife away. The poor woman was in a worse state than before. When she reached home, her children ran out to meet her, thinking she had brought them something to eat ; they caught

hold of her apron and felt her pockets, but they found nothing. The poor woman was heart-broken at the sight ; she knew not what to do ; until at last, unable to bear the sight of their misery any longer, she took a knife and cut the throats of her three children. In the same state of desperation, she awaited the arrival of her husband, who as usual came home drunk, and cut his throat, too, during his sleep. The straits to which she was reduced might well have excused her desperate act ; still she was arrested and condemned to death, according to law. She heard her sentence pronounced with the greatest composure, and when she arrived at the place of execution, she spoke so forcibly against those husbands who indulge in excessive drinking, that there was a remarkable improvement noticed afterwards amongst the people in that respect. Ah, would that my words, too, had power to wean drunkards from their evil ways ! I trust I have no drunkards before me now ; but in case any such are here present, who are not deterred from their evil habit by fear of losing their health, or their money, I ask them at least, not to drink more than is good for their honor and reputation, which are seriously injured by excessive drinking, as we shall see in the

Second Part.

Honor and life are generally looked upon as of the same value ; nay, many a one values his good name more than his life, so that he is ready to expose the latter to a thousand dangers, for the sake of preserving, or gaining the former. Many heathens have deliberately sacrificed, nay, taken away their lives that their names might descend to posterity untarnished. No one, unless he is the most degraded of men, will allow the least stain to affect his honor.

A good name is generally more valued than life itself.

And yet, this honor is utterly ruined by excessive drinking ; for what is more disgraceful than to have the name of being a drunkard ? What more loathsome object is there than a drunken man ? St. Gregory Nazianzen says that there was once a beautiful girl who used to amuse herself by playing on the flute, but one day happening to catch the reflection of her face in a pond of clear water, and seeing how it was disfigured by the flute, she became so disgusted with that instrument, that she gave it up altogether. I think, my dear brethren, that if one who is created to the image and likeness of God, and who therefore, is made only for heavenly things, could see himself and the actions he does when

Drunkards lose it by their indecent and disgraceful conduct.

in a state of intoxication, clearly reflected in a mirror, he would be ashamed of himself, and if he had a spark of honorable feeling left, would give up drinking at once. Anacharsis being asked the best means of practising temperance, replied that it was to see how people act who are intoxicated. It was in that way that the Lacedaemonians tried to deter their children from drunkenness, they used to make a slave drunk and let him go staggering about in that condition, in presence of their children; so that the latter seeing how unbecomingly he acted, and how unworthy of a reasoning being, might have a horror and dread of excessive drinking. And, in fact, if one who knew nothing of this vice, were suddenly to see a drunken man, he would take him for a wild beast; or at least for a madman. And after all, what difference is there between a drunken man and a madman; unless that the latter was involuntarily deprived of the use of reason, while the former deliberately deprives himself of it?

The Holy Fathers compare them to senseless things.

St. Basil compares them to dumb idols; "What else are drunken men, but idols such as the heathens adore? They have eyes and see not; they have ears and hear not; hands, and feel not; feet, and cannot walk; tongues, and cannot speak." "I see men as it were trees walking," said the blind man, when Christ first restored his sight, and he was enabled to distinguish objects faintly. If he had seen a drunken man, even after his sight was fully restored, I think he would have made the same remark; "I see men as it were trees walking," I see them swaying from side to side, like trees in a storm, as if they could not keep their feet; they stagger about and fall down almost as often as they get up; they are a nuisance to all decent people, and objects of scorn and ridicule to their own friends, children and servants.

They call them a disgrace to human nature and say they are worse than beasts.

St. John Chrysostom says that a drunkard is "A disgrace to humanity."² And what greater shame can there be, than to degrade human nature from its dignity? Man is created to the image and likeness of God; he is only a little inferior to the angels and princes of Heaven in dignity: "Thou hast made him a little less than the angels,"³ says the Psalmist. But when he is drunk, what becomes of the dignity of his nature? What trace of the divine image can be discerned in

¹ Quid, quæso sunt ebrri aliquid quam gentium idola? Oculos habent et non vident; aures habent et non audiunt; pedes habent et non ambulant; linguas habent et non loquuntur.—S. Basil. hom. in ebriet.

² Opprobrium generis humani.

³ Minus est eum paulo minus ab Angelis.—Ps. viii. 6.

him? He is, so to speak, no longer a man; he is not a whit better than a beast. As St. Basil says, "Drunkenness turns a man into a beast."¹ For while he is in that condition, how can he be distinguished from a beast? By his eyes, ears, hands or feet? But wild beasts have all these, too, and they make far better use of them than a drunken man does. It is reason alone, by which we think, and judge, and discern, that raises our nature almost immeasurably above that of the brute creation. If we lose our reason as is the case with the drunkard, we are no better than the beasts. Nay, one could wish that the drunkard were as good! "How much better," says St. Chrysostom, "is an ass, or a dog, than a drunken man."² And why? Because those animals will not drink more than is necessary to slake their thirst; you may beat an ass as long as you please, once he has had enough he will not drink a drop more. "You, therefore, oh drunkards, are worse than beasts;"³ for you drink six times, ten times more than your necessity requires, or your means allow. What a shame and disgrace to an honorable name!

That is true, they will say; but the vice is so common nowadays, that there is no disgrace in it; we are all in the one boat. They even make a boast of it, and think it a fine thing to be drunk. Alas, that the wickedness of the world should go so far, as to make a boast of a vice that is condemned by God and by nature, and abhorred by unreasoning animals; and that even Christians, should not hesitate to boast of it! It may easily happen that a respectable man once or twice in company gets a little overcome by drink, on account of bodily weakness, or because he is off his guard; he does not thereby disgrace himself, he rather deserves to be pitied; but I am not speaking of such cases as that. I speak only of those who are habitual drunkards, and who are seldom to be seen sober. There is no respectable man who will tell me that those are men of honor and worthy of esteem; and there is no one who will deny that all decent people look on them as disgraced. No matter how pious, how learned, how clever, how experienced a man is if he once gets the name of being a drunkard, all his good qualities are of no use to him; he sinks at once in the estimation of every one. Thus we often hear people say in a pitying tone:

Although drunkenness is a common vice, all sensible men look upon it as disgraceful

¹ *Ebrietas ex hominibus facit belluas.*

² *Quanto melior ebriosis est asinus et canis.*—S. Chrys. hom. 71 ad populum.

³ *Vos ergo brutis deteriores estis.*—*Ibid.*

Such a one is a good man ; but unfortunately he is too fond of drink ; what a pity it is ! If it were not for that he would be one of the best fellows in the world ; and so on. When the Pharisees failed to find any other accusation against Our Lord, they said that He was a drunkard, in spite of His perfect sobriety and temperance ; when they saw Him at the marriage feast at Cana, at the house of Martha in Bethania, with Matthew and Zacheus, who were public sinners, with the rich Pharisee, and many others ; they took occasion from His presence at those feasts to try to ruin His character. “ Behold,” said they, “ this man is a glutton and a wine-drinker.”¹ This false accusation of theirs was the means they made use of to lessen at least His reputation, if they could not take it away altogether. Therefore, he who is habitually addicted to intemperance, cannot be esteemed by any one, except perhaps by the companions of his carousals ; and that is an esteem such as thieves have for the most daring and lawless of their gang. Although the judgments of the world are mostly vain and false, yet there is no one of common sense, who does not at once condemn and look down upon him who has the reputation of being a drunkard.

It is most shameful and disgraceful in women.

“ A drunkard,” I have said ; that is, a drunken man ; for I do not dare to suggest even the possibility of that vice being found amongst women. A drunken woman ! What a horrible thing even to imagine ! There is nothing so disgraceful to a woman as to say that she is given to drink. For, if she is addicted to that vice, what is to become of her household duties, of the education of her children, and of the necessary watchfulness over her servants ? How can the mistress of a family perform these duties if she is given to intemperance ? Every one sees at once, without further proof, that under the circumstances, the ruin of the family is certain, and hence amongst many nations it was the custom to interdict the use of wine to women under the severest penalties. The ancient Romans punished a woman who had drunk but one glass of wine, as severely as if she had committed adultery. Pliny relates that a certain noble matron, who in obedience to her physician’s orders, took a small quantity of wine, was deprived of her dowry by the judge, Oneius Domitius, because she slightly exceeded the exact quantity that was necessary for her. Mezennius once caught his wife in the act of drinking wine, and he was so enraged thereat, that he beat her

¹ Ecce, homo vorax et potator vini.—Matth. xi. 19.

to death; and not only did he go unpunished for this act, but he was even praised for it. More than that; Fabius Pictor writes that a noble lady was once condemned to be starved to death, for merely opening the chest in which the keys of the wine-cellar were kept. So abominable in the eyes of heathens was not merely actual drunkenness, but even the bare suspicion of it on the part of a woman. Christian women, I cannot, nor is it my intention to forbid you to drink wine; I know well that the law of those ancient people was much too severe, and their anxiety to prevent drunkenness amongst women too great. But if you are determined to enjoy the good things that God has given you, do so, in God's name, without forgetting the temperance that becomes a Christian woman. My only object is to show that all, men and women, who exceed in the use of intoxicating drinks, destroy their health, ruin their families, and bring disgrace upon themselves. What folly, what wickedness that is.

Pardon me, my dear brethren, for having said so much of this shameful vice to you. Perhaps (and God grant that it may be the case) among all who are here present, there may be hardly one who requires admonition or warning on this point. At least my opinion is, that they who are most guilty do not often come to hear a sermon. But my wish is to deter all from this shameful habit, by bringing forward natural reasons to induce them to avoid it, which are often far more cogent than supernatural ones. They are the same reasons that you, who are masters and mistresses of families, often adduce, with threats and punishments in addition, to deter your servants, your relatives and acquaintances, especially when the latter are married, and your children also, from indulging in drunkenness. But you must never forget to enforce by your own example what you preach by words.

Conclusion
and exhortation
to avoid
drunkenness.

I conclude with the warning of St. Peter, the prince of the Apostles, in his first Epistle, a warning that we read daily in the Divine Office: "Be sober and watch, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour;"¹ therefore be on your guard, all of you, and let your reason keep awake. Prudent and foreseeing parents, whose sons are away at college, do not give them all at once the money they require for the year; but send it to them every month, little by little, so that they may not be tempted to

And to practice
Christian
temperance.

¹ Sobrii estote et vigilate, quia adversarius vester diabolus tamquam leo rugiens circuit, quærens quem devoret.—I. Pet. v. 8.

squander it away all at once, and then have to suffer want afterwards. It is the same with these bodies of ours that we have to support ; if the salvation of our souls is not a sufficient motive for us to avoid drunkenness, let us, at least, if we are wise, give the necessary refection to our bodies in such a way, that our incomes will not suffer from it, and that we may always be able to do our duty to ourselves and to those belonging to us. Prudent parents, no matter how rich they are, never send their sons more than the latter are actually in need of, lest they become spendthrifts and bring disgrace on the family. It is so, I repeat, with these bodies of ours ; if the salvation of our souls is not a sufficient motive to keep us from excessive drinking, let us at least consider our honor and good name, and not take more than is good for our reputation. And still, these should be the least motives to induce us to practise temperance and sobriety. Transitory goods, empty honor, it is not for your sake that I wish to practise virtue ! Thou, O God, to whom all love and honor are due, Thou hast commanded us to provide for our families as well as we can, in temporal things, and to keep up our good name for the general edification of all, and therefore to lead a sober and temperate life as becomes Christians ! This we will do for Thy sake, and with Thy grace. Amen.

TWENTY-THIRD SERMON.

ON THE GUILT AND SINFUL EFFECTS OF HABITUAL DRUNKENNESS.

Subject.

1. Deliberate drunkenness is always a mortal sin. 2. The habit of drinking much, although not to actual drunkenness, is very often a mortal sin.—*Preached on the fifth Sunday in Lent.*

Text.

Quis ex vobis arguet me de peccato ?—John viii. 46.

“ Which of you shall convince me of sin ? ”

Introduction.

To drink more than one's health, or income, or reputation can bear, what folly, what wickedness, what a shame ! And

yet, it is an ordinary consequence of excessive drinking, as we have seen in the preceding sermons. Yet, important as this consideration is, it would not matter much if the salvation of the soul and the law of God were not concerned also. For the worst of all the evil consequences of excessive drinking, which should be most effective in deterring Christians from that vice, is, that most people drink more than is consistent with the salvation of their souls and the observance of the divine law. Here it seems to me that some are inclined to say, like our Lord in to-day's Gospel, "which of you shall convince me of sin?" What nonsense to say that it is a sin to drink a drop too much now and then! So common has this vice become, that it is no longer looked upon as sinful. And my object now is to show, by way of concluding this matter, how false and wrong that idea is. I will convince you of sin.

Plan of Discourse.

Deliberate drunkenness is always a mortal sin. Such will be the first and longer part. The habit of drinking much, although not to actual drunkenness, is very often a mortal sin; as I shall show in the second part.

Help me to do this, O God, through the intercession of Mary and the holy angels guardian.

By perfect drunkenness I mean such a darkening of the reason through excessive drinking that one is incapable of doing a reasonable act. It is defined by theologians as, "An excess in drinking, without just and grievous cause, by which a man knowingly and willingly deprives himself by violence and fully of the use of reason." Mark these words, my dear brethren. In the first place it is called an excess in drinking, which is to be understood according to the capacity of each individual to bear a greater or smaller quantity of intoxicating drink. Father Bidermann says that there was a noted drinker in his time who was able to consume nearly eight gallons of wine at a sitting, without suffering the least inconvenience. How he managed it, I know not; but if such was really the case, although that man certainly drank a great deal, yet he was not guilty of any excess which would result in intoxication. That quantity, therefore, whether it be great or small, is to be considered as excessive and as the cause of drunkenness, which in any individual case, completely obscures the reason. Secondly, it must be without just cause; thus it is not a sin to take a medicine

What is meant by perfect drunkenness.

which deprives one for a time of the use of reason, or according to the opinion of many theologians, to get drunk if the doctor thinks it necessary for the recovery of health, because such a deprivation of reason arises from a just cause, namely, the avoidance of illness, or the recovery of health. Thirdly, the deprivation of reason must be wilful and deliberate ; therefore, if a man, either because it is the first time, or because he has good reason for so judging from past experience, thinks that what he is about to drink will not hurt him, although through illness, or the strength of the wine of which he knew nothing, or through coming out suddenly into the fresh air, his reason is actually affected, as frequently happens, such a man is not guilty, because he did not foresee nor intend that drunkenness should follow from his act. Fourthly, I have said, “by violence.” He who lies down to sleep at night also deprives himself of the use of reason, not however violently, but in the manner appointed by the Author of nature, so that when he awakes he is at once ready to use his reason again. Fifthly, I have said that one must deprive himself “fully” of the use of reason ; therefore, although the imagination is somewhat disturbed, and the tongue stammers and the eyes see double, and the feet are rather uncertain, nay, even though the stomach is forced to reject the wine that one has drunk as long as the reason is capable of acting and reflecting, there is not perfect and mortally sinful drunkenness, provided there has been no wish or intention of getting drunk. I speak of the matter as it is, my dear brethren ; there are sins enough already without making new ones through a false conscience. Drunkenness, then, consists in the total deprivation of the use of reason deliberately and wilfully caused, or foreseen ; a sin that is unfortunately only too common in this country of ours !

It is a grievous sin because it turns a man into a beast. Now it is easy to prove that this is a grievous sin, even if there was no divine law forbidding it ; for the light of reason alone enables us to see that it is unlawful. For, in the first place, drunkenness goes directly against the love, reverence and respect that man owes his Creator and himself, by inflicting a grievous injury on himself and offering a gross insult to God. Because, what greater harm could man do his own dignity, which consists in his reason, that enables him to raise himself to the throne of the Most High, and to bear the likeness of his Maker ; what greater harm could he do himself than of his own accord, to make himself a drivelling idiot, and to lower himself

to the level of a beast? It is undoubtedly a grievous sin for a man to deprive another of his reason even for a single day, or to transform him into a beast by magic arts, as we read of the celebrated Sorceress who changed the companions of Ulysses into swine; is it not then, a much greater crime for a man deliberately to take away his own reason, and as it were, to bewitch himself

The Holy Fathers consider that the names of fool and wild beast are too honorable to be applied to drunkards. St. Basil, St. John Chrysostom and others call the drunkard, "one who turns himself into a devil."¹ Because just as Lucifer by his pride and rebellion changed himself from an angel of light into an angel of darkness, so also the drunkard deliberately obscures his reason and makes himself a beast, instead of a reasoning being. Lucifer deprived himself of his supernatural gifts, but his natural gifts still remain to him, such as his intellect, his knowledge and his power of discernment. By drunkenness, therefore, a man does himself much more harm, because he destroys not only the inward supernatural beauty of the soul, which consists in sanctifying grace, but also his natural gifts, his understanding, his memory, his reason; and even his very outward appearance sometimes becomes brutalized. Unhappy is the man who is possessed by the devil! While in that state, he has not the power of acting or speaking as he wills, for the evil spirit uses his tongue as an instrument, and it very often happens that the possessed person, although he never learned any language but his mother tongue, speaks all kinds of languages, such as Latin, French, Greek and Hebrew with the greatest ease. How could he learn all those tongues so quickly? Alas, poor wretch, it is not he who is speaking, but the evil spirit that is in him! He is no longer master of his hands, feet, or head; the demon moves his body about at pleasure; he can lift it high in the air, and cast it down to earth again. Unfortunate, indeed, such a man must be, and well deserving of our pity, since God has allowed him to be so grievously tormented! But what would you think of one, my dear brethren, who deliberately invokes a demon and invites him to take possession of his body? Would not that be a fearful crime? Could it be excused from mortal sin? Yet that is what the drunkard does. He has no longer power over the members of his body; if no one takes the trouble of looking after him, and

Nay, even
into a de-
mon.

¹ Dæmonem voluntarium.

bringing him home, he falls in the mud like an unclean animal ; he speaks inarticulately, without knowing what he says, and without being able to make himself intelligible to others ; he does things that he would otherwise abhor, and that he must be heartily ashamed of when he comes to himself again. How is it that he behaves in such an unusual and unbecoming manner ? Ah, it is not himself, it is the wine, the evil spirit that has taken possession of him, that is the cause of all the mischief ! Still, he does not excite pity, but rather disgust ; because he has wilfully swallowed down the spirit that possesses him. And he is in a far worse state too, than the demoniac, for the miserable condition of the latter cannot be attributed to his own free will, and he may be freed from the evil spirit by the prayers and exorcisms of the Catholic Church ; but no exorcisms can help a drunken man ; he must remain in his unreasoning state until the effects of the strong drink have worn off. Can any sensible man maintain that drunkenness is not a mortal sin, when by it one inflicts such a grievous injury on one's self ?

And also offers a great insult to the Creator, because it is looked upon as an insult to dishonor the image of a king.

Still greater is the injury done to God. It is a great crime in the eyes of the world, to dishonor publicly the image of an emperor or a king, and it is looked upon as a kind of treason and punished with death. I remember very well a circumstance that occurred in a certain town in which I was studying. The students of the town, in their indiscreet zeal for the Catholic faith, destroyed the escutcheon of the king, who was not a Catholic. But how dearly had the town to pay for their rashness, although it was innocent ! It had to pay a heavy fine in money, and was made to suffer in many ways besides, in order to atone for the insult. Yet it was only a piece of carved wood that was dishonored. No matter ; it was the sign of a sovereign, who took to himself any disrespect shown to it. How much greater would not the insult be, if a favorite servant of the king were to dishonor and trample under foot an image of his master, which he had just received from the latter's hand, as a sign of special favor ?

The human soul is the image of God.

Now, my dear brethren, man always carries about with him a very precious image, namely, his reason. What a beautiful and costly image it is ! And whose is it ? It is that of the Lord of lords, and King of kings, of Him who is Master of all the potentates of Heaven and earth. It is the image of the Almighty God, who has given it to man with His own hands, as a token of His love. Now, if earthly lords are justly offended, when an insult is

offered to their coat-of-arms, although it is made only of wood or stone, do you think that the great God, who is so jealous of His honor and glory, and who cannot bear to see men offering the flesh of an animal to an idol, can see without displeasure His own living image wantonly disgraced and dishonored ?

And could a greater insult be offered to that image, than to degrade it to the condition of a senseless creature, or of a beast, by drunkenness ? Musonius asks, “ What can be more degrading to a man, than to bear the likeness of an irrational animal ? ”¹ I will make a slight change in this expression in order to inspire you with a greater horror of the vice of intemperance, and I ask, “ What can be more degrading to the image of God, than to turn it into the image of a beast ? ” Is it likely that God will allow this injury to go unavenged ? And is that a mere trifling sin, and one that we need not think much of ?

No, not without cause has God in His anger threatened woes and maledictions by the Prophet Isaias : “ Wo to you that rise up early in the morning to follow drunkenness, and to drink till the evening to be inflamed with wine.” “ Therefore hath hell enlarged her soul, and opened her mouth without any bounds.”² Not without cause does he ask in the Book of Proverbs : “ Who hath wo ? Surely they that pass their time in wine, and study to drink off their cups.”³ Not without cause has He pronounced the final sentence by St. Paul ; “ Nor shall drunkards possess the kingdom of God.”⁴

There is still another characteristic in drunkenness which distinguishes it from other sins, and brings out its gravity more clearly ; and it is this, that it makes man incapable of doing penance and being converted to God, and thus places the soul in certain danger of eternal damnation, when the time comes for her to leave this life. Suppose that a drunken man is overtaken by a mortal illness, or that he is grievously wounded, or otherwise reduced to the last extremity ; for we are not safe from death for a moment, nor can we have the least idea of the time of his approach, and therefore Our Lord warns us to be always on the watch ; how could a drunken man prepare for death and

It is shamefully disgraced by drunkenness.

A disgrace that is most displeasing to God.

Besides, when in a state of intoxication, one is in danger of eternal damnation.

¹ Quid foedius quam ut homo bruti animalis image sit ?

² Væ, qui consurgitis mane ad ebrietatem sectandam, et potandum usque ad vesperam, ut vino aestuetis. Propterea dilatavit infernus animam suam, et aperuit os suum absque ullo termino.—Isa. v. 11, 14.

³ Cui væ ? Nonne his, qui commorantur in vino, et student calicibus epotandis ?—Prov. xxiii. 29, 30.

⁴ Neque ebriosi regnum Dei possidebunt.—I Cor. vi. 10.

the journey into eternity? In any other circumstances, when the Lord knocks at the door, if, like the foolish virgins, we have no oil in our lamps, as long as there is a spark of life left we have time to go and buy some; that is to say, if a mortal illness were to surprise us when engaged in the commission of any other sin, we might at least make an act of contrition with the heart, if we are not able to make our confession, and thus obtain pardon, though it is not likely that we should do so under the circumstances, and hardly one in a thousand finds pardon for his sins in that way, when he defers repentance. But when a man is intoxicated what can he do for himself? He cannot make his confession because he is unable to speak, nor can he repent of his sins, because he cannot use his reason. He is utterly incapable of receiving any sacraments, as long as he is in that state, and of course if he dies before becoming sober, there is no place for his soul but hell. And this is the reason why it is not lawful to drink to excess before going to bed at night, when one foresees that complete drunkenness is likely to ensue during sleep; because thereby one deprives himself wilfully of the use of reason, and consequently is not able under all circumstances to attend to the salvation of his soul.

Drunkards
especially
have to
dread dying
impenitent.

O drunkards, if any one has to dread dying impenitent, you certainly must! Hear how God threatens you by the Prophet Jeremiah: "In their heart I will set them drink, and I will make them drunk that they may slumber, and sleep an everlasting sleep, and awake no more, saith the Lord."¹ According to the literal sense these words are to be understood of Balthasar and the Chaldeans, who were to be surprised and massacred in their drunken sleep by Cyrus, as we read in the fifth Chapter of the Book of Daniel. Still they may be applied to all who are given to drunkenness, because the longer they indulge in this vice, the more they become attached to it; so that they refuse to give it up, and are generally hurried into eternity by a sudden and unprovided death, without true sorrow and repentance for their sins.

Shown by
an example.

It is sad to read what the Venerable Bede relates of his own experience. I will tell it to you in his own words. "I once knew a Brother whose name I will keep secret; would that I had never known him! He lived in a noble convent, but not in a noble manner, for he often drank to excess. When he was overtaken

¹ In calore eorum ponam potus eorum, et inebriabo eos, ut sopiantur, et dormiant somnum sempiternum, et non consurgant, dicit Dominus.—Jer. li. 39.

by his last illness he called in his brethren, and in their presence began to rave and howl like a damned soul, and to cry out that he saw hell opened for him and a place prepared, in which he was to suffer eternal hunger and thirst. The bystanders tried to encourage him by reminding him that there was still time, and that as long as he had life, he could repent and ask God to forgive him ; but all to no purpose. ‘No,’ he cried, ‘there is no time for me any longer ; my sentence is already pronounced ; I am going to hell.’ And having said these words he died, without giving the least sign of contrition.” Oh, if God were to command all the dying thus to make known their sentences, how clearly should we not see the infallible truth of the words of the Apostle, “Drunkards shall not possess the kingdom of God.”

For God’s sake then, let no one say that drunkenness does not matter much, that it is a general failing, and that it cannot be a great sin ! Is it not a great sin, when God excludes men from Heaven on account of it ? If it is a general custom, and is therefore regarded as a trivial fault, so much the worse, so much the more is the evil to be deplored. It is not the civil or the ecclesiastical law against which a long continued prescription might avail, that forbids drunkenness ; but the natural and divine laws, against which no prescription is ever admissible. If all the people in the world were to act against that law, it still would be a sin for each individual. And the same is to be said of every custom and usage of the world which is of itself sinful, or apt to lead to sin. You say that you are not the only one who drinks too much ; is your sin any less on that account ? Is that a reason why you should expect to be punished less severely for it ? A soldier deserts, and induces twenty of his comrades to follow his example. If he is caught he will certainly be hung. Oh, he thinks, what does it matter ? I am not the only one. No, you are not the only one ; but you will see whether death will be any easier for you, because you have twenty companions hanging on the gallows beside you !

Yes, says another, I grant that wilful drunkenness is a grievous sin ; but I do not drink for the purpose of getting drunk ; my only object is to enjoy myself, and not to deprive myself of the use of reason. But what sort of an excuse is that ? An adulterer might say that his object is not to offend God, but to enjoy himself, does that lessen his sin ? You do not wish to take away your reason ; but you drink so much for the purpose of enjoying yourself, that drunkenness is sure to follow. I thought,

Custom does
not excuse
this sin.

Nor any
other pre-
text what-
soever.

says the third, that I could bear more ; but I found afterwards, to my surprise, that I was drunk. Very good ; if it is the first time, or if it is to be attributed to accident, your excuse is valid. But if you know by experience that you generally get drunk when you go to the tavern, or into company, your excuse is worth nothing ! you are guilty of deliberate drunkenness. That is all very fine talk, says a fourth ; but if you only knew the occasions and temptations that one is exposed to in the world ; I am forced to drink against my will ; healths are proposed, and I have to drink them till I am drunk. I will let St. Augustine answer this objection. “ Drunkards,” he says, excuse themselves by saying that they were compelled to drink by a stronger man. But if you were subjected to such violence, that you had to drink or die, it would be better for you to kill your body by practising temperance, than to kill your soul by deliberate drunkenness.”¹ From this language on the part of such a learned and holy Doctor of the Church, we can see how grievous is the sin of drunkenness.

From this we may see how grievously they sin, who provoke others to get drunk.

From what we have seen hitherto, it is evident that you are guilty of a great sin against God and your neighbor, who provoke others to drink to excess, often with no other intention but that of making them drunk, or at least foreseeing that they are sure to get drunk. It is a mortal sin, as theologians teach, to make an enemy drunk, as long as the intoxication is involuntary on his part, even if a town was to be freed, or taken thereby. How then can it be lawful to lead another on to perfect intoxication, out of mere wantonness ? Against you especially is that woe uttered by the Prophet Isaias : “ Woe to you that are mighty to drink wine, and stout men at drunkenness ; ”² But enough of this. There are many who flatter themselves, and think : God be praised that I am free from that sin at any rate ; I am not such a beast as to get really drunk, although I take a drop too much, still I never get so bad as not to know what I am doing. But hear what a celebrated author and theologian says : “ Drunkenness is a mortal sin, although it does not fully take away the use of reason.”³ I do not dare, my dear brethren, to say that this holds good always and for every one ; but I do main-

¹ Solent ebriosi ita se excusare, ut dicant, persona potens coegit me. Etiam si ad hoc veniretur, aut bibas, aut moriaris, melius erat ut caro tua sobria occideretur, quam ut per ebrietatem anima moreretur.—S. Aug. Sermon. 232. de temp.

² Væ qui potentes estis ad bibendum vinum, et viri fortes ad miscendam ebrietatem.—Isa. v. 22.

³ Ebrietas etiam citra deliquium rationis est peccatum mortale.—Estius in c. 5. I Cor.

tain that the habit of excessive drinking, although not to complete drunkenness, is in most cases not to be easily excused from mortal sin. I will briefly prove that in the

Second Part.

To place one's self deliberately in the proximate occasion and danger of sin, is the same thing as to commit the sin ; although in reality the sin is not committed. No theologian denies this. But the proximate occasion consists of those circumstances in which certain individuals know by experience that they always, or at least very often, fall into sin. Now there is very little doubt that excessive drinking, although it does not take away the use of reason, is yet a fruitful source of many sins ; as daily experience teaches, nor do we want a better proof than that. Wine tells on different people in different ways, according to their dispositions and inclinations. Some are most devout when they have a drop too much. I once knew a man who always wept tears of sorrow for his sins, when he was a little tipsy. Would that this was the only effect of wine ; but as it is the best, so also it is the rarest ! But what a number of sins arise from excessive drinking. St. John Chrysostom and other Fathers of the Church call it " The mother of all vice ; " ¹ St. Augustine says that he who is given to immoderate drinking, does not merely commit one sin, for, " he is sin itself altogether ; " ² the devil is never more pleased than when he can lead a man into this vice, for he knows well that it is sure to be the occasion of many sins.

Even the habit of drinking to excess, although not to actual drunkenness, is to most people a proximate occasion of many sins.

And he has already had proof of this from experience. Read the Holy Scriptures and you will find examples enough of the sad effects of excessive drinking, even among those who were otherwise faithful servants of God. The Patriarch Noe kept himself free from sin during the Deluge which destroyed the world, but when he drank too much wine, what scandal he gave to his own children ! Lot escaped unhurt from the flames of Sodom, and had not as yet defiled the purity of the marriage-bed ; but when he took too much wine, did he not commit a most shameful incest ? Herod, wicked as he was, had a great respect for St. John the Baptist, listened to his sermons with pleasure and followed his advice in many things, but on the occasion of the festival, when he was warmed with wine, he caused St. John to

Proved from the Old Testament.

¹ Omnium mater vitiorum.

² Sed totus est peccatum.

be beheaded, although he knew him to be innocent, merely to satisfy the whim of a dancing girl, who knew well that she could not find a better opportunity of glutting her cruelty. The vessels that Nabuchodonosor brought away from Jerusalem had always been kept in a place that the idolatrous priests looked upon as sacred; Balthasar, who had hitherto respected them, profaned them when he was excited by wine at a banquet, and drank out of them with his own concubines. The Israelites in the desert, after they had eaten and drunk, took to idolatry as a pastime: "And the people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play."¹

From daily
experience.
For drink
leads to im-
purity.

But why should we rake up those old histories? What happens in our own day? We can use our own eyes and ears, and learn from our own experience. There are some, and in fact very many who become quite friendly when they have drunk too much; but they are a great deal too friendly and too free in their conversation, far more so than is consistent with Christian modesty, or virginal or conjugal purity. With reason does St. Augustine say that wine, taken to excess, is "the shipwreck of chastity."² Where are you most likely to hear unchaste jests, filthy talk and immodest songs, if not in drinking-houses? Many a town would be freed from a great deal of impurity, seduction of the innocent, scandal, and adultery, if wine were not so much used; so that it would be a very good thing for those towns if God were to refuse to bless the wine-crop.

To sinful
loquacity.

Others grow quite talkative when tipsy, and reveal what was told them in confidence, thus doing much harm; nor do they hesitate to say boldly what they think of others, thereby injuring their neighbor's reputation. In fact, loquacity is so usual in a tipsy man, that it would be a wonder indeed if one who is in that state could manage to keep his unruly tongue in order. In olden times there was a public banquet once given in Athens to the ambassadors of King Ptolemy, to which Zeno the philosopher was invited. The latter appeared, but during the whole banquet he never opened his lips to say a word, nor did he even answer the questions that were addressed to him. When all was over, one of the ambassadors took up a goblet full of wine, and drank it off to the philosopher's health. Now, said he, O wisest of men, deign to give me an answer. What shall I say to my king when he asks me about you? Zeno

¹ Sedit populus manducare, et bibere, et surrexerunt ludere.—Exod. xxxii. 6.

² Est naufragium castitatis.

at last opened his mouth. Tell your king, said he, that you have seen at Athens a man who could keep silence while wine-drinking was going on. His meaning was, that it was a wonderful thing for a man to be able to do that.

There are others who grow abusive when drunk. They curse and swear, and use all sorts of hard words against their neighbor, and worse than all, they blaspheme their Creator. Others again become prodigal; they give away all they have; and drink and gamble until they have spent what ought to go to the support of their families, as we have seen in the last sermon. Others become irascible and quarrelsome, and are not easy until they have succeeded in picking a quarrel with some one, they have not a friendly word for any one, and thus give rise to hatred, enmity, and often murder. Others become so cruel and heartless, that they ill-treat their parents, wives and children, so that very often, the poor wife has to sit trembling at home, while her husband is drinking in the tavern, knowing well that when he comes home, he will beat and abuse her, as if she were a naughty child who deserves punishment. It is clear that these, and many other effects of excessive drinking are sinful, and mortally sinful. Therefore, he who knows by experience that immoderate drinking causes those effects in him, is bound under pain of mortal sin, to avoid excessive drinking, although he does not intend to deprive himself fully of the use of reason. The conclusion is evident, because the premises are certain.

To anger,
cruelty and
prodigality.

Unhappy wives, who have to suffer poverty, or ill-treatment, through your drunken husbands, how I pity your wretched state! Still, hard as it is for you, it is not that which most excites my pity; for it is a cross that God has laid on your shoulders to the salvation of your souls, and that you may earn much glory in Heaven, if you only make use of the opportunity, and practise patience and resignation to the divine will. But there is one thought which could make me shed tears of blood, and that is, that you turn this occasion of gaining merit for your souls into an occasion of eternal damnation to yourselves, by your excessive impatience and despair; and thus it often happens that you go from temporal into eternal suffering! For, how do you sometimes act, when your husbands come home, half, or wholly drunk? Do you not often abuse and curse them, and call them drunken beasts, and call down all sorts of imprecations on them, and give utterance to everything that your anger inspires you with? Is not that the case?

Instruction
for wives
who have
drunken
husbands.

And what do you gain by such conduct ? Your husbands who are already ill able to bear the least word of contradiction, on account of the state in which they are, return you curse for curse, and abuse for abuse ; and so you become an occasion of additional sin. And what better are you for it ? You get a sound drubbing, and, sooth to say, you richly deserve it ! Do you know how you should act ? That is no time for reproof or remonstrance ; as the saying is, if a man meets a wagon loaded with hay, he has nothing to do but to get out of its way ; and so also you should give way to your husbands when they are too full of wine. You must hold your tongues, give way, return soft answers, say that it is a good thing to take a drop now and then, and bear ill-treatment with patience ; there is no better plan for you to adopt. The next day, when the fumes of the wine have disappeared, and you think your husbands are in a better humor, you can remonstrate with them with humility, modesty and love, and beg of them to amend, and to cease causing you such suffering. If that does not help you, then you must pray earnestly to the Lord of hearts, that He may give your husbands the grace of conversion. Resign yourselves humbly and patiently to every decree of the Almighty ; unite your trials with the bitter passion and death of Jesus Christ, recall your past lives and see whether you have not perhaps committed some grievous sins, and accept your sufferings as a punishment for them from the hands of God. Think and say ; Lord, Thy will be done ! Thou chastisest me for the good of my soul, and in order to bring me to Heaven ! The punishment is hard and I feel it keenly, still I accept it from Thy fatherly hand ! Do Thou give me grace to bear it patiently ! O eternal joys of Heaven, you are well worth all that I can suffer here ! In that way you will have no part in the sins of your husbands ; if they wish to lose their souls, it is their own fault ; you will have done your duty. I am often forced to console myself in the same manner, when I try to exhort others to amend their lives, and find that my preaching has been fruitless ; I have done my duty, I say to myself, if they do not wish to profit by what I have said, I cannot help them ; they will have to answer to God for it. If you do that, you will at least find that God will console you in your trials ; if you neglect it, then you will have a twofold trial to bear ; that is, you will have to suffer without consolation either from God or man, and generally speaking, your hard lot in this life will only be the forerunner of a still harder one in the next

life. If I knew of any better advice to give you, I would give it with all my heart ; but I can find no other.

“Awake, ye that are drunk,” I say to you, O drunkards, for the last time, “and weep and mourn all ye that take delight in drinking sweet wine ; for it is cut off from your mouth.”¹ Weep and mourn over your unhappy and almost desperate state! Acknowledge and bewail the madness with which you ruin your health, your fortunes and your good name ! Bemoan your wickedness with tears of repentance, and atone for the many sins you have committed by intemperance ! Weep as Esau did, when he satisfied his gluttony by selling his birthright for a mess of pottage ; for you have given up your eternal inheritance in Heaven, that you may indulge your inordinate desires. Weep and beg of God with all humility to avert the woes that will surely fall upon your heads, unless you repent !

Conclusion
and threats
to drunk-
ards.

My dear brethren, let us try to serve God in temperance and sobriety during this short and uncertain life of ours. Let us use our understanding and our will to the end for which our Creator gave them to us, namely, to know, to love and to honor Him, whom we hope one day to see and to love in Heaven ; and let us keep all our desires for that heavenly banquet, the thought of which so much consoled the Prophet David, when he cried out : “I shall be satisfied when Thy glory shall appear ;”² in that heavenly country in which, as Thou hast promised, Thou wilt inebriate “Thy elect with the plenty of Thy house.”³ We shall console ourselves in this vale of tears with the hope of this blissful intoxication. Amen.

Warning
for others

¹ *Expergiscimini ebrii, et flete, et ululate omnes qui bibitis vinum in dulcedine, quoniam perit ab ore vestro.*—Joel i. 5.

² *Satiabor cum apparuerit gloria tua.*—Ps. xvi. 15.

³ *Inebriabuntur ab ubertate domus tuæ.*—*Ibid*, xxxv. 9.

ON ANGER AND VINDICTIVENESS.

TWENTY-FOURTH SERMON.

ON THE UNREASONABLENESS OF GIVING WAY TO ANGER, AND THE BEST MEANS OF CONTROLLING IT.

Subject.

1. Anger is a vice which is contrary to sound reason. 2. How one may and must control and repress the movements of anger, as well in himself as in others.—*Preached on the twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Et iratus Dominus ejus.—Matth. xviii. 34.

“And his Lord being angry.”

Introduction.

Just and righteous cause had this lord to be angry with his wicked servant ; for, would not even the mildest of men be displeased at seeing, that, although the servant was forgiven the enormous debt of ten thousand talents, yet he acted so harshly with his fellow-servant, who owed him but a hundred pence, and who begged him in the most humble manner to have patience with him, that he had him cast into prison for the trifling debt. “And his lord being angry.” Just indeed was that anger ! How often, my dear brethren, do not Christians give way to anger and resentment against their fellow-men, without the least cause, and without having ever suffered anything at their hands ? How many there are who, when things do not go according to their wishes, at once give expression to the bitterest feelings against those whom they suspect to be the cause of their failure ! Oh, woe to such people, if the Almighty were to deal in a sim-

ilar manner with them, every time they offend Him by sin, which they do daily ! For, as Our Lord says in to-day's Gospel : " So also shall my heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not everyone his brother from your hearts."¹ If that threat is uttered against all who refuse to forgive those who have injured them, what will they have to expect who give way to anger against their neighbor on the least provocation, and make use of injurious and insulting words towards him ? I will now speak of this anger through which most men commit sin nearly every day, and which is a fruitful cause of other sins.

Plan of Discourse.

Anger is a vice which is most contrary to sound reason. This I will show in the first part. How one may and must control and repress the movements of anger as well in himself as in others. This I will show in the second part.

Give us Thy powerful grace, O Jesus, that we may all learn to practise patience and meekness, and thus be true children of our heavenly Father ; this we ask of Thee through the intercession of Mary, Thy Mother, and our holy angels guardian.

As I told you on a former occasion, when speaking of drunkenness, Lacedaemonians, in order to deter their children from this abominable vice, used to make their slaves drunk, and bring their children in, to see them in that state. Their disgusting appearance, their unbecoming gestures, their uncertain gait, their incoherent speech, and the other effects of intoxication that were observable in them, made the children look on them as a strange kind of wild animal. Thus from their very childhood, the Lacedaemonians were filled with horror for a vice so unbecoming a reasoning being. In the same way, my dear brethren, in order to see how anger is opposed to reason, we need only imagine that we see an angry man giving vent to his feelings. See how disturbed he looks ; with his face alternately red and pale and swollen with passion, his eyes darting forth fire, his teeth grinding with rage, his lips compressed, his whole body trembling, his fist clenched, his tongue full of gall ; his silence is a continued discordant growl, his speech nothing but invective ! Would not one have reason to think that he is completely mad and out of his mind, or else that he has been transformed into a wild beast ? In fact he is called a fool by the Holy Ghost in the

An angry
man is like
a beast.

¹ Sic et Pater meus coelestis faciet vobis, si non remiseritis unusquisque fratri suo de cordibus vestris.—Matth. xviii. 35.

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Book of Ecclesiastes ; “ Be not quickly angry ; for anger resteth in the bosom of a fool ; ” ¹ and a savage and unreasoning beast, in the Book of Proverbs : “ As the roaring of a lion, so is the anger of a king.” ²

All that he says and does is unreasonable.

And in fact, while his anger lasts, are any of his actions such as could be said to proceed from sound reason ? No ; everything he does seems strange and unreasonable ; he appears to have lost all power over himself ; he speaks whatever his passion suggests to him, without knowing what he says. All kinds of curses and oaths come forth from his mouth ; he blasphemes God and man, and says things that he would never dream of otherwise. He gets into quarrels and disputes that he repents of and is heartily sorry for when he comes to himself. He strikes out blindly, not knowing whom he has before him, whether it is a friend or enemy, a stranger or an intimate. Those who have never injured him, even his own wife and children must keep out of his way. In a word, as the Holy Ghost says : “ The impatient man shall work folly.” ³

The cause of his anger is generally some worthless thing.

If we consider the causes which generally excite to anger, we shall see still clearer, how unreasonable it is to give way to that passion. Amongst the mountains of Switzerland there was discovered a small lake, which was of very insignificant size, but it was so sensitive that if the least thing were thrown into it, its waters would at once begin to boil and bubble up with the greatest fury ; a stone thrown into it would cause such a commotion, that the sky would be darkened by the vapor rising from the lake, and a fearful thunderstorm would be sure to follow. ⁴ Kircher says that a certain Margrave of Baden, wished to have ocular proof of this wonder ; he threw a small stone in the lake, and a thunderstorm arose that lasted for seven whole days, and threatened to destroy the whole country. It is not my purpose to trace this strange occurrence to its cause. But I am firmly convinced that they who are excited to anger by a mere nothing, may trace their passion to the devil, who is fond of hiding himself in the troubled waters of a passionate man’s heart. A harmless joke, a ludicrous gesture, a word of contradiction are so many small stones ; but they are big enough to

¹ Ne sis velox ad frascendum, quia ira in sinu stulti requiescit.—Eccles. vii. 10.

² Stout fremitus leonis, ita et regis ira.—Prov. xix. 12.

³ Impatiens operabitur stultitiam.—Ibid, xiv. 17.

⁴ Si quis lapidem injiciat, tonitrua horrendamque tempestatem illico spectat.—Athan. Kircher in mont. subter. to 2. l. 8.

raise a thunderstorm ; they are often the cause of quarrelling and contention, of abuse and reviling, so that they turn friendship into enmity.

Consider the anger and resentment of Achab ; one would think that some terrible misfortune had befallen him ; he became melancholy and refused to leave his bed ; he would not touch food or drink, and did nothing but look at the bare wall. “ And casting himself upon his bed, he turned away his face to the wall, and would eat no bread.”¹ But, Achab, what was the matter with you ? Were you suffering from fever, or was your stomach out of order, or had any other illness attacked you ? No ; nothing of the kind. And why was he then so distressed and disturbed ? A rude answer was the sole cause of his bitterness. Achab wished to purchase a certain vineyard ; he sent for the owner, Naboth, and asked him to exchange it with him. Naboth, instead of excusing himself in a polite manner, or acceding to the king’s request, answered gruffly, “ The Lord be merciful to me, and not let me give thee the inheritance of my fathers.”² This seemingly uncourteous answer was the little stone that aroused all Achab’s wrath ; “ And Achab came into the house angry and fretting, because of the word that Naboth had spoken to him.”³ Mark these words, my dear brethren, the Holy Scripture does not say that he was angry because of the deed, but because of the word. What great power a little word has on a passionate disposition. Was it worth while to get so angry for such a trifle ; to throw himself on his bed, and refuse to eat or drink ? See what power a little word had over him. Seneca writes that Veditius Pollio once condemned a slave to be thrown into a fish-pond for having broken a glass vessel, while waiting at table. Fortunately for the slave, the emperor Augustus was present, and he was so disgusted at the cruel sentence, that he had the slave set free and ordered every glass vessel in Pollio’s house to be broken, so that the latter might not have so many opportunities of giving way to anger, and of sacrificing human life for the sake of a broken glass. Still more senseless was the conduct of the two shepherds ; they were out one fine night on a hill, looking at the beautiful sky with its twinkling stars. Oh, said one, if I had land as long

Proved from
history.

¹ Et proiciens se in lectulum suum, avertit faciem suam ad parietem, et non comedit panem.—III Kings, **xxi.** 4.

² Propitius sit mihi Dominus, ne dem hereditatem patrum meorum tibi.—Ibid, 3.

³ Venit ergo Achab in domum suam indignans et frendens super verbo, quod locutus fuerat ad eum Naboth.—Ibid, 4.

and as broad as the sky, how rich I should be. And if I, said the other, had as many sheep as there are stars in the sky, should I not be rich also? But, asked the first, where would you find pasturage for such a number of sheep? In your meadow, of course, was the answer. What, you would pasture them on my fields? Yes, why not? You would not dare to do it. Would you prevent me? I would; if I caught your sheep in my meadow, I would kill every one of them! I should like to see you, said the other; and so one word borrowed another, until in a short time they were hard at it, fighting away with one another until they both fell down the hill.

Confirmed
by experi-
ence.

See, my dear brethren, for what worthless things an irascible and ill-tempered man gives way to his passion, when he does not know how to control its first movements. A doubtful answer given to a question of his, the least fault committed by one who is living in the same house, the silence of one, the loquacity of another, a thoughtless word, a well-meant contradiction on the part of his wife, the crying of his innocent children, the slowness, or precipitation, or awkwardness of his servants, nay, even his own faults stir up his ill-humor, and make him fill the whole house with confusion and discord. Even things that it is out of our power to improve or to change, such as inclement weather, a harsh wind, a difficulty in some work or other, a stubborn horse, a howling dog, an ill-tuned instrument, a blunt knife, a bad pen, a cup or glass broken by accident or even by his own fault, and a thousand other similar trifles are capable of making him quite beside himself with anger; so that he begins to curse and swear, and gets in a great passion. Now, is that the way in which a sensible man should act? Are such things to be deemed a sufficient cause for losing one's temper and often disturbing the whole family?

Usual ex-
cuses for
anger.

Oh, some will say, it is easy to call these things trifles; you do not know how things go on in our house; I should have as little feeling as a stone, if I were to pass them over in silence. When my drunken husband comes home the worse for drink, have I not reason to be angry? When my good-for-nothing, fault-finding wife criticises everything I do, how can I keep my temper? Must I not get angry if my servants do not do what I tell them? Have I not reason to be displeased, when I see my children running about the house, and doing what they like? When I meet that troublesome neighbor of mine, with whom I have a lawsuit, I should have the patience of Job to be able to

control myself. If others did not interfere with me, I should be all right; but as things are, I cannot keep my temper. Ah, my dear Christian, you are making a great mistake and deceiving yourself! It is not your husband, nor your wife, nor your servant, nor your child, nor your neighbor, nor any one else that is the cause of your giving way to anger: you yourself are to blame especially. Your over-sensitiveness, which does not allow you to bear the least annoyance from others; your obstinacy, which makes you try to have everything according to your own ideas; your imagination, which makes a mountain out of a mole-hill; your suspicious character, which you neither mortify nor restrain; the bad habit you have so long indulged in, of giving way to anger at the least provocation; these are the real causes of your ill-humor and anger. If you had learned a little Christian patience and meekness, you would not be at all disturbed by hundreds of such trifles, or at all events, you would not give such violent and unreasonable expression to your feelings.

Well does the Prophet David pray to God in the name of all passionate people: "Turn away my reproach, which I have apprehended."¹ Mark the words, "which I have apprehended;" the meaning is: This reproach is not only groundless as far as I am concerned, so that I do not believe I have deserved it; but also it has no existence even on the part of others, for it was simply the result of my own sensitiveness. My imagination began to trouble my heart, although I had no wrong to complain of. Balladius relates a ludicrous incident, which will serve to illustrate my subject. St. Vincent was once describing in a sermon the contest of St. Margaret with the devil. A courageous, but foolish young man, who was listening to him, thought that he should like to try a similiar adventure. Full of this idea, he went off to a ruined and deserted hut, in the hope that the devil would come to visit him there, and engage in a struggle with him. While he was looking for the arch-enemy in every corner, he saw a poor old woman with a sickle in her hand who had come to cut a few bundles of grass in the field. The young man looked at her, and at once came to the conclusion that she must be the devil. Avaunt! wicked spirit, said he, I know you in spite of your disguise, by the sickle you hold in your hand, and by your flaming eyes! With these words, he threw off his mantle, made the sign of the cross a

Frequently
the cause of
anger exists
only in the
imagina-
tion.
Shown by
an example

¹ Amputa opprobrium meum., quod suspicatus sum.—Ps. cxviii. 39.

countless number of times, rushed upon the poor old creature and threw her on the ground, treating her as if she were an old sack. She was utterly unable to cry for help, but she defended herself as well as she could with her sickle and with the few teeth she had left. The contest lasted some time, until at length it attracted the notice of some people, who came up and found the two combatants bathed in blood. The poor woman suffered so severely, that she died of her wounds a few hours after. It was certainly a grand thing to gain such a victory over an old woman, and then to boast as if it had been the foul fiend himself who was vanquished ! All passionate people act in the same way. They attack those from whom they imagine they have received an insult, with as much fury, as if it was against the devil himself that they were directing their efforts. If you had a little patience, you would be able to see that an old woman is not the devil. That neighbor of yours has a sharp tongue and says annoying things to you sometimes, but she is not the devil; she has nothing against you; she neither despises you nor wishes to do you the least harm ; her sickle will not hurt you ; she is only an old woman and not the devil. The same is to be said of all the other things that are likely to excite your ill-temper; they are not half so bad as they seem ; the wrong exists only in your own imagination, and you might say with the Prophet, "my reproach which I have apprehended." The truth of this you are often forced to acknowledge to yourself when your fit of anger is over, and you are obliged to confess that the faults which caused you to get into a passion were really of very trifling importance after all. For instance, a week ago your husband drank too much ; a week ago your wife contradicted you, or your child broke something, or your servant was disobedient, etc. Now I ask you, are you as much inclined to anger at those faults at the present moment, as you were a week ago, when you gave vent to your passion in curses and injurious expressions? Certainly not. But why? The fault is just as great now as it was then. Why do you not think it deserving of the same anger? The only reason is, that then your passion was excited, and you imagined the fault much greater than it really was, so that your unbridled passion was the cause of your anger, and it made you act in direct opposition to the dictates of reason.

The pas-
sionate man
gains no-

And what does the passionate man gain by giving way to his temper? Nothing, but that he makes his temper worse and

more difficult to be controlled, causes himself a great deal of pain and annoyance by imagining that people are treating him unjustly, injures his health and shortens his life; for, according to what physicians say, there is nothing more injurious to health, than to give way to anger; and makes himself hateful to the members of his own family and contemptible to all sensible men. For as meekness and amiability make one respected and loved by all, so a man of a passionate disposition, who gets angry at the least trifle, is simply unbearable; he is looked upon as one who is utterly incapable of self-control, who constantly forgets himself and exposes his weaknesses to every one. Thus he becomes a burden to himself, for when his anger is over, he sees how foolishly he has acted, and of course he must be ashamed of himself.

thing by his
anger; and
injures him-
self.

Finally, what should most of all deter one from anger, is the fact that thereby God is offended, and His wrath and malediction are incurred on account of the many sins against Christian charity that arise from it. For that unnatural cursing, swearing, and abusive language, quarrelling and fighting, long-continued hatred and enmity, discord and strife, vindictiveness and sometimes even murder, nay even blasphemy against the Most High, are all children of anger, and God will not allow them to go unpunished. Therefore, in order to preserve us from those sins, our Lord pronounces this sentence against anger, in the Gospel of St. Matthew: "Whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment;" but he who through deliberate anger, "shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."¹ Therefore, my dear brethren, let us do all in our power to avoid such a detestable vice, which runs directly counter to sound reason, and is a cause of so many sins. "Let all bitterness and anger, and indignation and clamor, and blasphemy be put away from you, with all malice."² Such is the warning of St. Paul. But what are we to do in order to check this evil inclination, to which we are all subject? That we shall see in the

Incurs the
wrath of
God, and
commits
many sins
that arise
from anger.

Second Part.

To avoid all anger, two things have to be observed, one by those who have to deal with passionate people, the other by those

They who
have to do
with pas-

¹ Omnis qui irascitur fratri suo, reus erit iudicio. . . . Qui autem dixerit: Fatue, reus erit gehennæ ignis.—Matth. v. 22.

² Omnis amaritudo, et ira et indignatio, et clamor et blasphemia tollatur a vobis cum omni malitia.—Eph. iv. 31.

sionate
people must
be careful to
give them
no occasion
for anger.

who are easily excited to anger. The former must be very careful to give the latter no cause for offence, once they know them to be easily excited ; they must never dispute with, or contradict them, and they must avoid everything which they know to be a likely cause of anger to them ; besides, they must bear with any annoyance which the others cause them, in a spirit of meekness and patience, for God's sake, in order, to preserve peace and quiet ; and they may console themselves with the assurance that they have the very best opportunity of increasing their virtue, and gaining great merit in Heaven, by practising this patience and self-denial. But if it is quite evident that the other is determined on getting into a passion, then there is nothing to do but to follow the advice of St. Paul : " Give place to wrath ; " that is, let the angry man have his way ; keep silent, and let him say and do what he will, until his anger is over ; go out of his way, out of his sight if possible ; do not attempt to excuse yourself, although you are innocent ; apologize to him as if he had reason to be vexed with you. This meekness will overcome his anger, and when he comes to himself, it will make him admire your virtue, acknowledge his own fault, feel ashamed of himself and have a greater esteem and love for you. In a word, if there is no one to contradict, there is no occasion for anger and bad temper.

