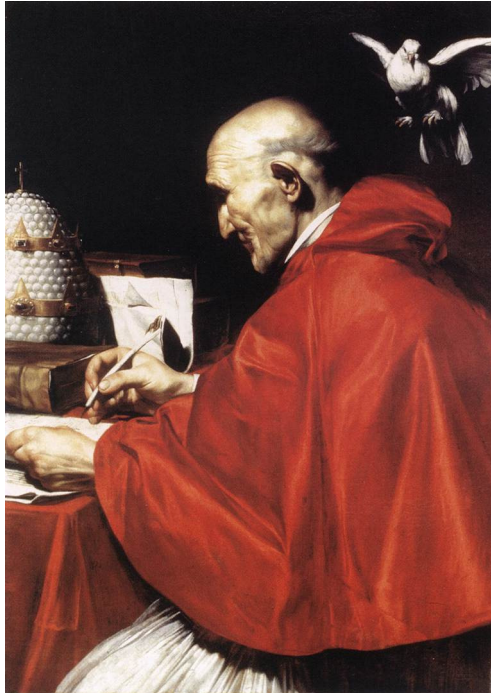


St. Gaspar Bertoni's
MEDITATIONS ON FIRST KINGS [1 S]



CHAPTER 1

Meditations 1 - 7

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Meditation 1 [## 4853-4862] – Prologue	205
Meditation 2 [## 4863-4883] - 1 Reg. 1:1-2	210
Meditation 3 [## 4884-4906] - 1 Reg 1:3-4	219
Meditation 4 [## 4907-4930] - 1 Reg 1:5-11	228
Meditation 5 [## 4931-4964] - 1 Reg 1:12-19	238
Meditation 6 [## 4965-5001] - 1 Reg 1:19-23	250
Meditation 7 [## 5002-5041] - 1 Reg 1:24-28	263

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FIRST BOOK OF KINGS¹**Chapter I - Prologue**

4853 - MEDITATION 1

[MssB ## 4853-4862]

Preparatory Prayer²

Prelude: Since I have to give these Meditations to the Seminarians who are receiving the various grades of Holy Orders, the material presented should be fitting for them. The Church, to whose service they are dedicating themselves, is a House of God. *That they might know how to behave in the house of God [1 Tm 3:15].* This House of God will be, then, the material of these reflections. And their purpose will be that they might know how to conduct themselves in the House of God.

1 Tm 3:14: ...I write these things to you... v. 15: ...so that you might know how to behave in the house of God...

First it is necessary to know what this House is, where, and so forth, and also the Master of this Household; secondly, what the vocation to this House is; thirdly, the conversation: evil, to be avoided, and the good, to pursue.

4854: We must take this entire instruction from Sacred Scripture. *2 Tm 3:15: ... And since from your infancy you have known the holy scriptures - which can instruct you unto salvation, by the faith which is in Christ Jesus. v. 16:... All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable to teach ... to instruct in justice. v. 17:... so that the man of God may be perfect, furnished in every good work.*

The Books of Kings contain this doctrine, as the Holy Fathers of the Church have expounded on them.

The House and the Master of the House: Elcana and his household.

¹ These Meditations of Fr. Bertoni are based on the classical Commentary of St. Gregory the Great, *Commentarium in Primum Regum*, CSEL, Vol. 144. Much of this master-piece has also been published by Sources Chretiennes, Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, nn. 351, 391 and 432 - more volumes are forthcoming.

² **Translator's Note:** for Latin of St. Gregory [or, of Cornelius à Lapide], the Computer Font will be presented here in regular print - for the Biblical quotes - from the Douay English translation of the Vulgate, the same, but in *Italics*. For the Italian reflections of Fr. Bertoni himself, introducing texts, and interspersed through them, the same font, but Bold Print will be used. Stigmatine themes will noted bold print, underlined, and in footnotes.

The Vocation: in the call of Samuel.

Behavior: bad in Saul - and good in David.

Our Meditations will be based on this place of Sacred Scripture. And since long introductions are annoying, let us begin immediately with the title of the First Book of Kings, which will be as it were, the key to enter into this House.

4855: Prelude 2. Let us imagine that we are looking at a vast forest on a very high mountain from a vantage point³: at first sight, everything seems even and equal; but, on closer look, one is able to see plains, as well as valleys that the mountain contains, and that there is very much more to see than that which had at first been noticed. - This forest is Sacred Scripture.

Or, even better: Prelude 2. Imagine that our Master and our Lord, Jesus Christ, of Whom one passage in Scripture states, Apoc 3:7, that *He has in his hands the keys*, and that He now sends to you by one of His Angels, the key to open up His House: this is the very title of this Book. He says to us: Consider first and see how you ought to make use of this key, to open, etc...

Prelude 3. Ask for the light to enter there into this darkness, and for the direction, not to remain overwhelmed within it. - *Give me understanding*, [Ps 118:144], the way in which one receives this key. Give me the wisdom, with which it might be handled with fruit. - 'O Gate of Heaven': You who are the gate through which one enters into the House of your Son, from this very moment show yourself to be propitious and receive us under your mantle [that of Mary, the Virgin], under which we place all our instructions.

4856: The First Book of Samuel, that is, the First Book of Kings.

This is a Historical Book - Prophetic - Divine. Here is the key to enter into this House.

Study, or bring the commitment to grasp the Sacred Scriptures. Thank God Who has written this for our instruction.

A Historical Book. History is the teacher of life.

The difference between our profane history and sacred history: this latter is compiled with a divine spirit, in narrating human events, as these are governed by divine Providence; the former, profane history, is put together with a human spirit, makes reference to those matters that take place through the prudence and industry of human beings.

³ The Stigmatine Historian, Fr. Joseph Stofella compares this massive work to a deep 'mine' full of treasures.

4857: And so sacred history teaches divine prudence, by which the mind through a pious worship would adhere to God, and is based most especially on His work and religion: whereas profane history teaches human prudence, and those minute little cautions that are invented by the industry of human beings, which so often have very little cautions in them, and very often bear danger with them. So, nothing is more fitting for the instruction of Ecclesiastics than these sacred histories⁴.

Scipio used to read the *Ciropedia* of Xenophon; Alexander the Great would read Homer; our military Generals would read Polibius and Caesar; our Politicians would read Tacitus. - St. Jerome was beaten with a stick when he would read more Cicero than Scripture⁵.

4858: This is the commitment of our edification. ...*With fear and trembling act...* [Ph 2:12; 2 P 1:10].

The Book of Samuel: This is called the Prophecy of Samuel by the Hebrews. **It is a prophetical Book.**

The divine Augustine wrote⁶: 'This Scripture, directing through order the Kings and their acts and events, seems to be historical when it is occupied with diligence in narrating their deeds. If, under the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the Scripture treats of certain considerations, then either more so, or certainly at least no less so, it will be found proclaiming future deeds even more than those that are past.'

St. Gregory⁷ speaks of this History: Gentle on the surface of **history**, more sublime in the types of **allegory**, useful in instructing **morality**, very clear in presenting examples. The Scriptures narrate history, while indicating spirituality; speak of exteriors while implying what is intimate; they propose the earthly that the **heavenly** might be realized.⁸

4859: Scripture, therefore, is a ladder to arrive at knowing God by means of the faith. One should not stop at the letter, but should ascend to the spirit. The letter is the foundation of the faith: one must build on this, with hope in God, charity for His works. How many priests bear the material of the letter of the Scriptures to build the houses of others! While the people build up in the spirit of the letter given to them, the priest remains with the letter and remains empty. They bring the ladder, and

⁴ Cornelius a Lapide, *In I Reg.*, Commentarium. 209/2 C.

⁵ St. Jerome, *Epist.* 22 *ad Eust.*, c. 30. t. 1, 113, A ff.

⁶ St. Augustine, *On the City of God*, Book 17, c. 1. t. 7, 455, F.

⁷ St. Gregory the Great, *In I Reg.*, Prol. t. 2, 863/ 1 A. [pp. 51, f. – Prologue, lines 122, ff.]

⁸ Senses of S. Scripture [cf. CCC. ## 114-119.

others climb it: they always remain at the bottom. This is what happened with the Spiritual Directors of St. Teresa.

What is our understanding of the divinity other than a certain summit of ineffable sublimity? And since the omnipotent God is known through the Scriptures, what, then, is Sacred Scripture if not that ladder by which one ascends, so that that Sublimity might be reached?⁹

4860: Humility is needed in the investigation of these sacred papers. There is needed admiration of this divine sublimity.

It is a divine Book: ... *All Scripture is inspired of God, 2 Tm 3:16*, all the more sublimely this will surpass even the most gifted intelligences of men, in proportion as these most outstanding men are inferior to God: and they will grasp nothing in the spiritual sublimity unless that which is revealed to them by the goodness of the divine condescension. No one is that perfect in his own knowledge that he could not learn something new, because each progress of a man can be drawn further by the height of the divinity inspiring this [**cf. the forest described in Prelude 2**].

4861: *Who stretches out [His] heights like a pavilion: who covers the highest rooms thereof with water...* [*Ps 103:3*].

“His”: the heavens, that is, Sacred Scripture. [cf. St. Augustine in this place¹⁰].

“The waters”: the profound intelligences of the Angels¹¹.

“His heights”: It is particularly evident that while God is said to stretch out over the waters the altitude of the sacred discourse, because humanity is always inferior, to whom only His inferior matters are revealed.

The Sacred Scriptures are to be venerated even when they are not understood. The residue of the Angel, God ordered to be burned [*Ex 12:1*]. Through the Scriptures, the Lamb of God is known. For indeed, by His grand design the omnipotent God has established by a great dispensation to adorn changing human weakness; in order that one might not degrade what is known, thus it has wondrously been disposed and that one might be the more graciously bound by that which is daily learned; the joy that is procured is the more vivid, from the fact that there is always something new to offer¹².

⁹ St. Gregory the Great, *In I Reg.* Prol. t. 2, 863. 2 D. [p. 53: Prologue 7 - lines 199, ff.]

¹⁰ St. Augustine, *In Ps 103. Sermo 1*, 9. t. 4, 1135 E.

¹¹ St. Gregory the Great, *In 1 Reg.*, Prol. t. 2, 262/2 B.

¹² St. Gregory, *ib.*, *passim*. [cf. p. 51 – Prologue 3 - lines 114, ff.]

4862: This is the key. But, it will be necessary for you to learn well the use of it, by trying it by yourselves, if you really wish that the Lord would open up this house for you in a better manner. For even when by yourselves you have understood very little, this 'little' will give you greater consolation. This you will achieve also if for a few minutes you make an examen and a reflection for a quarter of an hour on this present meditation. And also if for a few hours, today or tonight, you will repeat this meditation, and also if you will briefly write down after you have understood something, not for the use of your knowledge, but for wisdom: and not for others, but for yourselves.

Colloquy: *I will give you understanding, and I will instruct you in this way in which you shall go: I will fix my eyes upon you. Do not act like the horse and the mule, who have no understanding. With bit and bridle bind fast their jaws who come not near unto You. [Ps 31: 8,ff.]. Our Father.*

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4863 - MEDITATION 2

[On 1 K 1]

[MssB ## 4863-4883]

Preparatory Prayer.

Prelude 1: 1 K [S] 1:1: *There was a [individual] man of Ramathaimsophim, of Mount Ephraim, and his name was Elcana, the son of Jeroham, the son of Eli, the son of Thohu, the son of Suph, an Ephraimite: v. 2: And he had two wives, the name of one was Anna, and the name of the other Phenenna. Phenenna had children: but Anna had no children.*

Ramathaim: is the name of the city. And because there are many of these in Palestine, there is given its characteristic: of Sophim, or of the Sophites, the birth-name of those inhabitants descending from Suph; or, it is from the name of the canton nearby these settlers.

“An Ephraimite”, because he was of the uplands, and not of the tribe of Ephraim; he was of the tribe of Levi, who were dispersed, having cities in all the tribes.” Since he was a Levite, he had no part in the division of the land: for the Levites were dispersed through all the tribes¹³.

4864: Prelude 2. Imagine that you see on the uplands of Ephraim Elcana’s house, who lives there with his two wives, one of whom is surrounded by her little children: while the other is alone and sad, because she is sterile.

The holy Fathers of the Church see in the house of Elcana the House of God; therefore, on entering there humbly and devoutly in spirit, we do not fail to observe everything with great attention and reverence.

Prelude 3. Grant us the light to accept the allegorical sense of Your Scriptures, and communicated to us through the Holy Doctors, *that henceforth we be no more children, tossed to and from [Ep 4:14], and the grace to build on the foundation of faith, hope and charity, acting with confidence of the divine Spirit.*

O Lord, we have not made bold to enter into Your house without Your Spirit having introduced us there. Grant this to us that which you have promised to anyone who asks it of You, whatever is necessary *that we might search everything, even the deep things of God.* [1 Co 2:10]. May the Spirit bestow on us the light to ascertain the

¹³ Cornelius a Lapide, ib.

allegorical sense, indicated to us by You through the language of the holy Doctors, so that henceforth we be no more children, tossed to and fro. [Ep 4:14]. May the Spirit Who builds on the foundation of the faith, build up in us a perfect edifice of charity, having us cooperate with the divine grace in which we hope.

4865: *There was a man. [1 K 1:1].* The Lord Jesus Christ is to be understood here, true man in weak human flesh.

[The Latin "Vir"] "Man": comes from the word "virtue": because in the infirmity of the flesh, Christ struggled and conquered in strength. **Adam was created strong: vir, he became weak in combat, and fell: and all nature was dragged into his fall. Christ was born infirm, that is, mortal, and He conquered as a strong man, when the Devil renewed the ancient temptations of gluttony and pride. Christ, our Master, He was one tempted in all things...without sin. [Heb 4:15]. Since we are infirm, we should, and we can act with strength and with virtue.**

4866: *A woman shall compass a man [Jr 31:22]; reflect: Behold a Man, the Orient is his name [Zc 6:12]. - ... Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders and signs, which God did by Him, in the midst of you, as you know; This same being delivered up, by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you by the hands of wicked men have crucified and slain. [Ac 2:22, f.]. - [This is all about] Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet, mighty in work and word... [Lk 24:19].* For He accomplished deeds of great virtue; living in the midst of the Church He expelled the enemy; dying, He gathered it together; in rising, He reserved to us the gateway of eternity. **Though God could have conquered through power, He chose to do so through wisdom.**

4867: "There was a [one] man". [1 K [S] 1:1].

This word would seem to be superfluous, and would be contrary to the usual custom of the sacred Scriptures, which in other places simply places "man", without any indication of the article, or number [in the Latin Vulgate]: *There was a man in the land of Hus, whose name was Job... [Jb 1:1]. ...There was in the days of Herod, the King of Judea, a certain priest named Zechariah... [Lk 1:5].* However, according to the custom of the Catholic Church, in the spirit of allegory, this means both writer and prophet. **While it seems that Samuel, as a writer, wrote against the custom of the Scriptures, according to the letter of history; as a prophet he writes in the style of the Catholic Church, according to the spirit of allegory.** Because Christ is both God and a man.

4868: In Christ is the unity of Person. He was spoken about as the God-Man so that there might be asserted His humanity and Deity, and not that He would be one Person as the Word, and another person in assumed human nature, but that it might be the more openly demonstrated that He is one and the same Person as God and Man.

This is why the author wrote: He is one man.

His excellence.

In Christ, there is further the unity of excellence.

1. **Because of His shared gifts** [Rm 5:17]: *...much more they who receive abundance of grace, and of the gift, and of justice, shall reign in life, through one, Jesus Christ....*
2. **Because of His works:** *If I had not done among them the works that no other man has done, they would not have sin... [Jn 15:24].*
3. **Because of His beauty:** *You are beautiful above the sons of men... [Ps 44:3].*
4. **Because of His satisfaction:** *Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows... [Is 53:4].*
5. **Because of His Filiation:** *...This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased... [Mt 3:17].*
6. **Because of His salvation:** *For there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved... [Ac 4:12].*
7. **Because of His glory:** *For which cause God also has exalted Him, and has given Him a name above all names... [Ph 2:9].*

4869:

8. **Because of His dignity:** *Who, being the brightness of His glory, and the figure of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power, making purgation of sins, sits on the right hand of the majesty on high. Being made so much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they. For which of the angels has He said: 'You are My son, today I have begotten you' [Ps 2:7]. And again: I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son? ... [2. K*

7:14]. - [Heb 1:3, ff.]. He is said to be one to whom no one is compared¹⁴.

9. **Christ is our one and only means.** Our “man”; **in so far as He is Man, He has shown us the way;** as “One”, **as the Man-God He gives us the grace to walk along this way; as man, sweetly, and as God, mightily reaching from end to end.** [Ws 8:1].

4870: Regarding the words: Ramathaim, a Suphite, from the highlands of Ephraim.

“Ramatha” is interpreted as “consummated vision”, which means, a sublime, perfect knowledge of God. *We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then, face to face Now I know in part; but then I shall know even as I am known...* [1 Co 13:12].

“Suphim” is the same as “Observatory”, by which is indicated the sublimity of the Angels. For the Vision of God is preserved by the Angels in heaven.