Married
people
should es-
pecially ob-
serve this
towards
each other.

Oh, if all married people especially understood this beautiful art, and constantly practised it towards each other, what quarrels and discord and misunderstandings, along with the numerous sins that spring from them, would be avoided in families ! But, alas, they do not understand it, and therefore, neither will give way, neither will remain silent ; both strive to have the last word, and of course thus they give rise to the bitterest family quarrels ! They are like that married couple who always disagreed on a certain day every year ; and do you know why, my dear brethren ? They once had some roast fowl for dinner, and they differed in opinion as to what kind of birds they were. The husband said they were blackbirds, the wife maintained that they were fieldfares ; they had a great dispute about the matter, and at last came to blows. Next year, when the same day came round, the husband said to his wife : Do you remember how foolish we were last year, to fight about the blackbirds ? Yes, answered she, and it was your fault ; they were fieldfares, not blackbirds. And so they began the dispute again as bad as

¹ Date locum fræ.—Rom. xii. 19.

ever, and repeated it every year when the day came. It is certainly a most ludicrous affair, my dear brethren. But do not people act just as foolishly nowadays in many households? One contradicts the other, and neither will give way, in matters that are not of the least importance, and thus discord and hatred arise, and married life is turned into a regular purgatory, to be followed very often by the eternal pains of hell!

How much annoyance we should save ourselves, how many sins should we avoid, if we only had a little Christian patience in bearing with our neighbor's shortcomings, and in practising mutual forbearance! When Cardinal Bellarmine saw any of the members of his household quarrelling, he used to say that an ounce of charity is worth a hundred wagon-loads of right: thereby showing that in a quarrel, there should be no question as to who is right, and who is wrong, for that only makes matters worse, but each one should be ready to give up his opinion for the sake of preserving peace and concord. When your husband, or wife, or any one, no matter who, begins to quarrel with you, remember what Christian charity and patience require of you, and do not contradict; keep silence. Yes, you say, but I have not given any cause for a quarrel; I am treated unjustly. No matter; you must not forget that an ounce of patience and charity is worth a hundred wagon-loads of right. But I am quite certain that I am right and the other wrong! No matter; it still remains true that an ounce of patience is worth a hundred wagon-loads of right. You cannot do a better thing than give up your right for the sake of preventing anger, discord, hatred and many other sins.

And what advice have I to give those who are of a passionate disposition, and who are easily excited to anger? What means must they use in order to control and overcome this evil inclination? I answer, that, next to humble, daily prayer to God for the virtue of Christian meekness, the best means is for them to foresee, as far as possible, when they are calm, the occasions, objects, or circumstances that are likely to move them to anger, to imagine that those occasions are now really present, and then to arm the mind against them by a firm resolution not to give way to anger. For instance: you might say to yourself. This evening my husband will come home drunk; what shall I do? To-day my wife will contradict and speak sharply to me; my children will disturb me with their noise; my neighbor will meet me in the street, and will not speak to me; the people will

Christian
patience
and charity
must pre-
serve us
from anger.

What a
passionate
man must
do to avoid
anger.

make fun of me ; when I go into company I shall be made a laughing-stock of ; my work will be a failure, etc. Shall I therefore give way to anger and bad temper ? No ; I shall restrain my anger for God's sake ; not a curse, nor a wicked word shall fall from my lips ; I shall keep silent, and act as if the matter did not concern me at all. In that way one can be beforehand with anger and prevent it from breaking out ; and as a misfortune that we anticipate causes less affliction than when it comes unexpectedly, so also we can make injuries and annoyances less by foreseeing them.

How he is
to restrain
his rising
passion.

Again, if you find that something suddenly occurs to provoke you to anger, go away, so as not to see it. It may be your neighbor who insults you in the street ; go at once into your house and shut the door. If you are annoyed by some one in your own house, go into another room, or else to the Church, and pray to God for patience, until your anger has passed away. If you cannot go away, nor otherwise avoid the annoyance, keep perfectly still ; do not speak a word ; undertake nothing, make no resolution, until your resentment has subsided ; because you cannot act prudently while your reason is disturbed by passion. Such was the advice that a certain philosopher gave the emperor Augustus : Whenever you feel inclined to anger, he said, you must repeat the letters of the alphabet from beginning to end, over and over again, until your anger has passed ; in that way you will neither do nor say anything that you will have to repent of afterwards. The emperor Theodosius, acting on the advice of St. Ambrose, published a law forbidding any malefactor condemned to death to be executed, until thirty days had elapsed after the sentence was pronounced against him. The pious emperor knew well that it would be unjust not to give a poor wretch who was condemned to death by an enraged sovereign, any respite until the latter's anger had passed over. It was a remarkable saying that Architas made use of when he returned home from a foreign country, and found that his steward had allowed his property to go to ruin : If I were not angry, said he to the careless steward, I should punish you severely ;¹ And in acting thus he showed great wisdom, although he was a heathen, for he knew that while his reason was disturbed by anger, he could not inflict just punishment. Christian parents and married people, you should profit by this example. You are bound to chastise your children when they deserve it ; you must administer par-

¹ Quam male te acciperem, nisi iratus essem.

ental punishment to your children and servants when they do not serve you or their God properly ; but you must be very careful not to inflict this punishment when you are in a passion, for if passion puts the rod in your hand, you are apt to exceed the bounds of moderation, and to have recourse to abuse and cursing, which will make the punishment fruitless. Defer it then to some other time, when your reason will be undisturbed, and you can chastise your children and servants with fatherly love.

Finally, if in spite of your resolution, you are carried away by anger, you must at once enter into yourself and repent of your fault and beg of God to forgive you for having offended Him. Think and say to yourself ; what have I gained by getting in a passion ? Was it worth while to allow myself to be so disturbed ? What a number of foolish things I have said ! If I had borne with the annoyance patiently for God's sake, I should have gained a beautiful crown in Heaven ; as it is, I have only scandalized my neighbor and incurred the wrath of God. Then renew your resolution of being more careful in future, and impose some penance on yourself, such as saying certain prayers, or giving alms whenever you give away to ill-temper. You will thus, with the help of God's grace, conquer yourself little by little, and practise Christian meekness.

What he must do after having been angry.

I conclude with the words of the Prophet David : “ Be ye angry and sin not.”¹ Be angry and displeased when God is offended, and, if you can, chastise and prevent the sins of others. But if a man has to suffer anything from his neighbor, he must practise charity, patience and meekness. Always remember, says Seneca, who it is that causes you annoyance or insults you. Is he a child ? Then you must have pity on his youth. He does not know that he is doing wrong. Is it a grown-up person whom you have offended ? Why should you be angry with him ? You offended him first. Is it some one who insults you through sheer malice ? Then you must not be surprised at what he does, nor must you be angry with him, for he has already punished himself by being so wicked.² No matter who has injured you, you should not forget that he is your neighbor, that you are bound to love him as yourself, and to return good for evil. “ Bear ye one another's burdens, and so you shall fulfill the law of Christ ;”³ such is the advice that St. Paul gives

Conclusion and exhortation to meekness and patience.

¹ Irascimini, et nolite peccare.—Ps. iv. 5.

² Puer est ? Aetati donetur ; nescit an peccet. Læsus est ? Prior fecisti. Malus est ? Noli mirari, jam sibi poenas dedit qui peccavit.—Senec. de ira. c. 30.

³ Alter alterius onera portate ; et sic adimplebitis legem Christi.—Gal. vi. 2.

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us, and according to it, we must overlook each other's faults and failings. There is no one without faults which sometimes make him troublesome to others, yet these latter must bear those faults with patience. If, then, you are offended, you must think to yourself: I have offended others, or there is something in me which is displeasing to them; they must be patient with me, and of course I must be patient with them. "In your patience you shall possess your souls,"¹ says Christ. How patient one is with a querulous old man, or a troublesome sick person, or an eccentric and headstrong relative, when he hopes to inherit a large sum of money from him! How patient courtiers are! What annoyances and slights does not one bear through fear of displeasing men! And shall we be less diligent in practising patience for God's sake and to avoid displeasing Him, although He commands us to be meek, patient and kind to our fellow-men?

After the
example of
Christ.

Always keep before your eyes Our Lord, Jesus Christ. How gentle and patient He was with His disciples, while they were still very ignorant! How gentle and patient He was with the greatest sinners! How gentle and patient He was towards those who mocked, scourged and crucified Him! "Who when He was reviled, did not revile," as St. Peter says, "when He suffered He threatened not, but delivered Himself to him that judged Him unjustly."² And as Isaias prophesied of Him: "He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and He shall not open His mouth."³ "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart."⁴ If these words do not help you to restrain your anger, what can do it? St. Martin was very much troubled and annoyed by one of his priests named Brizius; but he would not turn him away, although many advised him to do so. Whenever that advice was given him, the holy man would answer: "Christ bore with Judas, and shall not I bear with Brizius?"⁵ So, too, should you say when you have anything to suffer from your neighbor; Christ bore with Judas who betrayed Him, and shall I refuse to be patient with my fellow-man, because he looks at me in an unfriendly manner? Shall I quarrel with my friend, because

¹ In patientia vestra possidebitis animas vestras.—Luke. xxi. 19.

² Qui cum malediceretur, non maledicebat, cum pateretur, non comminabatur: tradebat autem iudicanti se injuste.—I Pet. ii. 23.

³ Sicut ovis ad occisionem ducetur, et quasi agnus coram tondente se obmutescet, et non aperiet os suum.—Isa. liii. 7.

⁴ Discite a me, quia mitis sum et humilis corde.—Matth. xi. 29.

⁵ Christus passus est Judam; et ego non patiar Brizium?

he has let fall some thoughtless expression? Christ bore with the traitor Judas; ought I not to be patient with my troublesome husband, with my obstinate wife, with my noisy child, with my disobedient servant; and should I not meet my disagreeable neighbor kindly? Yes, O my Lord and my God, how Thou puttest me to shame when I consider Thy example! Thou wert mildness itself amongst the wicked wretches who were torturing Thee, and I, a poor sinner, so readily give way to anger against my own brethren when they happen to do anything against my will! Thou art silent while they spit in Thy face and strike and abuse Thee, and I, a miserable mortal, must curse and swear and abuse others, if they contradict me in the least! Thou wert patient even to the shameful death of the Cross, and I cannot control my anger for a single day; the least thing puts me in a passion! Ah, my meek Saviour, let me learn of Thee at last to be meek and humble of heart! This very day I shall begin! Help me by Thy powerful grace. Amen.

TWENTY-FIFTH SERMON.

HOW UNBECOMING IT IS TO SEEK REVENGE.

Subject.

1. To take revenge for an injury is never looked upon in the world as an honor. 2. To bear an injury with meekness and patience, and to pardon him who has inflicted it, is always looked upon as an honor.—*Preached on the Feast of St. Stephen, the first Martyr.*

Text.

Positis autem genibus, clamavit voce magna dicens: Domine, ne statuas illis hoc peccatum.—Acts vii. 60.

“And falling on his knees he cried with a loud voice, saying: Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.”

Introduction.

Great are the encomiums and praises which the Holy Ghost Himself gives to St. Stephen, the first Martyr, in the Acts of the Apostles; “And Stephen full of grace and fortitude, did

great wonders and signs among the people. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit that spoke. And they saw his face as if it had been the face of an angel.”¹ While still in this life he had the happiness of seeing the glory of God ; “ But he being full of the Holy Ghost, looking up steadfastly to Heaven, saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.”² And much more to the same purpose. Still, I do not require all those texts to show how deserving of praise St. Stephen was : I need only consider the text I have chosen, and imagine that I see on one side the ferocious Jews, gnashing their teeth with rage, and hurling showers of stones at him, and on the other, the intrepid martyr, kneeling down and praying with folded hands amid the rain of stones. “ Lord, lay not this sin to their charge ; ” forgive them ; do not punish them for what they are doing. This alone is quite enough to show how St. Stephen deserves to be honored by every one ; because he prayed for, and did good to those who injured him. But what am I saying ? He deserves to be honored by every one ? That very act of St. Stephen’s is the last one which the perverse world would look upon as honorable ; for it considers the forgiveness of injuries as a base and unmanly act and a proof of cowardice. Therefore we constantly hear people saying : No, I will not bear that ; I must have revenge ; I will not forgive, until I have had satisfaction ; my honor requires it ; if I were to act otherwise I should lose my reputation, I should be ashamed to appear before the world. And why ? Because my honor would suffer if I did not take revenge for that insult. Such is the language of vindictive worldlings. And still I say that the very reason why St. Stephen deserves to be honored, is because he prayed for those who injured him. How are we to reconcile these two things ? One or other of them must be false. And so it is, my dear brethren, one of them is false. Therefore, if I now succeed in proving that the judgment of the perverse world is false and erroneous, in thinking that honor depends on revenging an insult ; and that real honor consists in bearing patiently and forgiving injuries ; then I shall preach a panegyric of St. Stephen, and at the same time convince passionate and vindictive people that they are wrong, and exhort

¹ Stephanus autem plenus gratia et fortitudine faciebat prodigia et signa magna in populo. Et non poterant resistere sapientiæ et Spiritui, qui loquebatur. Viderunt faciem ejus tamquam faciem Angeli.—Acts vi. 8, 10, 15.

² Cum autem esset plenus Spiritu sancto, intendens in cœlum, vidit gloriam Dei, et Jesum stantem a dexteris Dei.—Ibid, vii. 55.

them to imitate the meekness and patience of St. Stephen. Is not that so? Then I will undertake to prove that, with the divine assistance, which I hope to receive through the hands of Mary and of the angels of peace.

Plan of Discourse.

To take revenge for an injury, and to attack with anger and hatred him who has inflicted it, is never looked upon in the world as an honor. This I shall briefly prove in the first part. To bear an injury with meekness and patience, like St. Stephen, and to forgive him who has inflicted it, is always looked upon as an honor. This I shall show in the second part.

Therefore, he who loves his honor must not say, I will have revenge; but, I will bear it with patience and forgiveness. What I am about to say, as you will see in the course of the sermon, may be applied to all the vices and unlawful customs of the vain world.

The first part of my sermon requires no further proof than the refutation of the pretext generally brought forward; namely: My honor requires that I should take revenge on him who has injured me. Tell me, in what does your honor consist? On what does it depend? If it is an honor for you to revenge an injury, then it must be an honor either amongst men on earth, or amongst the angels and saints in heaven, or with the Almighty God, or amongst the devils and lost souls in hell. Besides these there is no other place, there are no people. Now, is it an honor for you with God? But how can that be, when you deliberately transgress His law, and insult Him by your disobedience; for He has forbidden you under pain of hell to seek revenge, and has often and solemnly commanded you, not only to do no harm to, but even to love, and pray for, and be friendly with your greatest enemy, not to speak of those who merely give you slight cause for annoyance now and then? This law has been declared often enough: "But I say to you: Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you."¹ And besides that you contemn His supreme authority by usurping His office of Judge, and taking the sword out of His hand to use it yourself. Has He not kept this right strictly for Himself? "Revenge to

To take or
seek re-
venge is no
honor with
God.

¹ Ego autem dico vobis: Diligite inimicos vestros, benefacite his, qui oderunt vos: et orate pro persequentibus et calumniantibus vos.—Matth. v. 44.

me : I will repay, saith the Lord ;”¹ Nay, according to His own words, you do to Him the same injury that you inflict on your fellow-man : “ As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to Me ;”² It would be a strange thing, then, if we could hope to gain favor and honor with the Almighty by acting in direct opposition to His express command ! But there is no use in wasting any more time on this point ; you know very well that God does not look upon it as an honor for you to be at enmity with your fellow-man, and that by desiring revenge you give up the honor you should most esteem.

Nor with
the angels
or the
devils.

Do you seek for honor elsewhere ? With the angels and saints, for instance ? But you will be just as unsuccessful as in the former case ; for an injury done to my dearest friend, I consider as done to myself ; the angels and saints will not be very grateful to you for refusing to do as God commands you ; since they love God above all things, and desire nothing more than the perfect accomplishment of His will on earth as in Heaven. Perhaps the devils will honor you ? Yes, in a certain way ; they will exult over you, because you give them the pleasure of seeing that you are obedient to their suggestions, that you entertain desires of revenge, and that you have renounced God and your eternal happiness to become their companions in hell. But I do not think you are anxious to secure such an honor as that ; at all events it is an honor that no one would grudge you, or try to deprive you of.

Nor with
sensible and
pious men
on earth.

So that you have no place left to seek honor by desiring revenge unless on earth amongst men. And amongst what kind of men do you expect to find it ? Amongst sensible, righteous, pious men, who like good Christians try to save their souls, who are illumined by the light of faith, and governed by the wisdom of God, and are therefore in the best possible position to judge of the matter correctly ? Will they be likely to have a high opinion of you when they see that you return evil for evil, do not yield a hair’s breadth to your neighbor, and refuse to forgive him ? If so, they must look on it as a shame to forgive their brother for God’s sake, a shame to live according to the Gospel of Christ, and an honor and glory to despise and to offend God. But no faithful Christians can, or will ever be of that opinion ; for they are fully persuaded of the contrary. You speak very

¹ *Mihi vindicta, ego retribuam, dicit Dominus.*—Rom. xii. 19.

² *Quamdiu fecistis uni ex his fratribus meis minimus mihi fecistis.*—Matth. xxv. 40.

uncharitably of one who has injured you ; you grow pale with envy when he is praised in your presence ; you cannot conceal the joy you feel when some misfortune happens to him ; and you maintain that it is a good thing for him to be humbled at last. You are fond of explaining at great length the injury he has done you ; you call down a thousand curses on his head. I will not forgive him, you say, he shall never cross my threshold. I will teach him who I am ; I will not rest until he has given me complete satisfaction, and so forth. And you believe you have a right to say such things. But what must they think who hear you speaking like that ? There may be some half-hearted Christians, who through human respect will applaud you and approve of your sentiments ; but a good Christian, although he may not say anything through fear of giving offence, must still think to himself that you are giving proof of great weakness of character, that it would be much better for you not to speak in that way, that neither your words nor your intentions are such as become a Christian ; he will be greatly disappointed at finding you so deficient in prudence and piety, and he will lose a great deal of any respect he may have had for you. Such must necessarily be the opinion of every good Catholic with regard to a vindictive man. And it is a fine honor indeed, for people to be able to say of you that you are a passionate, quarrelsome, vindictive and unforgiving man ! One must be careful of him, they will say of you, I would not advise any one to have to do with him ; he cannot bear a word, and he will never forget the least offence. It is a fine honor when people can say : Those two have no great love for each other ; they are always at loggerheads ; they cannot be invited to the same house, or there is sure to be a quarrel ; for a long time their friends and relations have been trying to reconcile them to each other, but in vain ; they are too obstinate, neither wishes to give way to the other. See, oh vindictive man, if you think it is an honor to seek revenge, you must at once leave the society of good and sensible people, who cannot have the least respect for you, but must needs look on you as a man of low repute and disgraceful character ; for what you deem an honor, they look upon as worthy of contempt ! Therefore you must seek your supposed honor elsewhere. And where then ? You cannot find it with God, nor with the saints in Heaven, nor even with the devils in hell, and much less with good men on earth.

Who will then look upon it as an honorable thing for you to

It is an
honor only

with wicked
Christians.

take revenge on your enemy? I know; you must go amongst those who are of the same opinion as yourself, that is to say, amongst passionate, quarrelsome, vindictive and discontented men; amongst half-atheists, who know little and careless about the Gospel of Christ; whose only law is the world with its vain customs and false maxims; who give themselves little concern about God and His commandments, and although they profess to be Christians, yet belong in reality to those whom the Apostle calls "Enemies of the Cross of Christ;"¹ enemies of the humble, meek and crucified Redeemer. There is no doubt that these people will consider it an honor not to allow an injury to go unavenged, and that they look on it as a glorious thing to demand eye for eye, and tooth for tooth. Alas, that this should be; that there should be found Catholics, who, although they have sworn to observe the law and teaching of Christ, look upon it as an honor to do what even the devils would be ashamed of, and would repent of, if repentance were possible for them! Alas! that there should be Catholics who make a boast of acting contrary to the will of God! But what do I complain of? I should rather say with Our Lord; "Let them alone; they are blind, and leaders of the blind;"² they call evil, good; and good, evil; they take darkness for light, and light for darkness.

And that is
no true
honor.

If it is an honor to be praised by people of that kind, then it is an honor to be praised by idiots and fools; for they are as little capable of deciding in what true glory consists, as fools are of saying wherein true wisdom consists. Such at least is the description given of them by St. Paul: "If any man consent not to the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ, . . . he is proud, knowing nothing."³ They do not know what is good and praise-worthy. And you must acknowledge that this is so. Tell me; do you not often commit actions in public, which your conscience tells you to be wrong and shameful, for instance, when you indulge in blasphemous, uncharitable or unchaste language? I will say nothing of certain acts which you are not ashamed to commit with others. But do they not injure that honor of which you are so careful? Yes, you must acknowledge that they cause you to lose a great deal in the estimation of good and pious men; for you are ashamed even to declare them fully in confession. And why are you not ashamed to commit

¹ Inimicos crucis Christi.—Philipp. iii. 18.

² Sinite illos: cœci sunt, et duces cœcorum.—Matth. xv. 14.

³ Si quis non acquiescit sanis sermonibus Domini nostri Jesu Christi . . . superbus est, nihil sciens.—I Tim. vi. 3, 4.

them publicly? Because you are in the company of people like yourself, who think nothing of such crimes, and even make a boast of them. What a fearful perversion of judgment! Yet, oh vindictive man, these are the people by whose false judgment you guide your actions; it is from them that you seek honor and glory, such as is given to those thieves and robbers who excel in their nefarious profession. Meanwhile, you lose all honor with God, with His friends, the saints, and with all good and pious men on earth, who have always looked upon it as a shameful thing, and contrary to the law of God, to revenge injuries and to persecute one's enemy. Hence, since honor amongst the wicked is no honor at all, you can gain nothing by vindictiveness, and you only deceive yourself, when you say that your honor requires you to avenge an insult. You must know that it is always an honor to bear the faults of others with meekness and patience, to forgive from your heart those who offend you, and to love for God's sake those who persecute you; as I shall show more at length in the

Second Part.

I will not go back to what I have said already and speak of the favor that may be gained with God, and with all good men on earth by bearing injuries with patience; I will merely try to adapt myself to the ideas of those who are given to seek revenge, and will speak simply of that honor which they think they can gain in the eyes of the world. In what does it consist? In a reputation for bravery, courage, strength and the ability to defend one's self: a reputation they are afraid of losing if they bear an offence with patience. For such is the language they hold. Could I bear that? they ask. Must I be silent and overlook that insult and be the first to propose a reconciliation? If I let the matter pass off quietly, what will people think of me? They will look on me as a pitiful fool and coward, whom they can treat as they like. And what will my opponent say? He will believe that I am not able to defend myself, and that I give in to him for that reason. No, I cannot allow that; I must at least show that I am a man.

Now, my dear brethren, I will prove the very opposite of that, and show that it is not the taking of revenge, but the patient toleration of injuries that really deserves the name of bravery, courage and manliness, and therefore, that honor belongs in truth, not to him who takes revenge, but to him who for-

The imaginary honor of the vindictive man, consists in a reputation for bravery.

This is not gained by seeking revenge, but by bearing injuries patiently;

for it is a
mark of
weakness
to desire
revenge.

gives. If bravery consists in not tolerating the least offence, and in trying to return injury for injury, it should be sought for, not amongst reasoning beings, but amongst savage beasts in the desert; and the latter would carry off the palm in this respect from the most famous heroes, for they show the greatest fury in attacking those who provoke them. Nay, even the smallest animals surpass the greatest in this respect; a little lap-dog shows more fury than a mastiff or a grayhound; rats and mice, wasps and ants are more savage than horses or elephants. How is that? Touch a mouse with the tip of your finger, and you will see how it will try to turn and bite you, in order to defend itself; if you go near a wasp it will be sure to sting you; while it is quite the opposite with the horse and elephant; nay, the more you whip and spur them, the tamer they get. When a stranger comes into the house, the lap-dog begins to bark at once, and the smaller it is, the more noise it makes, thinking that it is about to suffer some hurt; but the big mastiff lies unmoved in his place and even allows little children to play all manner of tricks with him. Are we then to think that the lap-dog is strong and courageous, while the mastiff is weak and cowardly? No, my dear brethren, courage is a virtue that beasts are not capable of possessing. To seek revenge and to retaliate, it is necessary only to have a sensitive nature which is capable of feeling pain, and of being aroused to anger; for this reason is not necessary, and much less virtue; and therefore it is, that as the smallest animals are the readiest to bite, so also the weakest and most foolish men, who are least apt to be governed by sound reason, are generally the first to give expression to anger, impatience and desire of revenge.

On the
other hand
to restrain
one's anger,
is a sign of
bravery.

But to restrain one's evil inclinations and keep them in order, to moderate one's anger and repress it when occasion is given, to be so far master of one's self as to be able to hold one's own natural tendencies in check, and bear contradiction with unruffled patience, that is far too much to be expected of those who are of a weak, vacillating and pusillanimous disposition, for it far exceeds their mental powers, and requires a noble mind, a sound understanding, and a rare and excellent virtue. Now this is the virtue which is called courage and fortitude, and it is the characteristic of him who, although he has it in his power to take revenge for an insult, allows his opponent to go in peace, and bears the insult in silence. Hence, if it is an honor in the sight of the world, and even of vindictive men themselves, to be

looked on as one of a brave and determined character, it is an honor which certainly belongs to him who knows how to forgive his enemy, while he who is bent on taking revenge, has not the least claim to it.

Hear, not a St. Ambrose, who calls enmity and desire of revenge a mark of despicable cowardice and weakness: "To revenge one's self is not an act of bravery, but of abjectness and cowardice;"¹ not a St. Chrysostom, who calls vengeance "a childish folly;"² for the testimony of these Saints might seem to you, to be too biased by their piety; but hear what heathens say, who had far better ideas of this matter than many Christians. Hear what the heathen Seneca says: "It is a mark of a pusillanimous and low-minded man to try to bite again him who has bitten him; on the other hand he gives evidence of a great and noble character, who after the manner of large and strong animals, does not allow himself to be disturbed by the barking of little dogs."³ Hear the heathen Aristotle who speaks to the same purpose; "As it is a mark of a weak stomach not to be able to digest hard food, so it is a sign of a weak character not to be able to bear a hard word."⁴ He who cannot bear an insult or a word of contradiction with meekness, must not be looked upon as a strong man who can digest coarse vegetables or salt meat; but as a weak child who has to be fed with milk. What a disgrace for a man who prides himself on his valor, to be compared to a child! Yet, oh vindictive man, no matter who you are, that is the name given you, not merely by the holiest and most learned of the Doctors of the Church, but also by the wisest of the heathens. You can judge now for yourself, you who maintain that your honor requires you to take revenge, what sort of honor you will gain amongst sensible people by revenging yourself on your enemy.

But in order to show you still clearer how much you are mistaken, answer me this question: There are two people fighting; one has got the other down and is pummelling him to his heart's content; which of them do you consider the bravest and strongest, he who is lying on the ground and getting the beating, or he who is giving it to him? What an unnecessary

Proved by
the holy
Fathers,
and other
writers.

It is not the
meek man
who re-
strains his
anger, but
he who
seeks re-
venge, who
is the
weakest
and is
overcome.

¹ Vindicare se non est actus fortitudinis, sed abjectionis et timiditatis.

² Puerilis sententiæ.

³ Pusilli hominis et miseri est repetere mordentem. Ille magnus et nobilis est, qui more magnæ feræ latratus minutorum canum securus exaudivit.

⁴ Sicut debilis stomachi est cibum duriorem non posse concoquere, ita pusilli animi est verbum duriusculum non posse sustinere.

question, you think ; of course he who has the upper hand is the better man ; the other poor fellow must only be satisfied with what he gets ! You are right, but you have given judgment against yourself. When St. Paul was writing to the Romans, warning them to lay aside hatred and anger, to forgive their enemies, and to leave vengeance to God, he gives them the following reason for doing what he told them ; “ Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good.”¹ Now, when some one injures you by word or deed, and you give way to anger, and try all you can to do him an injury also, your opponent is then the conqueror, and you are the conquered ; you have to lie under, as you show by your conduct ; for you seek revenge, and have neither the courage nor the strength to overcome yourself and to practise patience ; you betray your weakness, and show how severely you have been hurt ; for as Seneca says, “ revenge is a confession of pain.”² This is the very thing that your opponent wished for ; he has attained the end he had in view, by making you angry, and he has evident proof of his success. You cannot give your enemy greater pleasure than to let him see that you feel the wound he has inflicted on you. “ The joy of him who injures another, consists in the pain felt by the latter,”³ as Tertullian says ; and experience shows the truth of his words. Your wish is to have satisfaction by doing to your opponent as he has done to you ; is not that so ? Yes ; but it is by no means certain that you will be able to carry out your wish, and meanwhile you show that your enemy has gained his point and has had the better of you. If you had held your tongue and borne the injurious word or deed with Christian meekness, the other would not be any the wiser, he would be deprived of the pleasure he looked for, and would be filled with secret shame and grief at the ill-success of his project, as Tertullian further says :⁴ I cannot cause my enemy greater annoyance than to let him imagine and experience that he cannot disturb my serenity, and that I do not feel the insults he offers me, but treat all his attacks with contemptuous silence ; for thus I get the better of him ; not he of me.

As the vindictive man must himself confess ;

Besides, when you act according to the law of Jesus Christ, pardon your enemy from your heart, and return good for evil, you gain a glorious victory by compelling him against his will

¹ Noli vinci a malo, sed vince in bono malum.—Rom. xii. 21.

² Ultio doloris confessio est.

³ Fructus lædenti in dolore læsi est.

⁴ Ipse doleat necesse est amissione fructus sui.

to be ashamed of his conduct, to admire your virtue, and to condemn his own wickedness, when he sees that he is treated with charity and kindness by one whom he tried to injure, and from whom he therefore could hope nothing good. Thus, you will become master of his heart and mind, by forcing him to esteem and love you, whom he formerly hated and persecuted. After David had slain the giant, all his efforts to gain the affection and esteem of King Saul were fruitless. On one occasion, however, he succeeded in fully conquering the latter's heart, and in making him meek and humble as a lamb; nay, the king even fell on his knees and with tears confessed David's worth. How did this happen? When he was following up David as usual, the latter found him one night asleep in his tent and had him completely at his mercy, but let him go without doing him the least harm. What a surprise that was for the angry and vindictive Saul! He had to confess that he was conquered; he fell on his knees and wept bitterly, crying out: "I have sinned; return, my son David, for I will no more do thee harm, because my life had been precious in thy eyes this day; for it appeareth that I have done foolishly, and have been ignorant in very many things. Blessed art thou, my son David."¹ This victory over the heart of his sworn enemy was far more glorious for David, than if he had revenged himself and taken the life of Saul. Therefore, oh vindictive man, do you wish to have a reputation for bravery, and be able to master him who does you harm? If so, you will find no better means of fulfilling your desire than to follow the advice of the Apostle: "Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good."

for he is thus forced to esteem his opponent.

Finally, consider everything that is powerful and strong in the universe, and you will find that the patient toleration and forgiveness of injuries is nowhere a sign of weakness and inability, as you think; but rather a means of measuring the greatness of one's strength. Can any power be compared with that of the Almighty God? No; there never was an earthly potentate, who had a knowledge of the true God, who dared to imagine that he could resist or escape His power. And yet, what fearful insults He bears with from His creatures! How many blasphemies He tolerates daily from Christians and infidels! How often He is offended every day, and insulted in thought,

The Almighty God shows His power by patiently bearing offences.

¹ Peccavi, revertere fili mi David, nequaquam enim ultra tibi malefaciam, eo quod pretiosa fuerit anima mea in oculis tuis hodie: apparet enim, quod stulte egerim, et ignoraverim multa nimis. Benedictus tu, fili mi David.—I Kings xxvi. 21, 25.

word and deed by men ; and by you, too, oh revengeful man, at the very moment in which you are meditating revenge on your fellow-man ! “ And,” asks St. Chrysostom in amazement, “ does He therefore extinguish the light of the sun ? ” ¹ Does He deprive the earth of its fruitfulness, so that it can no longer bring forth what is necessary for our sustenance ? Does He set the waters of the sea free from their limits, that they may overwhelm His enemies ? Does He hurl down His thunderbolts on them, and smite them to the dust ? Oh, woe to you, and to me, and to us all if He were to consider that His honor consisted in taking revenge ; if like us, He thought that His glory required Him at once to put forth His power, and to avenge the insults offered Him, and if He showed as little patience towards us, as we do to those who offend us ! Where should you, and I, and so many others then be ? Hell would soon become too small to hold us all. No, O Almighty and most patient God, we know by experience, and acknowledge that Thou dealest with us far differently and far more mercifully ! Thou makest Thy sun to shine on Thy enemies, as well as on Thy friends ; every moment Thou preservest, feedest and doest good to the most wicked and obstinate sinners ; Thou bearest with them most patiently ; Thou waitest for them, goest after them and callest them back ; Thou offerest them grace and forgiveness, and lovest them in the very moment when they are insulting and offending Thee, although there is nothing that grieves Thee so much as those insults and offences. Now, my dear brethren, is it any dishonor to the Almighty, that He is so patient ? Does He therefore lose any of His strength and power to defend and avenge Himself ? Must we therefore think slightly of Him, and say : God forgives sinners, and allows them to insult and offend Him, because He cannot protect Himself ? Woe to us again, if He were to make us feel the effects of His wrath ! But, as St. Paul says, it is because He is all-powerful, that He is so patient and forgiving towards His enemies : “ What if God, willing . . . to make His power known endured with much patience vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction.” ² But why do you say that, O holy Apostle ? Would it not have been better to have said, “ wishing to show His *mercy*,” etc. ? No, for it is the intention of

¹ Quid igitur ? Num idcirco solis extinxit radios.

² Quod si Deus volens . . . notam facere potentiam suam, sustinuit in multa patientia, vasa iræ, apta in interitum.—Rom. ix. 22.

the Almighty to show His power thereby. "Thou hast mercy on all, because Thou canst do all things,"¹ says the Wise Man ; and therefore when Moses tried to appease the anger of God against the Israelites, he made use of the following prayer : "Let then the strength of the Lord be magnified, as Thou hast sworn, saying : the Lord is patient and full of mercy, taking away iniquity and wickednesses. Forgive, I beseech Thee, the sin of this people."² Such also is the meaning of the prayer of the Catholic Church on the tenth Sunday after Pentecost : "O God, who showest Thy power especially by being patient and merciful."³ Therefore, O vindictive man, you must acknowledge that to bear injuries patiently and to forgive them, cannot be a sign of weakness and much less one of dishonor ; for, as Peter of Blois asks, "Is that which is becoming in God, unbecoming in a servant of God ?"⁴ Therefore our Lord says : "Love your enemies . . . that you may be the children of your Father who is in Heaven ;"⁵ such is the reason He gives for this command, because God acts thus with His enemies.

Yes, you object, but He is God, who thus patiently forgives those who offend Him ; we know already that He is Almighty, and that He cannot lose His honor thereby ; but if I remain silent under an injury, he who has inflicted it will think that I am not able to defend myself, and that would be a disgrace to me ; therefore, I must show him that I am not so weak as he thinks, and then I can make friends with him again. What a foolish objection that is ! You say, He is God ; but does not that make the offence infinite ? An offence offered to me is of small moment, and I have no right to revenge myself, but God has an unlimited right to take what revenge He pleases. And besides, when God forgives, He does so without any advantage to Himself ; when I do it I can save my soul thereby. Therefore, the only conclusion I can come to, is that, since I am not God, but man, I must be all the more ready to forgive. Again, you say, that we know that God is Almighty, and that he cannot lose any honor by forgiving. Well, if you consider that objection to be of weight, take the example of one who is man as well as God.

Jesus Christ considered it an honor to bear the greatest injuries with meekness.

¹ Misereris omnium, quia omnia potes.—Wis. xl. 24.

² Magnificetur ergo fortitudo Domini sicut jurasti, dicens : Dominus patiens et multæ misericordiæ, auferens iniquitatem et scelera. Dimitte, obsecro, peccatum populi hujus.—Num. xiv. 17, 18, 19.

³ Deus qui omnipotentiam tuam parcendo maxime et miserando manifestas.

⁴ Numquid quod decuit Deum, dedecit Dei servum ?

⁵ Diligite inimicos vestros, . . . ut sitis filii Patris vestri, qui in cœlis est.—Matth. v. 44-45.

the meekest and most patient of men, Jesus Christ ; you know what insults, injuries, persecutions and bitter sufferings, even to the death of the cross, He had to endure, and how patiently, meekly, and lovingly He bore them, without so much as opening His mouth to complain of them, and how He repaid them with benefits. And was He not all the time an Almighty Lord, who had the power of avenging Himself how and when he pleased ? Still He gave no sign of this power ; otherwise the Jews would not have treated Him as they did. Nay, on account of His patience, His persecutors looked on Him as a weak and powerless man, who could not protect Himself from them. “ He saved others,” they said when He was hanging on the cross, “ Himself He cannot save ;”¹ Therefore, O Jesus, according to the judgment of the children of the world, it is a shame for Thee not to have used Thy Almighty power in taking vengeance on Thy enemies ! It is a shame for Thee, according to worldly notions of honor, to have fled as a weak little child from the wrath of Herod, when Thou couldst easily have made him feel the weight of Thy power ! A shame for Thee, when the Jews took up stones to throw at Thee, to have contented Thyself by merely escaping from them ! A shame for Thee to have rebuked the zeal of Peter in the garden, when he drew the sword to defend Thee, and to have forbidden him to hurt any one ! A shame for Thee to have listened so humbly to so many blasphemies and false testimonies, and not to have contradicted them ! A shame for Thee to have borne so many buffets, and wounds, and bruises ! A shame for Thee not to have called down fire from Heaven on the wretched who led Thee to judgment ! A shame for Thee, when on the cross, to have prayed for Thy murderers, instead of taking vengeance on them ! A shame for Thee and Thy Gospel to have left such a disgraceful teaching to the world, and to command us to love our enemies as ourselves and to do good to them ! And therefore, it is a shame for Thee, that no one can follow Thy example and observe Thy law, without dishonoring himself before the world !

Therefore, it is no disgrace, but the greatest honor to follow the example of Christ, and bear injuries meekly.

Oh, revengeful man, you must either say that all this is true, or else confess that the patient toleration and forgiveness of injuries is an honor and glory to the strongest and bravest ! If you say the former, how can you look at Christ on the cross without shame ? How can you keep a crucifix in your house, in your room, at the head of your bed, without being ashamed ?

¹ *Alios salvos fecit, seipsum non potest salvum facere.*—Mark xv. 31.

You should get rid of it at once, and never allow a picture in your house of Him who was so weak and cowardly as to bear all those injuries without revenging Himself, and who disgraced Himself by actually forgiving His enemies ! And blot out your own name too, from amongst the number of Christians, for they make profession of that disgraceful Gospel which contradicts all the world's ideas of honor ! But if you acknowledge, as you ought, the latter, namely, that forgiveness of injuries is an honor even to the greatest men, why do you not strive for it, since you attach so much importance to honor ? If the forgiveness of injuries were a thing unheard of, if there never had been any one who practised it ; still the example of Christ alone, should more than suffice to induce us Christians, at all events, to look upon the patient toleration of injuries as an honor and glory, not as a disgrace. Emperors, kings and princes of this small world of ours, mortal creatures as you are like ourselves, what power and influence you have over the judgments and opinions of men ! No customs too unbecoming, no fashion too vain, nor manner of life too extravagant for men to follow, when you give them the example of it ! If a king were to clothe himself in a poor garment and take a spade in his hand and dig, that dress and labor would certainly not remain long the exclusive mark of peasants ; for all his subjects, and even his courtiers would deem it an honor to imitate their king. The Moors, as Diodorus Siculus narrates, used to imitate the very gait of their kings so faithfully, that they aped even their bodily defects and thought it an honor to do so. Thus if the king was misshapen in any member, they mutilated themselves, so as to resemble him, looking on it as a shame and disgrace to have sound limbs when their sovereign was a cripple. And Thou, O great God and dearest Saviour, canst Thou not have the same power over the hearts of thy Christians, Thy servants, Thy children ? Canst Thou not make them look upon forgiveness of injuries and the love of their enemies as an honor and not as a disgrace, since Thou hast sanctified it by Thy example ? Can we condemn what an Incarnate God considered worthy of, and a glory to Himself ? In a word, are we Christians, or not ? Do we acknowledge Christ as our Head ? Do we believe Him to be God ? Then why are we so little influenced by His example ? Why are we ashamed of doing what He tells us ?

I know all that, the vindictive man will say ; but our Lord had full control over His anger, while I am only a poor mortal,

As the saints
and pious
servants of

God have
done.

who find it hard enough to restrain myself. So after all you attribute your revengeful feelings to weakness ? I thought you wished to make a boast of them, as a mark of courage and manliness, and therefore as an honor to you ; but since you put them down to weakness, they cannot be any great credit to you, as far as a reputation for courage is concerned. However, you cannot avail yourself of this excuse, for there are examples enough of men who were subject to the same weakness as you and I, who gained undying honor and glory before all men, by their patience in bearing with and forgiving injuries, that they could easily have avenged. Joseph was most cruelly treated, and sold as a slave by his brethren, and was he not a man ? David, who allowed his persecutor Saul to go unhurt, when he could have taken his life ; Stephen, who prayed for those who stoned him ; Paul, who loved his persecutors more than himself ; Ambrose, who fed at his own table for a long time, a traitor who had plotted against his life ; Achaius, who pawned the sacred vessels, that he might get food for his enemies who ridiculed him ; Leo, Zacharias, Alexander, all three of whom were popes ; the first of whom saved his enemy's life, the second enriched his enemy, and the third raised his enemy to high dignities ; were they not all men ? But why do I mention individual instances ? The thousands of martyrs, who gave up their lives and properties without a word ; the early Christians, who used to embrace, and ask each other's pardon before hearing holy Mass ; were they not all mortal men ? are not their actions chronicled in history to their great glory, as a proof of their bravery ? Yes, you say, they were good and holy men. Do you then not wish to be good and holy ? If so, you have a queer idea of honor ! Have not holy people a weak nature, and can they not, must they not be careful of their good name ? Take care, lest, if you refuse to do what good and holy people have done, you may not be reckoned amongst the friends of God, but amongst His accursed enemies.

And also
mighty
kings and
sovereigns.

Still, to leave you no excuse whatever, cast your eyes on the example of those men who had the greatest interest in preserving their honor before the world (forgive me, O divine Master, if contrary to my custom, I am forced to have recourse to the authority of profane history to enforce the teaching of Thy Gospel; for things are unhappily come to such a pass nowadays, that such an authority has more influence with men than Thy divine word and the lives of Thy saints) ; you will find amongst

Christian potentates, a Theodosius the Great, and his sons, Arcadius and Honorius, all three of whom were Roman emperors, who caused the following law to be promulgated: "He who speaks an injurious word against our majesty, must not be punished on that account; for he has spoken either through indeliberation, or folly, or malice; if he has spoken through indeliberation, no notice should be taken of what he has said; if through folly, he is deserving of pity, and is already punished sufficiently; if through malice, we must forgive him, because we are Christians, and the Christian law requires that of us;" you will find a Wenceslaus of Bohemia, who being treacherously attacked by his brother Boleslaus, and having succeeded in overcoming the latter, and depriving him of his sword, took no other revenge, than to give back the sword, and say to him in a friendly tone, "Let us live in peace and love, as brothers ought;" you will find a Philip II., King of Spain, of whose meekness and patience the following well-known incident is related: "One night he had to write a long letter to the Pope on most important and pressing business; when he had finished it, his servant by mistake gave him the ink-bottle instead of the sand to dry it with; the king not noticing the mistake, poured the ink over the letter and of course rendered it illegible. If one of your servants were to make a mistake of that kind, my dear brethren, could you restrain yourselves from throwing the ink-bottle at his head? But Philip was not in the least disturbed, and merely remarking, "You have made a mistake, give me some fresh paper," began to rewrite the letter. These were kings and great men of the world, who certainly knew in what their honor consisted.

Consider even the heathens, who had no other end and object in what they did, but to gain honor before the world. Lysurgus, the legislator, strict as he was in matters of justice, would not allow any punishment to be inflicted on a man who had wantonly put out one of his eyes in a sedition. Cato, the Censor was once buffeted by one of the common people, but he never said a word, and went on as if nothing had happened. Socrates, the philosopher, who was condemned to death although innocent, prayed to the gods to grant prosperity to his judges, when he was about to drink the cup of poison. These and hundreds like them, were heathens, who had not the reward to expect that Christ has promised to us. Tell me now, O vindictive man, if they had acted differently, if they had given vent to

And even
heathens,
too.

their rage and resentment against their enemies, would they have gained such glory? Would their names be held up to the admiration of the world, as they now are? You yourself admire those men; and why? Is it not because they were so patient and so brave in bearing injuries? Then, according to your own confession, not revenge, but patience and the forgiveness of injuries is a title to the respect and esteem of the world.

Conclusion
and exhortation
to bear injuries
with patience
and meekness,
according to
the divine
command.

But, after all, what is the world to me? I am not amongst heathens and infidels, to whom I should prove that the love of our enemies is an honor! I am speaking to good Christians, who have abjured the world, and its vanities in holy baptism, and who propose to themselves no other end in all their actions, but the honor and glory of God. Suppose then, what never will be, that it was a disgrace before the world to leave an injury unavenged; has not the great God, who has commanded us to give up everything, even life itself, rather than offend Him, sufficient power over His creatures to oblige them to keep His commandments, even at the risk of losing their honor and good name? Who can doubt it? Now, one of His chief commandments is not to seek revenge, to forgive your enemy from your heart, to love him and do him good, and that commandment you must keep under pain of eternal damnation. Should not this be enough for a Christian, who wishes to save his soul, and who loves and honors his God? And so it is, O great God. To Thee belongs everything that I have; mine be it to obey Thee in everything as Thy most humble servant! It is no matter to me what the foolish world thinks of this command of Thine! Whether it is an honor or a disgrace I will obey it. I need not trouble myself much about the world, if Thou, my God, art pleased with me! Let men say, or think what they will; let them look on me as a weakling, a coward, as one who has neither courage nor strength to defend himself; I must and will place my honor and glory in acting as becomes a true servant of God, and a Christian, that is, in obeying Thee and Thy law! Rather will I, with Thy saints, and with Christ my Lord, incur the ridicule of the world, if necessary, than seek false glory from the wicked! Therefore I will forget the injuries I have received; I will patiently bear with him for whom I have a natural aversion; I will at once be reconciled to my enemy, forgive him from my heart, and return him good for evil. Such is the resolution that all good Christians here present. now make for Thy sake. Amen.

TWENTY-SIXTH SERMON.

ON THE INJUSTICE OF REVENGE.

Subject.

He who seeks revenge, 1. acts against private and natural right. 2. Against divine right.—*Preached on the Feast of St. Stephen, the first Martyr.*

Text.

Positis autem genibus, clamavit voce magna, dicens : Domine, ne statuas illis hoc peccatum.—Acts vii. 60.

And falling on his knees, he cried with a loud voice, saying : Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.”

Introduction.

Here is an example for you, O vindictive and quarrelsome Christians. See what that disciple of Christ, St. Stephen, did ; “falling on his knees ;” pay attention now to what he said ; “he cried with a loud voice : Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” To whose charge ? To the charge of those who have cast me out of the city, who have gnashed their teeth against me, who are stoning me, and putting me to death. What do you think of this, revengeful Christians, you who give full vent to your rage, and seek revenge, and curse and swear if the least thing is said or done to offend or annoy you, nay, if you only imagine that you are offended ; while, if you cannot take revenge, you at least pursue him who has offended you, with the bitterest hatred ? Are you Christians ? The law of Christ proves that you are not the kind of Christians that He wants : “But I say to you : Love your enemies, etc.” What ? Must I love him who has injured me ? Must I not seek satisfaction for the injustice he has inflicted on me ? Must I bear his insolence in silence, although I am as good as he ? No, I must have revenge ; it is my right ; the wrong I have suffered entitles me to it, etc. Such are the false arguments and pretexts brought forward by the vindictive man, and to show how false they are shall be the object of the present sermon. You say, I must take revenge ; I have a right to it. But I say you must not take revenge in any way ; you have not the least right to it ; and if you take it, you act against all right : as I shall now show.

Plan of Discourse.

You act against private and natural right. The first part. Against Divine right. The second part. Therefore if you wish to be just, you must love even your greatest enemy.

O Mary, Mother of beautiful love, and you, holy angels burning with love, obtain for us from the Child Jesus, who was born for the love of us, the grace to imitate St. Stephen and to love our enemies.

He who takes revenge, acts against the private right of men.

There are distinguished principally two kinds of civil, or human right. There is private right, which concerns each individual ; and secondly, public or general right, which regulates the well-being of the whole community. You act against both of them, when you seek or take revenge for an injury ; whether that revenge consists in something you do to harm your opponent or in what you say against him by injuring his character, cursing or abusing him, or in the thoughts of anger, hatred, or envy which you have towards him. And first, as far as private right is concerned ; by virtue of it, I have a full title to all that belongs to me, to my money and property, if I have any, to my honor and good name, to my health and strength ; so that no other private individual can deprive me of, or injure me in any of these things against my will. If I am injured, I have a right to be fully indemnified. Mark the word, “fully ;” that is, neither too much, nor too little must be restored to me, or else there will be a wrong done on either side. Quite right, you will say, that is just what I want ; it is the very thing I am working for when I seek revenge ! My right has been injured, and I want to assert it ; so I do to my opponent as he has done to me. He has attacked me, and I will attack him ; he has spoken badly of me ; I will do the same to him. I will give him abuse for abuse, and injury for injury ; or, at all events, I will have no good wishes for him, and I will return him hatred for hatred. He shows clearly enough that he cannot bear me ; neither will I show any great friendship for him. If he passes me by without saluting me, I will treat him in the same way. All the harm he wishes to me, I wish to him. That is the way to defend my right, and to preserve the equality that justice requires.

Because he cannot observe equality.

Yes, that may be all very good in theory ; but it is exceedingly difficult in practice, nay, humanly speaking, it is impossible. If you want to preserve strict equality, and measure your revenge, so as not to exceed by a hair's breadth the amount of injury

that has been inflicted on you, do you know what you must do ? You must be able to measure and to understand exactly how grievous each injury is that you have received ; you must know the intention your opponent had in acting in a certain manner towards you, or when speaking, or thinking of you in a certain way ; for the circumstances can appreciably increase, or diminish an injury ; and you must know, too, how severely, or deeply, or bitterly he will feel what you are about to do to him ; and many other circumstances besides. If you have not this knowledge, you will certainly exceed the limits of justice, and do too much. But where are you to get it ? Can you see the heart and intention of another, or measure the degree of his sensitiveness ? And how can you pretend to be able to weigh your hatred and revenge against his, at a time when your heart is full of bitterness, anger and dislike, and you are thinking of nothing, but the best way of revenging yourself ? It would be an impossible task for a man who is perfectly calm and has the full use of his reason ; how then could you undertake it, when your mind is altogether taken possession of and distracted by anger and hatred ?

Tell the dog that you keep to protect your property from thieves, that he must not bite or bark at any one who does not come with the intention of stealing, and that he must not bite a thief harder than the value of what he intended to steal allows. Now let your dog loose, and see how he will act. A beggar comes to the door ; the dog barks at him furiously ; an innocent child, or one of your best friends comes in ; if you do not look out the dog will do him a mischief. Yet these people are not thieves, and do not deserve such treatment. The beggar only wants a piece of bread ; the child has been sent on a message to you by its parents ; your friend comes to see you ; why should the dog bark at them so savagely ? Oh, he knows no better ! Another poor man sees a piece of wood lying on the ground ; he picks it up, and the dog rushes at him, and bites a piece out of his leg. Certainly the object stolen is not worth that. Quite true ; but the dog knows no better ; he is a brute, and what can he know about such things ? Aristotle compares a revengeful, passionate man to a savage dog ; and experience teaches that the comparison is just ; for amongst all the evil inclinations that disturb and disorder the mind, there is none that makes more havoc with sound reason than hatred and anger. Therefore the Holy Scripture compares a passionate and vindic-

Shown by a
simile.

tive man, to a blind man who wanders about in the dark : “ He that hateth his brother is in darkness and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth ; because the darkness hath blinded his eyes ; ”¹ and to a fool : “ Be not quickly angry ; for anger resteth in the bosom of a fool.”² To a fool, I say, who knows not how to discern right from wrong, whose mind is in a state of confusion, and who is led captive by his imagination. And is not that the case, my dear brethren ? How much misunderstanding, disunion, quarrelling, and bitter enmity is sometimes caused between friends, brethren and even husband and wife by mere imagination and groundless suspicion ? For it is easy to interpret as hostile the actions of those whom we suspect of disliking us. A doubtful expression, a laugh, a gesture, a gloomy silence makes us think we are the objects of a scorn or ridicule which the other does not even think of ; and once this suspicion has become firmly rooted in our minds, we look on everything that is said, or done, or thought by that person, as an insult to ourselves. If an injury is done us, that we think he could have prevented, our first thought is that he allowed it to happen on purpose, on account of his dislike to us ; if we lose an occasion of profit, or an office, or employment in which he could have helped us by his influence, we at once think that he has deliberately tried to prevent us from getting it ; and yet, if we take the trouble to examine the matter a little closer, we shall see that we are altogether unable to verify our suspicions. And meanwhile the innocent and well-meaning friend is barked at and bitten by the savage dog, who looks upon him as an enemy, and hates and persecutes him. Is that right ? Is that the way to be just and to preserve equality ?

For he considers the injuries inflicted on him, greater than they are in reality.

Even supposing that he does not mean you well, and really inflicts an injury on you ; still you will never be able to keep your revenge within just limits, nor to observe due equality in taking satisfaction. For in this case too, you are sure to look upon the injury you have suffered as far more grievous than that which you inflict in return. Why so ? The reason is natural enough ; it is because you love yourself more than you love the other ; you feel what hurts yourself, but you do not feel what hurts him ; in the former case you make a mountain out of a mole-hill, in the latter, you make a mole-hill out of a mountain ;

¹ Qui autem odit fratrem suum, in tenebris est, et in tenebris ambulat, et nescit quo eat, quia tenebræ obcæcaverunt oculos ejus.—I. John ii. 11.