“Situated in the highlands of Ephraim”, which in Latin means “Fruit bearing”, and indicates heaven, it always bears the flowers of eternal beauty and the fruit of unfailing joy.

4871: Regarding “Ramatha”, in the sense already explained.

As the Father knows Me, and I know the Father [Jn 10:15]. – *No one knows who the Son is but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and to whom the Son will reveal Him....* [Lk 10:22].

“Suphim”: means observatory, or sublimity. *You are from beneath, I am from above. You are of this world, I am not of this world...* [Jn 8:23].

Regarding “the highlands of Ephraim”: *I am the living Bread which has come down from heaven.* [Jn 6:51]. – *He that comes from above is above all...* [Jn 3:31]. – *His going out is from the end of heaven...* [Ps 18:7]. – *... the second Man [Adam] from heaven, heavenly...* [1 Co 15:47].

There was a man of Ramathaim Sophim, of Mount Ephraim [1 K [S] 1: 1] because the One Who was born among us all, has stood out over all. He has appeared so great on earth, because He has come from heaven. This Ramathaim was of Suphim, because even though He shone forth here incomparably, the magnitude of His excellence was not understood here, except where the perfect knowledge of Him was exhibited by the citizens of eternity.

¹⁴ St. Gregory: I, 3 – line 92, f.

4872: “There was a [one] man”. The one who had looked about in the excellence of His virtue, has said: *...which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our own hand have handled, the Word of life...* [1 Jn 1:1]. But, because he did not see the magnitude of His excellence, by “in Ramatha” he has promised this to us, saying: *know that when he shall appear, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is...* [1 Jn 3:2].

Christ is our reward and life, our last end. *I am your Protector...* [Gn 15:1]. *The Alpha and the Omega* [Apoc 1:8]. - *The Way, the Truth and the Life...* [Jn 14:6].

4873: Of “Mount Ephraim.” [1 K [S]1:1]. This “Mountain” is Mary.

“The Mountain”. [Is 2:2]: *And in the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared on the top of mountains...*

That Mountain towering above the heights, or above all the Saints and Angels, is Mary. She is the “House” because in her womb, through His assumed humanity, lay the divinity of the word.

She is a Fruit-bearing mountain, from whom has come the best Fruit. [Is 11:1]: *And there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root.* - [Ps 66:6, f.]: *Let all the people confess to You, let all the people give praise to You. The earth has yielded her fruit* : not conceived by any material means, but by the Holy Spirit. - [Ps 131:11]: *Of the fruit of your womb I will upon your throne.* - [Is 4:2]: *... and the fruit of the earth shall be high.....* - [Lk 1:42]: *And blessed is the fruit of your womb.*

4874: Mary is our Mediatrix, in order to reach out and come close to her Divine Son. *There was a man of Ramathaim, a Suphite, from the highlands of Ephraim* [1 K [S]1:1], because through the power of His divinity, He established the Angels: from the flesh of the **most excellent Virgin**, He received the form of humanity.

“Whose name was Elcana” [1 K [S] 1:1], or “the possession of the strong God.”

[Apoc 5:5]: *The Lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed*, which is Christ, powerful in His Passion, therefore His Father gave to Him His possession, that is, He handed over to Him all the nations. [Ps 2:8]: *I shall give You the Gentiles for Your inheritance...* - [Mt 28:18]: *All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth.* - [Ph 2:8]: *Becoming obedient even unto death, even to the death on the Cross.* v. 9: *For which cause God also has exalted Him, and has given Him a name which is above names.* v. 10: *that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth.* v. 11: *and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God, the Father.*

4875: The Possession of God¹⁵.

Christ is our Master. *We are the sheep of His pasture [Ps 94:7]. - May Your Kingdom come. [Mt 6:10]. - For the kingdom of God ... is justice, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit... [Rm 14:17]. - [1 Co 3:22]: ... all are yours..., v.23: and you are Christ's, and Christ belongs to God.*

Christ wants to give us the honor of being His spiritual family.

Son of Jeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Suph.

Christ is born of faithful ancestry, and not of the unfaithful. [Gn 22:18]: *And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed...* - [Mt 1:1]: *The Book of the generation of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham.* - [Jn 4:22]: *For salvation is of the Jews.* - [Rm 9:4, f.]: *The Israelites to whom belong the adoption, as of children, and the glory, and the testament, and the giving of the Law, and **the service of God** [obsequium¹⁶] and the promises. Whose are the fathers, and of whom is Christ, according to the flesh, who is over all things, God blessed forever. Amen.*

4876: Four of these Ancestors are designated, because to them pertained prudence in the knowledge of things; justice, by which they desired rightly to dispense what they knew; fortitude, by which they wished for all the good they could; and temperance, through which they discreetly carried out all the rest.

These are the qualities that the spiritual ancestors and family members of Jesus Christ ought to have. They generate Him with their preaching and with the administration of the Sacraments into the souls of the faithful¹⁷. *For whosoever will do the Will of My Father, that is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother.... [Mt 12:50].*

¹⁵ cf. Marginal Number above in Fr. Bertoni's Manuscripts, Mss B # 3837.

¹⁶ One of Fr. Bertoni's oft-used words: *in obsequium Episcoporum*.

¹⁷ Fr. Bertoni's view of the *Apostolic Mission* would offer this broad scope in his *Original Constitutions*: Part IX [On the 'Grade' of the 'Professed' – the core-group of his *Apostolic Missionaries*], c. II: Sacraments: [cf. CF ## 16, f. 2] – *Verbi Dei quodcumque ministerium* [CF # 163], etc.

4877: They need to be faithful in mind and in deeds, as Abraham. They need to be prudent, in order to know, etc.¹⁸ They should be just, strong, temperate, as the Patriarchs. Moral and theological knowledge, human and divine do not suffice: what are needed are the virtues, both human and divine, both moral and theological¹⁹. It is he who “does”, and not the one who “knows” the will of My Father, He is My Mother. [Mt 12:50]. No one was less learned than Peter, no one less expert than Paul and yet the latter being inexpert and the former being unknowing, they won over six hundred philosophers, and they compelled countless rectors to silence, etc.²⁰

4878: “Of Ephraim”, [1 K [S] 1:1], or from Mount Ephraim. This is interpreted ‘fruit-bearing.’

Christ is the benevolent Father of the family, Who nourishes us with the fruits of His Passion, in the sacraments, and the divine word and His grace.

[Ps 1:3]: *And He shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season.* The flowers of His doctrine are changed into the apples of the elect. As many as He joined to Himself from the human race, then just as many fruits He brought forth for eternity.

4879: *I sat down under his shadow, whom I desired: and his fruit was sweet to my palate...* [Ct 2:3]. **Let us sit contemplating this tree, on the banks of that river of grace which flows to His feet, the stream of this river makes the city of God joyful.** [Ps 45: 5]. **In that repose, I sat, and what sweetness, usefulness!** [this is the fruit].

The Devil fled from the Mount Ephraim, and was not of Ephraim; because he fell down from heaven, but the worst tree has not given good fruits.

There are two masters, according to the Gospel: one ‘comes’ from heaven, while the other ‘fell down’ from heaven. No man can serve two masters. [Mt 6:24]. - Let us declare ourselves.

4880: Christ is our Spouse: our Master, Means, End [and Mary, the Mediatrix], our Lord, Son, Father, Spouse.

[1 K 1: verse 2]: *And he had two wives, the name of one called was Anna, and the name of the other, Phenenna; Phenenna had children, but Anna had none.*

¹⁸ Fr. Bertoni places *Studiosity*, prudence in learning, under Chastity [cf. CF ## 122-127 – cf. Rm 12:3]

¹⁹ cf. CF Part IV, ## 47-68: *De Progressu*.

²⁰ cf. St. John Chrysostom, Proem. *In Ep. Pauli*. t. 9, 255/1 E.

Phenenna is the Synagogue: Anna is the Church.

Phenenna had children, because when our Redeemer appeared in the flesh, through the Law which He gave, through the Prophets whom He had sent, He found progeny already born into the faith of the Synagogue.

4881: *But Anna had no children.* [v. 2].

This was because of their inequality in age; because she was just a Novice then, and had not yet been joined to her heavenly **Spouse**, the holy Mother Church had not yet appeared through preaching. [Ct 8:8]: *Our sister is little: and has no breasts.*

Of how many priests is this sterility verified, because they never achieve the mature age of perfection²¹: ... until we all form a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ. [Ep 4:13]. *She has no breasts* [Ct 8:8] **with charity, or they are dry breasts as God finds fault in another passage of Scripture [Ho 9:14], because they never nourish themselves in prayer. ... my heart is withered: because I forgot to eat my bread.** [Ps 101:5]. **Such breasts are dry in themselves and dry for their children. The mothers and the wet-nurses who offer milk, eat much themselves, and then dispense themselves from fasting. If priests are dying of spiritual hunger, how will they be able to nourish their children?** - Knowledge may inflate one's breasts: but it is devotion that fills them.

4882: *But Anna had no children v.2.* because of the infecundity of her sterility. The sterility of Anna is the hardness of Judah; because He could not convert the hard hearts of the Jews to the faith of the Redeemer.

The second wife was Phenenna, did have children. Indeed the Synagogue earlier did bring her children up in the faith, but nevertheless she was less in dignity to the holy Church. She was the second wife who is Phenenna, not because of the time of conjugal union, but by her inequality of prerogative. *So shall the last be first, and the first last.* [Mt 20:16]. **How many good seculars are more fertile with their example than are wicked priests, sterile in their preaching.**

4883: Colloquy. We give thanks on account of your great glory. - *And we saw His glory, the glory, as it were of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth* [Jn 1:14]. - *Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ* [Jn 1:17]. - **O Lord, Jesus Christ, You have communicated to us now Your truth.** ***Being confident of this very thing, that***

²¹ St. Gaspar Notes this in his Spiritual Diary [cf. MP, Dec. 2, 1808]

he, Who has begun a good work in you will perfect it²² through the ministration of grace and charity [Ph 1:6]²³. *Loyalty will spring up from the earth, and Justice will lean down from heaven. God will Himself give prosperity... Justice will walk before him, treading out a path* [Ps 84:12, ff.].

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²² St. Gaspar cites this passage of spiritual growth, progress [Ph 1:6] - in his central Original Constitution, CF # 185.

²³ This is a text – Ph 1:6 – often used by Fr. Bertoni: cf. for example, his *Original Constitutions* – CF # 185: a most important Constitution, which Fr. Stofella maintains is the ‘explanation’ of the Founder’s *Compendium Rude* [CF ## 1-8]. CF ## 185-186 describe the Principal Scope of the ‘Professed’ in the Congregation later called the *Apostolic Missionaries*. Fr. Stofella in his footnotes states that these Constitutions are taken from Fr. F. Suarez, SJ and quotes Book I, c. 6.: ‘Whether it is fitting for the Society of Jesus to make use of those means that are suited for the Instruction of external students. On further analysis, however, one may also cite Suarez, Book VI, c. 4, n. 25, which asks the question *Whether the Fourth Vow of Obedience directed toward the Supreme Pontiff, which the Professed of the Society emit, is solemn and distinct from the other three vows?* [cf. p. 862 a & b]. The Jesuit theologian offers a lengthy analysis of the Fourth Vow – and Fr. Bertoni’s Constitutions are based on it, and adapted from this analysis of the Fourth Vow.

This CF # 185 speaks of the *varia et propria ministeria* of the Community – and it is helpful to compare this Constitution with one just earlier to it, CF # 182: ... *munus est docere non solum in concionibus, exercitiis, lectionibus quae ad vitam aeternam consequendam necessaria vel utilia sunt, sed etiam rudimenta fidei et morum, prasesertim rudibus et pueris...* likewise based on Suarez [cf. pp. 587 b; 589 b].

4884 - MEDITATION 3

[MssB ## 4884-4906]

Preparatory Prayer: *In His sight, I pour out my prayer.* [Ps 141:3].

Prelude 1: [1 K 1:3]: *And this man went up out of his city upon the appointed days [for the Feasts of the Pasch, of Pentecost and of Tabernacles²⁴] to adore and to offer sacrifice to the Lord of Hosts in Silo [on the highest mountain of Judea where there were the Ark and the Tabernacle in the time of Joshua]. And the two sons of Heli, Ophni and Phinees, were there, priests of the Lord. v. 4: Now the day came, and Elcana offered sacrifice [the task of the priests], and gave to Phenenna, his wife, and to all her sons and daughters portions [of the Peace Offering] . [A very small part, would be then burned for the Lord; another part, the flanks and the ribs, was given to the priest; a third part remained for the lord of the victim, who could then distribute this to his own and to the poor to be eaten in the holy city and in a clean place].*

v. 5: But to Anna, he gave one portion [because she did not have children to whom he would distribute more] with sorrow [for her sterility]: because he loved Anna.

4885: In Hebrew, instead of the Latin *sad* there is a word that means “honorable”, and further: “anger”, “sadness”. Therefore, it may be said that to Anna there was given a rather honorable portion, to alleviate the sadness of her sterility²⁵.

Prelude 2. Imagine that you see Elcana going up - to sacrifice - to the Mountain of Shiloh - to distribute the portions to Phenenna and to Anna, who manifests a sad countenance. I will give great attention and reverence in order to note in the actions of these persons the wondrous manners with which Christ works and governs the Church.

4886: Prelude 3. O Lord, You have let us know Your Son, the Head of the Church, Master, Lord, Father, Spouse: let us today come to know the manner with which You govern this House of Yours. *No one knows who the Son is, but the Father [Lk 10:22]. - Now this is eternal life: that he may know You, the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent [Jn 17:3]. - Show us, o Lord, Your mercy; and grant us Your salvation [Ps 84:8]. - By Your grace, grant that our soul might be first freed from*

²⁴ Three characteristic Festival for Ancient Israel: for the Spring; then the Feast of Weeks, then, Sukkoth [the Ingathering] in the fall of the year. [cf. Innocenzo Cardellini, *I sacrifici dell'antica alleanza*. Milano S. Paolo 2000; Bernard Renaud, *L'alliance, un mystere de misericorde*, Paris: duCerf 1998.

²⁵ cf. Cornelius a Lapide, *ib.*

corporeal desires, that in the classroom of our mind it might give itself over to wisdom, where every disturbance of earthly cares might be silenced, and that it might rejoice in holy meditations and in eternal delights.

4887: [1 K [S] 1:3]: *And this man went up out of his city upon the appointed days, to adore and to offer sacrifice to the Lord of Hosts in Silo.*

Up out of his city. ib. This is Scripture, which establishes as many works of defense for its citizens, as it does precepts; and provides as many weapons for them, as it offers counsels of salvation.

To go up means in the form of humanity, in order to reveal the heights of His divinity. *To go up out of his city*, this means: Christ reveals in the Scriptures all that through which He is known.

4888: *On the appointed days:* ib. This indicates those promises regarding Himself which are in the Scriptures, that is, in the Law and the Prophets. The words: *On the appointed days* are stated: because the Scriptures shed light on making Him known to the elect. Those days are said to be *appointed*; because we are not ignorant of the times set by the ancient Patriarchs in this same sacred discourse.

The days of the Ascent had been established by Moses, as is found in [Dt 18:18]: *I will raise them up a prophet out of the midst of their brethren like to you whom you will hear as though Myself...*

The Days of the Ascent as stipulated by Jacob, you have in [Gn 49:10]: *The scepter shall not be taken away from Judah, nor a ruler from his thigh, till he come that is to be sent and He shall be the expectation of the nations* - The days established by Micah [Mi 5:2]: *And you, Bethlehem of the land of Judah are a little one among the thousands of Judah: out of you shall come forth unto Me that is to be the Ruler in Israel....* - Finally the days were set by Isaiah: [Is 7:14]: *Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and his name shall be called Emmanuel.*

4889: *And this man went up on the appointed days*, as Christ said to the Jews, [Jn 5:39]: *Search the Scriptures, for you think in them to have everlasting life; and the same are they that give testimony of Me... For if you did believe Moses, you would perhaps believe Me, also; for he wrote of me...* ib. v. 46. Also on stated days Christ would go up, because the signs of His promises which He placed in sacred Scripture, by appearing, He demonstrated them.

The established days were also promised in His Advent by the splendor of miracles. Isaiah seemed to have had these days in mind, when he said [Is 35:4, ff.]: ...

Say to the faint-hearted: Take courage and fear not: behold your God will bring the revenge of recompense: God Himself will come and will save you. Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be stopped; then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall be free.

4890: On these stated days, Christ would ascend: [Lk 7:22-23]: *Go back and relate to John what you have heard and seen: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are made clean, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, to the poor the gospel is preached: And blessed is he whosoever shall not be scandalized in me..* . Because so that He might expel the darkness of the ancient error from the hearts of His elect, He radiated by so many splendors of His promised miracles.

The first means with which Christ founded His Church are the Sacred Scriptures, the prophecies, the miracles. Eternal happiness, which is the purpose of this government, consists in knowing Jesus Christ. This is eternal life, etc. [Jn 17:3]. - The study of the Scriptures is necessary for the priest, both for himself and also for the others, that all might come to know God and Jesus Christ.