² Ne sis velox ad irascendum, quia ira in sinu stulti requiescit.—Eccles. vii. 10.

and of course when you try to retaliate, you are sure to do him more harm than he has done you. He has wronged you of ten dollars, you say ; but in the meantime, ten months, or perhaps ten years have elapsed, during which time you have pursued him with the bitterest hatred, and wished him a thousand evils or at least rejoiced when any harm was done him ; you say nothing of all that, and still you are not satisfied. Is that the way to preserve equality ? Does the injury you have suffered deserve such a long-lived hatred ? You say, he has publicly ridiculed and laughed at you ; but you forget the number of times you have spoken ill of, and calumniated him, and taken away his good character in his absence. Is that the way to preserve equality ? You say he has caused you annoyance ; why do you not speak of the harm that you have tried to do him whenever you could, for a whole year ? Is that the way to preserve equality ? He has refused to do different things for you, you say ; but you forget the many occasions on which you refused him Christian courtesy, kindness and charity ; you count that as nothing. Do you think that the proper way to preserve equality ? He has inspired one individual with feelings of dislike for you ; but you have made ten enemies for him ; whenever you had a chance, you tried to draw down upon him the hatred of others. Is that the way to preserve equality ? And still you think that your wrong is greater than his, and you refuse to forgive him, or to lay aside your hatred ; so blinded are you, so much is your reason perverted by anger and the desire of revenge !

Suppose now, that your reason is perfectly undisturbed, that you have given the matter due consideration, and that you retaliate so as to observe perfect equality, neither too much nor too little ; do you know what justice requires of you besides that ? It requires that before he who has injured you is punished, sentence to that effect be passed upon him by a lawfully appointed judge. Now, you hate that man, and persecute him, and annoy him, and do all you can to be revenged on him ; and you say, I have a right to do so. But why have you that right ? Because, you answer, he has offended me, and wronged me. But for that very reason, because he has offended and wronged you, you have not the least right to revenge yourself. What do you, gentlemen of the law, think of the matter ? There is a man who has suffered an injury ; he wishes to be accuser, witness and judge all at once, to pronounce the sentence, and determine the punishment and inflict it. Is that a legitimate

Because he
is judge in
his own
cause.

mode of procedure ? Could, I will not say Christians, but even Turks or heathens tolerate such a mode of administering justice ? If a lawfully constituted judge shows more favor to one party than to another, how would people look upon him ? They would protest against his mode of action, and accuse him of being partial. But, O vindictive man, you will not hear of forgiveness ; you wish to take revenge because you have been offended, and so to be accuser, witness, judge and executioner in your own cause : “ who hath appointed thee judge over us ? ”¹ I ask you, as Moses was asked formerly. But, you answer, it is lawful to repel violence by violence. That is true ; but it is one thing to defend yourself from injury, and another to seek revenge for an injury already inflicted ; the former is allowed to every one by the law of nature ; the latter is against all law. Why has God decreed that there should be judges ? Nay, what has God Himself to do ? Must He look on idly, while we are judging and condemning each other ? He has reserved this judgment to Himself alone, and it is to Him that we have to appeal, as the Apostle says : “ Not revenging yourselves ; but giving place to wrath ; for it is written : Revenge to me, I will repay.”² See how you violate the private right of your neighbor by your revengeful spirit !

He also acts
against the
public right.

Still more grievously do you sin by taking revenge, against the general civil right. It is a matter, you say, that concerns my repose, my property, my interests, my honor ; all of which require that I should have satisfaction ; therefore, I must, and will have revenge. But the peace, prosperity, order and safety of a whole town, of a whole country, of the whole world, require that you should not be allowed to take revenge ; and, therefore, you should not, and must not revenge yourself, although you thus lose your property, your contentment, and your honor ; for the common good must be preferred to that of a private individual. If every one were allowed to avenge himself as he pleases, how could people live in the world ? That would simply let loose all sorts of rebellion, wars, persecutions, thefts, murders, in a word, it would open the door to cruelties of all kinds. Those who would have bitter feelings towards each other, would never be reconciled ; hatred and enmity would never cease, people would vie with each other in inflicting injuries and in avenging

¹ Quis te constituit judicem super nos ? —Exod. ii. 14.

² Non vosmetipsos defendentes ; sed date locum iræ, scriptum est enim : Mihi vindicta, ego retribuam. —Rom. xii. 19.

them ; there would soon be an end to friendship ; neighbors and relations would become implacable enemies ; families would try to ruin each other, so that parents would have to mourn the loss of their children ; the houses would be empty, the towns and countries would lose their best inhabitants, and kingdoms would no longer enjoy either safety or freedom. In former times it was the custom to get men to fight with wild beasts in the amphitheatre at Rome, and also in the one here at Treves, for the amusement of the public ; but if every one were allowed to take revenge as he pleased, the whole world would be turned into an amphitheatre in which a far more cruel spectacle might be seen ; for men would then fight, not against wild beasts, but against their fellow-men, with greater cruelty and ferocity, than lions and tigers display in their combats with each other. The world would then become like to hell ; for of both could be said with truth the words : “ Where no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth.”¹ Now use your reason a moment and consider this ; place it all in the scales and weigh it ; on the one side you have those great and numerous evils, on the other the honor or pleasure you gain by venting your anger on another. Which weighs the heavier ? On which side is justice ? Which has the right, you, or the common weal ? You, who wish to revenge yourself at the cost of the peace of the world, or the common good that, for its own safety and quiet, forbids you to take revenge, although you thus lose your honor or contentment ? It is evident then, that enmity and vindictiveness are opposed to all civil rights ; but that is the least disastrous consequence, and it is acknowledged even by heathens and idolators. They are opposed also to the divine right, and that is a most terrible consequence, as we shall see in the

Second Part.

Is it not sinning against the divine right to deprive the Almighty of the honor we owe Him in so many respects ? Now, in what does this external honor consist ? In this, that men do what God wishes, and observe His law in all things. This you do not do, when you hate your neighbor and try to be revenged on him, for God has strictly forbidden you to do so. You may say, I do not hate my neighbor himself, but the malice, or insolence, or sinfulness with which he has injured me, who have done him no harm. This I hate, this I

He sins
against the
divine right,
because by
chastising
his neighbor
he insults
the divine
honor.

¹ Ubi nullus ordo, sed sempiternus horror inhabitat.—Job x. 22.

cannot, and must not suffer, this I try to punish, so that I may bring him to repent of what he has done, and prevent him from doing it again. That is simply inflicting salutary chastisement on crime, converting souls, and being zealous for God's honor. That is what God has a right to from His creatures, and therefore, I do not lessen, but rather increase His honor by the revenge I take. What an apostolic man you are, to be sure ! Where did you get that great zeal for souls and for the divine honor, and such a great hatred of evil ? Would you venture to speak in that way before the judgment seat of God ? I do not hate the man himself, but his wickedness ; I do not revenge myself to do him harm, but to punish him for assailing the divine honor ! Is it long since you became so holy and zealous ? Perhaps if we could examine your past life, we should find that you were guilty of a good deal of wickedness too ; had you as great a hatred of wickedness then, as you have now ? When you committed mortal sin by thought, word, and deed, you were not afraid of losing your soul, forfeiting the friendship of God and the eternal joys of Heaven, and incurring the torments of hell ; and now you have such a violent hatred of sin ! How have you shown that hatred in your own case ? How have you punished and chastised yourself for having insulted the Almighty, and despised Him, so as to make atonement for His injured honor ? You did not think of that ! And where is your zeal for souls, if so ? Where is your desire to punish sin for the glory of God ? You should show it in your own case first of all. Or, perhaps, you are innocent and free from sin ? Why then, do you not inflict punishment and take revenge for the injuries that are done to others who are not connected with you in any way ? These too are acts of wickedness. But if anything is done against yourself you begin all at once to hate sin so violently that you cannot leave it unpunished ! You might perhaps be able to conceal your real design from a simple-minded man, by thus cloaking it ; but you cannot deceive the all-seeing God. " Hath God any need of your lie," asks the Prophet Job, " that you should speak deceitfully for Him ? or shall He be deceived as a man, with your deceitful dealings ? " ¹ No, my good friend ; it is not zeal for souls, nor for the conversion of sinners, nor for the glory of God, that animates you ; but your own vindictive nature, which prompts

¹ Numquid Deus indiget vestro mendacio, ut pro illo loquamini dolos ? Aut decipietur ut homo vestris fraudulentis ?—Job xlii. 7, 9.

you to hate and persecute your fellow-man, and thus to sin grievously against the express command of God.

And who has empowered you to punish the transgressions of one who is not subject to you? It is true, according to the Wise Ecclesiasticus, that, "God gave to every one of them commandment concerning his neighbor;"¹ and consequently, every one is bound to do what he can, by fraternal exhortation and correction, under certain circumstances, to prevent others from sinning, or to bring them to repentance; but do you know how this is to be done? Read the eighteenth chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew, and you will find out all about it. "But if thy brother shall offend against thee, go and rebuke him between thee and him alone;"² That is to say, exhort him with kindness, and show him the evil he has done, but do so privately, and in such a way as to spare him as much shame as possible. "If he shall hear thee, thou shalt gain thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more. And if he will not hear them, tell the Church."³ Accuse him before his lawful superiors. Do you understand these words, O vindictive man? Is that the way in which you act towards him who has offended you? Is there any sign of your observing Christ's precept in the hatred and anger that prompt you to wish ill to your enemy, to speak to him in an unfriendly manner, and to avoid him as much as possible? Is that the way to go to him and exhort him charitably? When you speak ill of him, and vilify him on every possible occasion, when you refuse him the ordinary signs of Christian charity, when you do all in your power to cause him injury and annoyance, do you think that you are going the right way about gaining his heart, his affection, his soul? When you make yourself his judge and executioner, do you accuse him to the Church, to those who can correct him? Away with your hypocritical zeal for souls and for God's honor! You are acting against the rights of the Almighty, and dishonoring Him by your vindictiveness.

You say further, God has given to man the right, nay, He has even commanded him to take revenge. Where did you find that? In the Holy Scriptures; for we read: "It hath been said: Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thy enemy."⁴

He violates the precept of fraternal correction.

He acts against the divine command in everything.

¹ Et mandavit illis unicuique de proximo suo.—Ecc. xvii. 12.

² Si autem peccaverit in te frater tuus, vade, et corripe eum inter te et ipsum solum.—Matth. xviii. 15.

³ Si te audierit, lucratus eris fratrem tuum. Si autem te non audierit, adhibe tecum adhuc unum vel duos. Quodsi non audierit eos, dic ecclesiæ.—Ibid. 15, 16, 17.

⁴ Dictum est: Diliges proximum tuum, et odio habebis inimicum tuum.—Matth. v. 43.

A similar command was given to the Jews: "Remember what Amalec did to thee . . . Thou shalt blot out his name from under Heaven. See thou forget it not."¹ It is true that, if we consider according to the bare letter, some of the commands given in the Old Testament, we might imagine that it was allowed to hate one's enemy and to be revenged on him. But what sort of enemies were alluded to in those texts? They were not private enemies whom the Jews were to hate and destroy; but the enemies of God, whom the Jews, as ministers of the divine justice, were to punish for their idolatry. Therefore, the kings of Israel drew down upon themselves the anger of God, whenever they spared the impious gentile nations, after having conquered them. But with regard to the conduct of the Jews amongst themselves, towards their brethren and fellow-citizens, a command of a far different nature was given; "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart. Seek not revenge, nor be mindful of the injury of thy citizens."² Nay, their charity was to be extended, not only to their enemies, but even to the very animals which the latter owned; "If thou meet thy enemy's ox or ass going astray, bring it back to him. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lie underneath his burden, thou shalt not pass by, but shalt lift it up with him."³

He violates
the law of
Christ in the
New Testa-
ment.

Even if it were the case that the Old Law was doubtful on this point, or that it really allowed hatred and revenge against one's enemy, how would that affect the matter now? Has not the Lord power to permit, command, or forbid what, how, and when He pleases? Are you a Jew, or a Christian? If you are a Christian, then you must obey the Christian, and not the Jewish law. And what does that law prescribe? Hear what our Legislator, Jesus Christ, publicly proclaimed, and caused to be proclaimed throughout the world by His Apostles; "But I say to you: Love your enemies;" not only is it unlawful for you to hate them, but you must love them, and with an active love, "Do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you;"⁴ Mark how emphatically this law is proclaimed; I say to you, says Christ; I who am the Lord,

¹ Memento, quæ fecerit tibi Amalec . . . delebis nomen ejus sub cælo. Cave ne obliviscaris. Deut. xxv. 17, 19.

² Non oderis fratrem tuum in corde tuo. Non quæras ultionem, nec memor eris injuriæ civium tuorum.—Levit. xix. 17, 18.

³ Si occurreris bovi inimici tui, aut asino erranti, reduce ad eum. Si videris asinum odientis te jacere sub onere, non pertransibis, sed sublevabis cum eo.—Exod. xxiii. 4. 5.

⁴ Ego autem dico vobis: Diligite inimicos vestros; benefacite his, qui oderunt vos: et orate pro persequentibus et calumniantibus vos.—Matth. v. 44.

and have the supreme right to command you. In the same way earthly sovereigns are accustomed to express themselves when promulgating their decrees ; This is our will. He enforces His command too with promises, if it is observed ; with threats, if violated. What are these promises and threats ? “ For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged ; and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.”¹ This is the general sanction of the law ; hear now the special promises and threats He makes in the same Gospel ; “ If you will forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will forgive you also your offences. But if you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your offences.”² Oh, how good God is, to offer His pardon to the sinner, provided the latter only forgives the trifling injuries he has had to suffer from his fellow-man ! Are you afraid, O man, of the severity of God’s judgments ? Perhaps you have reason to fear, since you have so often made Him your enemy by sin. Do you wish to appease the anger of God, and to recover His grace ? There is an easy way in which you may do that, and a way that is as certain as the infallible Gospel of Christ. “ Forgive, and you shall be forgiven.”³ Forgive for God’s sake him who has in any way offended you, and you may be certain that God will forgive your sins in return.

Christians, let us enter into ourselves. If we have cause to complain sometimes, that others offend us, can we say that we have never offended our God ? Such a one, you say, has done and said certain things to offend me ; must I put up with it ? Must I remain silent, and love him ? But what are you saying ? Have you never said or done anything against your God ? Must He put up with it from you ? Must He remain silent, and love you in spite of it ? But I must have satisfaction for the insult. And has God no right to have satisfaction for the insults offered to Him ? But I have a right to it. And has God no right to take vengeance on you ? Yet, He is willing to renounce this right of His, if you, for His sake, give up the revenge to which you have not the least right ; He will say nothing about your transgressions, and will love you in spite of them, provided only that you be silent about the injuries inflicted on you, and be

An advantageous law for us, who often offend God.

¹ In quo enim iudicio iudicaveritis, iudicabimini : et in qua mensura mensi fueritis remetietur vobis.—Matth. vii. 2.

² Si enim dimiseritis hominibus peccata eorum, dimittet et vobis Pater vester cœlestis delicta vestra. Si autem non dimiseritis hominibus, nec Pater vester dimittet vobis peccata vestra.—Ibid. vi. 14, 15.

³ Dimittite, et dimittentini.—Luke vi. 37.

friends with him who has inflicted them ; He will be satisfied with you, if you are satisfied with your fellow-man. “Forgive, and you shall be forgiven.” Can such a promise fail to have an effect on you, and to make you practise meekness ? When St. John Chrysostom was once preaching on this subject at Antioch, he pictured to the people the evil condition in which they were, on account of their having offended Theodosius by insulting the Empress’ statue ; so that they might expect at any moment to see their whole town laid waste. “In the midst of this alarm, if the executioners were already prepared to put the guilty to death, and if the people were already bemoaning their inevitable fate, what would you think,” says the Saint, “if a messenger were to come from the emperor, and to say: Hear, O citizens of Antioch ; if you forgive one another, and forget mutually the insults you have suffered from one another, if you be reconciled, and make friends with each other, the emperor will at once forgive you, and forget the rebellion you are guilty of ; oh, how eagerly would you not all then embrace your enemies, and fall at their feet to ask forgiveness ! Would one of you be likely in such circumstances to defer forgiveness for a moment ? Would you be ashamed to ask for pardon, or make a difficulty of granting it ? Would you claim your rights, and refuse to make friends ? There is question of appeasing the wrath of an emperor, and of obtaining pardon from him ; and he offers it so cheaply, although in reality no price would be too high to pay for it.” “Oh, my brethren,” continues St. Chrysostom, and I say the same to you now, my dear brethren ; “what the angry emperor Theodosius refused to do on that occasion for his rebellious subjects, that an angry God does for us, and for the whole world, without being asked, or entreated to do so. He will forgive all the insults we offer Him by our sins, He will save us from the eternal punishment we deserve for them, if we fulfil this one condition of showing the same spirit of forgiveness towards our brethren and fellow-men, for His sake.” Could He offer us anything more advantageous to ourselves ? What God is ready to forgive us is not imprisonment, nor banishment, nor torture, nor death, nor anything which human vindictiveness can think of to satisfy itself. What He is prepared to forgive us is the eternal punishment of hell, which He alone can inflict. Are we then so blinded by our desire for revenge, that we cannot see how much the advantage He offers us surpasses the condition on which He is willing to give it ?

But what am I saying ? Have we not once for all agreed to this condition ? Have we not made a contract with the Almighty, which we renew and ratify every day of our lives, when we say the words, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us" ? What do those words mean ? Lord, we say, do unto us as we do unto others. Yes, answers the Almighty, I will do to you, as you do to them ; " So also shall my heavenly Father do to you." ¹ See, there you have a contract ratified on both sides ; neither part can withdraw without doing an injustice to the other. If there was any right to complain that this contract is unfair, God would have that right, not we ; for compare what He has to forgive, with the little that you have to forgive.

We have made a contract with God to observe it.

"He," says St. John Chrysostom, "has to forget and forgive insults which He, the greatest of Lords, has received from you, His vile slave ; while you have only to forgive the insults that you have received from your fellow-slave."² Nevertheless, He is willing to keep His word, while you hesitate about keeping yours. And although He has already drawn the sword of His justice to punish your sins, unless you lay aside your hatred against your brother, do you prefer to suffer this punishment rather than forego the pleasure of revenge ? What folly ! What blindness !

If you are determined on it, then, hate your enemy ; give vent to your anger ; and when you have taken your revenge, say the Our Father. What do you say ? Forgive us our trespasses ; hush ; do not go any farther ! "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." But how can you say those words ? How can you say O Lord, I beg of Thee to deal with me, as I deal with my neighbor ; I have taken revenge on him ; do Thou also the same with me ; I cannot bear the sight of him ; do Thou also cast me out of Thy sight ! Do not pardon my sins, for I have not pardoned him. I cannot suffer the least word of contradiction from him ; Thou also shouldst not bear with the least fault in me ! Be as hard and severe to me, as I am to him ; hate me, persecute me, curse me, rejoice at my misfortunes, grudge me every thing good, frustrate all my plans, destroy me utterly ; just as I would my neighbor if I had the chance ! Therefore the Almighty will say, according to the contract : "Out of thy own mouth I judge thee, thou wicked servant."³ It shall be so ;

Therefore, he who does not forgive his enemy, calls down the vengeance of God on his own head.

¹ Sic et Pater meus cœlestis faciet vobis.—Matth. xviii. 35.

² Ille heriles, tu serviles remittis injurias.

³ De ore tuo te judico, serve nequam.—Luke xix. 22.

and this is the terrible threat that Christ utters in the Gospel, in the parable of the servant who refused to forgive his fellow-servant, although his master had remitted to him a much greater debt ; and therefore the wicked servant was handed over to the torturers by his angry Lord. “ So also shall my heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts.”¹ So will He act towards you ; you dissemble for a time, until you get an opportunity of revenge on your enemy ; God will do so too. He will seem to take no notice of you for a few years ; but He will find a time in which to take full revenge on you. You pretend by your words and your manner that you are reconciled, while your heart is full of gall and bitterness ; you say, I forgive him from my heart, and wish him well ; but you cannot evercome your hatred sufficiently to speak to him in a friendly manner. So also will God do to you. He will appear to forgive you for a time ; you will think you have recovered His grace because you have performed other good works, and thus paid Him an empty outward honor ; but when your last moment comes, you will find that His heart is disposed to you, as yours is to your neighbor. You, as you imagine, go according to the claims of strict justice ; but in reality you are guilty of the greatest cruelty towards your brother ; so will God deal with you. “ Judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy.”² Christians, think of what I have said whenever anything is said or done to offend you, and you find yourselves carried away by your passion so as to desire revenge. Take refuge at once in the Lord’s Prayer, and say to yourselves : How ? Have I then never sinned against my God ? Do I wish God to be angry with me, as I am now with my brother ? But so also shall He do to me. Shall I then ask Him to be angry with my sins, as long as I am angry with my brother ? Such thoughts as these will soon suggest to you a better mode of proceeding.

And deliberately chooses to go to hell.

And where are you now, O vindictive man ? Do you still claim your right, and insist on it ? If so, go and keep it ; but you will find when you are amongst the demons in hell, that God has an equal right to punish you for violating His right by seeking revenge ! For, to cut the matter short with you, you must necessarily choose one of two things ; you must either give up your revenge, or Heaven ; you must either forgive your enemy

¹ Sic et Pater meus cœlestis faciet vobis, si non remiseritis unusquisque fratri suo de cordibus vestris.—Matth. xviii. 35.

² Judicium enim sine misericordia illi, qui non fecit misericordiam.—James ii. 13.

from your heart, and lay aside your hatred against him, or else you will be condemned to hell for ever ; there is no other alternative for you. You may pray as long and as much as you will, although prayer is very powerful with God, it will help you nothing ; you must either forgive, or go to hell. You may give all your goods to the poor ; almsgiving, powerful as it is, will avail you nothing ; you must either forgive, or go to hell. You can hear Masses, and have Masses said ; the Holy Sacrifice is very powerful, but it will not save you ; you must either forgive, or go to hell. You can confess your sins a hundred thousand times ; God has given to this Sacrament the power of forgiving sins ; but not for you, as long as you hate your enemy ; all the absolutions you receive in that state are null and void ; all the Communion you make, are but new mortal sins ; you must either forgive your enemy, and love him from your heart, or else burn for ever in the flames of hell ; this is an article of faith. “ But if you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your offences.”¹ O Christian, think better of it ; do not say that you will renounce your hopes of Heaven, rather than forego your revenge ; that you will burn in hell rather than bear injuries ; that you will suffer eternal damnation, rather than speak in a friendly manner to your enemy ; that you prefer to hear the words, depart you accursed, than make peace with him ; that you would rather curse God and yourself for all eternity, than love your enemy !

Oh, no, great God, I will make a far different resolution ! I am ready to forget all offences, and to love those who have hitherto been my enemies. Now at this very moment, in this very place, I lay aside all hatred and dislike ; for, why should I defer pardon, when I know that it is necessary to my salvation. Why should I now hate him, whom in a short time I must love as a friend ? Why should I continue to deserve Thy anger, O God, to the imminent danger of my eternal salvation ? I have offended Thee often and grievously ; perhaps the punishment and Thy vengeance are already hanging over me. I will not wait for them to fall on me ; I renounce all my rights to Thee ; all vengeance I leave to Thee, to whom it belongs by right ! But I will take vengeance on my sins, as Thou hast commanded ; I will love my enemy, and to prove that I do so from my heart, I will treat him with all courtesy, honor and friendship ; I will

Resolution
to forgive
all injuries
and to bear
them with
meekness.

¹ Si autem non dimiseritis hominibus, nec Pater vester dimittet vobis peccata vestra.
—Matth. vi. 15.

be the first to propose a reconciliation, although strictly speaking, he should do that ; even if he is wanting in his duty, I will try to do mine ; even if I cannot fully overcome my natural dislike for him, I will do violence to myself, so that he will not notice it, and will show him all the greater marks of friendship ; I will pray for him daily, as Thou, O Lord, hast commanded ; I will refuse him no service that I can render him, and a sufficient reason for my doing that, will be the dislike I naturally feel for him. What a comfort it will be to me on my death-bed to be able to say with truth, like St. Gregory of Nyssa : “ My Lord and my God, I must now render Thee an account of all the actions of my whole life ; if I look only at my sins, I must fall into despair ; if I consider only what I have done to atone for them, I have reason enough to fear ; for what penance have I done for so many bad thoughts, unchaste words, and wicked actions ? But when I remember that Thou art faithful in Thy words, when I recall to mind that Thou hast promised to deal with me as I do with others, then, O Lord, I am consoled, and no matter how terrible Thy judgment otherwise is, I can hope everything from Thy infinite goodness. Do Thou what I have done, for I have done as Thou hast commanded ; I have forgiven ; forgive me then, according to Thy promise ; I have forgotten injuries ; do Thou also forget the sins that Thou couldst long ago have taken vengeance for ; I love my enemy ; do Thou show Thy love to me ! ” Yes, O Lord, so Thou wilt do ; I am sure of it, and so I will die in peace ! Amen.

Another Introduction for the Feast of St. Lawrence, Martyr.

Text.

Assatum est jam ; versa et manduca.—From the Office of the Church on this feast.

“ The roast is finished ; turn it over and eat.”

Turn your eyes in this direction, O vengeful, spiteful and quarrelsome Christians, and consider the example of St. Laurence ! He is placed on a gridiron, and slowly roasted to death. Could any tyrant devise a more cruel torture ? What a terrible thing it is to be burnt alive ! But how incomparably worse it is to be slowly roasted to death ! Hear what he says on his bed of torture ; “ I thank Thee, O God, that I am being roasted,” ¹ as the Church sings to-day in his person ; I thank Thee for the honor of suffering for Thy sake. But what does

¹ Assatus gratias ago.

he say to the butchers who torture him so cruelly, and without cause? Does he call them accursed tyrants, and pray that fire may come down from Heaven to consume them, because of the torture they are inflicting on him who is innocent? In the judgment of the perverse world he would have been right in so doing; but his own ideas of the matter were far different, for he was a true follower and servant of Him who has commanded us to love even our worst enemies. St. Laurence made a jest, so to speak, of his torments. The roast is finished, he said to the tyrant; if you want to eat me, turn me over and cut a piece off. What do you think of this, vindictive Christians, who are angry, not because you are roasted to death, but at the least word of contradiction? etc.—*continues as before.*

The fourth part of this work will treat of the manner of forgiving one's enemy.

TWENTY-SEVENTH SERMON.

ON SLOTH IN THE SERVICE OF GOD.

Subject.

When a man neglects small things in the service of God, 1. God can have no pleasure in him. 2. He can have no pleasure in God.—*Preached on the third Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Quæ mulier, habens drachmas decem, si perdiderit drachmam unam, nonne accendit lucernam, et everrit domum, et quærit diligenter, donec inveniat?—Luke xv. 8.

“What woman having ten groats: if she lose one groat, doth not light a candle and sweep the house, and seek diligently, until she find it?”

Introduction.

Is it worth while to go to the trouble of looking for a miserable groat? Is a single groat deserving of such care and diligence? Yet Christ speaks as if there was not the least doubt of it. What woman, He says, when she has lost a groat, will not light a candle, and sweep the house, and search carefully or it? This parable, my dear brethren, as our Lord explains

it, is to be understood of the human soul, which is lost by sin. But here I find still greater cause for astonishment. How can the Almighty God attach such importance to a single soul? He cannot suffer if it is lost, nor can He gain if it is saved. It is less in comparison to God, than a groat is to a rich man, who has millions; and yet, as He Himself acknowledges, He goes around seeking with the greatest diligence to find even one lost soul, and if He finds it, He rejoices with the whole court of Heaven as if it were of the utmost importance to Him. Such is the high value Thou placest on a soul, O God of goodness, and mercy! Ah, would that we, too, had the same high idea of everything that concerns Thy honor and service! But how is it with us in reality? We attach no value whatever to small, and, as we think, trifling things in which we might please Thee, or to small, and, as we think, trifling things in which we offend Thee. These we look on as worthless groats, that are of no account, so that they are not fit objects of our care and diligence. In to-day's sermon, my dear brethren, I mean to speak against this sloth and carelessness, and I say—

Plan of Discourse.

He who neglects small things in the service of God, and does not work diligently to fulfil the will of God in all things, be they great or small in his own idea, oh, such a man is in a dangerous state! Why? Because God can have no pleasure in him. This I shall show in the first and longer part. Such a man can have no pleasure in God; as I shall show in the second part. Therefore let us serve God with zeal and fervor, in small as well as in great things, such shall be the conclusion.

And may He grant us to observe it, who so zealously and carefully seeks for one single soul; this we ask of Him through the intercession of Mary and our holy angels guardian.

The servant
who does
not obey in
everything,
does not
please his
master.

You masters and mistresses, I call upon you as witnesses in this matter. You have servants in the house to wait on you. They do what you tell them; but they do not do all; they are faithful in many things, but now and then they take sides with your neighbor, who is an enemy of yours. They look after your comfort and welfare; but now and then they take little things out of the house without your knowledge and consent. They do their work; but in some instances according to their own ideas, how and when they wish, and not how and when they are told to do it. Now I ask you, are you satisfied with servants of

that kind ? Are they just what you want ? No, you say ; I do not want such people in my house at all. But why not ? It is only in little things that they act against your will, although they frequently do so. It is only in certain things that they refuse obedience ; otherwise they are full of zeal and industry in your service. No matter, you say ; I do not want them ; if I hire a servant, I expect him to do what I tell him, exactly as I tell him ; and he must be as faithful to me in one thing as in another. And you are quite right, too !

But tell me now, is God perhaps less a master, than you ? Has He less right to command us mortals, than you have to command your servants ? Has He less right to our service and obedience, than you have to theirs ? Does He deserve to be served in all things, according to His will and command, with less zeal and diligence than you ? You do not even dare to imagine that, much less to say it. But perhaps God does not expect us to serve Him with such zeal and devotion, that we try to do His will in all things, and to be always faithful to Him ? Perhaps He does not care much if we now and then go over to His adversary, or serve Him according to our own inclinations ? No, the first commandment teaches us quite the contrary : “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God which thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind.”¹ Mark the words, “with all” ; not half-heartedly, not partially, not incompletely ; but with thy whole heart, above all things, in all things, nothing excepted, in the least things, as well as the greatest.

Now, it is evident enough that he does not serve God in this way, who disregards small things, as he imagines them to be, now and then, in the divine service, although they may in reality be small things ; for he does not accomplish the will of God in all things, but reserves some things for himself, since he does not do them when and how God wishes to have them done. For instance, people say, (and the greater number of Christians are of the same way of thinking), I would rather die, than commit a deliberate mortal sin ; but this particular thing is only a venial sin, at least I cannot imagine that it is mortal ; therefore it does not matter much. I am not so proud that I try to raise myself above my station in life, to despise others and to oppress them ; still I do not wish another, who is not my superior in rank, to

God is the sovereign Master, who wishes to be loved and served above and in all things.

This service is not rendered to Him by those who are unfaithful in small things ; and there are many such people.

¹ Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo, et ex tota anima tua, et ex omnibus viribus tuis, et ex omni mente tua.—Luke x. 27.

be preferred to me, nor do I wish to yield to him in the least, or to suffer the least slight on his account. I am not so fond of the world as to lose my soul for its sake ; but neither am I so fond of Heaven as to give up this or that vain custom of the world. I am not so avaricious as to desire to take away unjustly what belongs to another ; still I will not allow myself to be persuaded into coming to an agreement about that lawsuit, or into giving up a farthing of my rights, even if my opponent is in danger of being ruined. I will be very careful not to cheat others seriously ; but I will be able now and then to make a trifle surreptitiously in the ordinary way of business. I detest all obscenity and impurity ; still I cannot see how every little freedom, every passing thought, is a mortal sin ; it cannot matter much to have a little pleasure now and then, and to indulge the eyes and hands a little ; these things in fact are required by ordinary courtesy and friendliness. I do not wish to excite impure love in others ; but at the same time I will do everything to attract admiration. I do not make much of a scruple about certain books, pictures, statues, and mode of dressing, although they are somewhat extravagant, and might perhaps be called scandalous by conscientious people. I will never get so drunk as to deprive myself of the use of reason ; but to get a little tipsy now and then, and to make others so, is the general custom of the world nowadays. I love my neighbor, and will never deliberately do serious harm to any one ; but I am glad that a certain person is humbled and mortified. God forbid that I should ever take away another's character ; still it pleases me to hear others finding fault with that person, and indeed I join in them myself in doing so. I have no deadly hatred to that man who treated me so ill ; but I cannot bring myself to do anything to please him ; I forgive him the slight insult, but not the more grievous one ; I do not desire revenge, but I cannot bear the sight of him ; I will be patient and meek, but no one must do me any injury. I am ready to bear everything for God's sake, but I cannot bear certain things. I will be patient with all men, but not with that man. I do not wish to lead my children into sin, but to bring them to the service of God ; still they must conform to the manners and dress of the world, they must appear in society with their equals, etc.

They try to
serve two
different
masters :

See, my dear brethren, that is the way in which most people consider the matter. They make nothing of small things, or what they imagine to be small things, although they are frequently

and in reality of great importance. Thus they do not seek God with all their hearts ; they do something for the soul, but they also allow the flesh a good deal of satisfaction ; they strive to practise virtue to a certain extent, but at the same time they indulge in vice. They observe the law of God, and also fulfil the law of the vain world ; they try to please God, and at the same time to refuse nothing to their sensuality ; in one thing they serve God, in another, the devil. In a word, what we want is some way to Heaven that is not marked down in the Gospel of Christ, a way that is neither too broad nor too narrow ; we try to build a city midway between Jerusalem and Babylon, in which the love of God and the love of self may be on an equal footing. You can judge for yourselves, my dear brethren, whether God is likely to be pleased with servants of that kind. No, that cannot be ; “No man can serve two masters,” says our Lord in the Gospel of St. Matthew, “for either he will hate the one, and love the other ; or he will sustain the one and despise the other.”¹ “He that is not with Me, is against Me ;”² He who does not try to serve Me faithfully in all things, declares himself My enemy, and works against Me. We have to do with an all-holy and jealous God, who cannot tolerate a single rival in the government and possession of our souls ; He called in no one to help Him when He created them ; He did it by Himself ; He asked no one’s assistance when He redeemed them from eternal death, He did it by Himself ; and therefore He wishes to keep those souls for Himself and His service alone.

which God
will not
allow.

At first the devil and the perverse world are content with a little ; they act like one who has no right to share in an inheritance, and who has recourse to all kinds of devices to get even a little of it ; and he is content with that little, because he knows that he has no right to anything ; or like that wicked woman who appeared before the judgment seat of Solomon. She was contending with another woman about a living child ; each claimed to be the mother of the child, as we read in the Third Book of Kings. Solomon, in order to find out which was the real mother, ordered the child to be cut in two, and a part to be given to each. But the real mother at once protested against this ; her maternal love would not suffer her to allow her offspring to be deprived of life, and she at once gave up all her

The devil is
content
with small
service.

¹ Nemo potest duobus dominis servire : aut enim unum odio habebit, et alterum diliget aut unum sustinebit, et alterum contemnet.—Matth. vi. 24.

² Qui non est mecum, contra me est.—Ibid, xii. 30.

rights to the other, so as to save her child. "But the woman whose child was alive, said to the king (for her bowels were moved upon her child): I beseech thee, my lord, give her the child alive and do not kill it."¹ But the other was not satisfied with this; "Let it be neither thine nor mine, but divide it,"² she said. That, I say, is the way in which the devil acts; he knows very well that he has no claim on our hearts, that they belong altogether to God, and therefore, when he cannot bring us so far as to make us commit a mortal sin, he tries to get at least a little of our hearts from us. Let it be neither thine nor mine, he says to God; let it be divided; the half, or quarter, or twentieth part is enough for me. Give, O man, to thy God the whole day; all I ask from you is a quarter of an hour. Say your prayers and attend to your usual devotions; go to Communion every month, or oftener; I have nothing against that; only give me that sinful pleasure, that vanity, that worldly custom, those nightly meetings and dangerous companions, that talking about others; such little things as these, as you imagine them to be, you must keep for me, and I will be quite satisfied; the rest you may give to God.

For he
knows that
he will be
better serv-
ed later on.

Meanwhile the crafty tempter knows well that when he has once secured a place, no matter how small, in the heart, he will soon get possession of it altogether. He is well acquainted with the words of our Lord: "He that is unjust in that which is little, is unjust also in that which is greater."³ That is what St. Paul alludes to in the warning he gives in his Epistle to the Ephesians: "Give not place to the devil;"⁴ Tertullian translates this passage, "Give not place to evil;" but since the devil is the spirit of evil and wickedness, it comes to the same thing, and I shall retain the ordinary reading, "Give not place to the devil." But what does it mean, that giving place to the devil, and to evil? It does not by any means signify that the door is at once opened to the devil when he knocks, so that he may enter in and take immediate possession of the heart. No, giving place to the devil does not mean as much as that. If a man enters a crowded church, or other place of assembly, and asks the people to make room for him, he does not want a

¹ Dixit autem mulier, cujus filius erat vivus, ad regem (commota sunt quippe viscera ejus super filio suo): Obsecro, domine, date illi infantem vivum, et nolite interficere eum.—III. Kings iii. 26.

² Nec mihi, nec tibi sit, sed dividatur.—Ibid.

³ Qui in modico iniquus est, et in majori iniquus est.—Luke xvi. 10.

⁴ Nolite locum dare diabolo.—Eph. iv. 27.

whole bench for himself, nor does he expect all the others to leave the place to him altogether ; he is quite satisfied if he gets barely enough room for himself. A stranger, or an old friend comes to your house and asks for hospitality ; he does not wish you and your family to leave the house altogether to him ; one room is all that he requires. It is in that way we must understand the words, “ Give not place to the devil, to evil.” It means simply giving him the entry into our hearts, listening to him for a few moments, leaving a small door opened to him, so that he can venture in a few steps. But woe to him who allows him even that much ! The wicked spirit will not always be satisfied with what was given to him at first ; he will try to get farther and farther, and like a rushing river, to carry away more and more with him. Therefore the easiest and safest plan is to prevent him from entering and to refuse him point-blank the first request he makes, saying boldly to him : Away with you, there is not a finger’s breadth of room for you in my heart !

Thou, O God, art our true Father, and Thou canst not see without sorrow, Thy children thus divided between Thee and the devil ! Either Thou wilt have our hearts altogether, or not at all ! And that is perfectly right and just, O God ! It is to Thee alone that we owe our being ; Thou hast given us everything we have and made us what we are ; Thou hast given us Thyself completely and without reserve, and besides that, Thou art ready to give us all that Thou possessest in a happy eternity ; is it not then only right that we should devote ourselves completely and unreservedly to Thy service ? Oh, heart of man, what ingratitude, what injustice ! We hope to possess the great God for all eternity in the kingdom of Heaven, and yet we refuse to give ourselves completely to Him for a few short years on earth ! Do we not then deserve to have no part in Him either on earth, or in Heaven ? Alas, yes, says St. Augustine, that must be the end of it, according to the threat which our Lord Himself pronounced in the Apocalypse against the Angel of the Church of Laodicea : “ I know thy works ; that thou art neither cold nor hot ; I would thou wert cold or hot ; but because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth.”¹ Hear this, tepid Christians, who neglect small things in the service of God, who divide your hearts, and keep one part for God, and the other for the devil, the world and

But God
will have
our hearts
altogether,
or not at all.

¹ Scio opera tua, quia neque frigidus es, neque calidus : utinam frigidus esses, aut calidus : sed quia tepidus es, et nec frigidus, nec calidus, incipiam te evomere ex ore meo.—Apoc. iii. 15, 16.

your own sensuality, so that you offer to God only half service ; because you are neither hot nor cold, but tepid, because you belong partly to me and partly to another, on that very account you are intolerable to me, and you excite my disgust, so that I am forced to vomit you out of my mouth and to reject you.

Therefore a half service is false and displeasing to God.

The heathen philosophers, says St. Augustine, after long study, arrived at the knowledge of the one, true God by the light of reason ; but influenced by human respect they continued out of custom to conform to the idolatrous rites of the pagans. In their hearts they adored the true God, outwardly they showed honor to false deities, and in that way they acknowledged no God ; for they were neither faithful, nor infidel, Christian nor heathen. “ It would have been better for them,” says St. Augustine, “ not to have known God, than to have mixed up His worship with that of false gods.”¹ False and vain was the piety of these philosophers ; false and vain is the piety of many Christians nowadays, who do not serve with all their hearts, the God whom they know ; who try to divide themselves between God and the world, between God and the devil ; who serve God in some things, and the devil and the vain world in others. You must know that, if you go on in that way, God, who is not satisfied with half service, will abandon you altogether. And for that reason, the small things, as you imagine them to be, in which you neglect the divine service, are not small, but, as St. John Chrysostom says, they are nearly everything in importance.²

Because it is unjust.

And how would it be, O Christian, if God were to act with you, as you do with Him ? Would you be satisfied ? You wish to avoid mortal sins ; but you do not trouble yourself about what you look upon as venial offences, although in truth they are often serious enough ; suppose now that God was prepared to forgive some of your sins, but not all of them ; or that He was willing to give you the grace to repent of certain sins, but not of all ; how would it be with you then ? You are disposed to give Him only what you think barely necessary to escape hell ; if He acted in the same way with you, and gave you barely food enough every day to prevent you dying of hunger, would you be satisfied ? You do not wish to overcome yourself in one or two things, which God wishes you to do or to avoid ; suppose now, that God took away from you your eye-sight, leav-

¹ Facilius effecerunt, ut Deum non haberent, quam ut diis multis, falsisque miscerent.

² Quamobrem hoc parum non est parum ; imo vero est fere totum.

ing you however, all your other senses, would you be satisfied ? But how good God is to you ! He continues to load you with all kinds of graces and benefits, that you are often unable to appreciate properly, and in spite of your ingratitude, to bestow them on you at all times, in all places, under all circumstances ; so that if you had endless time at your disposal, and inexhaustible strength, as well as a heart capable of endless love, you should devote them all to His service, in order to prove your fidelity, gratitude and love ; but as things are, you are not certain of a single moment of time, of a single breath of life, and besides that, you are narrow-minded and half-hearted, so that you can give Him very little ; and yet you try to deprive Him of a part of this little ! Is that generous ?

Can the great God be satisfied with such a half-hearted service ? Can He be pleased with it ? No, you do not, and can not please Him. His desire is that His holy will be fulfilled in all things without exception, with the greatest exactness. I have found a man according to my own heart, says He, speaking of His servant David, because “ he shall do all my wills ; ”¹ in small things, as well as in great. “ He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is greater ; ”² and he who neglects Me in small things, is not according to My heart. No matter what he does for Me otherwise, he will not please Me. So that God has no pleasure in him who disregards small things in His service, and who, even in one or two things only, does not try to do His will with all diligence. Nay, a man of that kind, no matter how pious and devout he may be otherwise, can have no pleasure in God ; as we shall see briefly in the

And therefore does not please Him.

Second Part.

This follows, necessarily from the first part, according to the words of St. Bernard : “ God cannot please him who does not please God.”³ If I see a servant who is continually unfaithful to his master, even in small things, who is always disobedient and obstinate in certain matters, and who refuses to do as he is told, whenever he is inclined to differ with his master, although he sees that the latter is displeased with him on that account, I am necessarily driven to the conclusion that such a servant has little love and respect for his master, and cares little about

The servant who is disobedient in many things, does not care for his master.

¹ Qui faciet omnes voluntates meas.—Acts xiii. 22.

² Qui fidelis est in minimo, et in majori fidelis est.—Luke xvi. 10,

³ Qui non placet Deo, non potest illi placere Deus.

his favor and good opinion. Certainly, if I have a genuine love for a person, I would be afraid to do the least thing to displease him, and I would do all in my power to give him pleasure ; if he only gives the slightest sign that he wishes me to do something for him, I am quite delighted to do it, no matter what trouble it may cost me.

He who despises small sums, does not love money.

How do we know, my dear brethren, that a man is avaricious and fond of money ? For instance, a man has a bag full of gold ; he is very careful of it and keeps it under lock and key, so that it may not be stolen ; what do you think of him ? Is he avaricious ? Another man has inherited thirty thousand dollars ; he runs to and fro, and gives himself no end of trouble to secure the possession of this legacy ; would you look on that man as avaricious, and say, oh, what a miser he is ? No, you would do the very same yourself, for you would think that such a large sum of money is well worth the trouble ; and even the most prodigal of men would be unwilling to lose it. But if you see that the same man is just as greedy of a small amount, as he is of a large sum, that he disputes about a penny, that he is willing to get out of bed at night and to open the door for the sake of a few pence, and that he looks at every penny twice before he spends it, oh, you would say, that man is a regular miser : there is no doubt that he is fond of money. If, on the other hand, he neglects small things in his business, so that he will hardly rise from his chair to make a few pence, and does not care if he loses a dollar now and then, oh, you think, he does not care much for money ; nor is he a provident man, for he is too ready in spending what he has.

So too, he does not love or serve God properly, who often offends Him, although only in small things.

The same is to be said, my dear brethren, of a Christian, with regard to the love and service of God. There is many a one who is neither a murderer, nor an adulterer, nor a blasphemer, nor given to cursing, nor does he cheat or rob others ; in a word, he does nothing, and will do nothing that he knows to be a mortal sin. But is he earnest and zealous in the divine service ? Has he a real sincere love for God ? That I am not yet certain of by any means ; for the sins he avoids are grievous mortal sins, and must be avoided by every one who wishes to save his soul and go to Heaven. But if I find that he is just as careful in avoiding venial sin, that he is equally diligent in performing the least of his obligations to God, and that he does at once what he knows to be pleasing to God, then I must acknowledge that he really loves God with his whole heart, and that he is determined

to go to Heaven. But on the other hand, does he commit venial sin without fear or shame, does he adhere to certain practices or customs of the world which he knows to be contrary to the divine will? If so he may go to Confession and Communion, he may hear Masses and sermons, he may attend public devotions; he may give alms and pray as much and as often as he likes, but he will never persuade me that he has a sincere pleasure in God, or that he loves God with his whole heart, as he ought.

And what sort of a love can such people have when they say, not indeed in words, but by their acts, no matter how long they spend reading their prayer-books, or how high an opinion they have of their own piety, when they say: My God, I love Thee above all things, but (and this is a thought that must often occur to them) not above this or that thing, which I do not wish to give up? Lord, may Thy holy will be done, but not in this matter. O my God I am ready to do all that Thou wishest, except that one thing; in that I have to conform to the custom of the world, and to prefer it to Thee. I am willing to sacrifice everything, my soul, my life, my property, my blood, if Thy holy faith, or Thy honor and glory should require it; but Thou must not ask me to overcome myself in this or that matter; although I knew it would please Thee if I were publicly to uphold Thy Gospel of humility, modesty and chastity, and to defend Thy honor and glory before the world; yet I cannot overcome myself to that extent, nor will I try to do so. Is that the way to love God with the whole heart and above all things? You may say to me a hundred times, and a thousand times, that it is; but I will not believe you, and I maintain that all your piety is mere nonsense; God does not please you; you do not love Him at all, not to speak of loving Him with your whole heart. "He that feareth God," says the Wise Preacher, "neglecteth nothing,"¹ be it great or small.

He loves
God in
word, but
not in deed.

Consider the example of the saints; you may learn from it what it is to love God with one's whole heart. Ask St. Bernard, and he will tell you that "a soul that loves God, looks upon it as more fearful and terrible than hell itself to offend Him in the least thing."² Mark these words, for he does not speak of offending God in great, but in small things. Nor does he say that a soul that loves God would find such offences merely terrible, but more terrible than hell. Consider the examples of

Not like the
faithful
servants of
God.

¹ Qui timet Deum, nihil negligit.—Eccles. vii. 19.

² Terribillius ipsa gehenna judicat, in re levissima vultum omnipotentis scienter offendere.

St. Bernard, St. Benedict, St. Francis ; see how they throw themselves into the snow, or into a frozen pond, or into a thorn-bush, through fear of yielding ever so little to a sensual thought. See how St. Francis Xavier, when he was assailed by an impure thought during his sleep, defended himself so vigorously against it, and was so filled with fear of offending God by it, that the blood poured from his mouth and nostrils. Consider even the Patriarch Abraham in the Old Law : he was so ready to obey the least sign of God's will, that he actually drew his sword to sacrifice to God his only son Isaac, whom he loved most tenderly. And we, Christians, who say so often in our prayers that we love God with all our hearts ; alas we refuse to sacrifice to Him not our only child, but some miserable thing that He asks of us ! Is it not evident that we do not really love our God, and therefore that He does not really love us from his heart ?

Therefore,
he cannot
have true
peace of
conscience.

But, alas, what an effect on the soul and mind of a Christian who wishes to save his soul and to go to Heaven must this thought have : I have no true pleasure in God, and He has no true pleasure in me ! On the contrary, the thought, I now give to my God all that I have, and my God has a true pleasure and joy in me, is the thought that takes all the bitterness and pain out of the torments of the martyrs, out of the labors and afflictions of apostolic men, and fills their hearts with the sweetest heavenly consolation.

But for you, tepid and slothful Christians, who refuse to give to God all that He asks of you, what a painful and troublesome thing it is for you to have to think, in the midst of your business, your household cares, and your sensual enjoyments, nay even in the midst of those apparent good works of yours, that you do not do all that God wishes, that God is not satisfied with you, that He has no pleasure in you ! In that state you go to the church to pray ; but the worm is gnawing secretly at your conscience, God is not pleased with me. You confess your sins ; but your conscience cries out God is not pleased with me, because I do not amend all that I should amend. You go to the Table of the Lord to receive the Flesh and Blood of your Saviour ; but your conscience cries out, God is not pleased with me, there is still something in my actions or in my dress, as I approach the communion-rail, which is displeasing to God because it gives the others an occasion of offending Him by looks or desires. After Communion you repeat the usual prayers to the

God whom you have within you ; I love Thee with my whole heart ; I am sorry for ever having offended Thee by the least sin ; I would rather die than displease Thee in the least ; I offer myself body and soul to Thy service ; do with me, O God, whatever Thou wilt ! What fine words these are, which are found in every prayer-book ; but they are accompanied by the gnawing worm : I know that what I say is not true ; I do not love God with my whole heart ; there is still a sin, an imperfection that I am not sorry for, a scandalous custom that I do not wish to give up ; I will not give everything to God ; in this or that thing I will not do what is pleasing to God. I often wish that I had more time and leisure to serve God, and to do something acceptable to him ; but the gnawing worm cries out : you are not sincere, you do not mean what you say ; for in this or that particular thing you can please God ; He expects you to do it, nay He even commands you ; but you refuse to obey. Therefore God has no pleasure in you ; nor does His Holy Spirit give you that consolation which He grants to zealous and pious souls, according to the testimony of the Apostle St. Paul, namely, that of knowing that you are really a child of God.¹ Therefore you have great reason to fear that God, to whom you are unwilling to give yourself and all that you have completely, may also, when temptation assails you, deny you those special helps of His grace, which He is bound to give to no one, and in your last moments He may deny you the grace of final perseverance, which He is equally at liberty to give, or to refuse. Woe to you, if that is to be the case with you ! Can any Christian, who wishes to go to Heaven, be at ease with such a thought as that in his mind ?

Ah, Christians, let us act honestly with the God of infinite goodness ; let us serve Him with all possible zeal, and fulfil His will as far as we know how ; let us be true to Him in small things as well as in great ; let us not give even the smallest portion of our hearts to the devil, the world, or the flesh ; but keep them altogether for Him to whom alone they belong of right, and who wishes that we should offer them completely to Himself ! O my Lord and my God, even if Thou wert content with a part of my heart, still it would not be right for me to be so niggardly and so ungrateful towards Thee, as to refuse Thee anything Thou askest of me ! Thou art the only one who hast made me all that I am and given me all that I have ; Thou alone canst help me in

Conclusion:
to serve
God faithfully in all,
even the
smallest
things.

¹ Quod sumus filii Dei.—Rom. viii. 16.

life and death, in time and eternity ; Thou alone hast given me Thyself as my food on earth, and Thou wilt give me Thyself without reserve as my reward in Heaven ! Therefore I must belong completely to Thee ! Yes, Lord, I will be Thine, and will remain Thine ; I will renounce all that I know has displeased Thee in me hitherto ; I will do with becoming zeal all that I know to be in accordance with Thy holy will ! No sin shall appear to be so small, that I shall dare to commit it deliberately, and thus I shall be able to say with truth, My God and my all. ¹ Now do I love Thee from my heart, and with my whole heart, and above everything that is dear to me on earth ! Grant that I may hear from Thee at the hour of death, the joyful words : “ Well done, good and faithful servant ; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things ; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” ² Amen.

*Another Introduction to the same sermon for the sixth
Sunday after Epiphany.*

Text.

Quod minimum quidem est omnibus seminibus : cum autem creverit, majus est omnibus oleribus, et fit arbor. Matth. xiii. 32.

“ Which is the least indeed of all seeds ; but when it is grown up, it is greater than all herbs, and becometh a tree.”

The kingdom of Heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed. How can that be ? How can that immense and boundless kingdom be compared to a small seed ? By the mustard-seed, my dear brethren, some of the holy Fathers understand Christ Himself, others the Catholic Church, others the Gospel of Christ and its propagation throughout the world, others again the Apostles and Martyrs of Christ. Cornelius a Lapide, speaking of to-day’s Gospel, explains the reason of this difference of interpretation. But we can also understand the mustard-seed to mean every good work of the just man ; for as the mustard-seed is very small in itself, but has such strength that it grows to be a lofty tree, so also the good works that we perform in the state of grace, considered in themselves, are small indeed, but nevertheless they are powerful enough to earn eternal joys in Heaven. Such is the case, for instance, with one sigh to Heaven, a momentary act of the love of God, etc. What small things they are ! And yet

¹ Deus meus et omnia.

² Euge, serve bone et fidelis, quia super pauca fuisti fidelis, super multa te constituam ; intra in gaudium Domini tui.—Matth. xxv. 23.

small as they are, they gain Heaven and God Himself as their reward. Oh, what happiness for us Christians, that we can, if we wish, merit in this way so many eternities of joys every day of our lives, and with so little trouble ! But I must complain bitterly of the folly and madness of most people, who lose and neglect countless eternities of happiness, either by continuing in the state of sin, or by their sloth and tepidity in good works. But alas, how little is thought of that ! small and trifling things, as we imagine them to be, by which we could frequently please God and gain Heaven ; small and trifling things, as we imagine them to be, in which we often offend God and lose an eternal reward ; these things are generally looked on as of no account ; they are considered as insignificant grains of mustard-seed, which are not worth any care or diligence. Against this sloth and tepidity, etc.—*continues as before.*

For other sermons on this subject : On The Evil of Beings too Much Occupied, see the first part of this work ; On The Evil of a Luxurious and Easy Life ; see the third part ; On Idleness, see the fifth part.

ON SINS AGAINST GOD.

On Superstition.

TWENTY-EIGHTH SERMON.

ON THOSE WHO SEEK ADVICE FROM FORTUNE-TELLERS.

Subject.

To seek advice from fortune-tellers is a very grievous sin, and must therefore be carefully avoided.—*Preached on the seventh Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Attendite a falsis prophetis.—Matth. vii. 15.

“Beware of false prophets.”