4891: *...To adore and to offer sacrifice to the Lord God of Hosts in Shiloh. [1 K 1:3].*

The Man went up so that he could worship and offer sacrifice, because He wanted to be known for this, that in dying, He would redeem those whom He had taught by living. *He adored:* as an example for the chosen, He rendered Himself totally humble and abject through obedience to God the Father. *He offered sacrifice,* Who by living, offered examples of humility, **He handed Himself over to God the Father on the altar of the Cross as an oblation and a host**²⁶, and those whom he taught by living, He redeemed by dying.

And both worship and sacrifice are necessary: If the Child sought by Herod would be put to death, he would immolate Him, but not worship Him: by dying, He becomes a victim, but those whom He was to deliver by His death, He would not have taught by living. - If He would, by living, teach us to disdain death, this would be adoration, but not immolation. However, Christ fulfilled both. So that He would be adored, He fled into Egypt from the king persecuting Him [Mt 2:13, f.]; and so that He be immolated, He found fault with Peter trying to dissuade Him, [Mt 16:23]: *Go behind me, Satan!... because you savor not the things of God, but the things that are of men ...*

²⁶ Fr. Bertoni took his central ideal from this view: Christ offering Himself as an oblation, rendered by *obsequium* [cf. Rm 12:1, ff.] – this ideal of the *obsequium* is found in a number of the *Original Constitutions* : CF ## 1; 7; 57; 62; 125; 172;185' 195; 237'296; 304. Fr. Bertoni's Charism is Trinitarian-Eucharistic, and Christ is the Offertory, Oblation, 'Surrender' of Holy Thursday Night.

4892: He implies that He adores: [Jn 6:38]: *I came not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me.* - ibidem 8:29: *For I do always the things that please Him....* - He implies that He is to be immolated, Jn 10:17, ff.: *Therefore, the Father does love me: because I lay down My life, that I may take it up again. No one takes it away from Me: but I lay it down of Myself. And I have the power to take it up again....* - ibi. v. 11: *I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd lays down His life for His sheep.* - Ep 5:2: *He delivered Himself up for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odor of sweetness...*

He went up to worship and to offer sacrifice, because for this He showed Himself by so many miracles that He might instruct us by words and examples, so that He might overcome our death, by dying.

4893: *...to the Lord of Hosts* is said, [1 K 1:3], for whom He ascended Ephraim; because by the death of the Redeemer not only the one Jewish people was redeemed, but all peoples.

The *God of Hosts* are the faithful multitudes of the nations. There is an exhortation directed to these Hosts for the triumph of their King. Ps 46:1: *O Clap your hands, all you nations, shout unto God with the voice of joy.* It is suggested that these Hosts should come together [Ps 85:9]: *All the nations you have made shall come and adore before You, o Lord: and they shall glorify Your Name....* The *God of Hosts* is said, because by the death of the Lord, not only is the chosen of Judea gathered, but all peoples are led to the service of the omnipotent God. While these people, as faithful ranks go forth against the hidden enemies, they are made robust by the weapons of the virtues, they are conducted through the glory of the triumph to the heavenly realms²⁷.

4894: Third Means: the Ministry of Priests, and the preaching also of evil ministers.

In Shiloh v. 3. This is the place of the immolation.

Shiloh: the word means “sent”, or is interpreted “mission”, indicating the imposed precept of the supreme Father, of obedience on His Only-Begotten.

To offer sacrifice in Shiloh : Because Christ in no other way gave Himself over to death than **being sent by the Father**²⁸. Jn 14:31: *As the Father has given Me*

²⁷ In Fr. Bertoni's *Original Constitutions*, there is ample indication of the Apostolic Missionaries going out... anywhere in the diocese and the world...: cf. CF ## 5; 188; 193; 214; 215; 217; 2229; 245].

²⁸ This revealed data is behind the Mission in the Church – and certainly in the heart of Fr. Bertoni's Trinitarian Charism of Hope: At St. Joseph's Convent, Verona, he saw a painting of the Trinity: *...The Eternal*

commandment, so do It.... - Ph 2:8: ...becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross....

In Shiloh, he adored and offered sacrifice, because both in living as in dying, He did the Father's Will.

4895: Still another means with which Christ directs her, His Church²⁹, are the doctrines, the examples, the Sacraments. - Grant, o Lord, that we might reform ourselves and conform ourselves to Your teachings and examples, making good use of the holy Sacraments, through which we will obtain the strength to do all this.

And the two sons of Eli, Ophni and Phinees were there, priests of the Lord. [1 K 1:3]

The priests of the Lord are said to be those who are called below to be the priests of Belial. For, they were priests of the Lord by their insignia: but, they were the priests of Belial, because of their depraved life. By these words, their faith was preached, but not their life: because they did exercise the depravity of deed, but they did not err in their faith of the Creator. This description would fit the prelates of Judea at the time of the Incarnation.

Many modern priests are similar to these.

4896: *Two* were said to be there, *ib.* not for the praise of their virtue, but for the correction of their dishonesty. *Woe to you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you are like to whitened sepulchers, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones, and of all filthiness. [Mt 23:27].*

There is indicated here the duplicity of the priest, when by his hypocrisy, he is one person in the pulpit, and another in the forum; when he is one person in the Confessional, and someone else in conversation; when he is one on the altar, and then someone else at table.

There: by this word there is indicated *Shiloh*, the "mission", that is, the precept of the Father.

The Hebrew priests upon whom this injunction was imposed, it was not: that in receiving Him, they were venerating Him: but, rather: in rejecting Him, they made Him perish. Even though they acted savagely in the death of the Lord by that cruelty of

Father was depicted with His arms open, which explained His Mercy to me, and the ready communication of His gifts... [cf. MP August 24. 1808]. Cf. this website: under 'Life & Spirituality', *Trinitarian Charism of Hope*.

²⁹ A note here refers to the Marginal Number, # 3959 – [Retreat of 1806, on the Prodigal Son].

theirs, they did not achieve what they had proposed to do by their savagery; rather, they simply fulfilled the Father's Plan in the death of His Only-Begotten.

4897: Their plan was that they would therefore hand Him over to death, so that the People could not believe in Him; however, they who were persecutors became cooperators in carrying out the Paternal plan, for the Deceased rose from the dead, and the whole world came to believe in Him. [Ophni and Phinees were at Shiloh, in the mission; because our Redeemer, in order to carry out the will of His Father, had Prelates as cooperators, even though they did not ever move in His behalf, other than not having any qualm about killing Him.

Many priests, in sacrilegiously celebrating, carry out the loving will of God in feeding His faithful; they give their lives to others, while killing themselves. The vanity, avarice of priests, for which they preach, say Mass, assist in the parishes, study like martyrs as young men, serve Christ to their own harm.

4898: *Heli*: means "My God". *Ophni* means "discalced": because he is one set for action; sandaled feet in preparation for the Gospel of Peace. Ep 6:15. *Phinees* means a "mute mouth", because he is destitute of the grace needed for preaching. - *The sons of Eli*. With the time very close now for the Incarnation of the Lord, they were priests consecrated to the Lord in the law of the good priesthood, and were the sons of correctly believing priests; they had no disposition to the open sacrifice to the teaching by word, nor to walking immaculate along the way, having been endowed with the proper wherewithal³⁰. **These were legitimate priests, but wicked and mute.**

4899: **The fourth means: He governs her with the gifts of His grace and glory.** *The charity of God is poured forth...* [Rm 5:5]. - *For we are saved by hope.* [Rm 8:24]. **Such gifts had been merited with the Passion, communicated in the Resurrection and Ascension**³¹. *Ascending on high, He held captivity captive; He gave gifts to men..* [Ep 4:8]. **This is an internal government and realm.** *The kingdom of God is within you.* [Lk 17:21]. *For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but justice and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.* [Rm 14:17]. "In the Holy Spirit": *For whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God* [Rm 8:14]. *He Who is the Head, even Christ: from Whom the whole body, being compacted and fitly joined together, by what every joint supplies to the operation in the measure, makes increase the body, unto the edifying itself in charity.* [Ep 4:15, f.].

³⁰ The Venerable Bede, ib.

³¹ Here St. Gregory maintains the integral aspects of the Paschal Mystery – as Fr. Bertoni often does – cf. in this Web Site: *Stimulate Integre*.

4900: v. 4: *Now the day came, and Elcana offered sacrifice, and gave to Phenenna, his wife, and to all her sons and daughters, portions.*

The day came : ib.: in the testimony of Sacred Scripture, Isaiah wrote [Is 53:7]; *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;* since the clarity of the promised oracle manifested the time of the Lord's Passion.

Elcana offered sacrifice [1 K 1:4, ib.]: because **our Redeemer offered Himself**³² to the eternal Father in sacrifice for our absolution, through His death on the cross.