Introduction.

The vain world is a false prophet, for nearly all its maxims and usages are opposed to eternal truth, and it promises its adherents and followers all kinds of honor, wealth and pleasure, but gives them nothing except trouble, care, labor and misery. Therefore our Lord warns us : “ Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world.” “ If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him.”¹ Many men in the world are false prophets, because under the appearance of friendship, generosity, or affection, they seduce others, lead them into sin, and devour their souls like ravening wolves. Against those Christ warns us in to-day’s Gospel : “ Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.”² Besides these, my dear brethren, there are other false

¹ Nolite diligere mundum, nequa ea, quæ in mundo sunt. Si quis diligit mundum, non est caritas Patris in eo.—I. John, ii. 15.

² Attendite a falsis prophetis, qui veniunt ad vos in vestimentis ovium, intrinsecus autem sunt lupi rapaces.—Matth. vii. 15.

prophets to be found here and there, who under the pretence of giving good advice or help, most cruelly murder souls and bring them to hell. Against these it is my purpose to speak to-day. There are, as I have frequently heard from different sources, men and women in some of the country districts, who have the name of knowing and being able to do more than their mere natural abilities would account for ; they are visited by people who seek their help on different occasions, such as in illnesses for which no natural remedy can be found ; and that help is given speedily and efficaciously. If a person has lost anything by theft, or otherwise, they know how to point out the thief or to say where the lost object is concealed. If one wants to know whether an undertaking is likely to succeed or not, they, as many erroneously imagine, are the people to go to for information, etc. And it is to people of this kind, under circumstances such as I have mentioned, that the simple-minded especially have recourse ; although there are many who seek their help, not through simplicity, but because they see no harm in doing so. What a grievous mistake they are laboring under ; a mistake that should not be tolerated amongst Christians, as I shall now show.

Plan of Discourse.

To have recourse to prophets of this kind, on any occasion whatever, for help or advice, is a mortal sin. Therefore beware all of you, of such false prophets, and warn all who are still ignorant in this matter. Such is the whole subject of to-day's sermon.

O Holy Ghost, give strength to my words, and light and understanding to my hearers that they may see the truth clearly! This we beg of Thee through the intercession of Mary and the holy angels guardian. I repeat then, "Beware of false prophets."

To make an alliance and a contract with the devil, to ask advice and help from him, to say like the wicked people of whom Isaias speaks : " We have entered into a league with death, and we have made a covenant with hell. When the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come upon us ; for we have placed our hope in lies, and by falsehood we are protected ;¹ the devil is our helper in the time of need. What a fearful sin

It is a most
grievous
sin to ask
help from
the devil.

¹ Percussimus foedus cum morte, et cum inferno fecimus pactum. Flagellum inundans, cum transierit, non veniet super nos, quia posuimus mendacium spem nostram, et mendacio protecti sumus. - Isa. xxviii. 15.

that is ! You are shocked, pious Christians, at the bare mention of it, and you refuse to believe that any but idolators and sorcerers could be guilty of such a crime. And you are not very far wrong. Unhappy heathens, what a miserable state yours was ! You erected temples, altars and statues to the evil spirit, and adored him on bended knee ; you could not undertake a journey, or commence a war, or enter a lawsuit, nor begin a building, nor enter on any important business without first sacrificing to the devil, and receiving an answer from him, through images of wood and stone, as to how and when the affair was to turn out. Unhappy heathens, I repeat, I heartily pity your blindness and stupidity ; for you knew not the true God, and therefore tried to make a god for yourselves of the evil one ! Endless honor and glory to Thee, O Jesus, who hast taught the world better things by Thy supernatural light ! With the exception of witches and sorcerers, that is, the outcasts of the human race, there is no sect in the Christian world which disgraces itself by bending the knee to Satan. To Thee alone, O God, does adoration belong !

This is done
by those
who have
recourse to
certain sus-
picious per-
sons.

But have I reason to rejoice thus, after all ? Even in Christendom, amongst Catholics, who appear to be good, and very often too, amongst those who are really good in other respects, (and I have heard too, of particular instances, in which it has occurred, but of them I will say nothing), even amongst those people, Thou, O great God, art passed over, and the devil is prayed to for help and assistance ! And this is done by those (you must pay attention to every word I say, my dear brethren, so as not to refer my words to individuals whom I do not at all intend to allude to) who, as I said in the Introduction, in order to obtain the cure of certain fevers and diseases, in man or beast, or to recover lost or stolen goods, or to secure the return of people who have escaped or lost their way, or to know whether a certain enterprise is likely to succeed or not, have recourse to certain suspicious men or women (and these latter are well known, and are frequently spoken of by name ; so little are people ashamed of this sinful practice !) and pay them for advice and help ; and the man, or woman thus consulted, is expected to cure the disease, or point out the thief, or say where the lost or stolen property is hidden, or compel the person who has escaped to return, or say whether the undertaking will succeed or not ; and that by means that are in themselves superstitious and utterly inadequate, naturally speaking, to produce the effects required. All

who either personally, or through others consult such people in any matter whatever, or ask advice from them, are worshipers of the devil, and are guilty of making a contract with their sworn enemy, the evil spirit, and of seeking help from him. Can any one doubt that this is a most fearful sin ?

But, they will say, how can that be ? God forbid that we should have anything to do with the devil ; it never entered into our heads to be so wicked as to ask the evil spirits for help ; we seek help from men on earth, not from the demons in hell, and we nearly always find what we seek. But, I ask you in turn, what is the difference, when you want a favor, between handing in your petition to the prince with your own hands, and getting one of his ministers or friends to hand it in for you ? Do you not ask a favor from the prince in the latter way, just as in the former ? Nay, perhaps you are more likely to obtain your request through the friend of the prince, than if you made it yourself in person. The same is to be said of the subject of which we are now treating. What difference is there between calling up the devil yourself, in order to ask him to help you, and getting help from his agents and ministers, who are sure to help you only by diabolical agency ? Do you not seek help from the devil in one way as well as in the other ?

Because they deal with the devil by means of such persons.

Let us consider the matter sensibly. Where do the people whom you consult get their knowledge of healing ? Who has given to the ciphers and letters that they hand you, to the superstitious devotions that they prescribe, and to other similar means they make use of, the power of effecting cures ? How do they know the thief who has stolen your money, and the place in which he has hidden it ? How can they say whether your undertaking is to turn out a success, or not ? Who gives them the power to bring back people from you know not where ? Perhaps they receive private revelations from God, and are endowed with a special power of working miracles ? But that is not likely to be the case with such people. It is true that God knows all things, that even the most secret recesses of the heart are open to Him, that He sees afar off as clearly as close at hand, that he knows the future as well as the present, and that He has kept to Himself the knowledge of these secret and hidden things. Therefore the Prophet Isaiah, in order to show the greatness of the true God, whom alone he adored, over the false gods of the heathens and infidels, brings forward this proof : " Let them come and tell us all things that are to come ; tell us the former

Otherwise where do such people get their knowledge ?

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things what they are. Show the things that are to come hereafter, and we shall know that ye are gods.”¹

God does not make a special revelation to them, and give them grace to work miracles as He did to the prophets.

There is no doubt that God can communicate to creatures a portion of this knowledge; He can reveal to them hidden and future things: He can give them the grace to work miracles; and He has already bestowed this special grace and knowledge on many saints in the Old and New Testament. In the Old Law, when the Divine Teacher had not as yet appeared on earth, and God was wont to instruct His people by means of men, to whom he spoke, and made known His will, there were always certain prophets, who were called “Seers,”² and “Men of God,” of whom the people used to ask advice and help; “Come let us go to the seer,”³ they used to say. Thus Samuel prophesied to Saul where he would find his father’s asses, and gave him also certain signs by which he might know that God had chosen him King of Israel; “When thou shalt depart from me this day, thou shalt find two men, etc., and they shall say to thee: The asses are found which thou wantest to seek. . . . And when thou shalt depart from thence, and go farther on, and shalt come to the oak of Thabor, there shall meet thee three men, going up to God to Bethel, one carrying three kids, and another three loaves of bread, and another carrying a bottle of wine. And they will salute thee, and will give thee two loaves, and thou shalt take them at their hands. After that, thou shalt come to the hill of God. When therefore these signs shall happen to thee, do whatsoever thy hand shall find, for the Lord is with thee.”⁴ And everything happened to Saul as Samuel had foretold. In the same way we read in the Fourth Book of Kings, that Naaman, the general of the king of Syria, had recourse to the Prophet Eliseus to be cleansed from leprosy: “And Eliseus sent a messenger to him,” says the Holy Scripture, “saying: Go, and wash seven times in the Jordan, and thy flesh shall recover health, and thou shalt be clean.”⁵ But, we

¹ Accedant, et nuntient nobis, quæcumque ventura sunt: priora quæ fuerunt nuntiatio. Annuntiate, quæ ventura sunt in futurum, et sciemus, quia dii estis vos.—Isa. xli. 22, 23.

² Videntes.

³ Eamus ad Videntem.—I. Kings ix. 9.

⁴ Cum abieris hodie a me, invenies duos viros, etc. Dicentque tibi: Inventæ sunt asinæ, ad quas ieras perquirendas. . . . Cumque abieris inde, et ultra transieris, et veneris ad quercum Thabor, invenient te ibi tres viri ascendentes ad Deum in Bethel, unus portans tres hœdos, et alius tres tortas panis, et alius portans lagenam vini. Cumque te salutaverint, dabunt tibi duos panes, et accipies de manu eorum. Post hæc venies in collem Dei. Quando ergo evenerint signa hæc omnia tibi, fac quæcumque invenerit manus tua, quia Dominus tecum est.—Ibid. x. 2-5, 7.

⁵ Misitque ad eum Eliseus nuntium, dicens: Vade et lavare septies in Jordane, et recipiet sanitatem caro tua, atque mundaberis.—IV. Kings v. 10.

might ask, how could water, and washing in it seven times have the power of curing leprosy? In fact, Naaman himself was disgusted at the cure prescribed for him, and was about to go away. But one of his servants persuaded him to do as the Prophet had said, and he was completely restored to health: "Then he went down, and washed in the Jordan seven times, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored, like the flesh of a little child, and he was made clean."¹ Such was the way in which the prophets in those days declared future things and healed the diseases of those who had recourse to them. But they were holy men, who were publicly appointed by God as prophets, seers and advisers for the people; and the latter were told to go to them, and were assured that they would learn from them, with certainty, the divine will; would be instructed in their doubts, and helped in their necessities. The ordinary expression used by the prophets when making any announcement, was, "Thus saith the Lord."² Thus saith the Lord, so and so will happen; thus saith the Lord, so and so shall you do.

But who has made prophets of those other people? When has it been revealed, where is the written promise on the part of God, that He will speak by their mouths, and make known hidden and future things? How can it be proved that they have received from God the power of working miracles? Where are the signs of extraordinary holiness, to prove that God has selected and appointed them to such an office? At all events, neither the prophets of old, nor the saints of our times ever asked money for healing the sick by a miracle, or for making known hidden and future things; while the contrary is the case with those false prophets, who take good care that they are paid for their jugglery. The Holy Scripture says that when Naaman was cured of the leprosy by washing seven times in the Jordan, he offered to Eliseus ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and humbly begged of the Prophet to accept them: "And returning to the man of God with all his train, he came and stood before him and said: In truth I know there is no other God in all the earth, but only in Israel. I beseech thee, therefore, take a blessing of thy servant;"³ And what

But one cannot believe that God has given to false prophets the grace of prophesying and working miracles.

¹ Descendit, et lavit in Jordane septies, juxta sermonem viri Dei; et restituta est caro ejus, sicut caro pueri parvuli, et mundatus est.—IV. Kings v. 14.

² Hæc dicit Dominus.

³ Reversusque ad virum Dei cum universo comitatu suo venit, et stetit coram eo, et ait: Vere scio, quod non sit alius Deus in universa terra, nisi tantum in Israel. Obsecro itaque, ut accipias benedictionem a servo tuo.—IV. Kings v. 15.

answer did Eliseus make him? "As the Lord liveth," he said, "before whom I stand, I will receive none;"¹ Nay, because Giezi, the servant of Eliseus, took some money from Naaman, the prophet punished him by declaring that he should become a leper; "The leprosy of Naaman," he said, "shall also stick to thee and to thy seed' forever. And he went out from him a leper, as white as snow."² Such was the way in which the prophets of God acted. Try what those false prophets will do; offer them ten dollars, and see whether they will accept them, or no. You will get very little advice or help from them, unless you pay them for it.

Therefore they must get their knowledge and help from the devil only.

I will not cry them down, my dear brethren, as sorcerers and dealers in the black art; I leave them to enjoy whatever reputation they have, and that cannot be a very good one, at least amongst sensible people. This only I will say, and no reasonable person will doubt me, that they do not get from God, or from His inspiration, the knowledge which enables them to find out where the thief is, or where the stolen property is hidden, and to give help and advice in other circumstances; and therefore, since they cannot get it naturally, it must come from the devil and by his help, in virtue of a compact entered into with him, either orally or in writing. And so it is in reality; the devil has lost none of the pride which made him wish to be equal to God; that pride which was the cause of his eternal ruin, and therefore, he introduced idolatry into the world, in order that, as sacrifice is offered to the true God, he also might have adorers to offer sacrifice to him. But he cannot have those sacrifices from Christians, and he sees, very much against his will, that they have recourse to God alone, generally speaking, in their trials and necessities, and so he endeavors to get the same honor for himself, when he makes use of his agents to disclose hidden and secret things, to foretell the future, and to cure wounds and diseases, so as to induce men to have recourse to him.

Who has but an uncertain knowledge of future events.

But, some one will ask, how can the devil do that? how can he prophesy the future, since God has reserved that knowledge to Himself and to those to whom He reveals it? I answer that, according to the teaching of theologians, neither the good angels nor the devils can by their mere natural powers have any knowledge of future things, or of the secret thoughts of one's

¹ Vivit Dominus, ante quem sto, quia non accipiam.—IV. Kings v. 16.

² Lepra Naaman adhærebit tibi, et semini tuo, usque in sempiternum. Et egressus est ab eo leprosus quasi nix.—Ibid. 27.

mind; for future events depend either on the free will of God, or on that of man; now, it is impossible to have any certain knowledge of either. The good angels, and also the devils, may indeed conclude with a certain amount of probability, from a man's inclinations and the circumstances in which he is, what will be likely to happen to him; but a certain knowledge of it they cannot have, because the man is free, and can, and very often does act against his inclinations and in spite of his circumstances. Thus neither the devil, nor even a good angel, can know, without a special divine revelation, whether I am going to a certain house, or into certain company this evening; nor do they know whether I am going to travel to-morrow, or whether I shall be elected to a certain office or dignity. Therefore, the devil can never tell me such things with infallible certainty. There are some future events, however, which depend on the natural course of things amongst unreasoning creatures, such as the change of the weather, sunshine, rain, thunder-storms, etc.; all these things the good angels and the devils can foresee naturally; but, as Suarez remarks, since God very often changes the course of these things, the devils are often deceived, and cannot have a certain infallible knowledge of them. The devil might foresee with some accuracy the number of years I still have to live, from my constitution and general health, the food and drink I use, the air I breathe, and the country I live in; but since he cannot know whether I will change my diet, or go into a foreign country, or what dangers I shall have to encounter, or whether I shall be shot, or drowned, or meet my death by some other accident; since it is impossible for him to find out whether God will not perhaps shorten my life, or prolong it, contrary to what might be expected from my constitution and habit of body; therefore he cannot tell me for certain whether I have still a quarter of an hour to live. He can foresee, as a consequence of a change in the weather, a great scarcity, or famine, or pestilence, or inundations, earthquakes, etc. but, since all these may be prevented by God, and often are prevented through the prayers of pious people, here again the devil is often at fault. Hence, when he prophesies any of these things, either immediately, or by means of his agents, what he says is mere guess-work; if it turns out true, well and good for him, because it helps him to deceive souls and to seduce them all the easier.

To how many has he not promised a long life, who died immediately after? How often has he not foretold immediate

And generally deceives man.

death to those who lived to a ripe old age ? Of many examples that are related to prove this, I will content myself with the following. Galeazzo, Duke of Milan, was once foretold by one of these false prophets, that he would die prematurely. And what, asked the Duke, will be your destiny ? Oh, said the other, I will live to be very old. Aha, said the Duke, I see that your art has deceived you considerably on this occasion ; you must know that I am a far better prophet than you ; you will die before me, and I will prove to you that what I say is true. Thereupon he had him strangled. The unhappy fate of Cardanus, a celebrated physician and astrologer, and at the same time a wicked, abandoned man, should deter any one from allowing himself to be deceived by such people. This Cardanus was dangerously ill ; Benedict Pererius, a learned and clever man was doing his best to induce him to repent and receive the last sacraments, but in vain. The sick man asked for the papers on which he had calculated his destiny according to the stars. See, he said, I have foreseen this illness, and I know that it will not be mortal ; for in a week's time I shall take a turn for the better and get well again. Nor would he hear a word of repenting, or receiving the sacraments. His prophecy came true in part, but nevertheless it deceived him completely ; for in a week, as he had said, his illness took a turn, but for the worse, not for the better ; so that he died unrepentant. Thus he experienced the truth of what St. Augustine had said long before : “ No one can promise you another day, unless perhaps an astrologer ; but how many are there not who have been deceived by astrologers ; ”¹ This should also serve as a salutary lesson to those who go to those notorious vagabonds (Egyptians or Gypsies they are called) in order to have their fortunes told from the lines of their hands. What a fearful abuse for Christians to be guilty of, and what lamentable folly ! As if a swarthy-visaged woman, who very often knows nothing of God or of His commandments, could foretell different changes of fortune and circumstances, or say whether one is to be long-lived or not ! For, you must either believe that those people can see the future by natural means in the palm of your hand, and if so you must be silly indeed ; or else you believe that they get their knowledge by divine revelation, in which case you are guilty of presumption and tempting God ; or you know that

¹ Crastinum diem nemo tibi promisit ; aut si forte promisit mathematicus ; longe aliud est. O Deus, quam multos mathematici fefellerunt !—S. Aug. tom. 10. de verb. Dom. serm. 49.

they are helped by the devil, and of course you are guilty of the horrible crime of seeking aid from the evil spirit ; or, finally, you are so clever that you do not believe a word of what they say, and yet you consult them, thus giving way to a most scandalous and dangerous curiosity ; scandalous, since you encourage the simple-minded in their superstitious practices ; dangerous, because, although you say you do not believe, yet if their prophecy happens to turn out true, you will commence to think that perhaps there is something in it, and either through hope or fear, you will allow it to influence your mode of life, and thus the indulgence of a vain curiosity will cause you to descend to the lowest depths of superstition.

With regard to lost and stolen things, the thief who took them, and the place in which they are hidden ; since all these are visible things, and have been the objects of outward actions, there is no doubt that the devil knows all about them ; and therefore, if God permits him, he can easily communicate certain knowledge with regard to them. Yet, even in this he is not always to be trusted ; for the father of lies often denounces an innocent person as guilty, either for the purpose of deceiving men, or to cause some greater misfortune. Martin Delrio, in his *Juridica*, states that there was once a peasant, who wrapped up some money he had just received, in a piece of fresh hide, and laid it on a bench outside the door, while he was engaged in doing some work ; as soon as he had turned his back, a pig came up and swallowed down the hide with the money. The peasant looked everywhere for his money, but could not find it. Where can it have gone to, he said ; there was no one near the house ; I must and will find out all about it. So saying, he ran off to a certain woman in the village, who had the reputation of knowing more than other people, to ask her what had become of his money. The witch told him that he must wait a little, and not dare to follow her. She then crept into a dark hole, and after some frightful conjuring and incantations, she cried out in a loud voice : Where is the money that this man has lost ? and a terrible voice answered her, saying, “ The man’s own pig has eaten it.”¹ But you must tell him that his wife has taken it, so that there may be strife and disunion in the house. The witch did as she was directed. But the peasant had seen and heard everything that went on in the dark hole, and when he went home he slaughtered the pig, and found the purse in its stomach. He

The devil
can know
where visible things
are hidden ;
but in this
too he often
deceives
men.

¹ *Sus domestica comedit.*

then accused the witch before the judge, who condemned her to be burned alive.

Therefore it is a great sin to have any dealings with such people.

See, it is false prophets of this kind that they have recourse to, who go to certain suspicious characters to get cured of their diseases, or to recover lost property, or to have their fortunes told. And what else is that but asking the devil for advice and help? Yet this is done by Christians, who have sworn fidelity to Jesus Christ, who worship the one true God, and who have solemnly renounced the devil and all his works in baptism! And it is done in a Christian land, and done without shame, as if there was no harm in it! I could wish to cry out in the ears of all who are guilty of such a crime, what God said by the Prophet Elias to king Ochozias, as we read in the Fourth Book of Kings; the latter had fallen from the window and hurt himself severely, so that he became seriously ill, and he sent his servants to Beelzebub, the false god of Accaron, to know what would be the result of his sickness: "And he sent messengers saying to them: Go, consult Beelzebub the god of Accaron, whether I shall recover of this my illness;"¹ What? said Elias to him, "Is there not a God in Israel, that ye go to consult Beelzebub, the god of Accaron? Wherefore thus saith the Lord: From the bed on which thou art gone up, thou shalt not come down, but thou shalt surely die."² What? I say to those Christians, is there no longer a God in the Christian world, to whom you can have recourse? Are things come to such a pass that you have to seek help from the powers of hell? Is it to the devil that you now bend the knee, to him that you fly for refuge, from him that you ask help and advice? What a shame and disgrace! What an enormity! Can I believe it to be true? No, I could not even imagine Christians to be guilty of such a crime, if I were not assured that they really commit it!

The usual excuses; the first; I protest that I will have nothing to do with the devil.

But, they say to excuse themselves, what does it matter to me what the man or woman I consult does, or what art is made use of? I for my part protest before God that I wish to have nothing to do with the devil, or with superstitious practices; all I want is to recover my lost property, or to get rid of the fever from which I am suffering, or to find out something that interests me very much; I have no other object than that. Besides,

¹ Misitque nuntios, dicens ad eos: Ite, consulite Beelzebub, deum Accaron, utrum vi-
verem queam de infirmitate mea hac?—IV. Kings i. 2.

² Numquid non est Deus in Israel, ut eatis ad consulendum Beelzebub, deum Accaron?
Quam ob rem hæc dicit Dominus: De lectulo, super quem ascendisti, non descendes, sed
morte morieris.—Ibid, 3, 4.

I protest that I wish to have nothing to do with the devil. Empty excuse ! Vain protestation, which does not help you a bit ! You may protest a thousand times, if you like, it still remains true that you have dealings with the devil ; for you seek help by means that cannot produce the effect required by their own natural virtue, and that therefore must be helped to produce it by diabolical agency, but it is never lawful under any circumstances to have recourse to such means as that. Theologians teach that he who is suffering from an illness caused by witchcraft, as is often the case through divine permission, is not allowed to have recourse to witchcraft or other superstitious means in order to get cured ; he should rather suffer a thousand deaths, than seek a cure by such unlawful practices.

That is all fine talk ; but it does not prevent those people from helping me. By their means I get back my lost property, or am cured of the fever. Such is the excuse generally brought forward : they help me. Of course they help you, if God allows them, and you get your property back ; but it is by diabolical and unlawful means, by using which you commit a great sin, and forfeit Heaven. Of course they help you, and you recover your health ; but through the intervention of the devil, and by incurring the eternal death of your soul. Which of these will you choose ? Is there not then, a God in Heaven, I must ask you again, who can help you just as well, or even better ? Is there no saint, or friend of God, through whose intercession you can recover your lost property, or regain your health ? Is there no church in the world, in which you can pray and have recourse to Mary the Mother of God, and get Masses said for your intention ? Do you look upon the devil as a better helper, physician and benefactor, than the God of infinite power, wisdom and goodness, from whom we have the infallible promise, “ Ask and you shall receive ; ” come and knock at My door, and I will give you everything, provided only that it is good for your soul.

The second :
they help
me.

Yes, you say again ; but I might pray for a long time before being helped so effectually. I have prayed, and got others to pray ; I have had Masses said, and given candles, and gone on pilgrimages, and called on St. Anthony and many other saints for help ; but what have I gained thereby ? My lost property is not yet recovered ; my child is still sick ; my son, my husband is still away from me, and I do not know where he is. Well, have

The third :
my prayers
to God have
hitherto
been fruit-
less.

patience ; I believe that such is really the case with you ; but what then ? Well, there is nothing else for me to do but to go to those people, and they will help me for a trifling sum. No, do not say that ; if you are a good Christian you must not think of such a thing ! If God has not heard your prayer, He knows why ; it would not have been for the good of your soul, had He given you what you asked. Your child is still sick in spite of all you can do lawfully ; well, at all events you have done your part ; that illness is a greater blessing from God, than health would be ; so that you must be satisfied with the divine will. You have failed to recover your lost or stolen property ; you must attribute your loss to the providence of God, and you must say, like the patient Job, when he was reduced to the direst poverty ; “ The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord ; ” ¹ “ If we have received good things at the hand of God, why should we not receive evil ? ” ² Why should we not accept trials willingly from the same loving and beneficent hand ? If it is good for you, the Lord can recompense you fourfold in other things for the loss you have suffered. You must not then be so foolish as to add to your temporal loss the loss of the Supreme God, by having dealings with the devil. Besides, God can take away from you the property you recover by the help of the devil, or make you suffer a loss ten times greater in other things. No, you must have recourse to God and appeal to Him alone. Such should be your resolution.

The fourth :
what I have
lost is of
great value.

What I have lost is of great value : that is another excuse they bring forward. I have lost a thousand dollars ; must I let them go without an effort to recover them ? If so how am I to support my children ? If I can get them back so easily, why should I hesitate ? So easily, you say ? Where is your common sense ? Is it an easy means of recovering your money, to offend God by mortal sin, and thus lose your soul ? You might make good your loss by stealing the amount of it ; but would that be lawful ? No matter what you have lost, even if it were the whole world, and you could get it back in that way for a trifling sum ; while on the other hand you run the risk of being reduced to beggary if you do not get it back ; even then it would be unlawful for you to ask help or advice from those false prophets. Every one should be at all times and under all circumstances will-

¹ Dominus dedit, Dominus abstulit : sicut nomen Domini benedictum.—Job i. 21.

² Si bona suscepimus de manu Dei, mala quare non suscepimus ?—Ibid. ii. 10.

ing to suffer the loss of all he has, not excepting even his honor and good name, his peace and pleasure, and to die a thousand times, rather than offend God by mortal sin. What good then would it be to you to have everything in the world, if you lose God and His friendship ?

But, another will say, I will venture it this once ; I can afterwards repent of my sin and confess it ; and meanwhile I shall have recovered my health, or my property. And has it come to that with you ? Do you think so lightly of a grievous sin, because God is so good and merciful, that He will forgive you when you have repented of and confessed it ? What a wretched thing for a Christian to do ! Go to your false prophets then, if you are determined on it, and ask them to cure you by their juggleries, or to recover your property for you ; I tell you on the part of God, that you will have neither luck nor grace with your property or health. Who knows, my dear brethren, whether it is not sins of that kind, that are the cause of the hard times that are pressing so heavily on all of us now ? How many poor people are compelled to lay aside their shame, and to hold out their hands to beg for a piece of bread ! How many are obliged to pawn what they have, on account of the high prices of things, in order to purchase food ! How many there are even, who actually die of hunger and privation ! And what else could be expected when people neglect the true God, and worship the devil ? Go to your false prophets, you superstitious people, and see whether they can give you bread !

Ah, good Christians, I conclude with the words with which I began, "Beware of false prophets," who, although they seem to benefit you by their help and advice, are in reality ravening wolves that devour your souls. And therefore I beg of you to tell others in town and country what you now hear. There are many simple-minded people who, through ignorance, see no harm in those things, so that they have recourse to the powers of hell without shame. If you come across any of them, warn them, and do all you can to induce them to give up their superstition, that this horrible vice may no longer find place in a Christian country ; threaten if necessary, to denounce them to ecclesiastical authority. Far be it from all of us, my dear brethren, even to think of committing such a crime ! We will unanimously ratify and renew the contract we made with God in holy baptism, and we will say in the name of all the Catholics of this country, "I renounce thee, Satan, and all thy works !"

The fifth : I can repent of my sin when I have profited by it.

Conclusion and exhortation to all, to avoid such false prophets, and to have recourse to God alone.

Away with thee, unhappy spirit ; I renounce thee for ever ! Never will I have the least thing to do with thy agents ! If thou wert to offer me the whole world and all its wealth, as thou formerly didst to the Saviour on the mountain : “ All these will I give thee, if falling down thou wilt adore me ; ”¹ I would say to thee, as He did : “ Begone, Satan ; for it is written : The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve.”² This shall be my constant resolution. Greed of gain will sometimes tempt me, and urge me to get back by unlawful means what I have lost ; away, I will say, with everything I have ! God is my best, highest and dearest good. As long as I have Him, I am rich enough. Sensuality will whisper to me, that it would be a good thing to recover my health. No, I shall answer, let me be sick and suffer ; let me and every one belonging to me die, if necessary ; as long as I can live for my God ! I shall take what care I can of my property, and do my best to make up for losses, but by lawful means ; I shall take care of my health, but by lawful means ; and then, whether I am rich or poor, or sick, or in good health, it does not matter, as long as the will of God is accomplished. Thee alone will I adore, O God ; to Thee and to Thy saints alone will I fly for refuge. Thee alone will I serve ; Thee alone will I love with my whole heart ! If you all unite in making this resolution and in keeping it (for I do not think that there are many here present who are addicted to the vice against which I am speaking) you will profit much by this sermon. May that be the case. Amen.

*Another Introduction to the same sermon for the second
Sunday of Advent.*

Text.

Sed quid existis videre ? prophetam ? Matth. xi. 9.

“ But what went you out to see ? A Prophet ? ”

There is no doubt that the Jews had a great opinion of St. John the Baptist, for they went out into the desert to see him, to admire his wonderful mode of life, and to hear his preaching. On one occasion, as we read in the Gospel of St. John, the priests and Levites sent to ask him, “ Who art thou ? ”³ Art thou Elias, or perhaps the Messias Himself ? Still they

¹ Hæc omnia tibi dabo, si cadens adoraveris me.—Matth. iv. 9.

² Vade, satana, scriptum est enim : Dominum Deum tuum adorabis, et illi soli servis.—Ibid. 10.

³ Tu quis es ? John i. 19.

did not know exactly what he was. From this Christ took occasion to explain to them the great sanctity of His precursor, and to show them that it was not without reason that they went out to see such a great man. “What went you out to see? A prophet? Yea, I tell you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written: Behold I send my angel before thy face who shall prepare thy way before thee.”¹ There are still prophets to be found here and there in the world, my dear brethren, to whom some people have recourse in certain circumstances to ask them for help and advice, and these latter might be asked in the words of Christ, “What went you out to see? A prophet?” Yes, but not a holy prophet. A prophet? Yes, but a false prophet, who under the pretence of giving you good advice, or helping you, devours your souls like a ravening wolf in sheep’s clothing, and brings them to hell. It is my purpose to-day to warn all Christians against those false prophets. There are, etc.—*continues as above.*

TWENTY-NINTH SERMON.

ON THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF SUPERSTITION AND ITS MALICE.

Subject.

There are different ways of practising superstition. What kind of a sin it is.—*Preached on the ninth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Domus mea domus orationis est. Vos autem fecistis illam speluncam latronum.—Luke xix. 46.

“My house is a house of prayer. But you have made it a den of thieves.”

Introduction.

Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold therein; and in another passage it is added, that He made a scourge and drove them out with it. And with

¹ Etiam dico vobis? Et plus quam prophetam. Hic est enim, de quo scriptum est: Ecce, ego mitto Angelum meum, qui præparabit viam tuam ante te.—Matth. xi. 9, 10.

good reason too, for God was publicly dishonored in His own house; the holy place that was intended only for the humble adoration of the true God, was turned by the people into a market-place and a den of thieves. In spite of His meekness, our Lord could not tolerate this, and He was obliged to give expression to His anger and indignation. Our churches, my dear brethren, are far holier houses of God than the temple of Jerusalem was; but, alas, how often would it not be necessary for our Lord to take the scourge in His hand, and drive out those who dishonor them by all sorts of disrespectful conduct. It is not of that, however, that I mean to speak to-day. Besides the churches, God has another house on earth, namely, the holy Catholic Church, in which alone He receives proper homage and worship throughout the world. But in many places even this house of God is turned into a den of demons, by those who mix up with the true Christian service of God all kinds of diabolical juggleries. I allude to the superstitious practices, which are indulged in almost as a general custom in different places, to the great dishonor of God. Oh, would that I had a scourge to drive away from the house of God, and if it were possible, from every country, and to banish forever, not men, but the superstitious practices of so many simple-minded, ignorant and crack-brained people! Trusting in Thy help, O Jesus, which I beg of Thee through the merits of Thy Mother Mary, and the intercession of the holy angels guardian, I will at all events begin to speak against them.

Plan of Discourse.

And I will now explain the different ways in which superstition is practised, and what kind of a sin it is. Such is the whole subject of to-day's sermon, my dear brethren, in the form of a catechetical instruction.

May all those who know that they are guilty of this great sin, get the grace to repent of it.

^{What super-}
stition is.

By superstitious practices, such as are in vogue amongst people nowadays, I mean those vain practices by which some try to forecast the future, or the use of certain means to a certain end; although the signs I observe and the means I use, have not of themselves any natural power to signify a future event, or to cause a certain effect, nor has any such power been given them by the Almighty God, nor by the Catholic Church through the prayers of the faithful, or in virtue of

ecclesiastical ceremonies. In all such practices I am guilty of the sin of superstition ; whether I use holy things, or things pertaining to devotion in them, or earthly and natural things ; and whether the event or the effect follows, or not.

Alas, how common this vice is nowadays, especially amongst ignorant and uneducated people ! Countless almost are the ways in which it is practised every day ; and as nearly every country has its particular language, dress and manners, so we find in almost every country special superstitious abuses. One thing I wish for to-day, and that is, to be able to describe the different superstitious customs at least of this country, so that I might place all their impious folly clearly before your eyes, and warn every one against them. For it is useless to preach in general terms against this vice ; useless to cry out that superstition is a most grievous sin against the first Commandment : “ I am the Lord Thy God. Thou shalt not have strange Gods before me ; ”¹ for what do ignorant people know about it ? They acknowledge that it is true ; but they do not know what superstition is. It is useless to try to explain to them, that superstition consists in using to a certain effect a means that has received no power from God or from the Church to produce that effect. You may tell them that a hundred times, and a thousand times, at the back of that, but they will be just as wise as before. How can I know, they say, what natural power this or that thing I make use of, has ? It helps me to effect my purpose, and I want no more ; how it does so, I do not understand. I am not a learned man, and I do not want to understand it. How difficult it is to persuade such people of the truth ! Besides, since the superstitious means they use generally help them to the desired end, they get so blinded by the devil and by self-interest, that they refuse to see anything wrong in them ; nay, since sacred things, and apparently pious works, or at least sacred words and signs are often abused for superstitious purposes, these people become so confirmed in their bad habits, that they not only refuse to see anything wicked in them, but actually look upon them as good and holy, and, as we shall see later on, build on them their hopes of salvation. Therefore, in order to do any good, one should be able to point out one custom after the other, and say, this is not lawful, that is superstitious, if you attempt such a thing, you commit a grievous sin, etc. But it is useless for me to desire knowledge

It is a common vice.

¹ Ego sum Dominus Deus tuus. Non habebis Deos alienos coram me.—Exod. xx. 2, 3.

of that kind. Therefore, I will speak of those things as far as I have read of them in books or heard of them from others or learned them in the course of my own experience. From what I mean to say, all who have a little common sense, will easily be able to see by comparison, whether certain customs of theirs are superstitious or not; or at least they might find reason to doubt whether they are good and lawful, so that they may ask experienced people about them, and thus avoid the danger of committing sin.

Superstition consists in vain observations of certain signs, according to pagan custom.

In the first place then, the sin of superstition is committed when certain signs are looked on as portending a certain event. St. Augustine says of the converted Christians of his time, who had still some relics of paganism left: If two friends are walking together, and a dog runs between them, or a stone falls between them, or a child comes between them, they look on it as a sure sign that their friendship will soon be broken.¹ If one sneezes when putting on his shoes in the morning, it is taken as a sign of an unlucky day, and he goes to bed again. He who stumbles on the threshold of the door when going out, must go back at once, or else some misfortune will happen to him. If a black dog runs into the house, it is a sign that some one in that house will soon die. If the salt-cellar is upset at table, something dreadful is sure to happen. These and countless similar, vain and foolish observations, continues St. Augustine, are in vogue, and they are all sins of superstition, inventions of the devil and relics of old heathenism and idolatry.²

And according to the practice of our own times.

Are not the same vain observations prevalent amongst us Christians nowadays, my dear brethren? For instance, when people imagine that certain herbs have more virtue when plucked at night, at a certain hour, or on the feast of St. John; or when one is afraid to undertake a journey on a certain day, or to begin an important business, under the impression that it would be unlucky to do so? There are some who dare not spin or sew on Saturday or Thursday, because, as they say, it was on those days that the rope was made with which Judas hanged himself. It is looked on as certain that whatever is cut on St. Abdon's day will never grow again. From eggs that are laid on Holy Thursday, come fowl that change their color every year. On Christmas night an onion is divided into twelve parts, and exactly as the clock strikes twelve a pinch of salt is placed

¹ Si ambulatibus amicis lapis, aut canis, aut puer intercurrerit, etc.

² Et mille inanissimarum observationum commenta, etc.—S. Aug. l. 2, de doctr. christ.

on each part, to which is given the name of one of the months ; according as the salt melts or remains dry, it may be seen what months in the coming year will be dry or rainy. On New Year's eve a straw rope is tied round the trees, and they are wished a happy and fruitful year ; there is no doubt that after that they will bear abundance of fruit. Father Gobat testifies that in his time it was a common custom throughout Germany for young people who wished to get married, to take meal, water and salt, and make a loaf of it with their own hands, which they themselves had to bake and eat on the vigil of St. Andrew ; they then said a few short prayers in the four corners of the room, and laid down to sleep ; whoever they dreamt of during that sleep, was surely the person whom they were to marry. If two priests are saying Mass, and happen to elevate the Host at the same time, that denotes that some misfortune is about to occur. At certain seasons of the year the wolf must not be named, or else he will come and devour the sheep ; during that time he is called the monster. Some shepherds, in order to be perfectly safe, turn in a certain direction, and then the wolf cannot hurt their sheep. What is sown by the hand of an innocent child, grows best. If the bread that has been begged by the poor is purchased from them and given to hens, they will lay an egg every day. Medicine is never so likely to do a sick man good, after he has confessed and communicated ; it should be given him before. To prevent a dying person from having a long agony, his bed must be so placed, that he sees the planks of the floor in their length, and not cross-ways ; for then the soul can leave the body without trouble. To find out which one of a married couple will die first, count the letters of their names and surnames, and the one who has an uneven number of letters will be the first to die. If you hear a noise in your left ear, it is a sign that some dear friend is speaking, or thinking of you ; if in the right ear, it is a sign that some one is speaking ill of you. If thirteen sit down to table together, one of them will die before the end of the year. This foolish fancy has taken such hold, even of people who are otherwise sensible and well-educated, that if they happen to be one of a party of thirteen at table, they are not ashamed to stand up and go away, preferring to suffer hunger, rather than remain in such a case.

What foolish nonsense all this is ! What connection can there possibly be between such signs, and the effects that are expected to follow them ? What, for instance, to go according

These vain observations are all nonsense.

to what many otherwise intelligent people maintain to be true, is the reason that if thirteen sit down to dinner, one of them will die during the year? Why does not the same thing happen when thirteen horses or oxen are together in the same stable? Why does it not happen in those convents in which thirteen religious are living and eating the whole year round? It is all sheer nonsense; death is not influenced by a consideration of that kind; it comes, as Christ tells us, when we least expect it, and therefore He warns us all: "Be you then also ready; for at what hour you think not, the Son of man will come;"¹ All who believe in those foolish things are guilty of sin. It is a strange thing to think that there are people who speculate curiously about the articles of faith, and begin to doubt them, because they cannot understand them; and yet the same people are so addicted to stupid superstitions, as would excite the laughter of any one who has a little common sense, and that no amount of argument can induce them to give up. How well the devil has succeeded in blinding those people! And men are to be found too, who fear neither God, man, nor devil, and who live as if they were determined to be damned; and yet they are slaves to those vain observations. What folly that is!

Shown by
an example.

Father Tamburini relates that in Sicily, where the belief holds regarding the thirteen at table, there were once thirteen canons of a cathedral who resolved to show how groundless that belief was, by sitting down to table together and enjoying themselves. But one of them did not like the business. You are too daring, he said to the others; if thirteen sit down together at table, one is sure to die during the year. I will have nothing to do with it; you may do as you like; but I will stay at home. But, as it happened, the only one of the number who died during the year, was he who remained at home. Suppose, now, my dear brethren, that he had allowed himself to be persuaded to join the others, would not his death be attributed to the fact of his having been one of the thirteen guests, and so have confirmed the superstition? A holy and Christian fear of God, says the Holy Ghost, despises all vain fears;² and he who loves God, says St. Augustine, will fear nothing in the world, so much as to offend God by sin.

Supersti-
tious belief
in dreams.

What has been said hitherto is also to be understood of the folly of believing in dreams. For instance, if you dream that

¹ *Estote parati quia qua hora non putatis, Filius hominis veniet.*—Luke xii. 40.

² *Qui timet Dominum, nihil trepidabit.*—Eccel. xxxiv. 16.

you have lost a tooth, some one of your friends will soon die. If you dream of a fish it is also a sign of death, and so forth. The Wise Ecclesiasticus speaks against these superstitious observations, and calls them fancies of ignorant and foolish men: "The hopes of a man that is void of understanding, are vain and deceitful; and dreams lift up fools. The man that giveth heed to lying visions, is like him that catcheth at a shadow, and followeth after the wind."¹ And again: "Deceitful divinations and lying omens, and the dreams of evil-doers, are vanity. . . . Set not thy heart upon them; for dreams have deceived many, and they have failed that put their trust in them."² In the Old Law God expressly forbade believing in vain dreams: "You shall not divine, nor observe dreams."³ But, it might be objected, there are many passages in the Sacred Scripture which show that the future is foretold in dreams, and those dreams actually came true. Thus, the Patriarch Joseph dreamt in his youth of his future exaltation; Pharaoh dreamt of the seven years of plenty and the seven years of famine; Nabuchodonosor saw in his dream of a tall tree, the punishment of his sins, and in the dream of the statue, the succession of the four great monarchies. So also one of the Madianite soldiers prophesied the victory of Gideon from a dream he had; and many instances similar to these are related. Does it not follow then, that there is often reason for believing in dreams, and that what they portend, really happens? To this I answer in the words of Ecclesiasticus; after saying, "Set not thy heart upon them," he adds, "Except it to be a vision sent forth from the Most High;"⁴ that is, unless God for some important purpose chooses to reveal something in a dream. All those dreams in the Holy Scripture that I have mentioned, were in reality so many revelations, and as such deserved to be believed in. It happens occasionally too in our own days, that God, by means of the holy angels, terrifies the sinner in a dream, so that he may be induced to repent at once, or that he gives the good some idea of the eternal glory that awaits them. There is no doubt also, that people have often seen their dreams fulfilled. Thus Father Calinus writes of a young man in Rome, who dreamed that he

¹ *Vana spes et mendacium viro insensato; et somnia extollunt imprudentes. Quasi qui apprehendit umbram, et persequitur ventum.*—Eccl. xxxiv. 1, 2.

² *Divinatio erroris, et auguria mendacia, et somnia malefacientium, sanitas est. . . . Ne dederis in filiis cor tuum; multos enim errare fecerunt somnia et exciderunt sperantes in illis.*—Ibid. 5-7.

³ *Non augurabimini, nec observabitis somnia*—Levit. xix. 26.

⁴ *Nisi ab Altissimo fuerit emissa visitatio.*—Eccl. xxxiv. 6.

had climbed upon a tree whose branches overhung the Tiber, and that he had fallen into the water, and was drowned. On the following day, he was standing on the bank of the river near the tree of which he had dreamt, and was relating to his companions the subject of his dream ; he then boldly climbed up the tree, but lost his footing, and missed his hold of the branch ; he fell into the river, and was drowned.¹ I myself knew a man, who dreamt of the manner of his death, and told his companions about it next day, to his and their great amusement, but on the afternoon of that day, he died, fulfilling in his death all the circumstances foretold in his dream. But these effects are not to be attributed to the dream, but to other natural causes. The young man fell down from the tree, not because he dreamt that he would fall ; but because he ventured into danger too boldly and lost his footing, and his hold of the branch. He was sensible enough in laughing at his dream ; but fool-hardy in climbing up the tree. He should not have ventured so far, not because of his dream, but because of the danger which he had no reason for encountering. Ordinary dreams are mere fancies, imaginary images depicted on the brain during sleep, which it would be a most superstitious and sinful folly to believe in.

Vain observations of the hour of one's birth.

Further, those observations are also foolish and superstitious, which are taken of the hour of one's birth. He who is born in a certain month, at a certain hour, under a certain constellation, will be happy all his life ; while he who is born in a different month, and at another hour, will be unhappy. Nay, from these observations predictions are made, as we see in some almanacs, as to who will be a priest, and who a layman, who will have a long, or a short life, who will die from natural causes, or through violence, etc. Now, in God's name, what connection is there between those things ? And yet there are people who believe so firmly in that nonsense, that they allow it to influence their mode of life ; so that many make themselves quite miserable through their excited imaginations, while others are so deeply impressed by the fear of misfortune, that they die a premature death. I knew a man, says Father Ambrose Cataneus, who when on his death-bed, could not be induced to make his confession because he believed, according to the scheme of his nativity, that he had still a long time to live ; but death proved that the prophecy was a false one, for it came at once and hurried his soul into

¹ P. Caes Calin.—Tom. 1. in Samuel. serm. 100.

eternity, and in all probability into hell. A married woman once happened to read in a book on astrology belonging to her husband, which she had taken up through curiosity, that if a woman who was born on a certain day were to get married, she should die in child-bed ; this made her so anxious and nervous, that, although she had given birth to all her children without difficulty, she died during her next pregnancy through the effects of a too excited imagination. Such is the result of foolish superstitions. God is the Lord of Heaven and the Ruler of the stars, my dear brethren, and His inscrutable Providence has fixed the time of life and death for all of us. “ My lots are in Thy hands,”¹ we must say with David ; my happiness and my misfortune are in Thy power, O Lord, do Thou with me as Thou pleasest ! But, some will say, if it is superstitious to observe signs and constellations, then it is superstition also for physicians to observe certain times and signs of the zodiac for blood-letting, or administering medicines ; gardeners, too, are superstitious, because they go by the moon in sowing and planting, in cutting and pruning their trees ; those who make almanacs are wrong in foretelling the weather, and whether it will be hot or cold, wet or dry on certain days, from the course of the sun and moon and the other heavenly bodies. And yet who will dare to condemn them ? Oh, my dear brethren, it is a different thing altogether with those people ; there is not the least doubt that the sun, the stars, and especially the moon have received from their Creator a certain influence on earthly bodies, and that they exercise that influence in a greater or lesser degree, according as they change their position with regard to the earth. Therefore all these observations are not superstitious, but are based on the natural properties of bodies, and are warranted by experience ; although they are not always to be trusted in. Vain observations, on the contrary, have no power of producing the effects attributed to them, either from nature, from God, or from the Church.

Many sins are also committed through diabolical superstition, either to recover what one has lost, or to keep possession of what one has. Besides consulting the false prophets, of whom we have already spoken, when anything is stolen, people are wont to tie a knot on a piece of grass or something similar, with the belief that they thus bind the thief. If an animal is lost, they pull the leg out of a chair, and call out the name of the animal through the hole, and then it is sure to come back of its own ac-

Superstitious means to recover lost things, or to keep what one has.

¹ In manibus tuis sortes meae.—Ps. xxx. 16.

cord. If a man's cattle or horses are dying, and he has reason to believe that their death is caused by witchcraft, he takes the heart of one of the dead animals, cooks it, and sticks it through with a fork, until the witch, who as he thinks, feels the pricking of the fork, is compelled to appear ; the same thing is done when cows have been robbed of their milk through witchcraft. How, I ask, can those who are absent, feel the prick of the fork in that case, unless the devil has something to do with it ? I have been told that it is a very common custom, when anything has been stolen, or any one has run away, to have a Mass said, which is called the bond-Mass, in the belief that the thief, or fugitive, if he has not already crossed a river, will not be able to go any farther, and will be compelled to return, while the thief will have to give back the stolen property. What nonsense that is ? I wonder that a priest can be found to say Mass knowingly for such a purpose as that. The Mass is a most holy sacrifice, there is no doubt of that ; but who has given it the power of stopping a thief, or a runaway ? And if it has such a power, why can it not be exercised on one side of a river, as well as on the other ? The idea is evidently a superstitious one. It is a good thing to have a Mass said in honor of St. Anthony of Padua, in order to recover lost property, provided it is done with a devout and humble confidence that God, through the merits of His holy and faithful servant, will restore what we have lost, if it is good for us. But it would be superstitious to believe that the Mass would infallibly have that effect. The same is to be said of other superstitious devotions, of which I shall speak more fully on another occasion. Shepherds and huntsmen have special practices of their own, to further their interests ; such as, for instance, having recourse to some superstitious rite to prevent another man's gun from going off ; making the sign of the cross, and saying some words to prevent another from hitting what he aims at. They also know how to employ counter charms when anything is the matter with their own gun. All these things, and several more of the kind are to be found in those little books on the Black Art, which, as they contain nothing but superstition, deserve to be burnt.

To find hidden treasure.

Thirdly, superstition is practised by using certain means to discover hidden treasure. The best known of these is the divining rod ; it is made of hazel wood, and if carried about in the hand, is said to bend down of its own accord, when it comes to the place in which there is water, gold, silver, or other metal hidden

in the earth. Most theologians do not, as a general rule, condemn the use of this rod as superstitious, provided that no superstitious words or signs accompany the use of it ; since the effect it produces, seems to be within the limit of natural powers, and might be ascribed to some vapors ascending from the water, or the metal, which have a special sympathy for the hazel rod ; just as the magnet attracts iron. Now it is the general opinion of the learned, and amongst them are St. Augustine, Layman, Suarez, Sanchez, and others, that we must not ascribe to the devil an effect that can easily be attributed to the forces of nature, although we cannot exactly say how those forces operate. But if, when these rods are being cut, or used, certain words are pronounced, or circumstances observed which have no natural power to help in producing the effect desired, there is no doubt that the whole business is tainted with superstition ; and that is generally the case nowadays. Besides, the use of this rod is superstitious when it is employed to discover not only water, or metals, but also clothing and other things ; because it is impossible to believe that the hazel rod has a sympathy for all sorts of things.

Fourthly, sins of superstition are most frequently committed in healing, or preventing the diseases of men and beasts. I will not say anything now of those suspicious characters who go about healing wounds and diseases by all sorts of blessing and crosses or by saying certain words, or writing them on a piece of paper, who heal the wounds of absent people by rubbing a sword with ointment, or tying it up, etc. These people belong to the false prophets of whom I have already spoken. To stop the flow of blood, two straws are placed on the ground in the form of a cross, and a drop of blood allowed to fall on them ; the flow of blood must at once cease. Warts are cured by making as many knots on a piece of thread as there are warts ; the thread is then buried, and as the knots rot away in the ground, so do the warts fall off. To get rid of a tooth-ache, or of a fever, you must throw pebbles or peas into a well, and run away before you hear the splash they make when falling into the water. Fevers can also be cured by writing certain letters on a leaf of sage, and hanging it round the neck ; or else it must be hung on the neck of a young frog, that one has come across by chance, but not looked for purposely ; or else, according to a plan that is followed in other illnesses also, a copper coin is thrown into a dish, while the names of several saints are repeated ; the saint whose name is being repeated when the coin falls out of the dish, is the one in

To cure diseases.

whose honor a Mass is to be said. To get rid of a goitre, you must stand in the moon-light, place your hand on the goitre, and say : May what I feel, disappear. There are numberless other tomfooleries of that description, which I am actually ashamed to mention. We can only pity the blindness, folly and malice of the many who put their faith in such absurdities, to such a degree, that they do not see how impossible it is for the means they make use of to produce the effect required, unless by diabolical intervention. And yet these customs obtain in Christian countries, in which sermons and instructions are so frequent ! Would it not be enough to make our Lord weep, if He were to look down on many of our towns and villages, and see the number of ignorant, simple people, who are given to the practice of these superstitious absurdities ?

Every kind of superstition is a grievous sin : because thereby the devil is appealed to.

The question now is, are those observations and practices grievous sins ? There is no doubt of it, I answer, unless in the case of inculpable ignorance. Do you wish to know what sort of sins they are ? Try to recall what I said about those who consult false prophets to get advice from them and to be cured of their diseases ; they are guilty of asking help from the devil, and there is no doubt that they commit a most grievous and intolerable sin. The same is to be said of all superstitious practices ; because by them a secret contract is entered into with the devil, the sworn enemy of God and man ; for since those observations, signs and usages have no power of themselves, or from God, or from the Church, to produce the effects intended, they must necessarily produce them by the aid of the devil, who makes use of them as a means of deceiving souls. But, as a last objection, some one will say, how can there be a compact with the devil, since when I have recourse to them, I do not desire any help from him ? Truly, I answer, when you know that these practices are superstitious, you do not expressly ask the devil to help you ; but you do so implicitly and by your acts. Two people go to take a walk out of town ; on the way they get thirsty. Oh, they say, what a pity we have not something to drink. A little further on they see a house with a garland of ivy, or a green bush hanging outside the door. Oh, they say, we are all right ; we can get wine there. But how do they know that ? How could a garland of ivy teach me that wine is to be had in the house ? Certainly the garland has not that power of itself : but since it has been once for all agreed upon that such a thing hung outside the door, is a sign that wine is to be had with-

in, I know at once when I see it, what it means. It is the same, my dear brethren, with superstitious practices. The devil made an agreement once for all, with those agents of his who first began these practices ; thus, for instance, he said, whoever shall say such and such words, or do this or that in certain circumstances, shall be looked on by me as desiring my help. As soon therefore, as those words are spoken, or those actions performed, the devil comes at once, as if at a given signal ; just as a servant comes when his master whistles for him. Hence when I knowingly have recourse to such practices, it is the same as if I said : I know that whoever does this will be helped by the devil ; I do it now in order to get help from him too. It is in this, according to St. Thomas, that the malice of superstition consists ; and that is the reason why the evil spirit, who always grudges the Almighty the honor shown Him, and tries to deprive Him of it whenever he can, has introduced into the world so many different superstitious customs, and has taken such pains to keep them alive amongst the ignorant ; for in that way he succeeds in depriving God of the adoration due to Him, gradually lessens men's confidence in God, and leads them on imperceptibly, even by means of a hypocritical piety, to commit other sins, to live on in the state of sin, and to die impenitent.

Hence, if any of the clergy, who have the cure of souls, are here present, I would earnestly implore of them, for the sake of God's honor and glory, frequently to instruct their parishioners, in the country districts especially, for there it is most necessary, in sermons and catechetical instructions on the grievousness and malice of this vice, to explain to them the different ways in which one can be guilty of it, and to deter them from it by threats of temporal as well as eternal punishment. I have another request to make of the ignorant and uninstructed, and that is, that if they have the least doubt in matters of this kind, they will not act until they have explained it to their confessor, or pastor. Finally, we must all profit by the warning that St. Paul addresses to the Galatians, regarding vain observations of certain times and days : “ But now, after that you have known God, or rather are known by God : how turn you again to the weak and needy elements, which you desire to serve again ? You observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest perhaps I have labored in vain among you.”¹

Conclusion
and exhortation to
avoid this
vice, and to
help others
to avoid it.

¹ Nunc autem, cum cognoveritis Deum, immo cogniti sitis a Deo : quomodo convertimini iterum ad infirma et egena elementa, quibus denuo servire vultis ? Dies observatis et mensures, et tempora et annos. Timeo vos, ne forte sine causa laboraverim in vobis.—Gal. iv. 9-11.

In the same way, my dear brethren, should each one of us think ; God has called me by His admirable light to the one true Church, in which I must place all my confidence, and adore and love a God of infinite power, goodness and wisdom ; I have been born of Catholic parents, in a Catholic country : shall I then be so superstitious, so foolish, so wicked, as to occupy myself with such nonsensical practices, and make common cause with the devil ? No, I protest with St. Ambrose, “ Far from the servants of God be all superstition.”¹ I wish to serve God and to adore Him alone ; not with lies and follies ; but, as the Saviour says, in spirit and truth ; that I may one day adore Him in that place where faith shall have an end, and I shall see Him face to face. Amen.

*Another Introduction to the same sermon for the first
Sunday of Advent.*

Text.

Erunt signa in sole, et luna stellis.—Luke xxi. 25.

“ There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars.”

What sort of signs shall be seen in Heaven, at which men shall wither away for fear ? Christ describes them in the Gospel of last Sunday ; “ The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from Heaven.”² And what shall these terrible signs portend, what have men to understand from them ? That the last day of the world is at hand, and that the Son of man shall soon come to judge the living and the dead. “ And they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of Heaven.”³ But what connection is there between those signs, and the end of the world and the coming of the Judge ? When the sun was darkened in Egypt long ago, and again at the death of our Lord, nothing of the kind was portended. Besides, the moon is often seen to be blood-red, and the stars change, without our attaching any such meaning to the prodigy. It is true, my dear brethren, that those disturbances of the heavenly bodies have no power of themselves to betoken an effect of that kind ; but since by divine revelation those changes of the planets are to be taken as a

¹ Longe, longe a servis Dei debet esse omnis superstitio.

² Sol obscurabitur, et luna non dabit lumen suum, et stellæ cadent de cœlo.—Matth. xxiv. 29.

³ Et videbunt Filium hominis venientem in nubibus cœli.—Ibid. 30.

certain sign of the approach of the general Judgment ; therefore we must believe in that sign, and when men see it they will have just cause to tremble with fear. Ah, Christians, would that we were equally anxious to find out the truth in all other things that pertain to our faith ! If we were, there would not be so many shameful abuses to disgrace the Church of God. I allude to those superstitious practices which have become almost a general custom in many places, and those vain and foolish observations, by which people try to divine future events from certain signs, and to produce certain effects by means that are utterly inadequate. Oh, who will give me arms to combat, not men, but, etc.—*continues as before.*

THIRTIETH SERMON.

ON SUPERSTITION IN SACRED THINGS.

Subject.

How superstition may be committed by prayers, devotions and holy things, and how to discern when a devotion is superstitious.—*Preached on the tenth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Jejuno bis in sabbato, decimas do omnium, quæ possideo.—Luke xviii. 12.

“ I fast twice in a week ; I give tithes of all that I possess.”

Introduction.

Prayer is a salutary work ; fasting, a meritorious work ; alms-giving, a holy work ; and yet, in spite of them all, the Pharisee, as we read in to-day's Gospel, did not succeed in pleasing God. A public sinner, who could not boast of having done any of those things, and whose vices were well known, was justified before him. What is the reason of this difference, my dear brethren ? Just as one instrument that is out of tune with the others spoils the music of a whole orchestra, so one single bad circumstance destroyed all these good works of the Pharisee, and made them incapable of pleasing God, and that was his pride and hypocrisy. Ah, Christians, when God, the all-seeing, will judge our good works, many of them, I fear, will be rejected as worthless, nay, will be condemned as sinful, al-

though they now appear to be praiseworthy, meritorious and holy, because they are spoiled by some hidden defect. It is not my intention to-day to speak of the different defects which destroy good works ; of such defects as, for instance, the state of sin, hypocrisy, a bad intention, the want of good intention, laziness and sloth, and so forth. I shall continue the subject I spoke on in my last sermon, when I explained the different kinds of superstition that are practised by means of natural things. But even prayer, and apparently holy actions, and exercises of devotion, and the most holy things, can be, and very often are abused for superstitious purposes, not only by pious people through ignorance and simplicity, but also by the wicked through malice and with a bad intention ; and thus these things are used, not to honor God, but to do homage to the devil. To prevent the ignorant, the uninstructed, and the credulous from falling into this intolerable error, and to tear the cloak off all kinds of superstition, I shall explain this at length in to-day's sermon, or rather catechetical instruction.

Plan of Discourse.

How superstition may be committed by pragers, devotions and holy things, and how to discern when a devotion is superstitious. Such is the whole subject.

O God, open our eyes, that we may henceforth adore Thee alone, as is right, in spirit and truth, and so reject even the least shade of superstition, that the devil may never have the least part of the honor that is due to Thee ; this we ask of Thee through the merits of Mary, Thy Mother, and the holy angels guardian.

Why the devil wishes to have holy things used for superstitious purposes.

It is an old saying, that where God has a Church, the devil builds a chapel. This proud spirit of lies, who is still envious of the honor shown to God, and tries to lessen it in every possible way, caused himself to be adored as the true God by the blind heathens ; but his attempts in that way have been greatly frustrated by our Lord and His Apostles and servants. And what does the wicked spirit try to do now ? He leaves no stone unturned in his efforts to preserve amongst Christians, and to spread throughout the world some relics of ancient idolatry. When the head of a family dies, his portrait is carefully preserved as a memento of him. In the same way, the devil, after idolatry was nearly extinct throughout the world, and reasoning beings had ceased to adore the sun and the stars, and stocks, and stones,

and dumb animals as their gods, tries to preserve at least the memory of that horrible vice in its portrait, that is, in all kinds of foolish and superstitious practices. But even in this he is not always successful with pious and fairly instructed Christians, who, as we have seen already, put no faith in vain observations and superstitious practices. He, therefore, hides his wickedness under a cloak that one would be least likely to suspect of concealing it; that is to say, he tries to deceive the pious by an appearance of holiness, and to lead them on to the vice of superstition by devotion and holy things, nay, even by the sign of the cross, which is so often used to put him to flight. Thus, since he cannot prevent the true God from being adored, he endeavors at least to prevent men from honoring and adoring Him as He wishes.

This he effects by what theologians call a superfluous worship, and a false devotion, that is, one that is not ordained by God, nor approved of by the Church, nor in accordance with the general custom of the Church; or else it consists in attributing to certain prayers and works of piety, a power and efficacy which they have not of themselves, and have not received from God, or from the Church. It is generally women who allow themselves to be deceived by the devil in this way. A certain noble lady, as Father Caesar Cataneus relates, whose only and dearly loved little son was sick, came to a priest of our Society for consolation and advice in her affliction. Father, said she, a certain pious person, who has received special lights from God, has told me of a very efficacious form of devotion, by which I shall certainly be able to secure the recovery of my child; but, influenced probably by humility, and the desire of concealing the divine favors, the person charged me strictly not to say a word of this to any one. What is the devotion, asked the priest. I must have a Mass said, answered the lady, in honor of the Blessed Trinity. Very good indeed, rejoined the priest, the holy Sacrifice is of infinite value; the most Blessed Trinity is infinitely good and powerful; it would be a very good thing to have the Mass said. But why make such a secret of it? Oh, because the Mass has to be said under certain circumstances. In the Blessed Trinity we adore one true God in three distinct Persons; but three and one written in succession make thirty-one; therefore the priest who says the Mass must be exactly thirty-one years old. Again, one and three written in succession make thirteen; therefore the Mass-server must be exactly thirteen years old.

How that
can be done
even with
the Holy
Mass.
Shown by
an example.

Very good ; and is that all ? No, there must be three candles on the altar, and the Mass must begin exactly at nine o'clock ; because three times three are nine ; thus the hour, the priest, the Mass-server, and the candles on the altar all clearly signify the mystery of the Blessed Trinity. Oh, said the father laughing, if that is the idea, I could suggest something much better. Have a High-Mass sung with deacon and subdeacon, and let them all be thirty-one years old ; then there will be three of them on the altar ; besides that, you might have nine choristers, who, like the Mass-server, are also thirteen years old ; and in addition you can have the bell rung three times for Mass ; in that way the Blessed Trinity will be far more honored, and will doubtless be compelled to restore your son's health. It is all nonsense, my good lady, and nothing but superstition. The special lights that your pious acquaintance has received are not from God, but from the spirit of lies. What, in the name of goodness, have the number and those other circumstances to do with the Holy Mass ? The holy Sacrifice has the same value and efficacy, whether it is said at seven, or at nine o'clock ; whether the priest is forty-one, or thirty-one years old ; and whether there are three, four, or two candles on the altar. Go away with your devotion ; if you want to offend God by a grievous mortal sin, and to cure your child by the help of the devil, then you can do as you say. Thus he dismissed the simple-minded lady. The General Council of Trent condemned¹ a custom of that kind, which was then in vogue amongst the people. It was a current belief that the souls in Purgatory could best be helped by seven Masses at which seven candles were to be lighted, and moreover, alms were to be given to the poor seven times. No Catholic doubts that the Mass is the real and holy Sacrifice of our religion, in which Jesus Christ, as the Eternal Priest, offers to His heavenly Father His own Flesh and Blood, and thereby shows Him infinite honor ; therefore nothing is more powerful in satisfying for the sins of the living and the dead, and blotting out the punishment due to them, than the holy Mass ; but that power does not come from a certain number of Masses, but from the infinite value of the Sacrifice that is offered.

The first rule for discerning whether a devotion is superstitious.

The following is a general rule, my dear brethren, by which you can see whether there is anything that savors of superstition in even the holiest practices of devotion. Whenever there is an obligation to observe a certain time and hour, a certain number,

¹ Conc. Trid. de reform.—Sess. 21.

a certain posture in standing or sitting ; for instance, a certain prayer or devotion, no matter how holy it is, must be said, or performed on a certain day at sunrise, at a certain altar, in a certain church, kneeling on a stone; the sign of the Cross has to be made so many times, and so many Our Fathers have to be said ; so that if the time, place, number and manner be not strictly observed, the prayer, or devotion will lose its efficacy ; that is a manifest proof of a shameful superstition. It is far different with the public devotions approved of by the Church ; for instance the devotion of the nine Tuesdays in honor of St. Anthony of Padua, and that of the ten Fridays in honor of St. Francis Xavier, the Apostle of the Indies ; on which days it is the custom to confess and communicate, in order to receive the grace of God through the intercession and merits of those great Saints. Still, if even in this case one were so to put his faith in a certain number or a certain day, that if he missed Confession, or Communion on one of the nine or ten days, or if he did not confess on the Tuesday or Friday, he would think that his devotions were of no good ; then he would be guilty of a superstitious error. (I must beg of you, my dear brethren, to pay particular attention to what I am saying, so that no one may accuse me afterwards of disparaging those devotions.) They are most praiseworthy devotions, and are appointed for the good of souls ; but it would be superstition to attach their merit and efficacy to certain days, or a certain number of days. It is always a good and holy work to confess and communicate in honor of a saint, provided it is done with proper preparation and devotion ; and the oftener it is done, the more pleasing it is to the saint ; but a fixed number of Tuesdays or Fridays, has nothing to do with it. The devotion to St. Francis Xavier, is fixed to ten Fridays, for those who have the opportunity of practising it, in memory of the ten years he labored for the conversion of the heathens in India. The Friday is chosen in preference to another day, on account of the tender love that St. Francis had for Jesus Crucified. Otherwise Confession and Communion on a Sunday, in honor of this Saint, is just as meritorious as on a Friday.

Another general rule for detecting superstition in prayers and holy things, is, when an infallible power and efficacy is attributed to them. Thus, many carry about with them, and repeat daily the Gospel of St. John, with other holy words and many signs of the Cross, in order to make themselves bullet-proof. This is one of the most impious superstitions, and can well be

Another
rule.

looked on as a compact with the devil. Again, certain written and printed papers are frequently to be seen, which are called “Domestic Blessings and Prayer Books;” they are even hung up openly in houses, and bound with real prayer books; and they contain certain strange characters, crosses, outlandish names of God and the angels, sacred words taken from Scripture and even terrible exorcisms to be used against the devil. In one of those books I recently saw the following words: “the dream of our Lady;” “a letter from God;” “a letter found in the sepulchre at Jerusalem;” “the shield of the spirit;” “a beautiful and well authorized holy blessing to be used against all one’s enemies by land and water;” “a beautiful blessing to be used when one goes out, in which the day and night are to be named,” etc. He who hangs this up in his house, or carries it about his person, and says the prayers contained therein daily, shall be free from accident by land and water, shall be safe from fire, and from sorcerers, witches, thieves and robbers; he shall not die by violence, nor shall he die an unhappy death; women who carry it about them, shall be saved from the perils of child-bed, etc. The Pope’s name too is often printed in those books, and he is said to have approved of those prayers and blessings, and to have sent them to others; sometimes they bear the bishop’s name as a sign of approval, as well as the name of the town in which they were printed, the publisher who issued them, etc. Thus ignorant people are convinced that those prayers are holy and of infallible efficacy. In those books is also to be found a superstitious promise, to the effect that, he who says the Our Father and Hail Mary daily seven times, and continues to say them until they have reached the number of drops of blood that our Lord shed during His scourging, will certainly go to Heaven. All this is a barefaced lie, my dear brethren, and a deceit of the devil; and such books and prayers deserve nothing better than to be burned as a mark of the contempt in which they should be held.

By such things the devil betrays and misleads numbers of souls.

Of those who give such books and blessings to others, or advise them to get them, or who sell them, or, what is still worse, publish them to the eternal ruin of thousands of souls, who in their simplicity believe in them, and trust their salvation to them, of those, in order to put every one on his guard against them, we might justly use the words in which God complained to the Prophet Jeremias of similar superstitious people, and warned His own people against them: “Therefore hearken not

to your prophets and diviners, and dreamers, and soothsayers, and sorcerers. . . . For they prophesy lies to you : to remove you far away from your country, and cast you out, and to make you perish. For I have not sent them, saith the Lord : and they prophesy in my name falsely ; to drive you out, and that you may perish.”¹ The same I say in the name of the Lord to you Christians. You must not listen to such advisers, nor believe in them ; for they tell you nothing but lies, to keep you out of your heavenly country, and to bring you to eternal ruin by means of the superstitious hope to which you intrust your salvation. But, the ignorant will say, there is no harm in those prayers and books ; they contain holy words to bless one’s self with ; they are good against witchcraft, and sorcery, nay, even against the devil himself. I answer that no one can defeat one witchcraft by another, and drive the devil away by the devil’s own art. The holier the words, the greater the sin of superstition ; for holy words that should be used to honor God alone, are degraded and dishonored by being used in the service of the devil. That is what the proud enemy of God wishes ; that is the way in which he conceals his wiles ; he mingles holy things with his juggleries, in order the better to deceive and lead astray the ignorant and credulous.

It is not enough for the fisherman merely to cast his hook and line into the water ; if he did no more than that, he would be a long time without getting a bite. He must have good bait, such as the fishes are fond of, and cover the hook well with it, and then cast his line where he knows the fish to be. To kill flies in a room, you must disguise the taste of the poison by sugar, or honey, or sweet milk. In that way the wily fiend acts, as St. John Chrysostom says. If he were to propose to pious people his superstitious practices, which have clearly no power in themselves to produce the desired effect, he would not succeed in catching one of them, nor in making one of them believe in him ; and so he prepares a more agreeable bait for them. “In order to induce them to take the poison, he mixes honey with it. He brings in the name of Christ into his incantations,”² and deludes them largely with apparently holy ceremonies ; and he

Shown by a simile.

¹ Vos ergo nolite audire prophetas vestros, et divinos, et somniatores, et augures, et maleficos . . . quia mendacium prophetant vobis, ut longe vos faciant de terra vestra, et ejicient vos, et pereatis. Quia non misi eos, ait Dominus, et ipsi prophetant in nomine meo mendaciter, ut ejicient vos, et pereatis.—Jer. xxvii. 9, 10, 15.

² Ut det venenum, addit mellis aliquantulum, miscet præcationibus nomen Christi.—S. Chrysost. Tract. 10 in Joan. hom. 21 ad pop. Antioch.

promises those who use them, not only temporal prosperity, but also a happy death, and the salvation of their souls, which of course must be followed by the happiness of Heaven. In this way he catches souls without number.

How and
why men
should be
on their
guard
against
them.

If you wish to know, my dear brethren, what kind of prayers are to be classed with those superstitious blessings already mentioned, you have only to see whether the name of God is frequently mentioned in unknown languages, and whether any false assertion is connected with it ; such as, for instance, “ Christ has had the fever ; ” whether anything ridiculous is said of God, of the angels, or of the saints, such as the prayer that children say at night ; “ four corners on my bed, four holy angels overspread, etc. ; ” whether the sign of the Cross has to be made otherwise than according to the custom of the Church, on the hand, shoulder, or knee, for instance, a certain number of times ; whether they contain all kinds of ciphers and crosses that are not approved of by the Catholic Church ; whether they say this prayer, or blessing must be carried about with one, and must be said daily, etc. If you see anything of that kind throw the thing away at once ; it is suspicious, and is worth nothing. All those too, who possess such books and prayers, are bound to destroy them, lest others should be deceived and betrayed by them. If you have a reasonable doubt about them, ask the advice of some qualified person, before you make use of them. The reason of all this is clear ; neither the collection of words, nor the ciphers, nor the paper on which they are printed can have the least power, naturally, to effect the promised result ; neither has the Catholic Church approved of those books or papers, whatever lies they may contain to the contrary ; much less has God revealed that those things have the power ascribed to them ; therefore, if I try to give them that power by believing in them, I use them as a sign to show that I desire help from the devil ; hence to believe in them, and use them for the object they profess to be able to accomplish, is nothing else but a vile superstition.

It is far different with holy things and prayers that are approved of by the Church.

It might be objected that it is customary to wear relics of the saints, Agnus Deis, and other blessed objects, in the belief that they are a safeguard against witchcraft, and other evils. There are letters of St. Donatus against thunderstorms, pictures of St. Ignatius Loyola against spectres, horns of St. Hubert against mad dogs, letters of the three Magi for travellers, and many more of the same kind. Priests also have certain prayers to ex-

orcise the devil, and to banish witchcraft. These too are nothing but words, prayers and paper. How can they have the power attributed to them? Or must we look on them too, as superstitious? No, by no means. The fact that they are approved by the Church should alone suffice to convince us that they are above suspicion, and are intended for really pious purposes. Besides, the efficacy of those things does not consist, nor must it be supposed to consist in the letters, pictures, words, or prayers; but when the effect follows, it must be ascribed to the blessing of the Church which is given them by a priest, a bishop, or the Pope. The letters and pictures produce their effect through the saints of God, who by their intercession obtain from God the favor required, as a reward for the love, devotion, and confidence shown towards them by those who wear their relics, or the pictures and letters that have touched their relics. Moreover, we do not place full confidence in those things, nor attribute an infallible efficacy to them. I am not sure, for instance, that I shall not be killed by lightning, because I wear a picture of St. Donatus; nor am I infallibly certain that I shall not be hurt by witchcraft, although I wear relics and an Agnus Dei; and so on for the rest. Nor is it said of those things as of the superstitious objects already mentioned, "he who wears this, will be protected from such and such an evil;" the inscription on them is generally in the form of a prayer: "Pray for us St. Donatus, that we may be protected from lightning." So that I do not place an infallible trust in them; but merely hope firmly that God and his saints will help me in my necessities, and will deliver me from all evil both of soul and body; a help that they very often give.

There are, besides, certain prayer books which contain prayers that are good enough in themselves, but to the recitation of which are attached infallible promises of all kinds; for example: he who recites this prayer daily, may expect, when on his death-bed, to see the Mother of God, according to her promise; or, he will not die without the last sacraments; or, Christ will be merciful to him in his last moments; or, he will soon be freed from Purgatory; or even, he will not be damned. Now, what are we to think of these prayers? As far as I am concerned (and I think all sensible people will agree with me), they may be good enough in themselves, and I would not forbid any one to say them; but the promises connected with them I would not give a straw for; because they are mere claptrap invented to de-

What we are to think of the promises attached to certain prayers in some prayer books.

ceive the inexperienced, and to give them a foolish confidence of salvation, on the strength of which they often lead an impious life, thinking that they cannot be lost as long as they say those prayers daily. And I must confess my own shortcomings in this respect too, my dear brethren. In my early youth (I knew no better at the time) I had a short extract from one of those prayer books to which certain promises were attached. When I think of it, I wonder at my zeal in prayer in those days ! I would not on any account go to bed at night, without having said that prayer during the day ; and I firmly believed that I was sure of going to Heaven, no matter how I lived, or what I did ; until at last my own reason, helped by the instructions of others, made me aware of the error I was guilty of, and I threw the prayer aside. They who believe in such promises, should remember the warning of our Lord : “ Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven ; but he that doth the will of my Father,” he who leads a good and holy life, and perseveres to the end, “ he shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven.”¹ Where did those prayers get the authority to promise me that I would make a good Confession, and die a happy death ? God could not have revealed that, because He says that a happy death is due to final perseverance alone. If He had revealed it, and really promised a happy death as a reward for saying those prayers, then the conclusion I came to, when I was a child, regarding them, would have been correct ; namely, I can live as I please, provided I say those prayers regularly I am sure of Heaven. No, my dear brethren, that is not the way to go to Heaven. To pin one’s faith to such things, and trust one’s salvation to them, is very closely related to superstition.

What the
faith is, that
Christ says
we must
have in
prayer.

But, you will say, does not God tell us all to pray, and does He not generally add that we must believe ? He says in the Gospel of St. Mark : “ All things, whatsoever you ask when you pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you ; ”² The most excellent quality of fervent prayer is faith and confidence of being heard ; cannot one then, and must one not put his faith in prayer, without being guilty of superstition ? Certainly, my dear brethren. But on what does our faith and confidence in prayer repose ? Not on certain

¹ Non omnis, qui dicit mihi : Domine, Domine, intrabit in regnum cœlorum ; sed qui facit voluntatem Patris mei . . . ipse intrabit in regnum cœlorum.—Matth. vii. 21.

² Omnia quæcumque orantes petitis, credite, quia accipietis, et eventient vobis.—Mark xi. 24.

words that we utter ; but on the infallible promises and faithfulness of God, who has promised to give me everything that is necessary for my soul not on account of certain words, but on account of the fervor, humility and perseverance of my prayer. Pray then, and pray humbly and fervently, and God will grant you a happy death. Believe also, and have a firm confidence that God will give you that grace, provided you strive for it during life ; for that is the condition on which it is accorded. Pray, and pray fervently for the grace to live well and to be faithful in the love and service of God to the end ; believe and have a firm confidence that God will give you grace enough to remain constant, provided you co-operate with it. This is another condition that must be fulfilled. And all this you will get from God, whether you pray with the lips, or with the heart, and whether you use this form of words, or that. Therefore, a certain form of words has nothing at all to do with the efficacy of prayer, much less can it make one sure of salvation.

Therefore, they believe and hope in vain, who expect to find salvation by such means. What blindness and folly ! What madness to deceive one's self by superstitious practices of any kind ! For, whom do they expect help from ? From the devil, and no one else ; as we have seen already. And why should I ally myself with that wretched and powerless spirit, who of himself cannot give me the least assistance ? For the devil can do nothing, my dear brethren, unless what God permits him to do, nor can he exceed by a hair's breath the divine permission as to circumstances of time, place or manner. You may read in the Holy Scriptures of this spirit of lies speaking by the mouths of four hundred false prophets, in order to deceive King Achab ; but he had first to ask and receive permission from God to that effect : " I will go forth," he said to God, " and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And the Lord said : Thou shalt deceive him and shalt prevail : go forth, and do so." ¹ You will find that he is a cruel spirit, who excites all the elements against the pious Job ; but not before he had asked permission from God to torment that wonderful man ; nor dared he advance a single step, until this permission was accorded him. For, first of all he got leave to attack Job in his worldly goods, but on the express condition of not hurting his body : " All that he hath is in thy hand," said

How foolish
to expect
help from
the devil
through
superstition
of any kind.

¹ Egrediar, et ero spiritus mendax in ore omnium prophetarum ejus. Et dixit Dominus : Decipies, et prævalebis : egredere, et fac ita. — III. Kings xxii. 22.

the Lord to him ; “ only put not forth thy hand upon his person.”¹ After that God gave him permission to torment his body also, but on condition that he would do nothing against the soul : “ And the Lord said to Satan : Behold, he is in thy hand ; but yet save his life.”² You will find him an unclean spirit, who wished to enter into a herd of swine ; but not even that could he do until Christ gave him leave : “ And the spirits besought Him,” as we read in the Gospel of St. Mark, “ saying : Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And Jesus immediately gave them leave. And the unclean spirits going out, entered into the swine.”³ See, my dear brethren, what little power the devil has ; he cannot hurt even swine, unless God allows him to do so. How much less then, can he hurt, or help man, who is made to the image of God ! Certainly, if he were able, he would endeavor to help his most faithful servants in their necessities, I mean sorcerers and witches who are in prison under sentence of death. But he is forced to acknowledge his want of power ; for God, who rules the world by His all-wise Providence, and who generally helps those who have to administer justice, does not allow the devil, generally speaking, to help those people in such circumstances, or to free them from the hands of justice. And I ask again, am I to put my confidence in such a weak creature, while I offend the true God by superstitious practices, and drive away from me Him who alone has the power and the will to serve my best interests ?

Conclusion
and exhortation
to avoid superstition
and trust in God
and serve Him alone.

Therefore, my dear brethren, I say to you with David : “ Trust in the Lord, and do good ; and dwell in the land, and thou shalt be fed with its riches. Delight in the Lord, and He will give thee the requests of thy heart.”⁴ Away with everything, prayers, devotions and holy things, which savor of superstition. When the plague has left a town, the inhabitants are wont to burn all their bedding and clothes, no matter how beautiful and costly they are, so as to destroy the least remnant of infectious matter, and to avert all danger of the plague return-

¹ *Universa, quæ habet, in manu tua sunt : tantum in eum ne extendas manum tuam.*—Job i. 12.

² *Dixit ergo Dominus ad Satan : Ecce in manu tua est : verumtamen animam illius serva.*—*Ibid.* ii. 6.

³ *Et deprecabantur eum spiritus dicentes : Mitte nos in porcos, ut in eos introeamus. Et concessit eis statim Jesus. Et exeuntes spiritus immundi introierunt in porcos.*—Mark v. 12, 13.

⁴ *Spera in Domino, et fac bonitatem : et inhabita terram, et pascere in divitiis ejus. Delectare in Domino : et dabit tibi petitiones cordis tui.*—Ps. xxxvi. 3, 4.

ing. In the same way, since our Lord has banished idolatry from the greater part of the earth, all the relics of this service of the devil should be burnt; that is, everything that has the least sign of superstition should be rejected, no matter how holy it appears to be. Let us put our hope in the Lord, in His infinite goodness and mercy, and in the intercession and merits of Mary, and of the angels and saints. But we must not be content with that alone; "Trust in the Lord, and do good;" do not only that which is good in itself, but that which will make you good. To hear Mass, and say the rosary, and give alms, are good works; but if you do them in the state of mortal sin, they will not make you good, nor will they help you much to salvation. With a good prayer on our lips, and confidence in our hearts, and good works in our hands, we shall find out the truth of the words: "How good is God to Israel, to them that are of a right heart;"¹ to those who serve Him constantly with faithful hearts. We shall find that the Lord can help us in our necessities, better than the spirit of lies, and that He can confer greater benefits on us. We shall find that he who trusts in the Lord, and serves Him, and loves Him above all things with all his heart, will not be confounded forever. Amen.

Another Introduction to the same sermon for the fourth Sunday of Advent.

Text.

Vox clamantis in deserto: Parate viam Domini: rectas facite semitas ejus.—Luke iii. 4.

"A voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight His paths."

Who is it who was crying out in the wilderness? He of whom the Gospel says: "The word of the Lord was made unto John, the Son of Zachary."² Therefore he was not one of those false prophets, who are ravening wolves in sheep's clothing, and who by their diabolical advice and help, bring souls to destruction, as we have seen already; but he was a true prophet, called to that office by the voice of God, to instruct the people. What did he teach? "Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight His paths." Mark these words, my dear brethren; "Make straight;" the path of the Lord must not be crooked, or uneven; you must keep the commandments with upright hearts,

¹ Quam bonus, Israel, Deus his, qui recto sunt corde!—Ps. lxxii. 1.

² Factum est verbum Domini super Joannem, Zachariæ filium.—Luke iii. 2.

and adore God in spirit and truth. So that the Gospel excludes all those lying deceits of which I have recently spoken, when I explained the different ways of committing superstition with natural things ; for superstition prepares the way for the devil, not for God. I shall continue the same subject ; for even the divine service, prayer, apparent good works and the holiest things, that should serve to prepare the way of the Lord, are often used superstitiously, by the pious through ignorance, by the wicked through malice, etc.—*continues as before.*

ON DISRESPECT TO GOD, AND HOLY THINGS.

THIRTY-FIRST SERMON.

ON BLASPHEMY.

Subject.

1. What blasphemy is. 2. What a terrible sin it is.—
Preached on the eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Text.

Hic blasphemat.—Matth. ix. 3.
“He blasphemeth.”

Introduction.

How blasphemous to think and say of the Most Holy Son of God, “He blasphemeth!” The Jews could not accuse Him of a more abominable, grievous and fearful sin. On other occasions, influenced by hatred and envy, they had called Him a disturber of the people, a drunkard, a sorcerer, who drove out devils in the name of the devil, etc. But all these accusations were as nothing compared to that of being a blasphemer, that is, one who assails the Almighty who is worthy of infinite honor and glory, with curses and injurious expressions. I will take occasion, my dear brethern, from the Gospel of to-day, to speak of this fearful sin, which is so common unfortunately, in order to make some reparation to the divine honor by inspiring all Christians with such a horror of this crime, that they will be shocked at the very name of it.

Plan of Discourse.

What is blasphemy? This I will answer briefly in the first part.

What a terrible sin it is. This I will show in the second part. The first part will be a short instruction ; the second will teach us that we must avoid and abhor this sin, more than any other.

O God of infinite holiness, there is question now of Thy honor ; by the honor shown Thee by the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the holy angels, I beg of Thee to give such force to my words, that I and all here present may henceforth only praise and bless Thee with lips and hearts.

There is
reason to be
afraid even
to speak of
blasphemy.

History tells us of the Emperor Nero, that in the beginning of his reign, he was of such a mild and gentle disposition, that when he was asked on one occasion to sign the death-warrant of a malefactor, he cried out, " Oh, why did I learn to write ? " ¹ Why must I now use my pen to sentence a man to death ? I too, might say the same, my dear brethren. Why have I learned to speak ; I might complain, why must I now use my tongue in order to speak to your ears and hearts of such a fearful crime as blasphemy ? If the holy Apostle, St. Paul, says that we should not even name the vice of impurity, on account of its foulness : " But all uncleanness . . . let it not so much as be named among you, as becometh saints ; " ² how much more will not that warning hold good of that most terrible sin which attacks directly the divine honor ? But, nevertheless, it must be spoken of, in order, as I have said, to make reparation to the divine honor by inspiring men with the greatest horror of such a crime, so that they will shudder at the very name of it.

What
blasphemy
is : how
many kinds
of it there
are.

Curses are often uttered in anger and impatience, which ignorant people sometimes look upon as blasphemies, but wrongly ; and there are many expressions in vogue which seem to be pious, but in reality are blasphemous. To be able then, to make the necessary distinction, we must first answer this question. In what does the sin of blasphemy consist ? St. Thomas, and all theologians with him, answer that it consists in using injurious or dishonoring expressions towards God, which assail any of His essential perfections, or affirm of Him something unworthy of His supreme majesty, or attribute to creatures what belongs to Him alone ; or else it consists in speaking of Him in a way that could be interpreted as dishonorable and unworthy His sovereign majesty, although the expressions used do not violate the truth.

The first is
that which

The first kind of blasphemy is committed by those unfortunate,

¹ Cur literas didici ?

² Omnis immunditia . . . nec nominetur in vobis, sicut decet sanctos.—Eph. v. 3.

miserable and wretched men, who, on account of losses, accidents, trials and miseries, murmur against divine Providence, and break out into the following, or similar complaints, (I protest before Thee, O God worthy of infinite honor and glory, that my only object in using words so unbecoming Thy supreme Majesty, is to deter others from using them.) Oh, there is no justice in Heaven any more ; God has forgotten me ; He seems to take a pleasure in tormenting me ; He cannot cause me greater torment than he is causing me now. What have I done that He should treat me so cruelly ? I have not sold Christ, at any rate, I have more to suffer than I deserve. Things have come to such a pass with me now, that God can no longer help me. I will not pray any more, nor do any good works, for God will not hear me in any case. My sins are too great and too numerous, God cannot forgive them, etc. All expressions of this kind are grievous blasphemies, because they attack the infinite wisdom, power, goodness, mercy and justice of God. There are others, whose blasphemous tongues assail the all-wise and inscrutable arrangements of God's Providence. Why, they think or say, should God look after me always ? He has enough to do without taking such interest in me and my belongings. God has not made a fair division of worldly goods ; He gives one too much, another too little, and nothing at all to a third ; one must suffer hunger, while another has abundance of everything, etc. God is not just in allowing that good and pious man to suffer so many afflictions, while He neglects to punish that worthless and wicked fellow. It seems that he who serves the devil, is better off and happier, than he who is faithful to God. It is easy to say that I must abandon myself to the arrangements of God's Providence ; if I do not make my own fortune, I need not expect much from them. It is not right for God to punish a whole country so severely, because thereby many innocent persons suffer along with the guilty, etc. People who indulge in blasphemy of this kind appear to think that they can govern the world better than the Almighty ; like the wicked king Alphonsus, who used to say in his foolish pride, " If I had been God's counsellor in the creation, I could have suggested many improvements to Him." Close your ears, Christians, against such horrid blasphemy !

To the second class of blasphemers, that is, to those who attribute something false or unbecoming to God, belong those who say, for instance, when it thunders : Now God is playing

deducts
from a di-
vine perfec-
tion.

The second,
that which
ascribes
something

unbecom-
ing to God,
or attributes
to creatures
what be-
longs to God
alone.

skittles ; or the drums are beating in Heaven ; or, Heaven is falling to pieces. Such people say sometimes to one who is praying : Oh, you are annoying God ; let Him have a little peace ; He has something else to do besides hearing what you have to say. If one is anxious about the future, they say, oh, leave it to God ; He had a wise mother. I dare not mention the terrible curses that are in vogue in the French and other languages ; such as, May God die, may He be destroyed, may He be accursed ; I tremble when I think of these expressions. Forgive me, O Lord, for having dared to utter them ! To the same class belong those who attribute to creatures, what belongs only to God, or to His saints ; this is done by way of showing affection, when some miserable creature is called by another, his god, his divinity, his chief treasure ; or in the expressions, as true as God lives, as true as Gospel, I am as innocent as the Virgin Mary, etc. Of these latter expressions Suarez says, that, although they may be excused from blasphemy, still they are not becoming, and they are injurious to God, because they affirm a human and fallible truth with a certainty that belongs only to divine truth.

The third
consists in
speaking in
a ridiculous
and unbecom-
ing
manner of
God and His
saints.

To the third class belong those who in cursing others, wish that they may be destroyed and ruined by what God has appointed for our welfare and eternal salvation. For instance, may the Blood of Christ, or the Death of Christ, or the Sacrament strike you dead. In a word, all expressions that contain contempt of God or of divine things, whether they are true or false ; as, for example : The man above is not of that kind ; God is a good man ; God is a cunning politician ; God knows me well, and He will not do anything to me ; the weather-man above must give us a good season ; He who is up there knows more about brewing, than we men do (when speaking of the difference between wine and beer) ; all these expressions are unbecoming, and derogatory to the reverence we owe the Most High. Again, there are people, such as half-atheists and desperate characters, who say ; I will believe and live as I will, and then God must give me the place in Heaven that I wish to have ; St. Peter and I are well acquainted, he will not fail to let me in, when I knock at the gate of Heaven ; what have I to do amongst the beggars and other low people in Heaven, I will find far more respectable company in hell. Further, when the words of Holy Scripture are used for a vain purpose, or to excite laughter, as is unfortunately often the case among Catholics ; such as when,

for example, he who encourages another to drink, says ; “ Let the sea be moved and the fulness thereof ; ” ¹ or when one has had a good deal to drink, and is said to be, “ in the brightness of the saints ; ” ² or when the wine is good : “ Give praise to the Lord, for he is good ; ” ³ or else, “ Lord, Thou hast proved me ; ” ⁴ if the wine is not worth much, they say ; “ Thou art found wanting ; ” ⁵ or when they want a candle lit at night, “ let there be light,” ⁶ and so on. All these expressions are disrespectful to God and to divine things. In this, then, my dear brethren, consists the sin of blasphemy. And what sort of a sin is it ? the most fearful of all ; as we shall see in the

Second Part.

We can deduce the grievous malice of a sin from three circumstances ; first when we consider who it is who is thereby attacked and offended ; secondly, who it is who offers the offence ; and thirdly, why it is that the offence is offered. From these three circumstances we shall see that blasphemy is a fearful sin, nay, as St. Thomas, following St. Jerome, says, “ Every sin seems small, when compared with blasphemy.” ⁷ For, in the first place, who is thereby attacked and dishonored ? The name itself of the sin tells us that. It is no other than the God of infinite wisdom, power and goodness, who is worthy of all honor and reverence, in whose honor thousands of happy princes of Heaven, Cherubim and Seraphim, with faces veiled through respect, sing their song of praise, “ Holy, holy, holy, Lord God, the heavens and the earth are full of Thy Glory.” This God is attacked, dishonored and insulted by the blasphemous tongue. And the insult is offered to Him directly. God is dishonored by every sin, as St. Paul says, writing to the Romans : “ Thou, by prevarication of the law, dishonorest God.” ⁸ O man, do you think of what you do, when you commit a sin, no matter what it is ? You dishonor God, because you refuse to do as He wishes you to do. But there is a great difference between blasphemy and other sins. I will explain it to you, my dear brethren, by a very common simile. He who transgresses the public com-

Blasphemy is a fearful sin, because it dishonors God.

And that directly, in His own Person.

¹ Moveatur mare, et plenitudo ejus.—Ps. xcvi. 7.

² In splendoribus sanctorum.—Ibid. cix. 3.

³ Confitemini Domino, quoniam bonus.—Ibid. cxvii.

⁴ Domine, probasti me.—Ibid. cxxxviii. 1.

⁵ Inventus es minus habens.—Dan. v. 27.

⁶ Fiat lux.—Gen. i. 3.

⁷ Omne peccatum comparatum blasphemie levius est.

⁸ Per prevaricationem legis Deum inhonoras.—Rom. ii. 23.

mand of his sovereign, dishonors him ; but it would be a far greater dishonor to ill-treat his servants ; a still greater one, if he were to ill-treat his courtiers and friends ; worse still if this were to occur at court in the presence of the sovereign himself ; and worse even than that, if he were to incite the subjects of his sovereign to rebellion. But the worst of all such crimes, which is called *lèse majesté*, is when a subject dares to attack and ill-treat the sovereign's own person ; that crime is so grievous that it is not condoned even in the holiest places, in churches, nor before the altar. Now, the gravity of that crime increases in proportion to the dignity of the sovereign. Who then, can explain the grievousness of the malice of him who attacks and dishonors God Himself, the great Monarch of Heaven and earth, whose foot-stool all the potentates of earth are not worthy to be ? And that is done by the crime of blasphemy.

Far worse
than other
sins.

Other vices are confined, so to speak, to God's creatures. Pride is a great vice, by which one arrogates to himself praise and honor that do not belong to him, and looks down haughtily on others. Injustice is a great sin, for by it the property of others is stolen and kept. Impurity is a great sin, which defiles both body and soul. Drunkenness is a great sin, by which a man deliberately deprives himself of the use of reason. Anger, hatred, envy, revenge, persecution, injuring others, detraction, cursing and swearing, all these are great sins, by which one gives vent to his ill feelings against the servants of God. Disrespect to priests and religious, indecent behavior in Church, are acts of insolence towards the ministers and servants of the Lord, which are committed in the house of God, and in His very presence. Scandal and leading others into sin are abominable sins, by which the subjects of God are incited to rebel against Him. But it still remains true that all these sins appear small when compared to blasphemy, for that is the only most terrible sin, which attacks God Himself directly, and dishonors Him. "Whom hast thou reproached, and whom hast thou blasphemed ?" was the question that God addressed to king Sennacherib by the Prophet Isaias, "against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thy eyes on high ? Against the holy one of Israel ;"¹ that is, thou hast vented thy anger against the Almighty God.

That insult
is offered by
a miserable

And (another circumstance that makes the injury still greater) who is it that dares to offer it ? "Who is this," I might

¹ Cui exprobasti, et quem blasphemasti ? contra quem exaltasti vocem tuam, et elevasti in excelsum oculos tuos ? contra Sanctum Israel.—IV. Kings xix. 22.

ask like the Pharisee in the Gospel of St. Luke, "who speaketh blasphemies?"¹ It is a poor mortal, a worm of the earth. Yes, it is he who, as Ballad describes him in the Book of Job, "is rottenness, and the son of man is a worm."² He who is utterly powerless, and who must depend on God for everything, dares to open his insolent mouth against Heaven, and to use the tongue which he cannot even move without God's help, in cursing and reviling the Almighty! And what kind of men are they, who are guilty of such a grievous crime? Are they Turks, heathens, or idolators? It would be less intolerable on the part of such as those. "If my enemy had reviled me, I would verily have borne with it," is the complaint that our Lord makes by the Psalmist, "And if he that hated me, had spoken great things against me; I would perhaps have hid myself from him."³ But they are Christians, and who would believe it, if he had not experience of it? They are Christians brought up in the house and true Church of God, who have been consecrated in baptism as friends and children of God, relations and brethren of Jesus Christ, who often eat the bread of angels at the table of the Lord, and who are called to be heirs of the kingdom of Heaven. They are Christians who, in preference to all other people, receive abundant graces and benefits every day, every hour, every moment, from God. Christians, who, according to the testimony of St. Peter, are, "A chosen generation, . . . a holy nation," who have been chosen by God for the one purpose only, "that you may declare His virtues, who hath called you out of darkness, into His marvellous light."⁴ And I ask, must Christians revile God, blaspheme Him and curse Him? The Turks are severely punished, if they mention even the name of their Prophet Mahomet in anger; nay, although they are sworn enemies of the Christian religion, they dare not curse by the name of Jesus Christ, whom they reverence as a great Prophet. But Christians, who adore Jesus Christ as their God, who uncover their heads and bend the knee, whenever this Holy Name is mentioned, treat that Name so disrespectfully, revile and blaspheme it, whenever they get into the least passion, or anything is said or done to vex them! What a shame! What intolerable wickedness!

mortal, and
even by a
Christian.

¹ Quis est hic, qui loquitur blasphemias?—Luke v. 21.

² Homo putredo, et filius hominis vermis.—Job xxv. 6.

³ Si inimicus meus maledixisset mihi, sustinuissem utique. Et si is, qui oderat me, super me magna locutus fuisset, abscondissem me forsitan ab eo.—Ps. lxx. 13.

⁴ Genus electum, . . . gens sancta . . . ut virtutes annuntietis ejus, qui de tenebris vos vocavit in admirabile lumen suum.—I. Pet. ii. 9.

And that
without
reaping any
advantage
from it.

And why should we give way to blasphemy? O my God, says St. Augustine with bitter tears, in the second book of his Confessions, how is it possible for a man to be so wicked, as to seek nothing by sinning, but to sin against and offend Thee? Is a man given to the lusts of the flesh? Alas, there is nothing wonderful in that! Corporal beauty and sensual pleasure are very powerful attractions, that offer a gentle violence to the human heart. Is a man given to avarice and injustice? He is blinded by a love of riches, which will help him to supply all his wants. Is a man ambitious? The mind is easily captivated by the praise of others and by the desire of their esteem. And yet, O God, although we are born with those inclinations, not one of them should be sufficient to induce us to violate Thy holy law! But alas, it is for the purpose of satisfying those inclinations that sin is committed! Ask one who has killed another, why he has done so. Either to get his money, he will answer, or through fear of being injured by him, or through desire of revenge and having satisfaction for an insult. If he were to say that he knows not why he killed the man, unless it was to have the pleasure of killing him, we should hardly believe him. Such are the words, my dear brethren, in which St. Augustine bewails the sin of theft that he committed in his youth, by stealing berries out of a garden, not through fondness for them, but through sheer love of mischief. And it is in that way, but very much worse, that blasphemers act, whenever they speak so as to dishonor God; for there is nothing whatever to impel them to such a sin, but a desire of reviling and insulting the Almighty. Tell me, blasphemer, what pleasure or profit do you find in speaking so disrespectfully of God, in cursing by the holy Sacraments, or by the Blood and Death of Christ, in treating the divine Majesty so contemptuously, or in making such a profane use of the word of God? Do you find any bodily pleasure in it? Does it make you richer or more influential in the world? You gain nothing of the kind, as you yourself must acknowledge. What then, induces you to commit such a fearful sin? Nothing but your more than diabolical malice in venting your anger against your Creator.

And with-
out any
reason to
impel one
to it.

Wretched mortal, what harm has your Creator done you? How has he ill-treated you, that you thus revile Him and insult Him? "O my people," He asks by the prophet Micheas, "what have I done to thee, or in what have I molested thee? answer thou Me."¹ Dear Christians whom I have purchased with My

¹ Popule meus, quid feci tibi, aut quid molestus fui tibi? responde mihi.—Mich. vi. 3.

precious Blood, what harm have I done you ? Have I ever given you the least cause to be angry with Me, that you now attack Me and My name so fiercely ? Have I not given you countless proofs of the most tender, fatherly love ? I never cease doing good to you for a moment, and, ungrateful mortals that you are, you repay My benefits by such shameful injuries. “For seventy years,” says St. Polycarp, when his persecutors tried to induce him to deny God, “God has done me nothing but good; why should I deny Him ?” Blasphemous Christians, how many years of your lives are now past, during which you have been enjoying the benefits bestowed on you by God ? How can you dare to blaspheme His holy Name ? No tyrant threatens you with torture, there is neither wheel, nor gallows, nor sword, nor lance, nor rack, nor gridiron to force you to foreswear your God and to curse Him ; there is no one in the world who threatens you with death, no one who promises you either pleasure or profit; there is nothing that can compel or induce you to blaspheme, and yet you insult God so grossly ! Your sin then, can only proceed from sheer diabolical malice.

From more than diabolical malice, I have said already; for, according to St. Gregory Nazianzen, the devils tremble at the name of Jesus Christ.¹ Nay, although the devils hate God, they have often showed their horror at the blasphemies of which men are guilty. Athanasius Kircher relates that in Austria there are certain mines of gold and other metals, in which there are often seen demons in the form of dwarfs, who are very industrious in helping the miners to dig out the metals, and never do them the least harm. But, mark this, my dear brethren, if the overseers, or the workmen get into a passion and give way to blasphemy, those demons at once get into a rage, refuse to work any more, and often beat those who are guilty of blaspheming. Whether they do that through pride, and not being able to tolerate the insolence with which man dares thus to insult God; or through hatred of God, so that they cannot bear to hear His name pronounced, even for the purpose of dishonoring it; or through the fear that the name of God inspires them with, even when it is blasphemed; this much at all events, is certain, that they get angry with the blasphemers, and thus put men to shame, who do not hesitate to do what the devils even are shocked at. It may be that the demons in hell are always blaspheming God; still the blasphemies of men are more wicked, and less to be excused.

The blasphemy of men is worse than that of the devils and the reprobate.

¹ Dæmones ad Christi nomen exhorrescunt.

For when the demons blaspheme, they do it only in thought and desire ; while you, oh man, do it both with thought and word ! The cursing and blasphemies of the demons and lost souls are certainly great sins ; but at the same time, they are a punishment for sin, which they must suffer forever ; and therefore God is glorified by that punishment ; in the same way that the just judge, who has condemned a malefactor to death, is not hurt, or offended by the insults or abuse that the latter heaps on him ; but rather looks on it as an honor to be so abused. But your blasphemies are sins in which God finds nothing but insult and injury. The reprobate curse God on account of the severe tortures they have to suffer ; and there is pity for the wretch who is impaled alive, or broken on the wheel. But you, oh Christian, who have received nothing but benefits from God, what reason have you to offend Him by your blasphemous tongue ?

How wrong
to blas-
pheme
through
anger and
passion.

I do not do it, you say, with deliberation, much less out of hatred towards God. If I let fall a blasphemous expression, it is because I am in a passion ; and if another does something to vex me, I must say something to make him afraid of me. Oh, what a fine excuse that is ! Even if your anger is just (and if it is not, you commit another sin by it), must you give vent to it against One who is innocent, and who has not given you the least cause for anger ? Is God to be blamed, if others vex you ? Did Christ shed His Blood, and institute the Sacraments, only to give you the means of frightening others by dishonoring Him and His holy Name, and His Sacraments ? Suppose that your own son, while you are actually working for his support, had a quarrel with another boy, and came up to you and gave you a box on the ear, saying, immediately after, forgive me, father ; I did not mean to hurt you ; I was in a passion. What would you say in a case like that ? Oh, my son, you would exclaim, why do you beat me ? I have done you no harm ! You should keep your anger for him who has vexed you. Even if I were not your father, but a complete stranger to you, you would have no right to treat me in that way, since I have done nothing to offend you ; and now you dare to attack me, your father ? Me, from whom you have received your life, and to whom you owe your support, and who am occupied at this very moment in working for you ? Have you lost your senses ? See, such, but far more grievous, is the injury you offer to God by your blasphemous words and curses. Your servants happen to break something in your house, or they do not obey you, because they do not understand what

you want; your children are obstinate and disobedient; your wife is sulky and disagreeable; a dog runs between your legs, and trips you; you get into a rage, and curse and blaspeme the name of God. Is your anger any excuse for your blasphemy? Has God done you any harm? No, certainly not; and He has just reason to complain of your conduct; your servant, or child, or wife, He might say, has vexed you, why do you ill-treat Me? If you are determined not to obey My law, and restrain your anger, then at least let it fall on those who have deserved it. If I were not your God, your Creator, your Redeemer; If you had nothing to hope or fear from Me, you would still be acting unjustly towards Me; but as it is, you insult Me, who have given you your being and all that you have, out of pure liberality. You insult Me, who redeemed, and saved you from hell, who have preserved you up to the present moment, and done you more good than you can understand, and who am still actually occupied in doing good to you. Must I then pay for the injuries inflicted on you by others? Yes, O God of infinite glory, so unjustly do many act towards Thee! Reason enough hast Thou to complain by Thy Prophet Isaias: "My name is continually blasphemed all the day long."¹ Canst Thou hear all those blasphemies, O great God, and still remain silent? Dost Thou suffer men to speak so contemptuously of Thee? "How long shall the wicked, O Lord," I might cry out with Thy servant David, "how long shall the wicked make their boast?" How long shall they utter and speak wrong things? Lift up Thyself, Thou that judgest the earth: render a reward to the proud,"² who rebel so maliciously against Thee. "Arise, O God, judge Thy own cause;"³ show by some extraordinary punishment, how deeply Thou feelest an insult to Thy infinite Majesty! Let those daring sinners feel what it is to blaspheme their God!

But I need not continue this prayer any longer, my dear brethren. There is no doubt that God has often shown, and will often show how He hates blasphemy. Wonderful stories are related of the punishment inflicted on blasphemers; some of them were struck by lightning, and dropped down dead on the spot in which their blasphemy was uttered; others were consumed by fire that fell from Heaven; others were swallowed up

Therefore God justly punishes this sin in a remarkable manner.

¹ Jugiter tota die nomen meum blasphematur.—Isa. lii. 5.

² Usquequo peccatores, Domine: usquequo peccatores gloriabuntur: effabuntur, et loquerentur iniquitatem. Exaltare, qui judicas terram: redde retributionem superbis.—Ps. xciii. 3, 4, 2.

³ Exurge, Deus, judica causam tuam.—Ibid. lxxiii. 22.

by the earth; others were carried off visibly to hell by devils, a punishment that, according to the holy Pope, St. Gregory, who describes it in detail, was inflicted once on a child of ten years of age; this child had just uttered a blasphemous expression it had learned from its father, when the devil appeared, snatched it out of its father's arms, and carried it off to hell. Thomas Cantipratanus writes that Simon of Tournay, a celebrated doctor of Paris, once blasphemed Jesus Christ, and said that He had deceived the world, when he suddenly fell down like a slaughtered ox, and died raving mad in three days. A still more terrible incident is related by Father Theophilus Rainaud. The son of a widow came home one evening with two companions, rather late from hunting; he knocked at the door, but on account of the lateness of the hour, no one came to open it, whereupon he got into a great passion, and began to curse his mother, and then God and the saints, in such fearful language that his companions were quite shocked. At last they were obliged to take shelter in another house, in which the three of them had to occupy the same bed. As soon as the light was put out, the devil, in the appearance of a hunter accompanied by large black dogs, entered the room, took away the blasphemer from between the two others, stretched him out on the table, hacked him in pieces just as a butcher does meat in the shambles, and threw the flesh bit by bit to the dogs, until they had devoured all of it. That is all I have been told to do, said the devil to the other two young men who were more dead than alive, and with these words he disappeared; nor was there ever the least trace of the blasphemer's body found. I will pass over the punishments that an angry God sometimes inflicts on whole countries and kingdoms on account of the sin of blasphemy alone; merely mentioning what occurred to King Robert of France. This pious king was once praying for peace in his kingdom, when our Lord appeared to him and said: "You will not have peace, Robert, until you have extirpated the vice of blasphemy from your kingdom."¹ Those blasphemers who have not such remarkable punishments to suffer in this life, will have all the more to dread in eternity from the anger of God. Hear how the old Tobias speaks: "For they shall call upon the great name in Thee. They shall be cursed that shall despise Thee; and they shall be condemned that shall blaspheme Thee."²

¹ Pacem non habebis Roberte, priusquam blasphemias e regno extirpaveris.