4901: *Now he used to give portions to Phenenna and to all her sons and daughters, ib., because He bought to the joys of paradise those chosen ones of Judea who were found in the underworld. Those portions were the gifts of the eternal joys. My portion in the land of the living. [Ps 141:6].*

To Phenenna and to all her sons and daughters. v. 4. They are mentioned separately in receiving the portions.

Phenenna indicates the doctors of Judea; *her sons*: the stronger of the listeners; the *daughters*: are the weaker subjects. - Separately the mother and her children receive the portions, and this is because of the disparity of the merits of the elect that their rewards were not equal.

4902: The fifth means: tribulations.

But to Anna he gave one portion with sorrow because he loved Anna [v. 5].

Sad ib., when he gave a portion to Anna: not when he gave a portion to Phenenna.

Anna's portion is the temporal affliction of the Holy Church. [Jn 16:20]: *Amen, Amen, I say to you that you shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice; and you shall be made sorrowful...*

4903: He also gave her this part when he would commend Paul's teaching to Anna. [Ac 9:15, ff]: *Go, for this man is to Me a vessel of election, to carry My name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake.* Hence, in the acceptance of this he is glorified as the Doctor of the Gentiles. Col 1:24: *And I fill up those things that are wanting to the*

³² Christ's Self-Offering [a fundamental Christian ideal] is the inspiration for Fr. Bertoni's *obsequium* for the Congregation he founded, first known as the *Apostolic Missionaries*.

sufferings of Christ. - [Ga 6:17]: *For I bear **the marks [stigmata] of the Lord Jesus** in my body*³³. *ib. v.14: But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom the world is crucified to Me, and I to the world...*

4904: She accepted one portion from the **Spouse**, who was disposed to glory in the Cross alone.

When he gave the portions to Phenenna, she was not sad, because our Redeemer would return, already endowed with the joys of paradise after His triumph on the Cross, for the elect of the Synagogue. He gave to Anna, who was sad, her portion, because He could not fail to have compassion on her, as when He left his **Wife** at death and made her the heiress of the Cross. And so it was that Stephen, enduring his passion, saw the heavens opened and Jesus *standing* there [Ac 7:55]. To be *standing*, in this sense, means to have compassion.

Because he loved Anna. [v. 5]. There are two possibilities: either she was sad, and this was why He loved Anna more: If He did not specially love her, He would never have wished for her to share in His Passion. For why would He bring her up out of Egypt, in the figure of the Hebrew people, unless because she was being invited to one *portion* in His passion? Going out from those places, milk and honey were being promised to her.

Or, He shared with her a *portion* because He loved her. This was because He is our Redeemer of the holy Church, although she believed in the work of His cross, He constituted her decisively in the more excellent gifts of retribution in heaven.

4905: *I am black but beautiful* [Ct 1:4]. *Do not consider me, that I am brown, because the sun has altered my color.* [ib., v. 5]. - **Solomon's temple was built without noise** [3 K 6:7]. - *For **the marriage of the Lamb***³⁴ *has come and his wife has prepared herself. And it is granted to her that she should clothe herself with fine linen, glittering and white. For the fine linen is the justification of saints....* [Apoc 19:7, ff.].

[Directions for preparing ferments of] linen 1. it is soaked; 2. it is dried; 3. it is separated from the bark breaking the wood; 4. one passes over it through the various forms of loom; 5. it is spun; 6. it is wrung; 7. it is ironed on the loom between two boards; 8. it is beaten over and over again on the loom; 9. it is purified in water and

³³ Fr. Bertoni made frequent reference to the Stigmata of Jesus Christ, that received on Good Friday, and retained in His Risen body – cf. this Web Site, under Studies: *Stigmatine Devotions* [Espousals & Stigmata] and *Stimulate Integre*.

³⁴ The Wounded Lamb takes the Church as His Bride - for Fr. Bertoni, the Church, as the Spouse of Christ is the *Model of Holy Abandonment* [cf. this web site, under Life & Spirituality, the translation of Fr. Nello Dalle Vedove's Doctoral Thesis, bearing that title.

ashes; 10. it is rinsed again; 11. it is bleached under the heat of the sun stretched out on stones; 12. it is cut; 13. it is pierced and pierced repeatedly in order to sew clothes out of it.

4906: SUMMARY: MANNER OF GOVERNMENT. The First Means, and fundamental basis of the family and of the Church: Scriptures, prophecies, miracles. Second Means: formal and instrumental: Doctrine, its examples and the Sacraments. Third Means, directive: ministerial: preaching, through the ministry of the legitimate and faithful shepherds and preachers, legitimate and believers, even though they are wicked. The Fourth Means, of the internal government: gifts of grace and hope of glory. The Fifth Means, perfective: tribulations.

COLLOQUY. Since You have called us into Your House, give us the grace to allow ourselves to be ruled by Your peaceful government. *Thy Kingdom Come, now of grace, and later of glory. Do not just make use of us; but grant that we might serve You in accord with Your promises. The oath which he swore to our father, Abraham, that He would grant to us, that being delivered from the hand of our enemies, we may serve Him without fear, in holiness and justice before Him, all our days. [Lk 1:73, f.].*

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4907 - MEDITATION 4

[MssB ## 4907-4930]

Preparatory Prayer

[1 K 1:5[: ..And the Lord had shut up her womb... v. 6: And her rival Phenenna] afflicted her, and troubled her exceedingly insomuch that she upbraided her, that the Lord had shut up her womb... v. 7: And this she did every year, when the time returned that they went up to the Temple of the Lord: and thus she provoked her: but Anna wept and did not eat... v. 8: Then, Elcana her husband said to her: Anna, why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why do you afflict my heart? Am I not better to you than ten children? v. 9: So Anna arose after she had eaten and drunk in Shiloh: and Eli, the priest sitting upon a stool before the door of the temple of the Lord [the atrium of the tabernacle] where he would be judged... v. 10: As Anna had her heart full of grief, she prayed to the Lord, shedding many tears. V. 11: And she made a vow, saying [presupposing the permission of her husband]: O Lord of Hosts, if You will look down on the affliction of Your Servant, and will be mindful of me, and not forget Your handmaid, and will give to Your servant a man-child: I will give him to the Lord [she thus obliged herself, not the will of her son] all the days of his life , and no razor shall come upon his head.. him to the Lord for the whole of his life [in addition to the obligation of the Levite to serve weekly from the age of 25 to 50] and no razor will ever touch his head [A Nazarene. It was believed that one was dispensed from these obligations when one was elected Judge].

4908: Prelude 2. Imagine that you see Anna in her affliction, before the Tabernacle, praying with many tears. Eli was in the vestibule seated at the Tribunal. Seeing in Anna the Church, we will observe with minute attention her manner, in order to draw from it her usual conduct.

Prelude 3. *Expound to us the parable... [Mt 13:36]. History is like Your word in public. The allegorical sense is the word in secret. Lead us into the wilderness [of the heart] and there speak to our hearts. [Ho 2:14]*

4909: On this base, building up with many of the saintly Fathers of the Church the allegorical sense, let us say how we have contemplated in the last two Meditations the Person of our Lord Jesus, as the Head of this House of His, which is the Church, and in His personal qualities as Patron, Father, Spouse, and in the manner of His government, that is, regarding the foundation, the form, the means, the principles and the goals of His government today with that beautiful order that Scripture makes

us pass over now in our contemplations to the Person of His Wife, which is the Church herself.

And since She has been strongly governed by the grace of Her Spouse, but at the same time, also sweetly - and so as She cooperated in this, it comes to pass that She so governs and rules herself in this way. And because singularly by means of tribulation, she obtains the scope of Her government, which is the perfection of grace in this life, and that of glory in the life to come. So we will consider Her in the manner of this admirable government, in which there will stand out equally the admirable Providence of Her Spouse that rules her, as well as the singular virtues of the Church, in accord with which she always directs Herself in conformity with His spirit.

4910: Now these tribulations, since they are never lacking to the Church, they come principally in two situations: I would say both in time of peace, and in time of war. In time of peace: these are the afflictions. *Behold in peace my bitterness is most bitter* [Is 38:17]. In the time of war, the Church suffers persecutions: *The sons of my mother have fought against me* [Ct 1:5]. - Today I will meditate on the former; tomorrow³⁵, with God's favor, I will meditate on the latter. I do not believe that there could be formed a more grandiose idea, and one which at the same time is the most useful to us of the House of God, than this one which the Holy Spirit Himself delineates and figures for us in His holy Scriptures.

4911: The matter of the tribulations of the Church: the hardness of sinners.