² Nomen enim magnum invocabunt in te. Maledicti erunt, qui contemserint te, et condemnati erunt omnes, qui blasphemaverint te.—Tob. xlii. 15, 16.

My dear brethren, I can guess what your thoughts are now. You think that this sermon is not of any use to you, because none of you can be accused of this terrible crime. I hope that such is the case. But that your presence here may not be in vain, I beg of you all, by way of conclusion, in the words of St. John Chrysostom, to help in the work of abolishing the vice of blasphemy and defending the honor of God. If you hear any one in your houses, or in the street, speaking disrespectfully of God, or blaspheming His holy name, admonish that person, and if necessary, "sanctify your hand by giving him a blow on the cheek."¹ What judge would punish you for doing that to one who speaks disrespectfully of his sovereign, to defend whose honor one should be ready to shed one's blood? If you cannot, or dare not do that, then at least make an act of heartfelt compassion with your God, endeavor to give Him all the more glory, the more shamefully He is insulted by impious blasphemers. Pious souls, I have another request to make of you, and that is, that you unite your sighs with my voice, in order to atone for the slights and insults that are so frequently offered to the divine majesty. O great God, in the name of all here present, I praise, bless and magnify Thy most holy Name! I implore Thy pardon and mercy if I have ever been in the least irreverent in speaking of Thee. I beg also for mercy for all the blasphemies that the wicked have ever uttered against Thee! To atone for the insults offered Thee, I implore of Thee to accept all the prayers and praises of all pious and well-meaning souls; I offer Thee all the blessings that have been uttered in Thy honor from the beginning of the world; all the praise and homage shown Thee by the choirs of angels; all the thanksgivings that Thy elect shall render Thee through all eternity; all the merits and good works with which the most Blessed Virgin Mary served Thee most perfectly; and besides, I offer Thee all the infinite treasure of satisfaction that the Sacred Humanity of Jesus has left us! Far be it from me, and from all here present, to speak of Thy holy Name and of anything belonging to Thee, otherwise than with the greatest respect! We desire that all our thoughts, words and actions, and all our movements of body and soul should be so many acts of praise to Thee in union with that eternal hymn of praise, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God!" To Thee be praise, honor and glory forever. Amen.

Conclusion
and exhortation to defend God's honor against blasphemers.

¹ Percussione manum tuam sanctificā.

THIRTY-SECOND SERMON.

ON UNWORTHY COMMUNION.

Subject.

1. To approach the Table of the Lord in the state of sin is to treat Jesus Christ most unjustly. 2. Yet there are many who treat Him thus.—*Preached on the second Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Dico autem vobis: Quod nemo vivorum illorum, qui vocati sunt, gustabit cœnam meam.—Luke xiv. 24.

“ But I say unto you, that none of those men that were invited shall taste of my supper.”

Introduction.

What a futile excuse that; I have bought a farm ! And what if you have ? Does that prevent you from going to the Supper ? Oh, I must go and see it ! You should have done that before buying it, so as to see whether it suits you or not. I have bought five yoke of oxen. Well, does that prevent you from accepting the invitation ? I must see them. What ? In the evening, with the dark night coming on ? I have married a wife. And if you have, do you not want food or drink any more ? The fact is, you could all have excused yourselves in shorter terms, and more in accordance with truth, by saying, I will not come. My dear brethren, by the great Supper, we understand the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, to which our Lord invites all men in the most friendly manner, that they may frequently receive His Flesh and Blood in the Holy Communion. But how many refusals He receives from most people, who approach this holy Table but very seldom ! How many vain excuses are invented and put forward by people who try to persuade themselves that they cannot communicate frequently ! On another occasion I will complain of this tepidity, when I shall exhort you to frequent Communion. To-day I must complain still more bitterly of those Christians who communicate far too often and too readily, and who would do better by abstaining from Communion altogether. If I knew who they were, I should have just cause for crying out to them, when they approach the altar rails:

Away with you! Keep away from here! This Table is not prepared for you! I tell you that not one of you shall partake of it. And who are they? I mean those alone who receive Holy Communion with an impure conscience, in the state of sin. What a fearful sin they commit! And how many Catholics there are who are guilty of it! As we shall now see.

Plan of Discourse.

To approach the Table of the Lord in the state of sin, is to treat Jesus Christ most unjustly. This I will show in the first and longer part. Yet there are many who treat Him thus; as I shall complain in the second part. Sinners, either do penance, and amend your lives; or else abstain from Holy Communion: pious souls, continue to communicate all the more frequently: such will be the conclusion.

Help us all to this, O dearest Saviour, through the intercession of Thy Virgin Mother Mary, and our holy angels guardian.

As I have said on the former occasion, the greatest insult that a creature can offer to God, is blasphemy; and that, because it is a crime against the divine Majesty. The same truth is the foundation of my present subject, that to receive Holy Communion in the state of sin, is to treat Jesus Christ most unjustly; for amongst the crimes that attack the divine Majesty directly, it is one of the greatest, since by it Christ is shamefully ill-used. To speak insultingly of a king, especially in his presence, is a most intolerable crime against human majesty, and is punished with death; and yet it is committed only by words which are carried away by the wind, and inflict no wound. But to attack the king's person, when he is seated on his throne, surrounded by his attendants and courtiers, or when he is passing in state through the streets, or when he is seated at a public banquet; to attack him then and plunge a dagger in his heart, would be a crime that no one but a madman would commit, or dream of. For where could a sovereign expect the reverence to be shown to him, to which he is entitled, when he is not sure of his life, even on his throne, or seated at his table?

See, oh Christian, such is the insolence, or rather madness you are guilty of, when you dare to receive Holy Communion in the state of sin. You pierce with a sword of sorrow the Heart of Jesus, your Lord, the King of kings, when you receive His most sacred Flesh and Blood with a heart and conscience defiled by sin. "Therefore," says St. Paul to the Corinthians, "who-

To insult a king publicly on his throne, or to kill him, is one of the greatest crimes of treason.

Such is the crime of him who communicates unworthily; he attacks and kills Christ on his

throne, and
seated at
His table.

soever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and of the Blood of the Lord.”¹ That is, as the Gloss says: “He shall be punished as if he had actually killed our Lord.”² It is the living bread as our Lord says in the Gospel of St. John: “I am the living bread, which came down from Heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give, is my Flesh for the life of the world.”³ This life you destroy by an unworthy Communion; for you cause its efficacy to be destroyed in you, and you make it kill your soul, instead of causing it to live. It is true, according to St. Paul, that every mortal sin crucifies and slays again the Son of God: “Crucifying again to themselves the Son of God;”⁴ still that is done in a moral sense by disgracing His image impressed on the human soul, which dies by sin; but in an unworthy Communion the Prototype Himself has to suffer; since He is present in His own sacred and divine person under the appearance of bread and wine; as St. Peter Damian says: “In other things we offend God in His creatures, but in this, we offend Him in His own person,”⁵ and that too, while He is seated at His own table, where He offers Himself to His dear friends as their food and drink; on His throne of glory, surrounded by angels, who wait on Him; and in His public triumph in which He shows Himself to receive the adoration of all.

Where He
wishes to
be specially
honored.

According to the Holy Fathers, the chief end our Lord had in view in instituting the Blessed Sacrament, was, that He might be repaid on earth for all the labor and trouble, the frequent hunger and thirst, the watching and fasting, the pains and torments, the insults and injuries, that His sacred Body had to endure during His thirty-three years’ life on earth; and that all the members of the true Church should henceforth show Him all the more humble homage and all the greater honor, in proportion to the insults and contumely He endured for their sake. From the very beginning up to the present time, the Catholic Church has distinguished herself by paying the greatest honor to the Blessed Sacrament; therefore we build churches, and have them consecrated, because the hidden God,

¹ Itaque quicumque manducaverit panem hunc, vel biberit calicem Domini indigne, reus erit corporis et sanguinis Domini.—I. Cor. xi. 27.

² Ac si Christum occiderit, punietur.

³ Ego sum panis vivus, qui de celo descendi. Si quis manducaverit ex hoc pane, vivet in æternum, et panis, quem ego dabo, caro mea est pro mundi vita.—John vi. 51, 52.

⁴ Rursum crucifigentes sibi metipsos Filium Dei.—Heb. vi. 6.

⁵ In reliquis Deum offendimus in rebus suis, hic autem in persona tua.

really and bodily present, takes up His abode in them. Altars are erected and adorned, because every day the bread and wine are changed on them into the Body and Blood of Christ; day and night, candles and lamps burn before the tabernacle; all who enter the church, bend the knee in profound adoration before Him; the people follow Him with uncovered heads in public processions; when He is carried through the streets to the sick, all good Christians, who happen to pass by, show Him honor by accompanying Him, and even princes, kings and emperors have not hesitated to do the same. (Good Christians, I say; for they who, having the opportunity, do not show our Lord that much respect, give sufficient proof, either that they have little faith in the great Lord who is present in the Blessed Sacrament, or that they are ignorant of the proper mode of behaving towards Him.) In a word, as the learned and pious Duns Scotus says: "Nearly every devotion of the Church is directed to the Blessed Sacrament,"¹ in order to show honor to it. See now, wicked Christian, what you do, when you dare to receive Holy Communion in the state of sin; you attack the King and Lord of Hosts when He is publicly seated on His throne of honor and glory; you cast Him into the mire of sin, and thus cause Him a moral suffering and death, which He feels far more acutely, than that He had to suffer long ago at the hands of the Jews and the executioners; and therefore the holy Fathers call an unworthy Communion a renewing and increasing of the Passion and death of Jesus Christ.

One of the bitterest pangs our Lord felt in His Passion was caused by the treason of His Apostle Judas; and that, because the traitor kissed his Master under the appearance of friendship. This was the only complaint that our Lord made to His murderers. "Judas," said He, "dost thou betray the Son of man with a kiss?"² As if He wished to add: My friend, the kiss I give thee comes from a heart that loves thee truly; but it is not so with thy kiss. If thou desirest to deliver Me into the hands of My enemies, why didst thou not do so in another way? Thou couldst have given them another sign, and said: There is He whom you wish to capture; go and seize Him, and drag Him away. It would Have caused Me less pain, than to betray Me to My sworn enemies by means of a sign of friendship and love. How couldst thou be so wicked as to betray Me by a

The unworthy communion treats Jesus worse than Judas did.

¹ Quasi omnis devotio in Ecclesia est in ordine ad hoc Sacramentum !

² Juda, osculo Filium hominis tradis?—Luke xxii. 48.

kiss? This hypocrisy the traitor was guilty of, while our Lord was still on earth, in the garb of poverty, and when He offered Himself freely to His Father, as a sacrifice for our sins. How much more keenly must not His heart feel the pang caused by the hypocrisy of some Christians, His own beloved children, who, while He is actually seated on His throne of honor and glory, approach Him with down-cast eyes, modest and humble demeanor, and folded hands, not merely to give Him a kiss, but to receive Him into their breasts, that they may treacherously stab Him to the heart, and imbue their hands in His Sacred Blood (for, as our faith teaches, that is what unworthy communicants do)? How much more bitterly our Lord could complain of such traitors! "Judas, dost thou betray the Son of man with a kiss?" Treacherous and perjured Christians, what are you thinking of, that you dare to receive Me in that manner? Do you wish to offend Me publicly? Do you wish to treat Me as your enemy, although I have never given you the least cause to do so? If so, then do not come to Me in the guise of friendship; do not give Me any signs of love; dishonor Me if you are wicked and ungrateful enough to do so; but do it in such a way, that all may see what you mean, and what your feelings are towards Me. Remain away from My Table altogether, and you will cause Me less pain, than by burying Me in your polluted conscience, and thus committing a twofold sin.

He mocks
Christ, as
the Jews
did.

The next insult that, in my opinion, must have caused our Lord great pain during His Passion, was the mockery with which the soldiers and executioners treated Him, when they publicly scorned Him as a mock-king. Jesus is the King of glory; but then He was a Teacher of humility, clad in an old purple garment, with a crown of thorns on His head, and a reed in His hands as sceptre, with a hard stone for a throne; in that guise He was surrounded by a crowd of soldiers and executioners, who, amidst bursts of derisive laughter, frequently smote Him on the cheek, and bending the knee before Him in mockery, cried out: "Hail King of the Jews!" Ye heavens, how could you bear that spectacle! And yet, presumptuous Christian, do you not ill-treat in the same manner your glorified Saviour, who is now reigning in triumph as King of Heaven, when you receive Holy Communion in the state of sin? You bend the knee, and bow the head before His altar, you humble yourself and beat your breast, and adore Him with folded hands, and

thus you outwardly show Him all reverence; but what is it all, but mocking and laughing at your God as a mock-king; for your heart is still embittered against Him, and you buffet Him anew by the fearful sacrilege you are committing?

Finally, the Jews nailed our Lord to the Cross, and thus put Him to death. But you, false Christians, nail Him to a far more painful and disgraceful cross than the sinless tree was. For you shut Him up in a foul prison, where He must put up with sin, than which nothing is more intolerable to Him, as his companion. They who crucified Him in former times, knew Him not, and looked upon Him as a poor, lowly mortal, who was condemned to a shameful death by the judge's sentence; "for" as St. Paul says: "if they had known it, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory."¹ But you, when you approach the holy Table, and receive Holy Communion, know well and believe that He whom you are receiving, is your God, your Saviour, your future Judge, and your greatest Benefactor, for you know and believe that this Sacrament, which you so shamefully abuse with your impure conscience, is the most noble gift of God, a gift that man would never have thought of expecting, if God Himself, the Infallible Truth, had not told us that He had really conferred it on us. On the Cross Christ readily fulfilled the will of His heavenly Father, redeemed the world by His Blood, and restrained the power of the devil; that sweetened the bitterness of His painful death, so that He longed for it, and had no rest until His desire for death was satisfied. But in your sacrilegious Communion He is tortured against His will; on the cross to which you nail Him, He finds nothing but ingratitude, inhuman malice, and everything that can deserve His hatred, His curse, and His reprobation.

It would make one's hair stand on end to hear of the fearful profanations that Christ has had to suffer in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, from heretics, Jews, sorcerers and other impious people. The contemptuous names that they have for Him in their writings, as a God of bread, as a blind and ignorant God, are the least virulent expressions of their blasphemous malice. How often have they not plundered consecrated churches, trampled the sacred Host under foot, and given it to the dogs and cats to be devoured by them? How often have not the Jews pierced the sacred Host with knives, until the blood poured miraculously from it, burned it, cooked it, hung it up in their

He hangs
our Lord on
a more
shameful
cross, than
the Jews
did.

And treats
Him worse
than did all
the Jews,
heretics and
sorcerers
who ever
profaned
this Sacra-
ment.

¹ Si enim cognovissent, nunquam Dominum gloriæ crucifixissent.—I. Cor. ii. 8.

chimneys, and buried it in their secret chambers. What shall I say of those sorcerers and witches who used the Flesh and Blood of Christ, under the appearance of bread, for purposes of witchcraft, sacrificed it to a foul he-goat, that is, to the devil, on their sabbaths, and desecrated it in various ways? There are many such crimes on record, which are enough to make the demons themselves tremble with horror; much more must I shudder at the bare thought of them. And yet, what is it all, when compared to the insult offered to the Son of God by an unworthy Communion? With the exception of the profanations of those unnatural people, which are grievous enough as far as the malice of the will is concerned (although heretics and Jews thus ill-treated the Blessed Sacrament, more out of contempt for Catholics, than through hatred of Christ), all the other profanations are not so intolerable to our Lord's Person, as to be received in the Holy Communion in the state of mortal sin. To be torn to pieces, burnt, and thrown into filthy cess-pools is bad enough; but still those places have not any moral wickedness in themselves; they are clean in the eyes of God, compared to the conscience that is defiled by mortal sin; for that is the only thing that is really repulsive in the sight of God, and if our Lord had to make the choice, He would certainly prefer to be thrown on a dunghill, rather than be buried in the heart of a sinner.

Shown by
an example.

I will prove this by a short example taken from the Annals of our Society. In the year 1601, in the Philippine Islands, there was a young man who had committed a secret sin, that he was ashamed to confess; he went to Communion, but hardly had he swallowed the Sacred Host, when he felt such violent pains, that he had to crawl rather than walk out of the church. As soon as he got outside he was attacked by a fit of vomiting, and rejected the Sacred Species, which were still intact; when he was immediately freed from the pain. Evidently our Lord wished to show thereby, that it was more tolerable for Him to be thrown into a filthy corner, than to remain any longer in a heart defiled by mortal sin. Yet, that is not saying half enough; for, as a certain author remarks: "Hell is a more suitable place for the Almighty God, than the house of a sinner."¹ And why? Because in hell He is a Lord of vengeance and a just Judge, who punishes His wicked enemies with deserved torments; whereas in the heart of the sinner, He is compelled

¹ *Aptior plane locus Deo esset infernus, quam domus peccatrix.*

to lie, like a prisoner, in a loathsome dungeon, where He is kept, so to speak, only for the purpose of being tortured.

Oh man, see how shamefully you ill-treat your Saviour, when you receive Holy Communion in the state of sin ! What in the name of God can you be thinking of, as you kneel at the altar rails, with your conscience reproaching you, as it must do, with mortal sin ? What does your heart feel, I ask you, when you see the priest coming towards you with the Sacred Host in his hand, and you open your mouth to receive it, into your sinful bosom ? Are you not afraid of your Judge ? Do you not tremble before the Almighty, in whose presence the purest spirits of Heaven are penetrated with a reverential awe ? Do you not fear that the lightning will fall from Heaven, and strike you dead on the spot, or that the earth will open to swallow you up ? Do you not dread the fate that happened to many, that you will be struck blind at the altar rails, or become possessed by the devil ? Ah Christians, is it possible that, among Catholics, any one can be found so presumptuous as to dare to receive Holy Communion in the state of mortal sin ? What do you think, pious souls ? I suppose you can hardly believe that Christians are guilty of such wickedness ? Ah, would to God that such were the case ! For, only too often, as I fear, is that fearful sin committed by Catholics. The cause of this fear I will tell you in the

Therefore, an unworthy communion is a fearful sin.

Second Part.

There are many kinds of people who generally receive Holy Communion in the state of mortal sin ; namely, the unchaste, the vindictive, the unjust, the culpably ignorant ; I will say nothing of those who communicate through sheer malice. First, with regard to the unchaste ; how many are there not of both sexes, both married and single, and God grant that there may be none of this kind even among persons consecrated to God ! who make a custom of this sin ? For they sin either with themselves, or with others for years and years ; and during that time their desires tend to illicit intercourse with others, and they either remain in the same house, or otherwise in the proximate occasion of sin with their accomplice, or if the occasion is wanting to them, they have at least a constant desire for sins of impurity, like invalids who, when they are forbidden certain kinds of food and drink, esteem those happy who are allowed to enjoy them. Meanwhile, they communicate several times a year, what are such people thinking of ? oh, they say, we go to

There are many who commit that sin ; namely the unchaste.

Confession beforehand. God help them ! what a poor Confession theirs is ! For they can have neither true sorrow nor purpose of amendment, since they remain in the occasion of sin; and thus they burden their souls with a new sacrilege. All their Communion are bad and sacrilegious.

The vindictive.

Secondly, the vindictive. I mean those who for a long time have been at enmity and variance with their neighbor ; and who, although they say with the lips, I forgive him, and bear no ill-will to him, yet avoid him through spite and refuse to salute him; burst almost with envy when they hear him praised, and exult with a secret joy when they hear of his misfortunes; and if they are in the same trade or employment, do their best to ruin him. Alas, how many people there are who communicate in that state ! Neighbors, relations, sometimes brothers and sisters go every month to the Table of the Lord, and yet they hardly speak to each other once in the month, through hatred and ill-will. Is that the way to make a worthy Communion ? Does not Christ expressly say in the Gospel of St. Matthew: "If therefore thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee : Leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother ; and then coming, thou shalt offer thy gift."¹ If you do not accuse yourselves of those things in Confession, what sort of a Confession do you make ? For you are acting in flagrant violation of the law of Christ : "But I say to you ; Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you, etc."² If you confess those sins each time, but without the intention of being reconciled to your enemy, and are nevertheless allowed to go to Holy Communion, what sort of a confessor have you ? You must know that all your Communion are sacrilegious.

The unjust.

Thirdly, the unjust, who possess wrongfully what belongs to others, and do not restore it when they can and ought to restore it. Alas, how many there are who know, or at least ought to know, that that piece of land, that house, that money, or whatever it may be, does not lawfully belong to them, and still continue to keep possession of it ! How many also know that their parents, or ancestors, whose property they have inherited, contracted debts here and there, which have not yet

¹ Si ergo offers munus tuum ad altare, et ibi recordatus fueris, quia frater tuus habet aliquid adversum te, relinque ibi munus tuum ante altare, et vade prius reconciliare fratri tuo, et tunc veniens offeres munus tuum.—Matth. v. 23-24.

² Ego autem dico vobis : Diligite inimicos vestros, benefacite his, qui oderunt vos, etc.—Ibid. 44.

been paid, and who do not pay those debts, because through mistake on the part of the creditors no demand has been made for them ! How many who know that they oppress the poor unjustly, and wilfully cause them loss and injury ; who know that they defraud their laborers and servants of their wages, either wholly or partially ; who know that they have exacted an usurious interest from the needy on account of the distress in which the latter are ! How many there are who are conscious of having tried to secure an unjust judgment by bribery and corruption, or otherwise to cheat their opponents out of their rights ! How many who have knowingly bought stolen things, or kept what they found without looking for the owner, or cheated in buying, selling, or in other ways ; and yet keep all they have thus unjustly gained without the intention of making restitution, or indemnifying the other for the losses caused him, and who remain in that state for ten or twenty years, or even longer, and go to Confession and Communion all the time on the usual days ! O my God, what sacrilegious Confessions and Communions those are ! who can count the number of them ! Still these latter may yet open their eyes, see the gravity of their sins, repent of their unworthy Confessions and Communions and so obtain forgiveness.

But what hope is there for the fourth class, which is by far the most numerous ? They flatter themselves when they go to Communion, that they are in the state of grace ; and yet they are mistaken. They imagine they have no mortal sin on their conscience, and yet they have enough of them, and that through sheer culpable ignorance, because they do not want to know anything of the sinful lives they lead. They consist, first, of those who have become accustomed to a certain vice, such as drunkenness, detraction, cursing, swearing and other sins, which they confess each time, but never repent of. They think that it is enough for them to tell everything clearly in Confession, and that then they need give themselves no further trouble. They never think of the sorrow and purpose of amendment, which, humanly speaking, it is impossible for them to have with sincerity ; at least, the fact of their continued relapses into their former sins shows sufficiently that neither their Confessions nor their Communions have had any effect on their souls ; for these two Sacraments, if received properly, frequently, and with good dispositions, must necessarily purify the soul, and sanctify it. There are others who live in a state of indifference ; they trouble

Those who
are in sin
through
culpable
ignorance.

themselves little as to whether their actions are good or bad; they are culpably ignorant of the duties of their employment or state of life, or else they neglect to fulfil them, although they are bound both to know and to fulfil them under pain of mortal sin; and they never accuse themselves of these sins. To this class belong those who fill certain important offices and employments for which they know they have not the necessary abilities; so that they are the occasion of much loss and injury to others. To this class especially belong parents who teach their children nothing but the vanities of the world, and take no care about keeping them from evil, instructing them in good, encouraging them to piety and the fear of the Lord, and leading them on to Heaven. Thirdly, this class consists of all those who live according to the manners and customs of the voluptuous world, and are addicted to many abuses that cannot always be excused from mortal sin, and although they now and then have a reasonable doubt of the lawfulness of their conduct, yet try to banish that doubt by all kinds of false excuses; so that they look upon those abuses as lawful, because many others are addicted to them also. All these people go every month, every fortnight, sometimes every week to Communion, and remain just as they were before; nay, as far as those worldly abuses are concerned, they come to the sacred Table immodestly dressed, to receive their Lord. Ye angels, what think ye of such Communions? St. Paul, what do you say of them? Are the hearts of those people properly disposed to receive the Flesh and Blood of the Most Holy? "Let a man prove himself," you say, to see if he be worthy, "And so let him eat of that bread . . . , for he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself."¹

Unworthy
communi-
cants are
entreated to
abstain
from com-
munion.

Ah, whoever you may be, who are amongst the number of those of whom I have spoken, I have one request to make of you, by way of conclusion; and that is, that you abstain from Communion, even at Easter, even on your death-bed unless you intend to leave the proximate occasion of sin, to give up your illicit intercourse, to lay aside your hatred and ill-will against your neighbor, to restore what you unjustly possess, and to amend your sinful customs and unlawful abuses. Again, I entreat you, abstain from Communion! It is true that if you do not communicate at Easter-time, you commit a grievous sin against the precept of the Church, which I do not wish by any means to advise you to

¹ Probet autem seipsum homo, et sic de pane illo edat. . . . Qui enim manducat et bibit indigne, judicium sibi manducat et bibit, non dijudicans corpus Domini.—I. Cor. xi. 28, 29.

commit; still you are guilty of only one sin thereby, and that a much less grievous one than you would commit by an unworthy Communion, in which you would offer a most grievous insult to Jesus Christ. If you have not a sincere purpose of amendment, do not communicate, even on your death-bed; it is true that you will then be lost for ever, and I do not by any means wish to advise you to incur eternal damnation; still your damnation will not be so deep as it would be, if you went into eternity loaded with the weight of an unworthy Communion. O my God, what a terrible situation ours is, if we are compelled to choose between one degree of damnation and another! It remains true, then, sinners, your damnation will be less grievous without, than with a sacrilegious Communion.

Reverence due to the most Holy Sacrament, to what dost thou now compel me? To keep souls away from the Table to which our Saviour so lovingly invites all men. "Come to Me, all you that labor, and are burdened, and I will refresh you."¹ "Come, eat my bread and drink the wine which I have mingled for you;"² which I have prepared for you out of pure love. Come, and come often; the oftener the better. "My delight is to be with the children of men."³ To keep them away from that food which is the necessary nourishment and strength of their souls against all temptations; from that food, without which, according to our Saviour's own testimony, we cannot have life in us: "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, . . . you shall not have life in you."⁴ Do I then wish to deter you from receiving this Food? No, my dear brethren, such is not at all my intention; I will forbid no one to approach this table; I say to you all: Come to Holy Communion, and come often; but at the same time I warn you in the words of St. Ambrose, "Let him who wishes to receive Life, amend his life;"⁵ Communicate, but with a pure heart; communicate, but not in the state of mortal sin; communicate, but woe to you, if instead of life, you should eat eternal death with the Bread of life! Still there will be many who will refuse to do as I say. They will go on as usual, and offer the most fearful injuries to our Lord by their unworthy Communions, that they may keep up the appearance of being Catholics. That is the way, O Lord, in

Or else to
amend their
lives.

¹ Venite ad me omnes, qui laboratis, et onerati estis, et ego reficiam vos.—Matth. x. 28.

² Venite, comedite panem meum, et bibite vinum, quod miscui vobis.—Prov. ix. 5.

³ Deliciæ meæ, esse cum filiis hominum.—Ibid. viii. 31.

⁴ Nisi manducaveritis carnem Filii hominis . . . non habebitis vitam in vobis.—John vi. 54.

⁵ Mutel ergo vitam, qui vult accipere vitam.

which Thy Christians thank Thee, for Thy liberality towards them ! Didst Thou not foresee it when Thou wast instituting this Blessed Sacrament ? Certainly, Thou didst, and the future ingratitude of men was not unknown to Thee. Why hast Thou, then, given Thyself thus to a thankless world. Why dost Thou not withdraw from it at once ? On account of the few souls who receive Thee worthily.

Exhortation
to the good,
to love God,
in this Sac-
rament with
all their
hearts, and
to receive
Him often.

Pious Christians, this is the thought which, I leave you by way of conclusion. For your sake, to remain with you, to be your refuge, consolation and help, to be your food and drink in life, and your Viaticum in the hour of death; (oh love, who can understand thee !) the great God has been pleased to bear with the most outrageous insults from the wicked; He suffers them still, and will continue to suffer them to the end of time. Think now what a debt of praise, thanksgiving, honor and love you owe your God who loves you so much ! Think and say with the Prophet David: "What shall I render to the Lord?"¹ Is it not our right, O my God, that I should love Thee with my whole heart, in return, and should fulfil Thy holy will, as far as I know it, most exactly ? That I should often visit Thee in this most Holy Sacrament, and adore Thee most modestly and humbly in Thy Church ? That whenever I have the opportunity, I should accompany Thee through the streets, as Thou art carried to the sick ? That, as often as my confessor allows, I should receive Thee, according to Thy wish and desire, with all possible devotion; and thus help in some measure to atone for the injuries thou sufferest, for my sake, from Jews, heretics and wicked Christians. Yes, that I will do with Thy grace. Amen.

THIRTY-THIRD SERMON.

ON IRREVERENCE TO OUR LORD IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR.

Subject.

We have not a perfect faith in the Blessed Sacrament, and therefore we do not always show it proper reverence and respect.
—*Preached on the Feast of Corpus Christi.*

¹ Quid retribuam Domino ?—Ps. cxv. 12.

Text.

Accedamus cum vero corde in plenitudine fidei.—Heb. x. 22.

“Let us draw near with a true heart, in fulness of faith.”

Introduction.

If any mystery revealed by God requires from us a strong and blind faith, that mystery is the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, to the honor and adoration of which this whole octave is dedicated by the Catholic Church; for it is certain that the infinite Majesty of God has exhibited its endless wisdom and power in no other work so gloriously and so wonderfully as in this mystery. A small consecrated Host is a greater work than Christ our Lord ever accomplished, either by Himself, or by His Apostles and servants who came after Him. With reason, then, does St. Thomas call it, “The greatest of all the miracles accomplished by Him.”¹ And therefore the Church calls it “the mystery and the Sacrament of faith;”² which is unintelligible, not only to the outward senses but also to human reason. Yet, no matter how wonderful and incomprehensible it is, we surrender our reason to it, O Lord; we believe firmly all that Thou hast revealed of this great mystery, and all true Catholics profess the same faith as we do. Thou hast said it, O Infinite Wisdom and Truth; and that alone is enough for us! But, my dear brethren, there is one thing, which makes me doubt, when I consider the text I have quoted from St. Paul. “Let us draw near in fulness of faith,” he says; that is, we must have that faith firmly and vividly impressed on our memory, so as not to forget who is present in the Blessed Sacrament. Now, I doubt very much whether all Catholics have that lively faith in, and constant recollection of the Real Presence; and I believe I have good reason to doubt, when I consider, first, Him who is present in the Sacrament, and secondly, the little respect that is often shown Him therein. Oh, no; I cannot doubt, or hesitate about it any longer; I say it out boldly; and will now proceed to prove it.

Plan of Discourse.

We have not always a perfect faith in the Blessed Sacrament, and therefore we do not always show it proper reverence and respect. Such is the whole subject of this sermon and exhortation;

¹ Miraculorum ab ipso factorum, maximum. St. Thom. Opus c. 5-7.

² Mysterium et sacramentum fidei.

that it may refresh our memories, and enliven our faith, and encourage us to show due devotion and reverence to the God who has hidden Himself for us.

Thou alone, O Hidden God, canst effect this in us by Thy grace, which we beg of Thee, and expect to receive through the hands of Thy Dearest Mother Mary, and through the intercession of our holy angels guardian.

If we look only at the outward apparel, we are often liable to mistake a great and wealthy man, for a poor and lowly one.

All is not gold that glitters: nor is everything iron that is black or dark. Many a poor beggar is honored by a lowly reverence; many a rich man is passed by disdainfully. What is the cause of this? Our ignorance, and the easiness with which the senses deceive us. For we generally judge of things by their outward appearance. We look upon one man as a great personage. Why? Because he is dressed in magnificent style. And because we see another poorly and shabbily dressed, we conceive a mean opinion of him. Still, it is not always safe to judge of a man by his clothes. There is many a one who struts along as if the street were too narrow for him, and yet his kitchen and pantry are furnished poorly enough; so that he could borrow a great deal that would be of use to him from those who dress and behave in a manner far more consistent with Christian humility.

Shown by an example.

A young Portuguese, who was poor in worldly goods, but rich in mental endowments, went to the Indies to seek his fortune. He got on so well, that in some years time he returned home with a ship-load of treasures and merchandise of different kinds, and made up his mind to enjoy his wealth in peace for the rest of his life. As he was on the point of disembarking in his native town, a thought struck him. Wait, he said to himself, I will play a trick upon my relations. He put on an old, dirty jacket, and a ragged mantle, and went in that condition to see one of his nearest relatives, and told him how he had been in a foreign land for so many years, and that he had now returned, and begged humbly for a few days hospitality, until he could find shelter elsewhere. My dear cousin, was the answer he got in a few cold words, I would willingly keep you in my house, if I could; but I really have no room. He met with the same reception from three other friends of his whom he visited; not one of them would give him shelter for the night; for they judged from his ragged clothes, that he was not in very good circumstances. After getting the cold shoulder in that way, he went back to the ship, and put on a splendid suit of clothes, more in conformity with his wealth, and then dressed, and ac-

accompanied by a train of servants and attendants, he hired one of the most magnificent houses of the town. It took him several weeks to get all his treasure and merchandise stored. But how his friends stared when they saw how he had deceived them! Each one of them thought that, if he had only known the truth a little sooner, he would not have turned away his relative. But their repentance came too late.

My dear brethren, we Catholics are guilty of the same fault. When there is question of paying proper reverence to the Blessed Sacrament, we do not seem to know who is present in It, or, at all events, we forget very often in whose presence we are. We look upon Him as poor and lonely, because He has chosen to conceal Himself under the humble appearance of the Sacramental Species. True it is, that if we were to judge of it by the senses alone, this Sacrament would appear to us so common, that we should not think it worth while to lift It up from the ground. For, if I ask my eyes: what do you see there, on the altar, in the monstrance, or in the priest's hand? A small, white, round piece of bread, made of flour and water, they would answer. The same answer would be given me by the senses of taste, smell and touch. But, O Lord, if thou wert to lay aside Thy poor mantle for a moment, so as to let us see Thee in Thy glory, how different would not our thoughts, words and behavior be towards Thee then! We should bow down to earth, and cover our eyes from the brilliant light of Thy glory!

But that is not necessary. Christian faith, art thou still alive in us? If so, we have enough in thee! What dost thou say? Who is He who appears on the altar under such humble veils? Is He not the same, true, living and Almighty God, who with a sign, with the mere breath of his mouth, as the Prophet David says, created the universe in a moment? Is He not that infinite God, whom the heavens and the earth cannot contain, "of whose greatness there is no end?"¹ Is He not that mighty Lord on the hem of whose garment, St. John saw written the words, King of kings, and Lord of lords?"² At the bare mention of whose name, all the spirits of Heaven bow, crowned heads on earth prostrate themselves, and the devils tremble? Who "looketh upon the earth, and maketh it tremble;"³ who, with a word restrains the raging sea, and keeps it within bounds

In the same way we look upon the humble outward appearance of the Blessed Sacrament.

And yet the Almighty God is really present in It.

¹ Magnitudinis ejus non est finis.—Ps. cxliv. 3.

² Rex regum, et Dominus dominantium.—Apoc. xix. 16.

³ Qui respicit terram, et facit eam tremere?—Ps. ciii. 32.

that it dare not pass? "And I said: Hitherto thou shalt come, and shalt go no farther, and here thou shalt break thy swelling waters."¹ Is He not that Lord, who owns all treasures, and who is not in need of any creature? That Supreme Lord, who calls to the stars and they answer Him: here we are; what is Thy wish? That Lord of infinite wisdom, who, concealed under this white mantle, penetrates the most hidden thoughts and desires of men, and who will one day come to judge the living and the dead? Yes, faith tells us that all this is true; that the same Jesus Christ, true God and true man, who redeemed us by His death, and who is now seated on the right hand of His Eternal Father in everlasting glory, is really present in this Sacrament, with His divinity and humanity, body and soul.

If we
always re-
membered
this with a
lively faith,
we should
never be
wanting in
due rever-
ence.

Christians, do we believe that? Do we believe it with a perfect and lively faith? Oh, if so, I need not say any more to urge us to pay due respect and reverence to such a great Lord. If we all have a perfect faith in this truth, then we shall never appear in the house of God, or before His altar without observing a religious silence, with down-cast eyes, modest demeanor, folded hands, bended knees, and every outward mark of the most humble reverence. If we have a perfect faith in this truth, then we shall be filled with astonishment at the great mystery it contains, our thoughts will be collected, our hearts pierced with sorrow for our sins, and inflamed with love for a God who loves us so much; our souls will be ravished with delight, and we shall present ourselves before this Most Holy Sacrament, as poor beggars before a mighty emperor, as slaves before their master, as criminals before their judge. If we have only a perfect faith in this truth, we shall cry out with voice and heart, like the Publican: "O God, be merciful to me a sinner;"² or else with St. Peter, when he saw the almighty power of Christ in the miraculous draught of fishes: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord;"³ or with St. Elizabeth, when she was visited by the Mother of God, we will ask, how is it that such a poor mortal as I, am allowed to enjoy the privilege of visiting such a Mighty Sovereign, of sitting down before Him, nay, if I will, of receiving Him, and bringing Him into my house? In a word, if we only have a perfect faith in this truth we shall

¹ Et dixi: Usque huc venies, et non procedes amplius, et hic confringes tumentes fluctus tuos.—Job xxxviii. 11.

² Deus, propitius esto mihi peccatori.—Luke xviii. 13.

³ Exi a me, quia homo peccator sum, Domine.—Ibid. v. 8.

never be wanting in due respect and reverence to the Blessed Sacrament.

The burning bush, which concealed the Majesty of God, inspired the Prophet Moses, in spite of his almost familiarity with God, with such a reverential fear, that he dare not approach it until he had taken off his shoes out of respect, as we read in the Third Chapter of Exodus. The Ark of the Covenant, which was only a wooden chest, and a mere figure of the Blessed Sacrament, had to be treated with such reverence, that no one dared to approach, or touch it, or even to look at it. The Bethsamites could testify to this; for on one occasion many thousands of them were struck dead, because they were wanting in proper respect towards the Ark, as it was being carried towards them: "But He slew of the men of Bethsames, because they had seen the ark of the Lord: and He slew of the people seventy men, and fifty thousand of the common people . . . And the men of Bethsames said: Who shall be able to stand before the Lord, this Holy God?"¹ And, after all, what did the Ark contain? Two tables of stone, on which the divine Law was written, and a little of the manna with which the Israelites were fed in the desert! That was all! O Christians, where is our faith? Ought we not to humble ourselves far more, and show far greater reverence to the true Living Ark, in which we adore the Almighty God as really present?

What reverence the Jews showed to God although He was present only in figures.

But why do I speak so much of divine things? Princes and kings of earth, you are raised above others, but you still remain in your nature poor mortals like the rest of us; you are, like us, creatures who are always in need of your God; like us, you must knock humbly at the door of the great King of Heaven, and ask Him humbly for an alms; and yet, come forward a moment, and let yourselves be seen. Oh, what respect is shown you; what bowing and scraping, what zealous and respectful attention on the part of all who are in your presence! And that is right; because the power that God has given you, deserves that honor. It would be a grievous crime in the eyes of the world to enter even the ante-chamber of an earthly monarch, without uncovering the head, or to speak therein in a loud voice. And as soon as the words are heard in the ante-chamber, or even in the court-yard of the palace: "The king is coming;" what a sudden change takes place among all the courtiers and attend-

What great respect is shown in presence of a king.

¹ Percussit autem de viris Bethsamitibus, eo quod vidissent arcam Domini: et percussit de populo septuaginta viros, et quinquaginta millia plebis . . . Et dixerunt viri Bethsamitæ: Quis poterit stare in conspectu Domini Dei sancti hujus?—I. Kings vi. 19, 20.

ants ! All conversation is at once interrupted, and every one assumes the most respectful posture he can, ready to bend the knee at a moment's notice, although the king is not yet visible. If, on such an occasion, one of the chamberlains were to continue laughing, or joking, or if one of the greatest lords of the court were simply to remain seated when the door of the royal chamber opens, that alone would be enough to warrant one in saying: that man either does not believe that the king is coming, or else he is an unmannerly clown, who has little respect for his sovereign.

Therefore, if we are not reverent before the Blessed Sacrament, it is a sign of want of faith.

Christians, what a shame it is, says St. John Chrysostom, to have to use such similes to exhort the faithful to their duty ! There is an infinite distance between the majesty of a mortal monarch, and that of the great King of Heaven. Compare all the princes, kings and emperors of earth with God, and they will appear infinitely smaller than a fly would if compared to an elephant, a straw to the tower of Babel, a worm to an emperor ! And yet, (what a shame, I say again !) the great God present in the Blessed Sacrament, receives from His children only half the respect that is paid, even in the streets, to earthly sovereigns, by their servants ! And yet we think that we thereby fulfil our duty ! Would that we did even that much always ! Whenever we enter a church, whenever the Blessed Sacrament is exposed on the altar, whenever the Sacred Host and Chalice are elevated at Mass, whenever the Viaticum is carried to the sick, our faith cries out, " Behold your King," your Saviour, your Judge, your Creator, your God ! If on such occasions I were not to experience any mental emotion, and were not to show any particular sign of reverence in my outward behaviour ; what opinion would you form of me ? You would say without fear of being wrong : that man does not believe that God is present in the Blessed Sacrament, or else he has forgotten his faith.

As is easily seen by our conduct.

A Jewess once presumed to receive Holy Communion with some Catholics ; but she was soon recognized, and severely punished. Do you know, my dear brethren, how she was found out ? As soon as she had received the Sacred Host, she bent forward and covered her face with her hands, as if to keep off distractions ; but those who were near her, heard her gnawing at the Sacred Host with her teeth, as if she wished to avenge herself thereby on Christ. This conduct on her part was sufficient to convince all who noticed it that she must be either a

witch, or a Jewess. Now, my dear brethren, if I see people in presence of the Blessed Sacrament, as is unfortunately too often the case nowadays, staring round on all sides, casting wanton glances in all directions, talking, laughing, hardly condescending to bend one knee, appearing dressed in a frivolous, scandalous, or indecent manner; or if it were possible for me to look into their hearts, and see the impure thoughts and desires that they bring with them to the altar, what conclusion must I come to regarding them? Are they sorcerers, or Jews? No, that I dare not say; but if I were to think to myself: oh, these people have not a lively faith; they do not know, and do not think of the great Lord in whose presence they are; would I do them wrong? Not by any means; there is not the least doubt that they are wanting in proper faith, and that they forget what the Christian faith teaches; otherwise they would behave far differently.

But, if they have a lively faith, are they perhaps so stupid and ignorant, that they do not know how to act in the presence of such a great God, and to show Him due respect and reverence? Then, why do they not learn from others, who know more about it than they do? A peasant knows how to deal with his equals, but not with great lords and princes. He never learned how to behave like a courtier. But in case he has to appear before his sovereign, what does he do? He first asks one of the servants at court what title he has to employ when speaking to his sovereign, and then pays great attention to the conduct of the courtiers. If he sees the latter bowing, or kneeling, oh, he thinks, I am only a poor peasant, I must certainly bow down to the earth; and so he imitates them as well as he can. My dear brethren, we are ignorant and inexperienced in the courtly etiquette of the great King of Heaven, our Lord and our God; and we betray our ignorance by our rude and uncultivated manners in presence of the Most August Sacrament of the altar.

Let us ask God's own privy counsellors, how we are to behave towards Him; I mean, we must see how the angels of Heaven act towards the Blessed Sacrament. St. Basil, and St. John Chrysostom testify to having frequently seen whole hosts of the heavenly spirits in bodily shape, clad in snow-white garments, surrounding the Blessed Sacrament during Mass, or when It was exposed in the monstrance, like an army in presence of the general, with bare feet, arms folded in the form of a cross, bowed heads and bodies, showing in their whole demeanor, the

Or else a sign of rudeness; since we do not know how to behave in presence of such a great Lord.

We can learn from the angels how to behave.

greatest humility and reverence, nay, awe and dread, as if they deemed themselves unworthy to appear in presence of Infinite Majesty. What food this gives us for reflection! For the angels are the great courtiers and princes of Heaven, who far surpass us in gifts of nature and grace; while we are poor and abject mortals, who are no better than dust and ashes! With what humility and modesty, then, with what devotion and reverence should we not behave in presence of this great Mystery! The angels who know well the greatness of this Lord, and the titles and the honor that are due Him, tremble before Him; and I, a miserable worm of the earth, dare to laugh and talk! The angels veil their eyes through humility; but I cannot even keep mine cast down! I must needs gratify my curiosity by letting them wander about in all directions! The angels bow down to the earth; but I hardly deign to bend the knee! The angels fold their arms in the form of a cross; but I am ashamed to fold my hands in church! What intolerable rudeness that is, in presence of so great a Lord, on the part of one who has even a little faith!

And also
from good
Christians,
and even
great po-
tentates.

But our eyes are not as good as those of a St. Basil, or a St. Chrysostom, to be able to see how the angels behave in this particular. Still we can, and we should try to learn from the example of pious men, how to behave before the Blessed Sacrament. I will not speak of the different ways in which great saints used to show their reverence; nor of the custom of the early Christians who used to prostrate themselves on the ground as soon as they entered a church, in order to adore their God who was really present on the altar. Great kings and emperors, from whom it was least to be expected, have been seen to crawl on their knees through the church up to the altar, to receive Holy Communion; thus showing that under the Sacramental veils, they acknowledged a far greater Monarch than themselves. Wenceslaus, King of Bohemia, through reverence for the Blessed Sacrament, used himself to till the land, plant the wheat, reap it, and prepare with his own hands the flour for the altar-breads. The celebrated Philip II., King of Spain, whenever he attended a procession of the Blessed Sacrament, never appeared as a king with his attendants, but went amongst the common people like one of them, no matter what the weather was. On one occasion, as he was attending a procession during the summer, the sun beat down fiercely on his head; a lackey noticed it, and tried to shade him with his hat; never mind, said Philip; the

sun will not hurt one on an occasion like this, we must not mind heat or cold, wind or rain. He once accompanied the Blessed Sacrament through a number of narrow, dirty streets, bare-headed, and on foot, to the house of a poor sick man, and returned with It to the church. The priest who carried It, asked him afterwards, if he was not tired. Tired? said he, I never heard my servants, who have to wait on me day and night, complain of being tired; how then can I be tired when I am serving my King? One cannot do enough to honor and serve the Almighty God. The same humble reverence towards the Blessed Sacrament has been kept up amongst the emperors of Austria for many hundred years, as a sacred heir-loom, down to Charles VI., of glorious memory, who, to the edification of the world, has given special proofs of his devotion in this respect; for, if in driving by, they happened to see the Blessed Sacrament carried to the sick, no matter how far away it was, they got down at once from the carriage, fell on their knees, and then, rising up, followed the Sacred Viaticum to the house of the sick person. We are amazed, my dear brethren, at reading such things of these great potentates; but have we not much more reason to wonder at our own amazement, since it is a sign of such an imperfect faith? If we had a clear knowledge and recollection, that God Himself is really present in the Blessed Eucharist, we should not be so much surprised that princes, kings and emperors showed Him such marks of humble reverence. It would not cause us more surprise, than to see a servant pulling off his master's boots, or a beggar taking off his hat to the rich man whom he is asking for an alms; for all the potentates of earth are no better than servants, or beggars, compared to God.

Much more reason have we to be astonished, that even dumb

And even from dumb beasts.

beasts can teach reasoning and believing men how to behave with reverence and respect towards the Blessed Sacrament. A swarm of bees once gathered together the fragments of a consecrated Host, that had been scattered over a field, put them into a little temple made of wax, and then gathered round, as if to adore their Creator. In the time of St. Anthony of Padua, a mule once threw itself down on its fore-legs, and, although it was very hungry, did not begin to graze, until a procession of the Blessed Sacrament which was going by at the time, had passed. The same honor was shown It on another occasion by a whole flock of sheep. If it were not for the learning and piety of Eusebius and Menochius, we could hardly believe what they relate of a

pastry-cook's dog at Lisbon: this animal, without being trained to do so, used to accompany the Blessed Sacrament; whenever he heard the bell ring, as a signal that the priest was about to bring the Viaticum to a sick person, he would run to the church, wait at the door until the priest was ready, and then follow the procession, sometimes on one side, sometimes on the other, as if to see that everything was in proper order; nor could even his own master hinder him from doing this. Once the signal was given during the night; the dog heard it, and tried to get out of the house, but the door was shut, and he ran to his master's room barking and whining, to show what he wanted; as his master paid no attention to him, he went to the maid-servant, seized her by the dress, and would not let her go, until she opened the door for him. On another occasion, as he was accompanying the Blessed Sacrament, he saw a porter sleeping by the wayside; he went up to him and began to bark until the porter awoke, took off his hat, and knelt down; he did the same to a peasant woman, who came by riding on an ass, nor was he satisfied until he compelled her to dismount and adore the Blessed Sacrament. Sometimes the same bell was rung for a burial; the dog, thinking the Blessed Sacrament was to be carried out, would run to the church as usual, but would return home at once on finding that he had made a mistake. Once, during Holy Week, he remained for twenty-four hours at a stretch before the sepulchre, in which the Blessed Sacrament was placed. If he appeared in a church, especially during exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, no one dared to stand up, or else he would bark at them with all his might, and thus make them quite ashamed. Every means was tried to make him abandon this singular custom; when the signal was given for a procession, the door was shut on him, or a piece of meat was thrown to him, but all in vain; he howled and whined at the door, until they were glad to get rid of him by opening it for him; or, he would make one or two snaps at the meat, and then run off to the procession. There is no doubt, my dear brethren, that the Author of nature implanted that instinct in an unreasoning animal, in order to put to shame both infidels and heretics. But what am I saying? Rather was it to put to shame worthless Catholics, who, although they are infallibly assured by the light of faith, that the divine Majesty is really present under the Sacramental Species, yet show It as little reverence, as if they were merely dealing with a mortal like themselves. O my Lord and my God, pardon my sloth and imperfec-

tion! I say so often, that I wish to serve Thee zealously, and that I know that Thou, who art Almighty and art worthy of all honor and love, art really present in this Sacrament; but how do I act in reality? "Without contrition of heart," as I must confess with St. Augustine, "and without due reverence and fear."¹ The angels in Heaven tremble before Thy Majesty; even dumb brutes acknowledge it; "but I, a miserable sinner, while I am in Thy presence, praising and offering Thee sacrifice why do I not tremble, and grow pale before Thee? Why do not my lips and my whole body shake with fear? Why do I not incessantly deplore my sins with bitter tears?"² O faith, faith, thou alone art wanting!

I conclude, my dear brethren, in the words of the text, "Let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith." When we enter a church, let each one of us say to himself with the inward voice of the heart: in this church, on this altar is truly present the Incarnate God, who rules Heaven and earth, and whom countless angels adore. Let each one keep this faith alive, while he remains in the church, and re-awaken it whenever the Blessed Sacrament is carried past. Especially should we do so when hearing Mass, or receiving Holy Communion. Let us draw near in fulness of faith; let us approach with a perfect faith deeply impressed on our minds.

Ah, if all were faithful in observing this, how carefully would not each one be in cleansing his conscience from the least stain of sin; how zealously he would prepare his heart for humility, devotion and love; how modest he would be in eyes, hands, clothing and outward behavior! What countless treasures of grace we could thus receive in a single Communion! Unworthy Communions, and Sacrifices received or celebrated in the state of sin, or in the proximate occasion of sin, would you then be possible? No, you are not possible where there is a lively faith. Oh, when a lively faith represents this mystery to me, I think to myself: my soul and body, you who daily at the altar become a dwelling in which the great God condescends to enter, how far should you not be from the least shadow of sin? how eagerly should you not strive after true holiness? You, my hands, that have daily the honor of holding God between your fingers, could you ever so far forget yourselves as to be guilty of unbecoming,

Conclusion.
always to
honor our
Lord in the
Blessed Sac-
rament with
a lively
faith.

Then we
shall not be
guilty of
sin or fault
in this re-
spect.

¹ Sine cordis contritione, sine reverentia debita, et tremore.

² Ego peccator, dum Tibi assisto, laudes dico, sacrificium offero; cur non corde paveo, vultu palleo, labiis tremo, toto corpore inhorresco, sicque obortis lacrymis eoram Te indesinenter lugeo?

or indecent touches? You, my feet, that bring me every day to the church, to see and to receive my God, could you ever bring me amongst dangerous and wicked companions? My eyes, that behold every day in my hands, under the Sacramental veils, Him whom the angels contemplate with dread; could you ever lend yourselves to impure looks? And you, my tongue and my mouth, what honor and happiness is yours! The angels in Heaven cannot do what you can; they must humbly adore Him whom you bring forth by a few words and afterwards receive. How could you dare to indulge in wicked, or uncharitable conversation? And you too, hearts and bodies of Christians, that are so often fed with this Divine Food, which is purer and more beautiful than the sun, how unbecoming it would be for you to still continue to defile yourselves with sin! Ah, dear Lord, it happens only too often! but through no other cause, unless want of faith. Almighty God, who workest so many and such great miracles in this Sacrament, show now in me, and in many others, a new miracle of Thy goodness, by curing our tepid hearts of incredulity, and giving us a lively and a perfect faith! Then Thou shalt not have reason to complain any more of us, as Thou hast done in the past, namely, that we have believed in Thy presence in this Sacrament, and yet have shown It so little reverence, respect and devotion. Amen.

THIRTY-FOURTH SERMON.

ON IRREVERENCE IN CHURCH.

Subject.

Many Christians know not, and think not of the Lord who dwells in our churches; or else they know not how to behave towards Him.—*Preached on the Feast of the Dedication of a Church.*

Text.

Vere Dominus est in loco isto, et ego nesciebam.—Gen. xxviii. 16.

“Indeed the Lord is in this place and I knew it not.”

Introduction.

Where are we now, my dear brethren? In the Cathedral of

Treves, the feast of whose Dedication we are celebrating to-day. To what end are we here? Partly to hear the word of God, and partly to offer sacrifice to the same God. A holy end, indeed! How do we behave ourselves here? Eyes, tongues, hands, feet, gestures, attitudes, thoughts and hearts, of all who are present, answer this question. When the Patriarch Jacob saw in a dream the ladder reaching to Heaven, on the top of which God was seated, while numerous angels ascended and descended by it, he woke full of astonishment and reverence: "And trembling, he said: How terrible is this place! this is no other but the house of God, and the gate of Heaven. Indeed the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not."¹ But, holy Patriarch, what are you saying? Do you not know that God is present in all places? Certainly, I do; but here I see in a special manner the effect of His presence, namely, the extraordinary blessing He confers; and I knew it not. See there, my dear brethren, as St. Gregory says, that is a figure of our Christian churches; there is not one of them which does not resemble a ladder leading to Heaven, by which our prayers ascend to God, and His blessings and mercies come down to us.² But perhaps, if I were to inquire into the matter, I should find many Christians who do not know what kind of a place the Church is, nor what kind of a Lord dwells in it. Yet, there is no need of an examination; experience proves clearly enough that it is not without reason that I form this opinion, as I shall now show.

Plan of Discourse.

Many Christians know not and think not of the Lord who dwells in our churches; or else they know not how to behave towards Him. Such is the whole subject. The first arises from want of attention on the part of the understanding, and from a want of a lively faith. The second comes from sloth, and from ill behavior. Both are betrayed by want of reverence in church. Both we must and will renounce to-day.

Christ Jesus, who through zeal for the honor of the temple, hast taken a scourge in Thy hand, and driven out those who dishonored it, give strength to my words, that I may defend and uphold the honor of Thy holy churches. This we ask of Thee through the intercession of Thy Mother Mary and the holy angels guardian.

¹ Pavensque, Quam terribilis est, inquit, locus iste! non est hic aliud nisi domus Dei, et porta cœli. Vere Dominus est in loco isto, et ego nesciebam.—Gen. xxviii. 17.

² Ascendit precatio, descendit miseratio.

David
thought of
building a
house for
God.

As we read in the 17th chapter of the First Book of Paralipomenon, King David was once walking in his palace with the Prophet Nathan; they were talking about the service, honor, and praise of God, when suddenly David was inspired with that great and holy thought; "Behold," he said, "I dwell in a house of cedar," in a palace with many well-furnished rooms, surrounded with beautiful gardens; "and the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord is under skins,"¹ in a poor tent. I, a servant of God, am in a palace, whilst the ark of God is kept in a tent! How unbecoming that is! I cannot bear it any longer; I will build a more suitable house for the ark; "I had a thought to have built a house, in which the ark of the Lord, and the foot-stool of our God might rest."² And he immediately prepares to carry out his design; he begins to collect all the materials for the temple, which his son Solomon was to build, according to God's command, and, as he says himself, in a few years he had got together all the money that was required for the purpose; "I prepared all things for the building."³

For which
he collected
an im-
mense sum
of money.

And how much money do you think he had collected, my dear brethren? Say, a hundred thousand dollars: do you not think that a fine temple might have been built for that sum? Say, six times that amount; could he not have raised a most magnificent structure with such an enormous amount of money? Still, that bears no proportion to the actual sum. Hear what great ideas David had: "The work is great," he says, for you must know that, "a house is prepared not for man, but for God;"⁴ for that great God whose palace is the vast Heaven, whose foot-stool is the sun, whose floor is the firmament strewn with stars; it is for this great God that I am going to build a house, so that I must do all I can to make it worthy of Him. Hear what an immense sum he had managed to put together, in spite of his poverty, as he told his son: "Behold, I in my poverty have prepared the charges of the house of the Lord." How much? "Of gold a hundred thousand talents, and of silver a million of talents."⁵ That is, according to the calculations of

¹ Ecce, ego habito in domo cedrina: arca autem foederis Domini sub pellibus est.—I. Par. xvii. 1.

² Cogitavi, ut ædificarem domum, in qua requiesceret arca foederis Domini, et scabellum pedum Dei nostri.—Ibid. xxviii. 2.

³ Ad ædificandum omnia præparavi.—Ibid.

⁴ Opus namque grande est, neque enim homini præparatur habitatio, sed Deo.—Ibid. xxix. 1.

⁵ Ecce ego in paupertate mea præparavi impensas domus Domini: auri talenta centum millia, et argenti mille millia talentorum.—Ibid. xxii. 14.

Pineda and other authors, three thousand millions of Spanish ducats. But besides that, there were brass and iron, of which there is no weight, for the abundance surpasseth all account.”¹ Nor was there any want of wood and stone.² And all this was only for the commencement of the building. On his death-bed he left all his other treasures, “three thousand talents of gold, and seven thousand talents of refined silver to overlay the walls of the Temple;”³ and in addition to all that, the princes of the tribes of Israel, whom he had summoned for the purpose, gave, “of gold, five thousand talents, and ten thousand solids; of silver ten thousand talents, and of brass eighteen thousand talents, and of iron a hundred thousand talents. And all they that had precious stones, gave them to the treasure of the house of the Lord.”⁴ These are the words of the Holy Scripture, my dear brethren, I have added nothing to them. Ah! David, what do you intend doing with a treasure so enormous that we could well doubt of its existence, if we were not assured of it by the infallible word of God? Are you going to build a new world, or a house? I am going to build a house; but you must not be astonished, because it is not for men, but for God; it is intended as a dwelling-place for the God to whom the whole world is as a grain of sand; must I not then do all I can to make it worthy of Him?

David dies and Solomon succeeds him, and begins the work; but he soon exhausted the treasure left him by his father. He had gold and silver brought to Jerusalem for the building, not in hundreds or thousands, but like the stones of the street in quantity: “And the king made silver and gold to be in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar trees as sycamores, which grow in the plains in great numbers.”⁵ There were seventy thousand laborers who carried loads on their shoulders; eighty thousand men to cut the stone in the mountains, and three thousand six hundred overseers to keep the people to their work, besides the masons and tradesmen who worked at the Temple. All these had to be fed and paid for seven years. What a splendid edifice

To which Solomon his son, added a great deal more, and built a most magnificent temple.

¹ Aeris vero, et ferri non est pondus, vincitur enim numerus magnitudine.—I. Par. xxli. 14.

² Ligna et lapides præparavi ad universa imdendia.—Ibid.

³ Tria millia talenta auri, et septem millia talentorum argenti probatissimi, ad deaurandos parietes templi.—Ibid. xxix. 4.

⁴ Auri talenta quinque millia, et solidos decem millia; argenti talenta decem millia, et æris talenta decem et octo millia; ferri quoque centum millia talentorum. Et apud quemcumque inventi sunt lapides, dederunt in thesauros domus Domini.—Ibid. 7, 8.

⁵ Præbuitque rex argentum et aurum in Jerusalem quasi lapides, et cedros quasi sycamoras, quæ nascuntur in campestribus multitudine magna.—II. Par. i. 15.

that must have been! Yes, answers Solomon, “for the house which I desire to build, is great : for our God is great above all gods.” “Who, then, can be able to build Him a worthy house? if Heaven and the Heaven of heavens cannot contain Him : who am I, that I should be able to build Him a house? but to this end only, that incense may be burnt before Him.”¹ The magnificence and glory of the Temple after it was finished, can neither be imagined, nor described.

From which we may infer the great respect and reverence the Israelites had for the house of God.

Besides all this outward splendor, what respect and reverence were required of those who entered the Temple! In order to save time, you can read for yourselves in the Holy Scripture, my dear brethren, of the ceremonies that were prescribed for priests and people. We may form some idea of them from the mere fact, that the high-priest alone could enter the Holy of Holies, and not until he had carefully washed his hands and feet. Christians, why do I describe all this to you so minutely? In order that you may form a clearer idea of the greatness of the Lord who dwelt in the Temple, and of the reverence that the Jews had for their God and His house; for, as they said, “a house is prepared not for man, but for God.”

And yet God was present in it only by figures.

Poor Hebrews, tell me then, how was God present in the temple? He was there by His omnipresence. What? Why, I have Him in my poor room in that way! And is that all? Oh no, He was in the Temple in a special manner, for He promised to hear our prayers in it. But He does that in our small chapels that are built merely of wood and stone. Is that all? No, in the vestibule of the temple we sacrifice our sheep and cattle, which he accepts as an agreeable offering. But you did that in former times in the open air, and God accepted the sacrifices you then offered Him. Is there nothing more? Oh yes, the chief sign of the divine presence is the Ark of the Covenant, and that is kept in the Temple. The Ark of the Covenant? And what was it? A wooden box. What did it contain? The two tables of stone on which God wrote the Ten Commandments for the Prophet Moses, and a little of the manna which fed our forefathers in the desert. Is that all? Yes. There is nothing more? No. And you build such a magnificent Temple for the sake of two stones and a little bread? To two stones and a little

¹ Domus enim, quam ædificare cupio, magna est : magnus est enim Deus noster super omnes deos. Quis ergo poterit prævalere, ut ædificet ei dignam domum? si cælum, et cœli cœlorum capere eum nequeunt, quantus ego sum, ut possim ædificare ei domum? sed ad hoc tantum, ut adoleatur incensum coram illo.—II. Par. ii. 5, 6.

bread you show such honor? For their sake you require all to enter the Temple, to observe the greatest respect?

O Christians, we must hide our faces for shame? Ah, if David or Solomon had known what we are assured of by an infallible faith; if they could have had the Lord as we have Him present shut up in our churches; what would they not have done in His honor? Great God, show Thyself to Thy people, let them see who Thou art, and how Thou art present night and day in this temple, which is consecrated to Thee! Lay aside for a moment the Veil of the Species which hide Thee! But no; rather remain hidden, as Thou art! Our eyes would not be able to bear the splendor of Thy Majesty! Our faith tells us, that Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, as He is seated in Heaven on a throne of endless glory, dwells in this church. And in what manner? Not merely by His omnipresence as God, not merely as a benevolent Father, seated on a throne of mercy to hear our prayers, not by mere figures and shadows, as God was present in the temple at Jerusalem; but He is here present in reality, with His divine and human nature, with His living body and soul. To Him sacrifice is here daily offered; not of sheep and oxen; but He Himself is both priest and sacrifice, who offers Himself to His eternal Father for us in the Holy Mass. Christians, have we been aware of that hitherto? Have we thought of it when we entered the church? Do we believe it now that we are in the church? If so, then, where are the splendor and magnificence that are due to so great a Lord?

God is present in our churches in a far more real and glorious manner.

Be not afraid, my dear brethren, it is not much gold and silver that are required of you. If it were, I might talk to you in vain, and it would be with me, as it was with our Lord in the temple when the woman taken in adultery was brought before Him; He stooped down, and wrote on the ground, and as St. John says: "But they went out one by one, . . . and Jesus alone remained."¹ So also, I say, I should be left alone here, if I required of you to contribute great treasures in honor of this church. If their Prophet Moses were to appear on earth, and, as he did in former times, ask the Jews to contribute to build a tabernacle, they would joyfully consent, and would vie with one another in giving up their most precious objects for the purpose; the men would bring their gold and silver goblets, the women would bring their ear-rings and finger-rings, their necklaces and armlets, and their silken garments. So they did in

God does not require us to bring great treasures to church.

¹ Autem unus post unum exibant . . . et remansit solus Jesus.—John viii. 9.

olden times, when Moses had to tell them not to bring any more, they were so generous : “ Moses therefore commanded proclamation to be made by the crier’s voice : Let neither man nor woman offer any more for the work of the sanctuary. And so they ceased from offering gifts, because the things that were offered did suffice, and were too much.”¹ But, O Moses, if you were to come to us Christians, and ask us to give something to a poor church, in which Jesus Christ, God and Man, dwells, in which the chalice is of lead, and the altar linen is torn and worn with age, and in which a small lamp is with difficulty kept burning ; if you were to ask us for something for a church of this kind, in spite of your persuasive oratory, I am afraid you would not find it necessary to prohibit us from giving any more, on account of the abundance of our generosity. I would not even dare to promise you anything from those who carry their treasures about them for show, and who go about clad in silk and velvet, and gold and silver, above their means, adorning their bodies like a magnificent temple; as the Prophet David says : “ Their daughters decked out ; adorned around about after the similitude of a temple.”²

But inward
and out-
ward rever-
ence.

No, my dear brethren, it is not with gold and silver that I ask you to adorn the house of God to-day. I only ask you for an ornament which the poor, as well as the rich, the covetous, as well as the generous can give, and are bound to give ; and that is, inward and outward reverence, respect and devotion in the house of God, a holy silence, downcast eyes, a modest demeanor, folded hands, bended knees, and an humble posture of the body ; a pure conscience, a contrite heart, and a mind free from distractions and collected in God. That is all I ask of you when you come into the church, and as long as you remain in it. Is that too much ? Nay, is it enough to ask for the house and court in which God is really present, seated on His throne, that we may adore and honor Him ? Ought we not to crawl on the ground like a worm of the earth, and annihilate ourselves in His presence ? What less should we, poor mortals, do, in presence of such infinite Majesty ? “ Indeed the Lord is in this place.”

Therefore,
he who is
wanting in
that is either
ignorant or
rude ; there
are many
such.

But if we see any one behaving otherwise, as is unfortunately so often the case, we can conclude that he does not know, or acknowledge, or think of the great Lord, worthy of all honor

¹ Jussit ergo Moyses præconis voce cantari : Nec vir nec mulier quidquam offerat ultra in opere sanctuarii. Sicque cessatum est a muneribus offerendis, eo quod oblata sufficerent et superabundarent.—Exod. xxxvi. 6, 7.

² *Filiæ eorum compositæ, circumornatæ ut similitudo templi.*—Ps. cxlii. 12.

and glory, who dwells in our churches. If he were to contradict us and say : What rash judgment are you forming of me ? I am a good Christian ; I believe that God is here present in the blessed Sacrament, and I am ready to give my life for my faith ; very well, we might answer, but if so, you are an ignorant clown, and do not know how to behave in the presence of the divine Majesty. And he would really deserve that name. Still he would have a great many companions ; for even among Catholics, a fact that cannot be sufficiently deplored, there are many quite as ignorant as he.

And in the first place, I would ask those who forget the respect they ought to observe on entering the church, who come dressed in a vain and frivolous, and even scandalous style, whether their intention was, not to pay humble homage to their Lord and their God, but to attract the attention and admiration of others. If those people had lived in the time of St. John Chrysostom, they would hardly have ventured to church in that style, for he would have stopped them at the door, and asked them where they were going and whether they thought the church was a dancing house ? And he would tell them to go back and return dressed in a more modest manner, if they wished to adore a humble crucified Saviour ; I would ask those people, I say, if they know how to pay due respect and honor to their God, since they hardly even bend the knee before Him ? It seems almost that they are afraid of faring like the unfortunate Timagoras, who was beheaded by the Athenians because, when they sent him as ambassador to King Artaxerxes, he bowed lower before that monarch than became the ambassador of such a great nation ; in those days, humiliation was looked on as a crime deserving of death. These proud Christians seem to fear a similar fate, if they humble themselves before the King of Heaven, more than the perverse customs of the world allow. But although they think too much of themselves to honor God as they ought in church, they do not forget to greet and salute in most humble manner some poor mortal like themselves, whom they see in church, nor do they hesitate to turn their backs to the altar while doing so. What shameful conduct that is ! Is this the place for those vain observances of the world ? Or is the great God so little deserving of respect, that it is not worth while to pay Him any outward honor ?

In the second place, I would ask whether much is known of the honor due to God, by those who, when they come to church,

Namely,
they who
enter the
church ir-
reverently.

They who
behave dis-

respectfully
in church.

are so careful of their clothes, that they dare not kneel down for fear of soiling them, and so they remain either standing, or sitting? From their conduct we can easily infer that, they either think more of their clothes than they do of the Majesty of God, or that they are more anxious, through want of Christian mortification, to secure their comfort, than they are to pay due honor to God. I do not wish to condemn the practice of sitting down in church; there are a few examples of it in the Holy Scriptures which I would be glad if all who sit down in church, were to imitate carefully. In the Book of Judges we read that the Israelites prayed in the house of God sitting down; but under what circumstances? They had come in worn out and tired after fighting and long fasting, and even then they did not forget the respect due to the place in which they were: "Wherefore all the children of Israel came to the house of God, and sat and wept before the Lord."¹ As we read in the following chapter of the same Book, they sat and prayed in the house of God, but they spent the whole day in lamentation and weeping; "And they all came to the house of God in Silo, and sitting before Him till the evening, lifted up their voices, and began to lament and weep."² David too, sat down in the house of God, as we read in the Second Book of Kings: "And David went in, and sat before the Lord."³ But he was wearied out after all he had done the day before to honor the Ark, and while his body was seated, his heart and his tongue were pouring forth most humble sighs: "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me thus far?"⁴ In the time of Esdras, the Hebrews did not sit down in the temple, but in the street before it, and that too, when they were tired after a long journey, and in spite of the heavy rain: "And all the people sat in the street of the house of God, trembling because of the sin, and the rain."⁵ In the Old Testament I can find no other example of the people sitting down in the house of God. In the New Testament we read that Jesus sat down on two occasions; in the temple, once when He taught therein: "They found Him in the temple sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing

¹ Quamobrem omnes filii Israel venerunt in domum Dei, et sedentes fiebant coram Domino.—Judges xx. 26.

² Veneruntque omnes ad domum Dei in Silo, et in conspectu ejus sedentes usque ad vesperam, levaverunt vocem, et magno ululatu cœperunt flere.—Ibid. xxi. 2.

³ Ingressus est autem rex David, et sedit coram Domino.—II. Kings vii. 18.

⁴ Quis ego sum, Domine Deus, et quæ domus mea, quia adduxisti me hucusque?—Ibid.

⁵ Et sedit omnis populus in platea domus Dei, trementes pro peccato, et pluviis.—I. Esd. x. 9.

them and asking them questions;"¹ and again when the offerings were being made: "And Jesus sitting over against the treasury, beheld how the people cast money into the treasury."² Otherwise we read of Micheas, Daniel, Esdras, David, all holy men, honored with the special friendship of the Almighty, praying on bended knees, even outside of the temple: "Wherewith shall I kneel before the high God?"³ as Micheas says. And the Holy Scriptures say of Daniel: "He went into his house: and opening the windows in his upper chamber towards Jerusalem, he knelt down three times a day, and adored, and gave thanks before his God, as he had been accustomed to do before."⁴ "I fell upon my knees," says Esdras, "and spread out my hands to the Lord my God."⁵ David's knees grew weak through constant kneeling, as he says himself: "My knees are weakened."⁶ The great king Solomon prayed before all the people in the temple, kneeling not on a soft cushion, but on the hard floor: "He rose from before the altar of the Lord: for he had fixed both knees on the ground, and had spread his hands towards Heaven."⁷ These, we Christians, have all the more reason for imitating, since we have God present in our churches in a far more excellent and real manner. At least, if fatigue obliges us to sit down, we should, as in the cases I have mentioned, show in our whole behavior the greatest humility, modesty, reverence, devotion and sorrow for sin.

But what is the conduct of a great number? Many sit or stand with as little reverence, as if they were in the market-place; they are ashamed to take a prayer-book, or a rosary in their hands; nay, they are ashamed to make the sign of the Cross properly; while they talk, laugh and hold conversations in the house of God, where they should come for the sole purpose of adoring and praising His infinite Majesty. Do such people know how to act towards their Lord? Oh, certainly, St. John Chrysostom would not have spared them, but would have put them to shame pub-

Those who make a market-place of the church.

¹ *Invenerunt illum in templo sedentem in medio doctorum, audientem illos et interrogantem eos.*—Luke ii. 46.

² *Et sedens Jesus contra gazophylacium aspiciebat, quomodo turba jactaret aë in gazophylacium.*—Mark xii. 41.

³ *Curvabo genu Deo excelso?*—Mich. vi. 6.

⁴ *Ingressus est domum suam, et fenestris apertis in cœnaculo suo contra Jerusalem tribus temporibus in die flectebat gœna sua, et adorabat, confitebaturque coram Deo suo, sicut et ante facere consueverat.*—Dan. vi. 10.

⁵ *Curvavi gœna mea, et expandi manus meas ad Dominum Deum meum.*—I. Esd. ix. 5.

⁶ *Gœna mea infirmata sunt.*—Ps. cviii. 24.

⁷ *Surrexìt de conspectu altaris Domini; utrumque enim genu in terram fixerat, et manus expanderat in cœlum.*—III. Kings viii. 54.

lily. He would have asked them: "Do you think that the church is a market-place?"¹ Are there no other houses and places in which you can chat and talk? Or do you think perhaps, that you are on such familiar terms with God, that you can act as you please in His house, in His presence, without showing Him the least mark of respect? "I did not know," said the Emperor Augustus once to a senator, who had invited him to dinner, and had given him very poor fare, "I did not know that you were such an intimate friend of mine."² Could not Jesus Christ reproach you in the same terms, O tepid Christian, when you show such little respect in church: I did not think that you were on such familiar terms with Me? O perverse maxims of the world! When you are asked to frequent the Sacraments, and to go to Holy Communion several times a month, you say that we must not deal so familiarly with God; and yet, you act in His presence as if He was quite an intimate friend of yours, nay, as if He were merely your equal. To love God with the whole heart, to hear His voice and to receive Him frequently and unite one's self with Him in prayer, that is looked on as too great a familiarity; but to stare around, to laugh and talk and exchange the news in His presence, is considered as respectful. Away with you out of the church, and learn how to behave properly towards so great a Lord, before you venture into His presence!

Those who
make a
street of it.

Do they know much about how they should behave in church, who make a short cut of it, to get from one house to another? God has given us the whole wide world to make our journeys and do our business; the church alone He has kept for Himself, that it may be set apart solely for His worship and adoration; and yet we mortals dare to dispute that small space with Him, in order to save a few moments! Tell me, would any one allow you to make a thoroughfare of his house in order to go from one street to another? No, certainly not. No one would allow such a thing as that, for any money. Leave, then, your God in possession of what belongs to Him.

Those who
commit sin
in church.

Finally, do they know how to behave in church, who turn it into a brothel, as St. Athanasius says?³ Who defile their souls with fresh sins, in the place where they should obtain forgiveness of their sins with repentant hearts, as St. Ambrose says:

¹ Numquid forum est Ecclesia?

² Nesciebam ego te tam familiarem esse.

³ Ex Ecclesia Dei lupanar efficiunt.

“They come to church with venial sins, and leave it with mortal sins”?¹ I will say nothing of unworthy Confessions and Communions. O consciences of communicants, how strange you are sometimes! If one could see you, what objects of horror he would find you to be! I speak only of the unchaste looks, thoughts and desires with which many Christians defile the church; thus taking occasion from the piety of others, to gratify their sensuality. They come to church, and find therein the means of gratifying an impure passion, through the presence of some person who has come to hear the word of God, to assist at Mass, or to receive the Sacraments. Alas, cries out St. John Chrysostom, “many come to church solely for the purpose of admiring the beauty of others;”² and they take every opportunity of gratifying their curiosity, or attracting the attention of others. Nay, it sometimes happens that young persons of different sexes agree to meet in the church, in order to carry on an unlawful passion. “Are you not surprised,” asks St. Chrysostom, “that the lightning does not fall from Heaven to strike you, or that the earth does not open and bury you beneath the ruins? Are you not afraid to disgrace the house of God, by turning it into a place for gratifying your impure passions?”³ Certainly you would be more cautious on the market-place, lest people should see you; but here, where the great God speaks in sermons, where He admonishes people to avoid sin, here you seek the opportunity of gratifying your passions at least by looks and desires. Would it not be better for you to be stone blind, than to make such a bad use of your eyes? So far, the zealous St. Chrysostom. In one of the wars between France and England, some British nobles bound themselves by oath to wear a shade over the right eye until they had succeeded in conquering the enemy. Priests of Jesus Christ, ah, if you have nothing else, take the altar linen on which the sacred vessels are placed, and bind with it the eyes of that young man, that young woman, whose only desire in coming to church, is to enjoy a sinful pleasure, and to turn the house of God into an idolatrous temple!

How insulting that is to God, the King of Heaven. How unworthily Thou art treated, O Lord, by Thy Christians on

What an insult they offer to God.

¹ Cum parvo peccato ad Ecclesiam veniunt, et cum peccatis multis de Ecclesia recedunt.

² Multi ad formas mulierum adspiciendas, ad adolescentularum pulchritudinem curiosius intuendam ad Ecclesiam veniunt.—S. Chrys. hom. 14. in Matth.

³ Non miraris quomodo fulmina undique non deferantur; quomodo cuncta funditus non evertantur? Quid facis, O homo? Non horrescis, tanta templum afficiens contumelia? Itane postribulum tibi videtur Ecclesia, foro ignobilior?

earth. Is it for that, that Thou hast given us such a wonderful proof of Thy love for us, by concealing Thy divinity and humanity under the appearance of bread and wine, that Thou mightest remain with us always? O ye angels, what do you think of our irreverence? You, great princes and courtiers of Heaven, who far surpass us in excellence of nature, surround the altar of your Lord and King, in our churches, trembling with awe and reverence before your God who is present thereon; while we, poor mortals, who are nothing but dust and ashes, are ashamed to adore Him humbly on bended knee and with folded hands! We, vile worms of the earth, dare to be guilty of frivolity, unseemly behavior, nay, even of sin, before His very eyes! What do you think of our conduct, O blessed spirits? Are you not horrified at it? How can we expect you to intercede for us on the day when our Judge and yours will call us to an account for dishonoring His temple, and will visit us with well-merited punishment?

The heathens will complain of them on the last day.

But, why do I speak of the angels? If they wished to intercede for us, the very heathens and idolators would cry out against us, and would accuse us, Christians, to our Judge, of disrespect and irreverence in the house of God. How, O Lord, they would say: Thou condemnest us to hell because we have not known Thee; and we acknowledge that we have deserved Thy condemnation, because it is our own fault that we have not known Thee; but, are they deserving of mercy, who knew Thee, and yet behaved so disrespectfully towards Thee? It is true, they have trampled our idols under foot; but were they more reverent towards Thee therefore? It is looked on as a great sin for us to have bent the knee to false gods; is it a lesser sin for them to have been wanting in respect to Thee, whom they knew to be the true God? If we have adored stocks and stones, yet it must be acknowledged by all who know, or have read anything of the ceremonies that we observed in our temples, that we behaved towards our idols with humility and respect; but Thy Christians, who have the most sacred Mystery in their churches, treated It as indecently, as if they had nothing better than wood or stone before them. O just Judge, which of us deserves the severer punishment: We, who had a reverential fear of our lifeless and powerless gods, or they, who treated the true, living and Almighty God with disrespect? We, who honored mere figures, or they who sinned in Thy very presence? We, who were devout even to superstition, in our temples, or

they, who were guilty of the utmost disrespect and irreverence in the house of God? Christians, what shall we have to say in answer to these just complaints? What proofs shall we be able to bring forward against them? How shall we show our innocence?

Ah, my God, I have nothing to say; I can make no reply to these accusations, except to confess with shame and sorrow, that my faith has been hitherto very weak, and to say, "Indeed the Lord," to whom all honor is due, "is in this place, and I knew it not;" I have not thought of it; I have not kept myself reminded of it by a lively faith, whenever I entered Thy holy house, and remained in it. This is the cause of my want of respect. I confess and repent of my indecent conduct, with a contrite heart. Henceforward, I shall be most reverent; as St. Nilus tells me, I shall look on Thy church, as if it were Heaven, and pay Thee my homage with the angels who are in attendance on Thee therein, with the greatest humility, modesty and devotion; nor will I think, speak, or do anything that savors of earth. Let no one in the future dare to speak about other business in the church; I will show by my silence, and by trampling on human respect, that there is a great Lord here present, whom I must treat with the greatest reverence! Let no one think the worse of me, if I forget the politeness of the world, and omit the usual greetings and compliments! I have here before me the greatest of all monarchs, whom alone I must honor in this place. You, my eyes, shall look on nothing but the altar on which God awaits my love and adoration, or else you shall keep yourselves modestly cast down. You, my hands, when you are not occupied with prayer-book, or rosary, shall be folded in adoration of the great King. You, my knees, shall be bent in open confession of that great God whom I believe to be here present. Thus this place will be to me a place of freedom and refuge, in which, like the Patriarch Jacob, I shall receive frequent graces and blessings from the Lord, so that I may one day praise and bless that same Lord in His heavenly place. Let this be your resolution too, my dear brethren. Amen.

Conclusion
and resolution
to be-
have rever-
ently in
church.

THIRTY-FIFTH SERMON.

ON THE MALICE OF IRREVERENCE IN CHURCH, AND THE PUNISHMENT IT DESERVES.

Subject.

Irreverence in the Church of God is an act of the greatest contempt towards God, which He, in His anger, punishes most severely.—*Preached on the ninth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Quomodo huc intrasti? Matth. xxii. 12.
“How camest thou in hither?”

Introduction.

“Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the exterior darkness.”¹ What a severe Judge! What a terrible punishment to inflict on the poor man! What fault had he committed? He had come to the marriage-feast, without having on a wedding-garment. That was his whole crime. Is it, then, such a grievous fault to appear at a feast of that kind, without being dressed suitably, that it deserves to be punished with exterior darkness where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth? If that is the case, my dear brethren, how will it then be with those who appear, I will not say without decent clothes, but with a disrespectful demeanor, in the house of the great King of Heaven, to which the faithful come, either to receive Holy Communion, or to hear the word of God in sermons? Christ Jesus, King of Glory, who art bodily present in our churches, and who seest, not only the outward behavior, but the most secret thoughts of men, how many there are who enter Thy house and who remain in it, to whom Thou couldst say, with just resentment, “How camest thou in hither” dressed as frivolously as if going to a dancing house? How camest thou in hither, without bending the knee and showing Me proper honor? How camest thou in hither, to talk and chat, as if you were on the market-place? How camest thou in hither, to allow your eyes to indulge in impure glances? How camest thou in hither, to approach My table with a conscience stained with mortal sin? Quick, ye angels,

¹ *Ligatis manibus et pedibus ejus, mittite eum in tenebras exteriores.*—Matth. xxii. 13.

bind the hands and feet of this impious man who dishonors My house, and “cast him into the exterior darkness.” Yes, my dear brethren, so it will be one day, with all who in any way are irreverent in the church of God. A sin that we generally think little of, although by it the Almighty is treated with the greatest contempt, so that He punishes it with the greatest severity ; as I shall now show.

Plan of Discourse.

Irreverence in the church of God is an act of the greatest contempt towards God, which He, in His anger, punishes most severely. Such is the whole subject of to-day's sermon. Therefore, before we enter the church, let us always recollect where we are going, that we may never be wanting in due respect and reverence to our God. Such shall be our conclusion.

Give us Thy grace thereto, O omnipresent God; we humbly ask it of Thee through the merits of Mary, and the intercession of our holy angels guardian.

Every sin has this terrible quality, that it implies a dishonoring and a contempt of God, since a miserable mortal dares to rebel against his Almighty God and Lord, and to trample His law under foot. Therefore every sin merits the just anger and vengeance of God, to such a degree, that, if it is a mortal sin, and is not repented of, it deserves no less a punishment than eternal fires amongst the demons in hell. Still, there is no doubt that, as far as this contempt of God is concerned, circumstances make some sins worse than others. Thus, calumny, by which one accuses another falsely and contumeliously of a crime, is no doubt a greater sin than detraction, or speaking ill of a person in his absence. An insult offered to a prince or a king, seated on his throne and surrounded by his courtiers, is greater than if it were offered to him in his absence, or when he conceals his dignity under a disguise.

As far as contempt of God is concerned circumstances make one sin greater than another.

Now, with regard to the insult that men offer directly to the Almighty God; consider, my dear brethren, what the Holy Scripture says in the Book of Exodus. When the Hebrews were in Egypt, enslaved by Pharaoh, they fell into shameful idolatry, and adored an idol in the shape of an ox. The same people afterwards, when in the desert, at the foot of Mount Sinai, adored a golden calf as their god. A fearful and abominable crime, you think, to adore the likeness of a dumb animal, instead of the true God. And so it is; it is a fearful sin, indeed.

Proved from Scripture.

But there is one thing that astonishes me. God, in His goodness, bore with His people with the greatest patience, as long as they were in Egypt, although they had committed such a grievous crime; for we do not read of their having suffered any special punishment for it then; but when they committed the same crime in the desert, God at once poured out the vials of His wrath on them. According to the divine command, the father had to slay his son, the brother, his brother; the neighbor, his neighbor: "Thus sayeth the Lord of Israel: Put every man his sword upon his thigh: go, and return from gate to gate through the midst of the camp, and let every man kill his brother, and friend, and neighbor. . . . and there were slain in that day about three and twenty thousand men."¹ But why was that? Was it not the same God who had been grievously offended in Egypt, and by the same crime of idolatry, too? Nay, did not the same people adore the same idol? Why, then, did not the Almighty punish one crime, as well as the other? Tertullian, in answer to this question says, that we must consider the different circumstances in which those crimes were committed, in order to understand the different way in which God dealt with the transgressors. In Egypt, God was present among his people; but not in a way different from that in which He is present everywhere among all His creatures; whereas on Mount Sinai the same God gave evident proof of His presence, when amidst thunders and lightnings He delivered His law to Moses. Yet the Israelites dared to be guilty of idolatry at the very foot of the mountain; and it was that very circumstance which made the insult they offered to God so grievous, that He at once punished them for it, and twenty-three thousand of them were slain, because, as Tertullian says, "they had dared to offend God, who was so close to them;"² For the same reason the Holy Scripture says of the sons of Heli, "Wherefore the sin of the young men was exceeding great before the Lord."³ Why so? for there is no doubt that many far more terrible sins were committed before and after the time of Heli's children. Because these latter sinned in a sacred place, in the Temple, in the tabernacle, before the ark of

¹ Hæc dicit Dominus Deus Israel: Ponat vir gladium super femur suum: Ite, et redite de porta usque ad portam per medium castrorum, et occidat unusquisque fratrem, et amicum, et proximum suum cecideruntque in die illa quasi viginti tria millia hominum.—Exod. xxxii. 27-28.

² Quia tam proximum Deum offenderant.

³ Erat ergo peccatum puerorum grande nimis coram Domino.—I. Kings ii. 17.

God. Oh, certainly their sin was grievous indeed, and could not be left unpunished!

See, my dear brethren, a similar insult is offered to God in our days, by irreverence in church. The whole world, says St. Ambrose, belongs to God, and He has given it to men, to do with it what they please. They can build houses to live in, courts of justice to settle their disputes, markets and shops to buy and sell, streets to walk on, while they can use the mighty ocean to transport their merchandise from one place to another, and they have besides, fields and forests, mountains and valleys, gardens and meadows for their support, business and amusement. The churches alone God has reserved for Himself, to receive therein due homage and adoration from men. "Although the whole world," says the Saint, "belongs to God, He is satisfied with the Church alone as His dwelling-place."¹ As God Himself said to Solomon: "For I have chosen, and have sanctified this place, that my name may be there forever, and my eyes and my heart may remain there perpetually."² I do not allow any one to use this place for any other purpose, except to do homage to Me.

For the same reason, the insult offered to God by irreverence in church is greater, because the church is the house of God.

It is true that the great King of Heaven is present in all places, and that honor and reverence are everywhere due to him; but He dwells in the church as in his palace, where He is seated on His throne, that He may be seen and adored by all. When I am in the church, I am in a holy place, where the same God who gave the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai still declares His law to His people; in a place where I can adore the same Lord and Saviour, who was adored in the stable at Bethlehem; in a place where sins are forgiven by the same merciful Lord, who went about formerly in search of sinners; in a place where that loving Lord gives as our food and drink, the same Flesh and Blood which he gave to His Apostles at the Last Supper in Jerusalem; in a place where the Holy Sacrifice of Calvary, in which the Son of God was offered on the Cross as a Victim to His heavenly Father, is renewed daily, in which the same Precious Blood still flows for us that was shed on the Cross. Ah, when we think of this, should we not cry out, like the Patriarch Jacob, when he saw the ladder on which the angels were ascending and descending: "How terrible is this place!

In which He wishes to be adored on His throne.

¹ Cum totus mundus Dei sit, Ecclesia tamen domus ejus dicitur.

² Elegi enim et sanctificavi locum istum, ut sit nomen meum ibi in sempiternum, et permaneant oculi mei, et cor meum ibi cunctis diebus.—II. Par. vii. 16.

this is no other but the house of God, and the gate of Heaven. Indeed the Lord is in this place.”¹ Truly the great God has chosen this as His dwelling-place!

Therefore a Catholic who is disrespectful in church, acts most insultingly to God.

Now, my dear brethren, to be disrespectful to God, to be in any way wanting in reverence to Him in such a holy place, is not that to insult and offend the Majesty of God, which deserves infinite honor and love, on His very throne, in His own palace? Therefore, is it not to offer to God one of the greatest possible insults? And can a Catholic Christian dare to do this? Or if any one is so foolhardy, can the all-seeing God allow such conduct to remain unpunished?

He is put to shame by heathens.

A Catholic Christian, I say; for I dare not even accuse heathens and idolaters of such a crime towards their false gods of wood and stone. I feel ashamed when I read what the philosopher Seneca says of the humility, modesty and reverence which the Romans observed in former days in the temples of their gods. I feel ashamed when I read of the bitter complaints that Demosthenes made, when a ship that was used to carry the idolatrous priests from one place to another, to offer sacrifice, was sold to merchants to be used by them for purposes of traffic. Ah! cried out Demosthenes, with tearful eyes and sorrowful heart, what accursed impiety!”² Is it come to such a pass with our religion, that the sacred ship, which was used by our priests, is now profaned by being devoted to ordinary commerce? O abominable impiety! If a mere ship, which was used simply to carry about what belonged to the temples of their false gods, was held in such reverence by those heathens; what, I ask, must have been the respect they showed in the temples themselves, when assisting at their sacrifices?

By heretics.

Nor would I dare to accuse even heretics of that crime. Father Joseph Prola, of our society, writes, that a certain bishop relates how he was once travelling through foreign countries, in company with four Roman nobles, and that on one occasion they entered a heretical church in which a sermon was being preached. They were accompanied by a great number of servants and retainers, and of course made no inconsiderable noise when walking up the church; still, not one of those who were present even turned aside to see who was coming in. When the sermon was finished, the people fell on their knees

¹ Quam terribilis est locus iste! non est hic aliud nisi domus Dei, et porta cœli. Vere Dominus est in loco isto.—Gen. xxviii. 17, 18.

² Execranda impietas!

to sing and pray; after which they left the church quietly, modestly and with down-cast eyes; nor even then did any one look around to see who the strangers were, who had visited their church. Ah, Christians! Catholics! must we not blush with shame at being forced to acknowledge the truth of what Tertullian says: "Heathens show more faith" and reverence "towards their religion, than Christians towards the only true faith?"

A Turk was once urged by a zealous missionary to embrace Christianity. No, said he defiantly (and his answer may well put some of us to shame), I will never embrace your religion; I cannot, and must not do so. And why not? Because you Catholics either believe what you all profess, that God is really present in your churches, or else you do not. If you do not believe it, your religion is a mere hypocrisy; if you do believe that you adore the true God, to whom the highest reverence is due, and yet act with such disrespect and behave so badly in His presence, as I myself have seen in your churches, where people appeared dressed in a frivolous style, talking, laughing, staring about them, hardly bending a knee, or stretching out a hand to God, even while their lips were moving in prayer, if, I say, you behave like that, even while the sacrifice you call so holy is being offered, and while your God is elevated to be adored, then, if you still believe in God, you must be the most wicked people on earth. Therefore I will never belong to a religion in which God is so shamefully treated in His own house.

Now, what have we to say to this? Can we deny his accusation and the conclusion he lawfully derives from it? Do not people behave as badly as that, nay, even worse, in many of our churches? If the Turk had been able to see all the sin that is committed in our churches in thought and desire, nay, sometimes even by the outward senses, as I said on a former occasion, alluding to the custom that some young people have of making the church a meeting-place in which to indulge their passions, how would he not have been scandalized? O my God, if such things are done in Thy churches, in Thy very presence, where canst Thou find in the whole world a place in which Thou mayest be free from insult? Sins without number are committed in private houses, in dancing houses, in gardens, in the public promenades, in public houses, in places of resort for young people of both sexes, in hidden corners, by day and by night. Not even

By Turks.

God is insulted in this way by many Christians.

¹ *Mellior est fides gentium in suam sectam, quam Christianorum in suam.*

the church, the holy house which Thou hast reserved for Thyself, that Thou mayest receive due honor therein, is free from sin. Certainly, those sins are concealed from the eyes of the pious, who, keeping themselves recollected as they ought, in the presence of God, are attending to their prayers, and suspect no evil of others; but can they be hidden from the all-seeing eye of the God who is present? That we shall learn in due time.

At which
the devils
rejoice.

We read in the little book, called the *Scala Coeli*, or Ladder of Heaven, that a pious priest who was making his thanksgiving after Mass, near the altar, once saw a devil in the shape of a man writing rapidly on a piece of parchment, and when he came to the bottom of the page, he took it in his teeth, and pulled it out so as to make it wider. The priest, after various exorcisms, commanded him in the name of Jesus Christ to read aloud for the people what he had written. The devil obeyed and in a loud voice cried out: On this parchment I have written all the greetings, conversations, curious and impure looks, indecent behavior, unchaste desires, and, in a word, all the irreverences and sins that the people of this place have been guilty of this morning in church, in order to present them before the judgment-seat of God; for there are no sins that cause us so much satisfaction, as those which are committed in church, because thereby God is treated with the greatest insult and contempt. Ah, Christians, if one of those hellish spies were to stand here in our midst, and read out the list of sins that have been committed in our churches during a single year; what a fearful number there would be, even of those of which we take not the least notice! But if he were to call out the names of the guilty ones, and to say: such and such a one has thought, looked, spoken, or acted in such and such a manner in the church; he has hitherto behaved disrespectfully in different ways; how many there are who would have to hide their heads for shame! But the time will come, when everything shall be shown plainly to the whole world; although the punishment may not be deferred till then.

But of
which God
complains.

For this is that intolerable insult of which God complains by the Prophet Jeremias, and of which He will complain still more bitterly on the last day, when the book in which all the thoughts, words and actions of all men are written down shall be opened and read: "What is the meaning that My beloved hath wrought much wickedness in My house?"¹ As if He meant to say: What

¹ *Quid est, quod dilectus meus in domo mea fecit scelera multa?*—Jer. xl. 15.

have I done to My beloved, that he should sin even in My house? My beloved ! If Turks, heathens, or heretics had been guilty of such wickedness, it might still be tolerated to a certain extent ; for they could excuse themselves, as people sometimes do, when they have not shown due respect to another. Oh, they say, I beg your pardon, I did not recognize you. But My beloved, My chosen Catholic people, who knew that I, the true God, was present amongst them, they are the guilty ones, and in My own house, too ! Have they not room enough to commit sin elsewhere, that they must make choice of My house as a place in which to offend Me ? They treat Me badly enough by their horrible cursing and swearing in their own houses, by their calumny and detraction in company, by their drunkenness and impure talk in taverns, by their scandalous dress in dancing houses and theatres, by their injustices in business, by their impurities at night at their own doors, or in the darkness of their rooms, etc. All that I have already written down, and will demand an account for at the proper time, unless it is blotted out by sorrow and timely repentance, through My goodness and mercy. But that sins should be committed in the house that is specially consecrated to Me, in My own palace, before My throne, under My very eyes, that I cannot tolerate, nor overlook for a moment.

No, a sin of that kind must be punished, even before the day of general punishment arrives. I have already announced My determination by My Apostle Paul : “ If any man violate the Temple of God, him shall God destroy.”¹ The Israelites in the Old Law experienced the truth of this. “ Go,” said the Lord in His anger, to the Prophet Ezechiel, “ show to the house of Israel the temple, and let them be ashamed of their iniquities, and let them measure the building, and be ashamed of all that they have done.”² After the Lord had shown the same Prophet all the abominations that had been committed in the Temple at Jerusalem, He adds : “ Is this a light thing to the house of Juda, that they should commit these abominations, which they have committed here : because they have filled the land with iniquity, and have turned to provoke Me to anger ? Therefore, I also will deal with them in My wrath : My eye shall not spare them, neither will I show mercy.”³ And again : “ As I live, saith the

Therefore He cannot allow it to go unpunished, as we see in the Old Testament.

¹ Si quis autem templum Dei violaverit, disperdet illum Deus.—I. Cor. iii. 17.

² Ostende domui Israel templum, et confundantur ab iniquitatibus suis, et metiantur fabricam, et erubescant ex omnibus, quæ fecerunt.—Ezech. xliii. 10, 11.

³ Numquid leve est hoc domui Juda, ut facerent abominaciones istas, quas fecerunt hic, quia replentes terram iniquitate conversi sunt irritandum me ? . . . Ergo et ego faciam in furore : non parcet oculus meus, nec miserebor.—Ibid. viii. 17, 18.

Lord God : Because thou hast violated my sanctuary with all thy offences, and with all thy abominations, I will also break thee in pieces, and my eye shall not spare, and I will not have any pity. A third part of thee shall die with the pestilence, and shall be consumed with famine in the midst of thee ; and a third part of thee shall fall by the sword round about thee ; and a third part of thee will I scatter into every wind, and I will draw out a sword after them.”¹

The city and Temple of Jerusalem were often destroyed on that account.

Did not the city of Jerusalem feel that punishment often enough ? A wonderful thing it is, too, my dear brethren ! Jerusalem was the favored and chosen city of God, the holy city ; “But I chose Jerusalem that my name might be there.”² “He is the God that is in Jerusalem ;”³ “in the holy mount in Jerusalem.”⁴ So does the Lord Himself speak of this city ; nevertheless, how often has not that city been destroyed and laid waste. In the Third Book of Kings, c. xiv., you find that it was taken and plundered by Sesac, the king of Egypt ; in the Fourth Book of Kings, c. xiv., that it was plundered by Joas, king of Israel ; in c. xxiv., of the same Book, Nabuchodonosor attacked and took it twice ; in the First Book of Machabees, c. i., that it was taken by Antiochus the Illustrious, and afterwards by Jason ; and in the Second Book of Machabees, that it was captured and sacked by another Antiochus, until at last it was completely destroyed by the Romans. And why was that ? If God loved that city, why did He deliver it so often into the hands of its enemies ? Did not its magnificent Temple consecrated to God help to save it from destruction ? nor its altar ? nor its tabernacle, nor the Holy of holies, nor the many sacrifices that were offered in it ? No ; the Temple itself was plundered, burnt and destroyed along with the city ; the altar and tabernacle were carried off, and all sacrifice ceased. And why was that ? The three Hebrew youths walked about unhurt in the midst of the flames of the furnace in Babylon, because the Almighty, in order to preserve their lives, changed the heat of the fire into a gentle breeze. “Could not the same God,” asks the Abbot Rupert, “who saved the

¹ Vivo ego, dicit Dominus Deus, nisi pro eo, quod sanctum meum violasti in omnibus offensionibus tuis et in cunctis abominationibus tuis, ego quoque confringam, et non parceret oculus meus, et non miserebor. Tertia pars tui peste morietur, et fame consumetur in medio tui, et tertia pars tui in gladio cadet in circuitu tuo ; tertiam vero partem tuam in omnem ventum dispergam, et gladium evaginabo post eos.—Ezech. v. 11, 12.

² Sed elegi Jerusalem, ut sit nomen meum in ea.—II. Paral. vi. 6.

³ Ipse est Deus, qui est in Jerusalem.—I. Esd. i. 3.

⁴ In monte sancto in Jerusalem.—Isa. xxvii. 13.

three children, prevent His Temple from being burnt?" "Certainly He could have done so," is his answer; "but God wished to teach the world that He has no pleasure in the beautiful stones and gilded walls of a temple made by hands: but in faith, and charity, and purity of heart."¹ The three youths were full of piety and the fear of the Lord, therefore God dwelt in them, and protected His dwelling from the flames; but in the Temple at Jerusalem He saw all kinds of sin and abomination, with which the Jews dishonored it, and, as a punishment of their crime, He allowed it to be destroyed, although it had been consecrated to Him.

But, we might ask, when the Jews were threatened with punishments of this kind, did they not take refuge in the Temple, in order to avert them by prayer and sacrifice? Did not God promise Solomon emphatically, that He would hear every prayer that would be addressed to Him in the Temple? "If I shut up Heaven, and there fall no rain, or if I give orders and command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people; and My people, upon whom My name is called being converted, shall make supplication to Me, and seek out My face . . . then will I hear from Heaven, and will forgive their sins, and will heal their land. My eyes also shall be open, and My ears attentive to the prayer of him that shall pray in this place."² Why then, I ask, did not the Jews take refuge in the Temple, when those calamities befell them, and pray to God to avert the punishment from them? There is no doubt that they did run to the Temple, and cry to Heaven for mercy; but in punishment of the crimes by which they had dishonored the Temple, God refused to hear their prayers. And that was what He threatened them by the Prophet Ezechiel, after having shown him the abominations that were committed in the Temple: "Therefore, I also will deal with them in My wrath: My eye shall not spare them, neither will I show mercy; and when they shall cry to My ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them."³

Therefore, too, God rejected the prayers that were offered to Him in the Temple.

¹ Non poterat Deus templum suum illæsum custodire, qui tres pueros custodivit? Plane poterat; sed erudiendus erat mundus, ut sciret quod Deus excelsus non pulchris lapidibus, aureisque parietibus templi manufacti delectatur, sed fide et charitate, et mundis cordibus.—Rupert de Vic. Verb. l. 6, c. 25.

² Si clausero cœlum, et pluvia non fluxerit, et mandavero et præcepero locustæ, ut devoret terram, et misero pestilentiam in populum meum; conversus autem populus meus, super quos invocatum est nomen meum, deprecatus me fuerit, et exquiserit faciem meam, . . . et ego exaudiam de cœlo, et propitius ero peccatis eorum, et sanabo terram eorum. Oculi quoque mei erunt aperti, et aures meæ erectæ ad orationem ejus, qui in loco isto oraverit.—II. Paral. vii. 13-15.

³ Ergo et ego faciam in furore: non pareet oculus meus, nec miserebor, et cum clamaverint ad aures meas voce magna, non exaudiam eos.—Ezech. viii. 18.

The same
punishment
is inflicted
on us in the
New Law,
by God, in
allowing
our
churches to
be de-
stroyed.

Christians, do we not experience almost the same punishment in our own days, under the law of grace? How often have not our forefathers, and we ourselves, too, seen, heard, or read that the most venerable Catholic churches in Europe, and especially in Germany (a lamentable proof of which we have before our very eyes), have been plundered, turned into dwelling-houses and stables, and utterly destroyed and burnt to ashes, not only by furious heretics, but also by Catholic soldiers, in war-time? How often have not the consecrated chalices, monstrances and other sacred vessels been profaned in different ways? How often have not consecrated Hosts been trampled under foot and treated with the utmost indignity? We throw the blame of this on a licentious soldiery, or on the blind hatred of heretics towards our holy religion; but if we consider the many profanations that are committed in our churches, we shall probably find them to be the cause of it; so that God might reproach us, as He formerly did His people by the Prophet Jeremias: "Go ye to my place in Silo, where my name dwelt from the beginning; and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel."¹ In the Temple at Silo the Sacrifice had been profaned, the ceremonies were not observed, impure passion had been indulged in, etc. Therefore, says God in His anger, go and see what has become of that place: the ark, the tabernacle, the altar, the Holy of holies, all have been taken away "for the wickedness of my people." Christians, He might say to us, go and see what has become of so many churches consecrated to Me, that have been so magnificently built and endowed by princes and kings; you will find nothing but ruined walls, broken altars, mutilated statues, and the bones of the dead scattered about. Do not wonder at that; it is the punishment of the sins that My people have committed in those churches! For God has ceased to protect His churches, because the faithful no longer observe proper respect in them; He no longer looks on them as His dwelling-places, because they have been turned into dens of sin; nor can they please Him any more, since His people come there to offend Him. Josephus writes, that before the final destruction of Jerusalem, many voices were heard in the Temple, crying out: "Let us go from this place."² These were the voices of the angels, who were unwilling to re-

¹ *Ite ad locum meum in Silo, ubi habitavit nomen meum a principio, et videte, quæ fecerim ei propter multam populi mei Israel.*—Jer. vii. 12.

² *Transeamus ex his sedibus.*—Joseph. de bell. Jud. l. 7, c. 17.

main any longer in the midst of the abominations that defiled the Temple. I should not be surprised if those pure spirits repeated the same words in many of our churches nowadays. Let us go from this place; why should we remain any longer in the midst of such impurities? We are faithful adorers of our great God, and we tremble with awe in His presence; why should we remain in the midst of the profanations and insults that are constantly offered Him? Let us leave this house! We are here to collect the devout prayers of Christians, and to offer them to God in Heaven; why should we remain to witness nothing but idle compliments and greetings, and to listen to vain conversation? Let us away at once! Yes, God would say to them, go away, My faithful ministers; but first destroy this den of thieves, this place where My enemies come to offend Me, “and begin ye at My sanctuary.”¹ The Almighty acts like a prudent general, who destroys a fortress that has been taken by rebels.

Now, if God acts with such rigor towards His own churches, because they are profaned by men, what refuge can they hope to find in the church, or rather, what a terrible chastisement will they not have to expect, who profane the church by their irreverence, and by many sins? A fine refuge they may hope for, surely! The church will help them as little as the tabernacle helped Core and his companions, whom the earth swallowed up before the very tabernacles; as little as the Temple sheltered Joab, who was slain as he was embracing the altar with both arms; as little as the ark protected the Israelites, when thirty thousand of them were slain around it. For such contempt of God cannot but draw down severe punishment. If we knew the judgments of God, could we be surprised that God so often visits us with private and public calamities? If no other sin was committed (and, alas, there are only too many of them, which force the divine justice to use the rod!) the profanations and sins that are committed in the churches by word and thought, I will not say by act, would be enough to draw down the anger of God.

Is it to be wondered at, that the prayers we offer up in our necessities before the altar of Jesus Christ are so seldom heard? For we insult God by profaning the place in which He would otherwise hear our prayers, according to His promise. No; He is carrying out the threat He uttered long ago: “And when they shall cry to my ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them.”

And by chastising those who profane the churches.

Especially by not hearing their prayers.

¹ Et a sanctuario meo incipite.—Ezech. ix. 6.

When they are under the pressure of difficulty and in danger of losing a great part of their property, when a decision is about to be given against them to their great detriment, when husband, or wife, or only child, whose help they are in need of, grows dangerously sick even to death, they will run to My church and cry out for mercy with a loud voice, with outstretched hands, on bended knees, and prostrate on the ground; but I will not hear them; I am determined to close My ears to all their prayers and supplications! They will redouble their prayers, promise amendment, go on pilgrimages, make vows, burn candles, have Masses said, and get prayers said in convents; but I will not hear them; I will not pay the least attention to them; the misfortune that threatens them will surely happen, they will lose their case, the husband, or wife, or child, will die. But, O Lord, after so many prayers, sacrifices, and promises? Yes, no matter what they do, I will not hear them. I will despise all their prayers and cries; and that, because they have so often despised Me in the same churches!

Conclusion
and exhortation to be
very respectful in
church.

Ah, my dear brethren, I trust that this threat will not be carried into effect against any of us who are here present, and that my whole sermon may be necessary simply as a salutary warning never to forget the reverence we owe to the house of God. In future, when we are going to church, let us think, on the way, of the great God whom we are going to adore; and while in the church, let us keep up a lively recollection of the great Monarch of Heaven, and imagine that we are quite alone with Him, so that the thought of others may not distract us. If any one attempts to disturb us by the ordinary greetings or salutations, or by talking, let us give them, more by our silence and modest demeanor, than by words, the same answer that Ferdinand II., Archduke of Austria, whispered into the ear of a certain prince, who spoke to him in church: "Let us pray, that we may not give scandal to the devout people;"¹ lest they should think we did not know what reverence is due to God, who is here present. In a word, let us always appear in church with such inward and outward humility, and so watch over our eyes and hands, over the postures of our bodies and the thoughts of our hearts, that we may not make the house of God a house of destruction for ourselves, but that we may one day acknowledge, with joy and gladness, that we have found in that house the eternal salvation of our souls. Amen.