[1 K 1:5]: ... And the Lord had shut up her womb. v. 6: Her rival also afflicted her, and troubled her exceedingly, that she upbraided her, that the Lord had shut up her womb. v. 7: And thus she did every year, when the time returned that they went up to the temple of the Lord; and thus she provoked her...

With these words the Spirit has expounded on the increases in the passion of the holy Church.

And the Lord had shut up her womb, v. 5, that is, the Church, because in His supreme judgment He could not generate the rejected people of the Jews in the faith of our Redeemer.

Her rival also afflicted her, v. 6. Her rival is the Synagogue which savaged her with threats and accusations.

³⁵ The question may arise: would these *feast day* conferences have been given on consecutive days in the Seminary of Verona by Fr. Bertoni?

And troubled her exceedingly, v. 6, because along with the terror of the threats, the Synagogue showered her with blows and torments, inflicted pains upon her.

4912: It fell upon her: Ac 9:1,2: *And Saul as yet breathing out threats and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, and asked of him letters to Damascus, to the synagogues: that if he found any men and women of this way, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem...* [Ga 1:13, f.]: *For you have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion: how that beyond measure, I persecuted the Church of God, and wasted it. And I made progress in the Jews' religion above many of my equals in my own nation, being more abundantly zealous for the traditions of my fathers...*

4913: And because into the depths of such damnation Judea had fallen that it would then rejoice because by an eternal warning of God is projected, and therefore added:

And troubled her exceedingly, insomuch that she upbraided, that the Lord had shut up her womb v. 6.

Judea held it as very important that she would not be moved to be converted to her faith. As a result, in these words the Prophet expressed his admiration for the magnitude of such blindness: she is depressed by such darkness of error that she even insults those who are good, that they might not be able to accomplish good any more.

How many unbelieving and modern priests put themselves against the Church and against other good priests.

And thus she did every year when the time returned that they went up to the Temple of the Lord: and thus, she provoked her. v. 7.

Every year ib. By this expression there are indicated the long times of the given law³⁶.

4914: However, these tribulations were tempered by internal consolation. The Church being thus afflicted did not allow herself ever to be absorbed by sadness, as she would listen to the voice of her Spouse.

v. 7: *...but Anna wept and did not eat. v. 8: ...Then, Elcana her husband said to her: Anna, who do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why do you afflict your heart? Am I not better to you than ten children?*

But, Anna wept. v. 7.

³⁶ cf. the Ven. Bede.

[Rm 9:2, f.]: *that I have great sadness, and continual sorrow in my heart. For I wished myself to be an anathema from Christ, for my brethren, who are my kinsmen according to the flesh.*

And did not eat.

As for Judea being lost in sorrow, her total conversion and salvation, the Church did not have the refreshment of happiness and joy.

4915: *Then, Elcana, her husband, said to her, etc. v. 8.*

While this nourishment of rejoicing, which would be from the conversion of the Jews, was not granted to holy Church, she was sustained by the consolation of her **Spouse**. For the words of her preaching, her reprobate listeners did not accept, and thus were not open for the reward of her retribution. For the omnipotent God rewards this, even though it was without benefit to the reprobate, she was committed to these reprobates as they set themselves against the chosen preachers of such adversity, and thinks of them in the scales of a just examen in the reward of retribution.

4916 *Anna why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why do you afflict your heart? v. 8.*

It was as though through the solace of an internal inspiration, the Redeemer would say to the mind of the doctor: You will seek in vain for the lost benefit of the preaching, but you receive the more abundant fruit, as you commit yourself even to your enemies through the affection of your charity, and thus you grieve where you should be rejoicing.

Am I not better to you than ten sons? v. 8.

I am better for you: because He Himself is the reward of the elect.

Ten sons: this would be the people of the Jews, placed under the ten commandments.

Than ten sons: than if the early Church had generated that people in the faith.

Am I not better to you than ten sons: v. 8: because some indeed, by preaching, are of benefit to others, but they are displeasing to their Maker in much else.

4917: *Anna, why do you weep?* The loss of the Jews is indicated here: one weeps fruitlessly when use has never benefited by the prayer of the just.

Why do you not eat? ibi. The joy from the conversion of the gentility is hinted at here. Since you ought to reach out to the entire world, you do not rejoice in being frustrated in that which had been projected, and the people did not give up the darkness of its error.

The conduct of the Church in tribulations.

v. 9: So Anna arose after she had eaten and drunk in Shiloh: And Eli the priest sitting upon a stool before the door of the Temple of the Lord.

After she had eaten: this implies receiving the food of comfort by divine encouragement.

And drunk: this means to rejoice in the infused sweetness of internal consolation. For while food comforts, drink exhilarates.

4918: We partake of food when we are strengthened by the foreseen eternal rewards even among adversities. After food, we drink, because whenever the mind strengthens itself in the thought of the eternal goods of the elect, all the more so does it rejoice even in great adversities, when it sees the more ample rewards in heaven for these great labors. The courageous mind renews its forces in the heavenly refectory then granted, so that all the more strongly does it disdain the earthly goods, as when the love of the values above exalts it.

4919: *So Anna arose after she had eaten and drunk in Silo, v. 9:* because she renewed her spirit at the onset of the preaching.

In Shiloh, v. 9, or in the mission, where she adored and offered sacrifice to her **Spouse**.

She ate and drank, v. 9: both through instruction and through the death of her **Spouse**. Through instruction, she ate from the words, and drank in from examples, which are the more efficacious. Through His death, she ate and drank through the Sacraments of the Body and Blood of the Lord³⁷.

4920: *Eli the priest was sitting upon a stool, v. 9:* because the Jewish people still had the rituals of the sacrifices, still had both the honor of the legal magisterium and the sublimity of the pontifical dignity.

Before the door of the temple, ib. He was not inside, because he could not exhibit the magisterium of the law spiritually, but only in a carnal manner.

³⁷ Ven. Bede

The Temple of the Lord, ibi, is the spiritual understanding of the sacred Scriptures.

The door of the temple, ibi, this would be the Law and the Prophets; and thus, on the mountain the Lord in the midst of Moses and Elijah appeared transfigured [Mt 17:3], because then the splendor of His Divinity is seen, not in some western letter, but in the signification of the spiritual Law and the Prophets that His Sacraments require.

Eli the priest was sitting upon a stool before the door, outside, ibi, because the doctors of the Synagogue had been expelled from the spiritual understanding of the Scriptures, and yet they had the authority in the subversion of the people subject to them, and the dignity of prelature.

4921: v. 10: *As Anna had her heart full of grief, she prayed to the Lord, shedding many tears.*

Having already accepted confidence in beseeching the Lord, after her body had been refreshed with His most sacred body, and was inebriated with the precious blood of His chalice, and while there remained now in Judaism only the doctors, the ministers of the old priesthood having observed the coming of the heavenly kingdom from the chair of Moses, that they, too, might enter it, and they would teach those who would want to enter it, the Church with tears and prayers began to beg the gifts from the Lord, which before knowing or having perceived the mysteries of the Incarnation, she did not want to presume in any manner³⁸.

The effect of her affliction: fervor in her preaching: *she got up*; her confidence in praying: *she prayed*. And this she did through her internal consolation, and by merit of her affliction.

4922: 1 K 1:11: *And she made a vow, saying: O Lord of Hosts, if You will look down on the affliction of Your servant, and will be mindful of me, and not forget our handmaid, and will give to your servant a man-child: I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon him..*

She made a vow. ib.: Vow, and pay to the Lord your God. [Ps 75:12]. – I will pay my vows to the Lord in the sight of them who fear him...in the courts of the House of the Lord in your midst, O Jerusalem.... [Ps 21:26; 115:18, f.]. Prior to the incarnation such sentiments were not presumed.

³⁸ Ven. Bede.

To the Lord of Hosts. v. 11: to Whose service the Peoples are called. Praise the Lord, all you nations, praise Him, all you people. For His mercy is confirmed, and the truth of the Lord remains forever. [Ps 116: 1, f.].

4923: *If You will look down on the affliction of Your servant. v.11.*

His eyes are upon the poor [Ps 9:9] - He has regarded the humility of His handmaid. [Lk 1:48]. – Many are the afflictions of the just; but out of them all will the Lord deliver them... [Ps 33:20].

And not forget Your handmaid. [v. 11].

She knew that the Lord received Israel, his servant, being mindful of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, and to Abraham and his seed forever. [Lk 1:54, f.]

And do not forget Your handmaid [v. 11].

[Ps 9:13]: He does not ignore the cry of the afflicted. - [Ps 10:17]: The Lord has heard the desire of the poor: Your ear has heard the preparation of their heart.

And give to your servant a man child. [v. 11]: you are those whom the holy Church wishes to cultivate by her preaching, and desires that you be strong in evangelical perfection.