¹ Oremus, ne simus supplicanti huic populo scandalo.—La Marin, in vit. Ferdinand, c. 5.

Another Introduction to the same sermon, for the tenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Text.

Duo homines ascenderunt in templum, ut orarent.—Luke xviii. 10.

“Two men went up into the temple to pray.”

These two men had the same object in view, when they went to the temple, namely, to pray to God. Both offered their prayer at the same time. Both went away at the same time, when their prayer was finished; but in very different conditions. For, “this man went down to his house justified rather than the other.”¹ He who went into the temple a notorious sinner, came out of it freed from the burden of his sins; while he who went in apparently a just man, went back to his house with his conscience still burdened with sin. What was the cause of this difference between the two men? The poor sinner, by his humble and sorrowful prayer, at once appeased the anger of God; but the proud and boastful prayer of the Pharisee was an insult to God, rather than an act of adoration; and therefore the one was justified rather than the other. My dear brethren, if we could see into the hearts of the many Christians, who daily enter the churches of God, what a great difference we should find amongst them! We should see great sinners go into the church, and after a good confession, come out friends and children of God; we should see others go in in the state of sin, and come out in the same state; we should see others going in, without the intention of praying, and after a while, coming out without having said a prayer. Still, I do not intend to speak of this to-day. The most astonishing, and yet the most common thing of all, is, that we should see many going into the church with pure consciences, and coming out stained with sin. How can that be? Because they dishonor God and His church, before, after and during their prayer. What a shameful thing that is! I allude to irreverence in the church in general, of whatever kind it may be; a sin of which we generally appear to make little account, etc.—*continues as before.*

On how to observe reverence when entering the church, and while in it, see the following Fourth Part.

¹ Descendit hic justificatus in domum suam ab illo. — Luke xviii. 14.

THIRTY-SIXTH SERMON.

ON THE PROFANATION OF SUNDAYS AND HOLY-DAYS.

Subject.

God wishes Sundays and holy-days to be devoted altogether to His honor, and to that of His saints. How that is to be done. Most Christians do quite the opposite.—*Preached on the Feast of All Saints.*

Text.

Vidi turbam magnam, quam dinumerare nemo poterat.—Apoc. vii. 9.

“I saw a great multitude, which no man could number.”

Introduction.

So that we celebrate to-day the feast of that great multitude of the saints of God, which no man can number. And it is quite right that we should do so! For God wishes us to show public honor to His chosen servants. The most of them He Himself has made illustrious during their lives on earth, by many miracles; all the elements had to help them, and be obedient to their prayers. How much more, then, does He not wish us to honor them now that they are in actual possession of His kingdom as His dearest friends? “Praise ye the Lord in His holy places,”¹ is the exhortation of the Prophet David to all men. The honor, my dear brethren, which the Catholic Church pays the saints, consists principally in her appointing certain feast days in their honor, just as God has reserved to Himself the Sabbath, or, as we now say, the Sunday of every week. But if the Church wished to appoint a day for every saint, many thousand years would not suffice for the purpose, as there are so many of them; therefore, in addition to the usual Sundays, and the holy-days that are devoted to a few of the greatest saints, she has appointed this day in each year to be kept as a feast of all the saints, so that none of them may be excluded from receiving whatever honor she is able to show them, and to make some reparation for her inability to show them all the honor they deserve. And that is quite right, I say again. To Thee be all honor and glory, O Lord, in Thy saints! Meanwhile, I cannot help think-

¹ Laudate Dominum in sanctis ejus.

ing, that, if the Catholic Church would appoint a certain day every year to atone for the faults that are committed in profaning the days set apart to honor God and His Saints, this would be not a joyful feast but a day of lamentation, on which we should repent properly of those faults. For, how are the days of the Lord, and of the saints generally kept? Ah, my God! Ah, chosen friends of God, how much more insult than honor do you not receive from many Catholics on those days! Such is, alas, the case, my dear brethren, as we shall see in the course of this sermon.

Plan of Discourse.

God wishes Sundays and holy-days to be devoted altogether to His honor and to that of His saints; such is the main point of the sermon, that I shall briefly prove. How that is to be done, I shall show in a short instruction. Most Christians do quite the opposite; such is the just complaint that I have to make. All together form the whole subject.

My object is, O great God, that we may henceforth celebrate as we ought the days devoted to Thee and to Thy saints; but I cannot effect this; so that Thou must help me thereto by Thy grace, which we humbly beg of Thee through the merits of Mary, of Thy holy angels, and of Thy chosen friends in Heaven.

But after all, is not God the Lord of all time? Does not every day in the year without exception belong to Him? Must we not serve God, love, honor and praise Him every day of our lives? By all means. And every one should say with the Prophet David: "I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall be always in my mouth."¹ Every day, in every thing, in our temporal affairs even, no matter how trifling they seem, we should seek the honor and glory of God, as St. Paul says to the Corinthians: "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do," without any exception, "do all to the glory of God;"² because this is the only end for which we are on earth.

Since that is the case, "Why," as the Wise Ecclesiasticus asks, "doth one day excel another?"³ In reality, one day is greater than another, not because it has more than four-and-twenty hours, for all days are alike in that respect; but because God requires a special homage and service from us on one day, which

Every day
should be
consecrated
to God.

But es-
pecially
Sundays and
holy-days.

¹ Benedicam Dominum in omni tempore : semper laus ejus in ore meo.—Ps. xxxiii. 2.

² Sive ergo manducatis, sive bibetis, sive aliud quid facitis, omnia in gloriam Dei facite.—I. Cor. x. 31.

³ Quare dies diem superat?—Eccl. xxxiii. 7.

He does not require on another. Just as, although He is absolute Lord and Master of the whole world, and therefore must be honored and revered in all places, yet He expects to receive special homage and service in the churches and temples that are consecrated to Him; so also He makes a distinction of time with regard to His service. For, there are, so to speak, certain common and ordinary days, which are called week-days; while others are of a higher rank, and are called Sundays, or feast-days, or holy-days. The former God has given to men for their worldly business; the latter He reserves for Himself and His friends in Heaven; and therefore, Sunday is called the Lord's day. It is as if He said to us: I leave the greater part of the year for your temporal affairs; six days in the week you can devote to your lawful business, and attend to the duties that your state or occupation imposes on you, and work for the support and sustenance of your body; you can work on the land for your bread, in the shop for your clothing, in the warehouse for money, in the courts of justice in order to gain your case, you can travel by land and water to carry on your business. I will be satisfied with one day in the week: but that day, along with some other days that are set apart in honor of My saints, I keep for Myself, that it may be devoted wholly to My service. Therefore I will not allow the least part of it to be taken from Me, or to be used for any other purpose.

Nature itself teaches us that.

Could the Almighty make a more reasonable and just request of us, my dear brethren? Even amongst heathens and barbarians there never yet was a nation that did not appoint special days in honor of the false deities, the sun and stars, the stocks and stones, the calves and goats, the snakes and dragons that they worshiped; nay, they had certain days on which they paid special honor to the devil himself!

And the divine command in the Old Law.

In the Old and imperfect Law, which was a mere figure of the Law under which we live, how emphatic was the command given to the Jews: "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day!"¹ And how strictly they had to keep that day for God alone and for His service! No one dared to move hand or foot to do the least external business that was not necessary for the divine service; they were not allowed even to light a candle, to kindle a fire, to cook food, or to do other things of the kind, although such work as that seems necessary even to the support of the body. "Six days shalt thou labor, and shalt

¹ Memento, ut diem sabbati sanctifices.—Exod. xx. 8.

do all thy works. But on the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: thou shalt do no work on it; thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy beast, nor the stranger that is within thy gates;”¹ such was the command that God gave them, so that being free from all business cares, they might remember that He was their Lord and God, who wished to be specially honored by them on that day.

Christians, how strict must not our obligation now be in this respect, under the New and most holy Law of Jesus Christ, when in addition to the natural and written law, we have also that express command of the Catholic Church, obliging us under pain of sin to devote Sundays and holy-days exclusively to the honor and glory of God! “It seems to me,” says St. Augustine, “that this day of the Lord surpasses all other days in brightness and clearness, and that the stars and the elements rejoice,”² on account of the special honor shown to God by His servants on this day.

Now, my dear brethren, if Sundays and holy-days are days of the Lord, what follows? It follows that all servile work and labor, all temporal and worldly business and occupations, all law-suits, contracts, judicial sentences, and everything else of the kind, must be laid aside on those days. They are days sacred to the Lord, on which He must be publicly honored by assisting at the Holy Mass, as a sacrifice of atonement and thanksgiving, with all possible devotion and respect. And is that all? Is the observance of these two points enough to sanctify those days? Yes, the Catholic Church, like an indulgent and loving mother, does not wish to burden her children with many commands which they must observe under pain of grievous sin, and therefore she obliges them to observe only those two points, on Sundays and holy-days under pain of eternal damnation. But does she not expect, or desire any more from her faithful children? Certainly she does; for it is not by any means her intention to prohibit them from practising other works of piety and devotion in honor of God. The same Church commands us all to confess and communicate once a year; does she mean that we should not receive the Sacraments oftener? Not at all. She constantly exhorts her children to

And the precept of the Church in the New Law.

How to observe Sundays and holy-days.

¹ Sex diebus operaberis, et facies omnia opera tua. Septimo autem die sabbatum Domini Dei tui est: non facies omne opus in eo, tu, et filius tuus et filia tua, servus tuus et ancilla tua, jumentum tuum, et advena qui est intra portas tuas.—Exod. xx. 9, 10.

² Videtur mihi hæc dies Dominica cæteris esse lucidior astra quoque vel elementa lætari.

have frequent recourse to those channels of grace, and looks on them as tepid and careless of their salvation, if the fear of eternal damnation drives them only once a year to Confession and Communion; and therefore the command of the Church says, "at least once a year;"¹ thereby showing her wish to be that we should often confess our sins, and approach the Table of the Lord to receive the necessary food of our souls. But if he who has the opportunity of going to Holy Communion during the year, does not avail himself of it, he is guilty of a mortal sin, and deserves eternal damnation. In the same way we are to interpret the precept of sanctifying Sundays and holy-days; we must spend those days altogether in honoring God and His saints; but the precept obliges under pain of mortal sin only with regard to hearing Mass and abstaining from servile works. And if we consider the matter aright, my dear brethren, what is the reason that all servile works are forbidden on those days? Is it that we may spend the day in idleness after having heard Mass? Certainly not; for otherwise, God would be much more honored by the work that we do with a good intention on week-days, than by the idleness in which we indulge on Sundays. All servile work, says St. Augustine, is forbidden to the faithful on Sundays and holy-days, that they may more readily attend to the divine service, and, being free from worldly cares, may more easily fulfil the will of God by praying, visiting the church, going to Confession and Holy Communion, attending sermons and catechism, reading spiritual books and the Lives of the Saints, meditating on the many benefits they have received from God, that they may be all the more grateful to Him, and by performing other works of devotion.

Many
Christians
do quite the
contrary.

Alas, when we consider how most Christians, and even Catholics spend those days; when we take all their actions into account, we are almost driven to the conclusion that Sundays and holy-days are not days of the Lord and His saints, but of the perverse and wicked world; not days of salvation, but of damnation; days to serve, not God, but gluttony; days consecrated, not to the divine Majesty, but to the unbridled desires of the flesh; days on which God and His saints are not praised, but blasphemed; days appointed, not to return humble thanks to God for the benefits received from Him, but to heap sin on sin; days on which men instead of receiving new graces from God's mercy, compel Him to visit them with new chastisements! In

¹ Ad minimum semel in anno.

a word, it would appear that those days are the very refuse of the whole year, and are devoted, not to God and His saints, but to the devil and his wicked angels; so that if those days were abolished, millions of sins, that cannot be committed on other days through want of opportunity, would be prevented.

Is it not so, my dear brethren? I do not intend to say much now of those half-Catholics who desecrate the Sundays and holy-days by doing servile works, and by carrying on their usual business so as to seek their own temporal advantage, and who compel their servants and others subject to them to work also, nay, who even sometimes remain away from Mass for the sake of working. Petra Sancta writes of a mill, called after the holy Abbot Luccarinus, the stones of which could not be moved on holy-days; no matter what efforts were made to set them in motion, they absolutely refused to stir. In olden times the Prophet David said to God: "The voice of Thy thunder in a wheel."¹ It would seem, my dear brethren, that the wheels of that mill had heard the thunders of the divine threats, that had escaped the ears of their avaricious master; they cry out to those who profane the Sabbath: Are you not ashamed, O wicked Christians? Do you not know that your heart is harder than a stone, with regard to keeping the Commandments of God and of the Church? No violence can force us to move against the will of our Creator; but you dare to transgress His law for the sake of a vile profit? This reproach from an inanimate creature will suffice for those half-Christians.

I speak now only of those who, during the week, are busied with temporal cares and labor of all kinds, and who lead an innocent life, and even, if they keep themselves in the state of grace and have a good intention when performing the different duties of their state, a real Christian and holy life. If people of that kind commit a mortal sin, on what day generally does it happen? Unrestrained license, gluttony and drunkenness, dicing and gambling with the usual accompaniments of lying and cheating, cursing and swearing, quarrelling and fighting, calumny, detraction, unchaste songs and discourses, bad and dangerous company, dancing, impure liberties, and other crimes that may not be mentioned; on what day, I ask, do men of that kind commit such sins as these? On week-days, when they are occupied with their usual labor? No; for then they have neither time nor leisure for such things. And when then? Generally,

By profaning the Sundays and holy days by servile work.

By committing many sins.

¹ Vox tonitruum tui in rota.—Ps. lxxvi. 19.

and you will acknowledge that such is the case, on Sundays and holy-days. God be praised, they say, to-morrow is Sunday; to-morrow is a holy-day. What is the meaning of this joy on their part? Perhaps they think: God be praised, I shall have more time to attend to my soul; to-morrow is Sunday, I shall be able to spend the whole day in prayer; to-morrow is a holy-day, I shall be able to hear a sermon, or to attend catechism, and learn something useful; to-morrow is a feast-day, I shall go to Confession and Communion in order to gain the indulgence, and to get the grace of the Sacraments, and I shall visit the church during public devotions and praise and bless God, etc. Is that what they mean? It ought to be; and that is the reason why every good Christian is glad at the approach of a Sunday or holy-day; but is that the reason why many rejoice? God be praised, they say, to-morrow is Sunday. And what then? Oh, I mean to spend a pleasant day. To-morrow is a holy-day. And what then? Oh, I am going to have a good carouse; all that I made during the week must be spent to-morrow with my companions. To-morrow is a holy-day, thank God! Why? Because we can have a game. To-morrow is a feast-day, and I shall have the opportunity of seeing that person, and enjoying myself, etc. And so, off they go to drink and gamble, to amuse themselves in dangerous company, and to commit sins of all kinds. O saint of God, whose feast-day is to be celebrated on the morrow, look down from Heaven and see what men do in your honor!

In that way
Christ is
crucified
anew on
Sundays
and holy-
days.

How disgraceful it is, says St. Cyril, to act in a manner so unbecoming a Christian. "Do you celebrate a feast-day by indulging in gluttony and giving a loose rein to your evil passions?"¹ Do you praise God and bless Him by insulting and offending Him? No, that is not the way to merit the grace and friendship of God, as you should do on Sundays and holy-days; for by your misconduct you drive out of your heart, on the Sunday or holy-day, the God whose friendship you enjoyed perhaps during the week, and you renounce His grace forever. Perhaps this was what our Lord wished to signify when He was lost by His parents, as a child of twelve years of age, on the festival-day in Jerusalem, as Cardinal Hugo remarks:² "Jesus was lost on a feast-day, because there are many who lose their God on feast-days, those days on which they should be united to Him

¹ Idne est, O Christiane, celebrare diem festum indulgere ventri, et inconcussis voluptatibus laxare habenas?—S. Cyril, l. 8 in cap. 15 Joan.

² Ideo dicitur quod Jesus amissus fuit in die festo, quia multi in diebus festivis, quando magis se deberent conjungere Deo, ipsum amittunt.—Hugo Card. Sup. C. 2, Luc.

closer than ever." Such people seek Jesus on feast-days, in the same way as the Jews sought Him, that is, in order to crucify Him anew: "The Jews therefore sought Him on the festival day, and said: Where is He?"¹ as we read in the Gospel of St. John; where is He that we may vent our rage on Him? Good reason had a priest once to say of his parishioners: On week-days I have none but pious souls in my parish; but on Sundays and holy-days they are devils.

The demons once held council together to see how they could manage to abolish the Lord's day altogether. "Let us abolish all the festival days of God from the land," they said, with those wicked people of whom the Psalmist² speaks, according to the explanation of Cardinal Hugo: Do you not see what harm those days are doing our cause? How many souls they snatch out of our hands by means of the confessional? How many by sermons and instructions? How many by the Sacrifice of the Mass, the Sacraments and public devotions? No, they will not do for us at all. Let us ask God to put an end to them. My dear brethren, 'tis my firm conviction, that if the Almighty were to grant that request now, there would not be one of the infernal spirits who would not vigorously oppose it; they would all cry out unanimously: Do not grant our petition, O Lord, let things remain as they are; let all the Sundays and holy-days be continued as before; we do not envy Thee the glory Thou gainest on those days! And why so, unhappy spirits? Why do you now wish the feast-days to be observed? Oh, we know why! Those so-called feast-days of God and the saints are real feast-days for us in hell. Why so? Every day we go about seeking to ensnare men's souls, and to lead them into sin; but we are not half so successful on week-days, as on feast-days. On week-days hardly any one is to be seen on the streets, unless pious people who are going to and from church; the drinking, dancing and gaming-houses, in which we make most profit, are empty; people are all occupied in various ways: one is in his study, another in his work-shop, or in the field, the garden, the pasture land, or the forest; all have something to do, and so our temptations and snares are of no avail, against them; our only chance then is to catch them when their work is done in the evening and they are assembled at the doors of their houses; otherwise during the whole week we can do little or nothing.

The devils
rejoice on
those days,
as if they
were their
own.

¹ Judæi ergo quærebant eum in die festo, et dicebant: ubi est ille?—John vii. 11.

² Quiescere faciamus omnes dies festos Dei a terra.—Ps. lxxiii. 8.

For then
most sins
are com-
mitted.

But on Sundays and holy-days, when the streets, gardens and promenades are full of people bent on pleasure, we do a thriving trade. On week-days we are often turned out of the houses, especially by the women, by the frequent repetition of the terrible names of Jesus and Mary while the Rosary is being said; on Sundays and holy-days the same women call us back by their swearing and cursing, when their husbands come home drunk at night and beat them. It is true that a great deal of good is also done on those days, but it is mixed with a great deal of evil. People go to church, and attend devotions, but not for a pious motive; their object is to meet some one for whom they have an impure affection, and to enjoy that person's company as long as possible; thus they act according to our wishes by turning the house of God into a den of thieves, and by making their religion a pretext for gratifying their passions, and indulging in unchaste looks, thoughts and desires. They go to church; but many of them are an occasion of sin to others by their scandalous style of dress; along with that too, there are the sins that parents commit, by allowing their daughters thus to be an occasion of sin to others. What a grand thing that is for us! They hear the Holy Mass, in which the Son of God is offered as a Victim to His heavenly Father; it is true, that we evil spirits must tremble with fear at this august Sacrifice; but many of those who are present at it, are as distracted in thought, as careless in manner, as curious in looking about, and as unrestrained in talking, as if they were on the market-place, looking at a butcher slaughtering an ox. And all this is a two-fold advantage for us; because it goes on before the very eye of God, and in the house in which He wishes to be especially adored and honored. Many useful sermons are preached on Sundays and holy-days, and we know that they are the means of rescuing numbers of souls from our snares; but amongst all the people of a large city, how few there are who hear the word of God, how few even amongst those who are present at it, who hear it with attention and eagerness! How few who try to practise what they hear. A still greater gain for us, is the fact that we shall be able to accuse those people all the more severely at the judgment-seat of God; the former, because they neglected, by not going to sermons, the lights and graces that God offered them; the latter, because, after having learned the will of God, by hearing sermons, they did not fulfil it in their lives and actions. There are many who go to Confession and Holy Com-

munion on Sundays and holy-days; it is true that we suffer great loss thereby; but still, we can write down in our book a great number of sacrilegious Confessions and Communions; for some conceal their sins through shame, or do not tell them properly, or have not true sorrow and purpose of amendment, because they are unwilling to leave the proximate occasion of sin, to restore ill-gotten goods, to remove an occasion of scandal, or to live in peace with their neighbor. They confess and communicate, pray and are devout in the morning; but in the afternoon and evening, nay, frequently during the whole night, they are on our side; so that before they awake next morning, they have abundant matter for another confession, etc. No, O Lord, do not disturb the present order; let the Sundays and holy-days be still devoted to Thy service, as Thou requirest of Thy servants! Nay, if Thou wilt, increase the number of those days; we will not grudge them to Thee by any means! Hear this, O great God, worthy of all love! With reason has Thy servant David said: "They that hate Thee have made their boasts; in the midst of Thy solemnity." They triumph over Thee on the days consecrated to Thee! That is, as Cardinal Hugo says: "The demons boast that more and worse sins are committed on feast-days than on other days."

Ah, Christians, what a disgrace that is! What are we thinking of? How can we hope to save our souls, if we so shamefully misuse one of the occasions and means that God has given us to save them? Sundays and holy-days are appointed that we may praise, honor and love God, atone for the sins we have committed during the week, and purify our consciences from all stain; but if we abuse those days to insult God and to defile our souls with sin, how must our Creator deal with us? what must become of our souls? "Oh, how foolish many people are," I must say with St. Bernardine of Siena, "they work the whole week to support their mortal bodies; and on the Sundays they work for the damnation of their immortal souls." Has then the Church forbidden all servile work on those days, merely that we may have time to enjoy ourselves in drinking and gambling, dancing and amusing ourselves, and gratifying our passions? Certainly, as St. Augustine says, "it would be better to dig the whole day, than to dance." Far better still to dig, than to

How unjust
that is to
God and to
one's soul.

¹ *Gloriati sunt qui oderunt te; in medio solemnitatis tue.*—Ps. lxxiii. 4.

² *Gloriati sunt, id est daemones, quod in diebus festis plura et pejora peccata accidissent.*

³ *Multorum insania, per totam septimanam laborare pro misero corpore, in die festo laborare pro damnatione infelicis animæ.*

⁴ *Mellius utique tota die foderent, quam saltarent.*

do other things worse than dancing. Work is good and praiseworthy in itself, it has been imposed by God on our forefather Adam, and on all his descendants, it has been sanctified by our Saviour Jesus Christ, who was pleased to earn His bread by the sweat of His brow, and if we do our work in the state of grace, and offer it to God by a good intention, we can thereby gain eternal glory in Heaven ; still, I say, this work is forbidden on Sundays and holy-days, so that he who spends a considerable time on those days in manual labor, without grievous necessity, commits a mortal sin and deserves eternal damnation. What a terrible sin must it not then be to profane those days consecrated to God, by works that are in themselves unlawful and sinful ! Will God allow such a sin to go unpunished ? Certainly not.

Remarkable
punishment
inflicted by
God on
people who
profaned
the Sundays
and holy-
days by
servile work.

If you read the Lives of the Saints, you will find instances of remarkable punishments inflicted by an angry God on those who were guilty of profaning Sundays and holy-days by servile works. You will read of a goldsmith, who was beaten by saints who arose out of their graves for the purpose, because he tried to make some improvements in a work of art he was engaged in, on a feast-day ; you will read of a woman who was making clothes on a feast-day, because she was in a hurry to get them finished, and who suddenly found them covered with blood ; of a man whose arm was burnt off his body because he baked bread on a feast-day without necessity ; of another whose hand stuck fast to his hammer, as he was engaged in doing something to his mill on a holy-day ; of hay disappearing off the meadow in smoke, because it was made on a feast-day ; of peasants who worked on a Sunday, losing all they had by fire, and not being able to find out where the fire came from ; of another peasant who, having threshed some corn on the feast of St. James, went afterwards into a bath, and had all the skin taken off his body, so that he died in great torture. Another who was ploughing on a holy-day had his oxen and plough destroyed by lightning. A laborer who was quarrying limestones on the feast of the Assumption was buried under a heap of earth which fell on him. A woman who went out with a hoe to take the weeds out of a field, on the feast of St. John the Baptist, had her face and both hands fearfully burnt by a miraculous fire. Another woman who was spinning on the feast of St. Stephen, although warned not to do so, did not leave off until she was suddenly paralyzed in her hands and feet. The devils have been seen to gather up carelessly hair that was cut on holy-days, and to preserve it as

carefully as if it were gold. And many other such incidents are recorded.¹

O my God, I must think, if Thou takest such revenge on those who profane by servile labor the days consecrated to Thee, although the labor in itself is good and innocent; what a terrible punishment Thou must have in store for those who dishonor those days by unlawful amusements, by gluttony and drunkenness, by dancing, and by abominable sins! Ah, Christians, it is not necessary for us to go to history for a proof of this; otherwise I could relate to you what happened to those people who persisted in dancing before the church-door on Christmas night, and would not leave off, although the priest gently remonstrated with them, until at last, moved by a holy zeal, he cursed them, and they were compelled to keep on dancing for a whole year; nor did their punishment cease till St. Heribert, the then Archbishop of Cologne, released them from it. Still, the women died immediately after, while the others were affected with a trembling in their limbs which never left them;² thus giving the world a melancholy example of the punishments inflicted on those who desecrate the days consecrated to God. But, as I say, we do not want proofs of this kind. Whole cities and provinces are often visited by the anger of God, without our being able to say where the evils come from that afflict them. War and devastation, scarcity and famine, pestilence and sickness, how do we know that they are not inflicted as a punishment for the profanation of Sundays and holy-days, as well as for other sins? One thing is certain, and that is, that God who is most jealous of His honor and glory, will not fail to punish severely in the next life those who dishonor Him, unless they blot out their sins by a sincere repentance.

If then, we are guilty of any fault in this way, my dear brethren, let us try to avoid eternal punishment by always giving to God in future the honor that belongs to Him. Sundays and holy-days are days of the Lord, that He has reserved for Himself and for His chosen servants; therefore, let us spend those days in the service of God, and in preparing ourselves for the eternal rest and the everlasting festival which we hope and desire to celebrate with the saints in Heaven, where, as St. Augustine says, "we shall rest, and love, and praise."³ Amen.

¹ Meyer, l. 2, Annal. Fland. A. 861; Baron. Tom. 10, Annal. A. 993. Sur. Tom. 4; Beluacen. spec. hist. l. 27, c. 41; Annal. S. J. A. 1580; Sulp. Sever. l. 2. Mirac. S. Martin, c. 75; Annal. S. J. A. 1705.

² Joan. Trit. in Chron. Cranzius, l. 4. Sax.

³ Vacabimus, amabimus, laudabimus.

How much more severe punishments they will have to expect, who profane these days by sin.

Conscientiousness and resolution to observe those days properly.

THIRTY-SEVENTH SERMON.

ON FALSE AND USELESS PRAYER.

Subject.

Many pray ; but they do not wish to receive what they pray for. That is a false and useless prayer, which offends God, instead of honoring Him.—*Preached on the fifth Sunday after Easter.*

Text.

Petite, et accipietis.—John xvi. 24.
“Ask, and you shall receive.”

Introduction.

There we have a clear promise on the part of the God of infinite truth, who must necessarily keep His promise : “Ask, and you shall receive.” And yet there is nothing more common than to hear men complaining that their prayers seem to be of no avail. What is the cause of that, my dear brethren ? I am firmly convinced that if ever our hearts and desires are in contradiction with the words we utter, they are so very often when we pray to God ; for, we are not always in earnest in our prayers nor do we really wish to be heard ; in fact, we desire the very contrary of what we ask for. This is the case especially when we ask for heavenly graces and spiritual blessings, which ought to be the chief object of our prayers. Without wasting any more precious time on the introduction, I begin at once, and I say

Plan of Discourse.

Many pray but they do not wish to receive what they pray for. That is a false and useless prayer, which offends God, instead of honoring Him. Such is the whole subject.

That we may correct this fault, which makes our prayers fruitless, nay, even culpable, we humbly beg Thy grace, O God through the intercession of Mary and the holy angels guardian.

He does not
pray who
does not
wish to re-
ceive what
he asks for.

The nature of prayer consists, properly, in the desire of obtaining what we ask for ; because asking is but an outward sign of our inward desire. And this was the first condition that our Lord required from the sick and infirm whom He healed. “Wilt

thou be made whole?"¹ He asked the infirm man in the Gospel of St. John who had no one to put him in the pond at Bethsaida. "What will ye that I do to you?"² He said to the two blind men by the roadside, when they cried out to Him to have mercy on them. If he had seen that those people were not in earnest in their prayers for health and sight, and that they would have preferred money instead, He would certainly not have healed them. In the same way, whenever the Holy Scripture says that God hears the prayers of men, it generally adds that men must cry to God beforehand; "In my trouble I cried to the Lord, and He heard me;"³ as the Prophet David says. And the Lord promises that He will hear their cries: "He shall cry to me, and I will hear him."⁴ Now what does it mean, that crying to God in prayer? Does it mean that we must open the mouth and shout out loud? Oh, no; for if that were the case, a sickly, delicate man, or one who has a weak chest would gain but little by his prayers, while he would fare best who could shout the loudest. To cry to God in prayer, says St. Bernard, is nothing else but to pray with a great desire and wish to be heard; the greater this desire, the more piercing the cry that resounds in the ears of the Almighty; but when this desire is wanting, the prayer is not heard.

And that is perfectly just; for who would force His gifts and graces on one who is unwilling to receive them, and who sets no store by them? To ask, and not to desire what one asks for, is not to pray, but to deceive and lie; conduct which merits, not grace and favor, but anger and punishment. Such is the complaint that Jesus Christ makes, in the Gospel of St. Matthew, of those hypocrites, who pray to Him with the lips, while their hearts and desires are in utter contradiction with their words: "Hypocrites, well hath Isaias prophesied of you, saying: This people honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me."⁵

Now, my dear brethren, I maintain the opinion I expressed in the beginning, that, namely, if ever our hearts and wills are in contradiction with the words we utter, that is frequently and especially the case in our prayers to God; we are not in earnest

But deceives
him to
whom he
prays.

Such is the
conduct of
those who
ask for
heavenly
goods and
do not wish
to get them.

¹ Vis sanus fieri?—John v. 6.

² Quid vultis, ut faciam vobis?—Matth. xx. 32.

³ Ad Dominum, cum tribularer, clamavi: et exaudivit me.—Ps. cxix. 1.

⁴ Clamabit ad me, et ego exaudiam eum.—Ibid. xc. 15.

⁵ Hypocritæ, bene prophetavit de vobis Isaias, dicens: Populus hic labiis me honorat, cor autem eorum longe est a me.—Matth. xv. 7, 8.

with them, nor do we really wish to be heard. What do you think of it yourselves? A beggar comes to the door and begs most piteously for a piece of bread for God's sake; the maid-servant comes and shows him several pieces that have been put aside for the poor; there, she says, take whichever of them you please. But the beggar will not put himself to the trouble of stretching out his hand for it; nay, if a piece is given him he throws it away at once; he is actually afraid of being forced to take another piece, and still he does not cease to cry out for a bit of bread for God's sake! Is he in earnest with his begging? No; he is a foolish man; he does not know his own mind; he asks for a thing that he does not wish to get; a man like that must be turned away, even with blows. Now, that is the way in which many Christians pray, when they ask for spiritual blessings that concern the salvation of their souls. The mouth speaks and begs, but the hands remain idle, and will not stretch themselves out to seize what is asked for. Outwardly they appear to sigh with longing for it, inwardly, they are filled with anxiety lest their prayer should be granted. The beautiful words they read in their prayer-books express a great desire for good; but in reality the good is rejected and quite the contrary is accepted. See for yourselves whether it is not so.

They are not in earnest with a single petition of the Lord's prayer.

I will content myself with proposing for your consideration that most excellent of prayers, which, at the same time is the most common; it is the most excellent, because it comes from the lips of Christ Himself, it was made by Him, and He has recommended it to us, and it contains brief petitions for all that we can expect or ask for in any kind of prayer, that concerns our eternal salvation: it is the most common prayer, because it is recited daily several times by great and small, young and old, learned and ignorant, nay, a Catholic would make a scruple of omitting that prayer for only one day. That prayer is the Our Father, of which Christ says: "Thus, therefore, shall you pray: Our Father who art in Heaven."¹ Let us see now, whether there is a single petition in it, in which the lips and the heart, the words and the will are always in perfect accord.

They are not in earnest in the first petition: "Hallowed be Thy name."

"Hallowed be Thy name;" such is the first petition; and its meaning is this; We wish and desire, O Lord, with our whole hearts, that Thy holy name be always praised, honored, glorified, and blessed by all creatures in the world, in a manner befitting Thy infinite Majesty and Sanctity; that Thy glory be every

¹ Sic ergo vos orabitis: Pater noster, qui es in coelis.—Matth. vi. 9.

day increased by us and all belonging to us, and by all Thy creatures; that Thou be always known and loved by all men, above all things. Now, I ask all who say that prayer: are you really in earnest? Have you a sincere desire to obtain your request? Are you in earnest, if you use irreverently and disrespectfully the Most Holy Name of Jesus, at which every knee must bend in Heaven and in hell; if you utter it in astonishment, or in jest? And you, who by your inveterate and horrible habit of cursing, pay more honor to the name of the devil, than to the name of God, and by your bad example teach your children and servants to use a language fit for demons? You who so often speak of God and His saints in contemptuous, profane, or blasphemous terms? You, who are ashamed to pay due respect to God in His church by outward modesty, humility and a humble posture of body? You, who do not like to be thought pious by others, and who therefore are often more influenced by human respect, than by a desire for God's honor? You, who are so jealous of your own honor, that, for the sake of it, you often transgress the law of God? You, who give others the occasion of sin by scandalous behavior, dress, manners, or language, and thus keep them away from God? You, who introduce dangerous abuses that are contrary to the holy Christian law, and spread them, approve of them, or do not prevent them, as far as your position allows? Are you in earnest, I ask, in your prayer that the name of God be hallowed, and His glory increased by all men? Or do you think that you are going the right way about blessing His name? Meanwhile, all these people say every day, "Hallowed be Thy name;" but they do not take the least trouble to amend their own conduct. Away with such beggars as those! Either they do not know what they are asking for, or they do not want it.

The second petition is, "Thy kingdom come." Do we know what it means, my dear brethren? If there was question here of a great and glorious earthly kingdom, such as, according to the Holy Fathers, the two Apostles imagined, when their mother asked our Lord: "Say that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand, and the other on Thy left, in Thy kingdom,"¹ then, indeed, I should have no doubt of the earnestness of our prayer, and like the two Apostles, we should do everything in our power to have it granted. Unceasingly, should we cry out: grant, O Lord, that Thy kingdom may

What the second petition, "Thy kingdom come," means.

¹ Dic, ut sedeant hi duo filii mei, unus ad dexteram tuam, et unus ad sinistram in regno tuum.—Matth. xx. 21.

come! It is my most ardent wish! Let me be the first in Thy kingdom! I desire with all my heart to sit next to Thee! But that is not the meaning of those words, and therefore, although we pray a hundred times a day, "Thy kingdom come," there is little earnestness in our prayer. The kingdom of God, which is the object of this petition, is twofold; one is in the present, the other, in the future life. Of the former our Lord says: "Lo, the kingdom of God is within you,"¹ and that is the case when, after having destroyed the kingdom of the devil therein, God takes possession of our hearts by His grace, and rules over them as their Sovereign Lord. The other is the eternal kingdom of Heaven, for which the royal Prophet sighed so eagerly, when he said: "As the hart panteth after the fountains of waters: so my soul panteth after Thee, O God. . . . When shall I come and appear before the face of God?"² I shall enjoy neither rest nor ease until I enter the house of my Lord!

They are
not in ear-
nest in ask-
ing for it.

But how few Christians who repeat that petition are really in earnest? How many, who while they say with the lips, "Thy kingdom come," Thou, O Lord, shalt alone rule in my heart! cry out far louder with their hearts, which are already possessed by something else, what the citizens said to the nobleman who went to receive for himself a kingdom: "We will not have this man to reign over us."³ No; the Lord is too severe, and He is opposed to our desires; we do not want Him to rule over us. Like the wicked Jews, when Pilate showed them Christ, saying, "Behold your King," they cried out; "We have no king but Cæsar."⁴ Thus many Christians really cry out, when they pray: we have no king but our unmortified flesh, whose desires we always are willing to gratify; we have no ruler but that person to whom we have sold our heart, our love and our freedom, and whom we adore as an idol; we will have no master but the world, whose laws we observe most obediently; no lord but the devil, whose slaves we make ourselves by sin. Again, how few Christians there are, who pray earnestly for the eternal kingdom of Heaven! If the Lord were to come and knock at their door, while they are praying over and over again, "Thy kingdom come," oh, what troubled countenances there would be! with what fear and dread they would cry out: give us

¹ Ecce enim regnum Dei intra vos est.—Luke xvii. 21.

² Quemadmodum desiderat cervus ad fontes aquarum, ita desiderat anima mea ad te, Deus. . . . Quando veniam et apparebo ante faciem Dei?—Ps. xli. 2, 3.

³ Nolumus hunc regnare super nos.—Luke xix. 14.

⁴ Ecce, rex vester. Non naeumus regem, nisi Cæsarem.—John xix. 14, 15.

till to-morrow! give us till to-morrow! Wait a little, O Lord; we have had no time to prepare! Give me a few years longer; I am not so old yet! There are many who, if the choice were given them between Heaven and earth, between eternal joys and the allurements of the world and the delights of the flesh, would cry out at once, in the words of the Psalmist: "The heaven of heaven is the Lord's: but the earth he has given to the children of men,"¹ therefore I prefer to remain on earth amongst men. Oh, you may pray as much as you like "Thy kingdom come," you will not be one bit better; for you are not in earnest; you do not want it.

The third is a beautiful petition, if we were only in earnest about it; "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven," by the angels and saints, who desire and wish for nothing more, and rejoice in nothing more, than that the will of their God be perfectly accomplished; nay, who resign themselves so fully to that holy will, that if God were to banish them from Heaven, they would rejoice in obeying Him and in loving Him in the midst of torments. "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven;" such is our prayer, O Lord! Let everything on earth be according to Thy will! Do with us and all belonging to us, with our bodies and souls, our lives and fortunes, at all times, in all places, according to Thy good will and pleasure! We wish and desire nothing, but what Thou wilt, and how, when, how long, and because Thou wilt! What a beautiful, angelic and heavenly prayer that is, I say again! Are you all in earnest with it, my dear brethren? If so, you are not in need of any more virtue; you are all perfect and holy.

In earnest, indeed! A likely thing, to be sure! you, poor, oppressed and needy Christians, see how this prayer of yours, "Thy will be done," chimes in with your actions! God has been pleased to place one man in humble and reduced circumstances; another He has deprived of honor and respectability before the world; a third He has commanded to work hard for daily bread; a fourth He visits with sickness, or bodily pain, or with temporal losses, or with different crosses and trials; the husband, the wife, the father, the mother, must look on while the object of their dearest affection lies dangerously ill, and may die at any moment. All these people say, "Thy will be done;" but how do they say it? What a want of resignation they show! What tears they shed! How impatient they are!

The third,
"Thy will
be done."

They are
not in ear-
nest with it.

¹ Cœlum cœli Domino: terram autem dedit filiis hominum.—Ps. cxlii. 16.

How they murmur and complain! They almost give way to despair. No advice, nor remonstrance will do them any good. And why? You are praying to God and saying to Him, "Thy will be done;" rejoice then, and thank God for having heard your prayer; He cannot please you better than by granting what you ask. The trouble you are in, is according to the will of God; it is God's will for you to be poor, or humbled, to suffer loss, or to be unfortunate; it is His will for your son, or daughter, or father, or mother, or husband or wife to be dangerously ill and to die; such is the will of God. And are you dissatisfied? Do you murmur against it? Then you cannot be in earnest in your prayer; you do not wish it to be granted; nay, you desire the very opposite of it! But what sort of a prayer is that? Do you wish that God should arrange everything so as to please you? If so, you must change the Lord's prayer, and say, not, "Thy will be done," but, my will be done! And, I say again, if you continue to say the Lord's prayer, as Christ has made it, you are not in earnest; you say one thing with the lips, and another by your actions: in a word, you do not really desire what you ask for. Be sure that you understand me aright, my dear brethren. I speak of a complaining, murmuring, discontented, despairing sorrow; for, it is natural to weep and be afflicted at misfortune, nor can we help feeling pain and grief; that is the reason why God sends us crosses; we must feel them; we must weep and be afflicted; but our sorrow should not interfere with patience and resignation to the will of God. Job certainly felt his sufferings when he was lying on the dunghill; he cried out: "Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you my friends, because the hand of the Lord hath touched me."¹ And yet he was patient in the highest degree, and was quite satisfied with the punishment inflicted on him by God; for he said: "Blessed be the name of the Lord."² David wept bitterly when he heard of the death of his son Absalom: "My son Absalom, Absalom, my son," said he, "would God that I might die for thee;"³ but at the same time, he praised God with the most humble submission to His will. Jesus Christ Himself, the Son of God, was troubled in the garden of Gethsemane at the thought of the sufferings that were in store for Him, and he was sorrow-

¹ *Miseremini mei, miseremini mei, saltem vos amici mei, quia manus Domini tetigit me.*
—Job xix. 21.

² *Sit nomen Domini benedictum.*—Ibid. i. 21.

³ *Fili mi Absalom, Absalom fili mi: quis mihi tribuat, ut ego moriar pro te.*—II. Kings xviii. 33.

ful even to death: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death,"¹ He said to His Apostles; He even asked His heavenly Father to free Him from such a shameful death: "He fell upon His face, praying, and saying: My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me;"² but at once, with the utmost resignation, He added: "nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt."³ So that sorrow is not a sign of dissatisfaction and discontent, when he who suffers it, says and thinks: O Lord, it is Thy will for me to suffer; Thy will be done! But this is where most people go astray, and therefore, they do not wish what they pray for.

If we are to be in earnest about any petition, we surely should be so, in my opinion about the fourth, "Give us this day our daily bread." That is, bestow on us, O Lord, temporal blessings, and all that is necessary for our bodily welfare, such as food and clothing. I do not think that any one would refuse to pray earnestly for this, or to stretch out both hands eagerly to seize hold of any blessings of the kind that are bestowed on him; in fact the more one receives of those blessings, the better he is pleased. Still, surprising as it is, even in this petition we are not always in earnest. And why? Consider what we ask for; "bread," that is, whatever is necessary to support life, but nothing superfluous. According to the well-known exhortation of St. Paul: "Having food, and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content;"⁴ nor should we desire any more: "For they that will become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men into destruction and perdition."⁵ Give us "our bread;" that is to say, our neighbor must share with us, and he to whom God has given much, must help the poor and needy. Give us our "daily bread," by which we acknowledge our constant and humble dependence on the great Lord of Heaven, and like poor beggars expect our food from His hands. Give us "this day;" we do not say, to-morrow, so as not to show too great an anxiety for the future, and to prove our confidence in the common Father of all, who feeds the birds of the air and the worm of the earth.

"Give us this day our daily bread," the meaning of this petition.

From this, my dear brethren, you can see what your desire is They do not

¹ Tristis est anima mea usque ad mortem.—Matth. xxvi. 38.

² Procidit in faciem suam, orans et dicens: Pater mi, si possibile est, transeat a me calix iste.—Ibid. 39.

³ Verumtamen non sicut ego volo, sed sicut tu.—Ibid.

Habentes alimenta, et quibus tegamur, his contenti sumus.—I. Tim. vi. 8.

⁵ Nam qui volunt divites fieri, incidunt in temptationem, et in laqueum diaboli, et desideria multa inutilia et nociva, quæ mergunt homines in interitum et perditionem.—Ibid. 9.

wish it to be
granted.

regarding this petition. Judge yourselves, if they are satisfied with their daily bread, who squander away their lives in immoderate pleasures, and indulge in too great an extravagance in dress. They are not content with their bread, although there are so many poor who have no bread, whom they could and should help out of their superfluous wealth. Do they ask for "our" daily bread, who are concerned for themselves alone, and do not trouble themselves about others, while they look upon the law of alms-giving as not binding in conscience, and very often resort to all kinds of tricks to plunder poor widows and orphans? Do they expect from God their "daily" bread, who think they owe their prosperity to their own skill and cleverness, and, blinded by pride, hardly ever think that it is all due to Him alone who can, in a moment, humble the mighty, and send away the rich empty-handed? Are they content with their daily bread for "this day," who through greed of gold, are most anxious to save all they can, and to increase their treasures, as if they expected never to die, but to live in this world for ever? All these people do not really desire what they ask for; they are not satisfied with that for which they pray to God.

"Forgive us
our tres-
passes,"—
this too, is
against
their will.

What says the fifth petition? "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us;" as we deal with our neighbor, with him who has offended and injured us, and who says he is our sworn enemy; so also, O Lord, do we wish and desire that Thou shouldst deal with us, and with our sins! Oh, vindictive man, do you mean that? You cannot bear the man who has injured you, or with whom you have a difference or a law-suit; you do not speak a friendly word to him; your heart is full of bitterness towards him; you will never forget the harm he has done you; if you wish him no harm, neither do you wish well to him; you seize every opportunity of paying him off in his own coin; and do you now wish and desire that the just God should deal with you in the same way, and take vengeance on you for the sins you have committed against Him? Do you really mean that? I ask you again. Oh, woe to you, if He were to do as you ask! And yet you say every day to Him; "forgive us, as we forgive!" No; I cannot believe that you really wish to be heard; and so you do not desire what you pray for. I will say no more about this now, my dear brethren, as I have spoken of it more at length on a former occasion.

"Lead us

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," that is,

keep off from us, O Lord, the evil spirit, that he may not deceive us by his wiles, temptations and suggestions; keep down in us the unruly desires of the flesh, that we may not be led by them to transgress Thy law; keep our souls from all dangerous occasions; turn away our eyes and ears that we may not see or hear anything that would lead us into evil; save and "deliver us from evil," and especially from the greatest of all evils, sin! Such is the tenor of our prayer; but what is really our wish and desire? Oh, how readily we should be heard in this petition, if we were only in earnest in making it!

not into temptation
Deliver us
from evil."

Truly, the devil is not always to blame for every temptation and sin! Much less is God an occasion of evil to us. He permits us to be tempted, but not more than we can bear; and His only object in doing so, is to prove our virtue, and to increase our merit and eternal glory. But very often we tempt ourselves, and do our best to lead ourselves into evil; we go without necessity into the dangerous occasions of sin; we give full liberty to our eyes, ears, tongue and all our senses; we are fond of, and seek conversations, friendships and acquaintances that the holiest and most mortified servants of God shunned through fear of falling, and which we must acknowledge in conscience, to be dangerous to innocence; we read books, novels and love-tales, and think about what we read, until it would be a miracle indeed if we did not give way to evil desires. And still we pray daily, "Lead us not into temptation!" Truly there can be little earnestness in our prayer!

They are
not in ear-
nest about
the first.

"Deliver us from evil;" fine talk that! I think that, if I could read the hearts of many, I should find them like St. Augustine when he was still young and given to impurity. As he himself confesses, he had neither rest, nor peace when he considered his miserable condition, and the danger he was always in of being lost forever; so that he was often driven to have recourse to God in prayer, and to ask to be freed from his misery by a powerful grace. "But alas," he says, "I was afraid, O Lord, that Thou wouldst hear me too quickly, and wouldst heal me of the disease of concupiscence."¹ I dreaded breaking off my old habits, as I would dread death itself; I looked forward with fear and trembling to the time when I should no longer have the beloved object before my eyes, nor enjoy the wonted pleasure. Oh, terrible time, I thought, oh, bitter solitude, in which I shall have nothing to think of but Heaven, nothing to

Still less are
they in ear-
nest about
the last pe-
tition.

¹ Timebam, Domine, ne me cito exaudires, et cito sanares a morbo concupiscentiæ.—
.. Aug. l. 8; Confess. c. 7.

love but God. I prayed, and was full of fear at the same time, that in Thy mercy, O Lord, Thou wouldst hear me too readily and too quickly. There are many in our own days who act in just the same way. Change my heart, O God; free me from this dangerous state; keep my soul safe; be merciful to me, a poor sinner! so they say a hundred times, like St. Augustine. But, tell me, would you be satisfied if your prayer was granted, and if God loosed in a moment the bonds which keep you in such an agreeable captivity? If He were now to embitter for you all those joys and pleasures that you have hitherto so eagerly desired? If He were to make you hate the person whom you have hitherto so ardently loved, and by whom you are, so to say, bewitched? If He were all at once to deprive you of the opportunities and company that are so dear to you? If He were to depose you from that office which has hitherto been the sole occasion of your sins? Would you, I ask, be satisfied? oh, many a one would say, quite frightened at the idea: "I fear that God may hear me too quickly." Do you then love your own misery? You secretly rejoice when you find an opportunity of gratifying your passions, and you weep through sorrow if the person with whom you sin, goes away: therefore you do not really desire what you pray for.

"Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?" says another, when his confessor advises him to pray in order to find out that state of life he should choose; but if we could look into his heart, we should find it full of fear that God would call him to the religious state; he does not want that; he does not want an inspiration that interferes with his freedom. Lord, enlighten me; give me grace to know my duty in all circumstances, and to fulfil Thy holy will! Such is the prayer of a third, who is afraid of asking advice from others, or to come to a sermon, lest he should be taught his duty, and learn truths that he would find disagreeable to live up to. In a word, they who are in the state of sin come to the church and pray, "deliver us from evil," without the least earnest desire or resolution to abandon the evil, that is, sin, and to amend their lives. Thus they are not in earnest even when they say the last word of the Lord's prayer, which is Amen, "so be it;" as the Catechism says, "that we may show our hope and desire to obtain what we ask in those seven petitions."¹ See, my dear brethren, nearly every word in our prayers is false and deceiving!

There are other prayers also which they do not wish to be granted.

¹ Hoc est, fiat; ut spem desideriumque monstremus, accipiendi ea quæ septem his petitionibus continentur.

But what an absurd and ridiculous kind of prayer that is. It reminds me of what students say in school when they want to be questioned on the lesson: "let me answer;" they shout and sometimes it happens that he who shouts the loudest, would turn red and pale, and get into a fearful state if he were asked a question, because he does not know a word of his lesson, and shouts with the others in order to make it appear that he can answer, so that he may get off without being questioned. And the trick succeeds very often; for it is not impossible to deceive the school-master in that way, now and then; but if the trick is found out, woe betide him! Now, do we really think that we can deceive, in that way, our God who can penetrate the inmost recesses of our hearts, and that we can say anything we like outwardly, without His perceiving that we really do not mean a word of what we say? Still, we think that if we spend a few hours praying in that way, we have done great things for God's honor, and we look upon ourselves as very devout and pious! What nonsense! In reality, we are insulting God, and trying to befool Him; for when we ask Him for that which we cannot receive, and He, in spite of His omnipotence, cannot give us, it is the same as saying: O Lord, do not allow my heart and my conscience to be stained by sin, while I still wish to keep them in the state of sin! Keep me from all the vanities of the world, while I love nothing but the world and its customs; save my soul from all dangerous occasions, although I deliberately seek them; let my flesh be subject to the spirit, although I gratify all its inordinate inclinations; let me not be blinded by ambition, although through pride I extol myself above others; give me meekness and patience, although I am determined not to bear the least word of contradiction. That is as much as saying: O God make me humble and proud, patient and impatient, chaste and sensual, an enemy and a friend of the world, virtuous and vicious, pious and wicked; grant that I may save my soul, and lose it! What an extraordinary prayer that is! Can God be honored by it?

Prayer of that kind is an insult to God.

Suppose that we address a prayer of that kind not to God, but to a mortal like ourselves; would not that man feel offended when he finds out that we are not in earnest, and that we are afraid of receiving what we pretend to desire from him? What could he think but that we wish to put his goodness and generosity to the test, or else that we are trying to make a fool

Therefore He rejects it with displeasure.

¹ *Liceat mihi, mihi!*

of him? And what could he do but turn us away in displeasure? And that God, who, as the Apostle says, "is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things;"¹ who knows not only the words we speak, but also the desires of our hearts; will He listen with favor to a prayer which our own conscience tells us to be false and deceitful? Will He force upon us gifts and graces which we do not value nor desire, and are actually afraid of receiving? Can He hear a prayer of that kind?

Or else He
hears it to
their des-
truction.

Yet, He will hear it; but you must not rejoice on that account, for you have reason rather to fear. He will hear it, not according to the words you speak, but according to the desires of your hearts. "Be it done to thee as thou wilt;"² He will say, as He formerly did to the woman of Chanaan; I will grant the prayer of thy heart, but not that of thy lips! You speak of the salvation of your soul, and the kingdom of Heaven; but in reality you desire your eternal ruin; "be it done to thee as thou wilt!" You say with the lips to Me, "Thy will be done;" but you have no intention of being satisfied with My will; "be it done to thee as thou wilt;" remain in your impatience and discontent. You say that I must forgive you your trespasses, as you forgive those of others against you; but you refuse to forgive; I will do the same; "be it done to thee as thou wilt." You ask Me to free you from the danger of sin; but you run wilfully into the danger; go on then, to your own destruction, "be it done to thee as thou wilt." You say that I must convert you; but you remain in the state of sin; "be it done to thee as thou wilt." Amen! so be it! You will live and die in that state. And why? Because such is your will. Alas, what a fearful Amen that is! God grant that it may never be said to any of our prayers!

Conclusion
and exhortation to be
earnest in
prayer.

Christians, let us pray; but at the same time, let us really desire to receive what we ask for; let us ask God for His help and grace, but at the same time co-operate with that grace, and show that we really wish our prayers to be heard. If we find that our corrupt nature is not inclined to do this, and that our will is opposed to good, then let us at least beg of God earnestly and unceasingly to change our will, and to give us an earnestness of purpose in good, according to the prayer of the Church; "graciously compel our rebellious wills to turn to Thee."³ We know, O Lord, that very often our hearts contradict our lips in prayer; now we ask of Thee a grace, that we intend asking of

¹ Major est Deus corde nostro, et novit omnia.—I. John iii. 20.

² Fiat tibi sicut vis.—Matth. xv. 28.

³ Rebelles nostros ad te propitius compelle voluntates.

Thee every time we say, "Thy will be done;" and that is, that Thou wouldst draw forcibly our obstinate wills to Thee, and grant us the grace of earnestness in prayer; show the might of Thy arm in us; and use to that end whatever means Thou foreseest will best succeed, whether they are pleasing to our sensuality or not; so that, detached from earthly things, we may labor with all our hearts to gain Thee and Thy heavenly goods. Amen. So be it!

*On other Faults and Qualities of Prayer, see the following
Third and Fourth Parts.*

END OF THIRD VOLUME.