4924: *In comparison to gospel perfection, those works of the law which seemed to be strong, now appear quite weak. [Lv 19:18; Mt 5:43]: Love your friend as yourself ...and hold your enemy in hatred. But, [Mt 5:44]: Love your enemies, do good... [Dt 5:18]: .Do not commit adultery. But, [Mt 5:28]: Whoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, has already committed adultery with her in his heart. The Synagogue which has generated the Jewish people in the weakness of the precepts, did not bring forth the masculine sex, but rather only the female. Anna was desirous of bringing forth the strong through the Gospel, those who would appear strong, both by the exterior cleanliness of their body and their internal charity.*

This is applied well to us ecclesiastics.

I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life. v. 11.

*I will give him to the Lord. ib. She acts here like the one who brings forth fruit from his preaching, and does not usurp anything for her own praises. **This is valid for all preachers.***

For all the days of his life. ib. This is the way of acting of one who improves his subjects by bettering them in the virtues, and does not ascribe anything to one's own favor. **This is most applicable to spiritual directors.**

4925: *For all the days of his life.* The days of the life of the chosen subject are those holy virtues, which illumine one's soul even while resting, so that no one might be found in the darkness of the night of vices along the path of the heavenly fatherland. Of David it is said [1 Ch 29:28]: *And he died in a good age, full of days, and riches and glory.* - [Ps 72:10]: *Full days shall be found in them.* - [Ws 4:8,f.]: *For venerable old age is not that of a long time, nor counted by the number of years; but, the understanding of a man's grey hairs.* Here the hairs mean the sense of a man, and old age, implies his immaculate life.

4926: *No razor shall come upon his head. v.11.*

When a razor goes across one's head, it cuts off those hairs which are superfluous to the body, and these indicate the abundant supply of earthly substance.

The razor is the cupidity of those bad shepherds who cut off the hair of those spiritual off-spring born to them, when they take over the goods of their subjects through the cupidity of the preachers.

[Zp 3:3]: to the delinquent among the Jews it is said: *Your shepherds are evening wolves, they left nothing for the morning.*

By night, these shepherds act like wolves, because with the onset of darkness and as they depart from this world, they do not fear take over the goods of their subjects. They leave nothing for the morning, for since they are much engaged in temporal goods, as the advent of the future judgment begins to dawn, they will not reserve for themselves any rewards to be bestowed.

4927: [Mi 3:5]: *The prophets that make My people err: that bite with their teeth, and preach peace; and if a man give not something into their mouth, they prepare war against him.*

The Prophets that make My people err, ibi., they are reprobate preachers who confound the judgments of their listeners.

So long as they have something to eat, they preach Peace. ibi., because in the appetites of their rapacity, while they take the earthly gifts of the afflicted, they promise to them the security of divine indulgence.

And if a man gives not something into their mouth, they prepare war against him, ibi, because they terrify the just with their severe sentences, who do not exhibit to them their earthy goods as an offering.

4928: They run the razor across the head of the boy, whenever under the pretext of charity they preach heavenly goods while they take away from them their earthly goods out of cupidity.

And no razor shall come upon his head [1 K 1:11]. There is indicated here the perfect order of the preacher, who while **he despises taking any favors as a reward for his preaching**³⁹, he does not remove the temporal goods of their subjects in so acting.

The Church certainly does not make use of any such razor in seeking their subjects' goods as their prey..

[Ph 4:17]: *It is not the gift that I value most; what I value is the interest that is mounting up in your account.* - Those who preach the gospel should get their living from the gospel. However, **I have never availed myself of any rights of this kind**⁴⁰.

Anyone who does not strive to receive even the necessary nourishment from his subjects, clearly shows that in the sublimity of his worldly disdain, he does not confuse any unclean and illicit gifts.

No razor shall come upon his head. v. 11.

Anna clearly insinuates the later practice of the Church, which when giving birth unto eternal life by her speaking, but she never takes away their temporal goods out of avarice.

4929: Summary: The fruit of the tribulations of the holy Church is the perfection of the Elect. The last chapter of the Apoc. 22:11: *He that hurts, let him hurt still: and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is just, let him be justified still; and he that is holy, let him be sanctified still.*

Perfection of this kind principally is seen to consist in disinterestedness and humility. Because, *for the desire of money is the root of all evil [1 Tm 6:10] [avarice], For pride is the beginning of all sin [Si 10:15]. Thus, poverty in spirit, disinterestedness, cuts the root to all the vices, and by inducing humility, introduces*

³⁹ In his own life, and in his *Original Constitutions*, Fr. Bertoni insisted much on gratuitous service: cf. CF ##3; 67; 102; 184. [cf. St. Ignatius maxim: *Praedicare in paupertate*.

⁴⁰ Translator's Note: A hint of the Stigmatine rejection of the Cartolari estate by the early Confreres???

all the virtues, in which perfection consists: as we have more completely treated during the Retreat.

4930: COLLOQUY: O Lord, we have known the spirit with which the Church conducts herself in tribulations, a spirit that is in conformity with Your own, in fact, it is the same spirit. We have seen:

- the object of these afflictions: the hardness of sinners;
- the manner of these afflictions: softened somewhat by internal consolations;
- the effect, that is, the fervor in preaching and confidence in praying;
- the fruit, which is the perfect detachment from riches and honors.

4930: Grant that we, coming to minister in this House, that we may be in conformity to the Spirit of the Master of this House, to the Spirit of the Spouse and to that of His wife. *As the eyes of the servants are on the hands of their masters, as the eyes of the handmaid are on the hands of the mistress [Ps 122:2], and so are our eyes, so that making use in the same way of the afflictions that surround this Your House, keeping our eyes on the adorable intention of Your Providence, we might derive the fruit of Your mercy, which is our justification and perfection, for Your greater glory and honor. So are our eyes unto the Lord our God, until He have mercy on us. [Ps 122:2].*

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4931 - MEDITATION 5

[MssB ## 4931-4964]

Preparatory Prayer

Prelude 1. 1 K 1:12: *And it came to pass as she multiplied her prayers before the Lord, that Heli observed her mouth. v. 13: Now Anna spoke in her heart, and only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard at all. Eli therefore thought she was drunk, v. 14: And he said to her: How long will you be drunk? digest a little the wine, of which you have taken too much. v. 15: Anna answering said: Not so, my lord; for I am an exceeding unhappy woman [her spirit was oppressed with sorrow. In Hebrew: it was very harsh. I cannot be softened by any consolation]; and have drunk neither wine nor any strong drink, but I have poured out my [I have opened and poured out my heart] soul before the Lord. v. 16: Count not your handmaid for one of those daughters of Belial [stupid and impious: without judgment]; for out of the abundance of my sorrow and grief have I spoken till now. v. 17: Then Eli said to her: Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant you your petition which you have asked of Him. v. 18: And she said Would to God that your handmaid find grace in your eyes. [so that you might pray for me, or make better judgments about me]. So, the woman went on her way; and ate and her countenance was no more changed. [The serenity of her countenance was no longer changed into anguish]. v. 19: And they rose in the morning, and worshipped before the Lord: and they returned and came to their own house at Ramatha.*

4932: Imagine that you see this Anna, with such fullness of heart in praying, and Eli observing her. - Listen to the criticism of this priest, and her modest response. - Finally, after having his blessing, she gets up and returns to her home with her family.

Now this reading figuratively presents the persecutions of the holy Church and provides for us every opportunity to uncover their causes, principles, progress and outcome.

I will dedicate attention to observing in this the persecutions and the conduct of the Church in persecutions.

4933: Prelude 3. O Lord, since You have called us into the House of Your Son, where You make clear to us beforehand by means of the Apostle that persecutions will come: *And all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution [2 Tm 3:12], grant that we might learn from the example of the Holy Church, where we might prepare ourselves, and that we do not become ungrateful or unworthy servants and sons; but rather imitators of her, as She is of her Spouse and our Lord. Wherefore, I*

beseech you, be followers of me, as I also am of Christ [1 Co 4:16]. Grant that we might come to know the Spirit of Your Bride, the Church, so that in knowing her we might love her, in loving her we might desire her, desiring her we might open our mouths to pray for her to You, and the heart to be drawn by her: I opened my mouth and panted because I longed for Your commandments. [Ps 118:131].

4934: The cause and the principles of the persecutions are the following. On the one hand, the proper zeal of working for conversion, which is in the Church; and then on the other hand, the obstinacy which is in sinners. The Church wages combat with prayers and correct preaching which is the fruit of prayer⁴¹: the sinner, on his part, also engages in combat, with the desire of harming, with the cleverness of surprising with his words. The Church, however, does not give cause for this through any fault of her own. *Blessed are those ...who suffer for justice' sake; blessed are you... when they shall revile you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for My sake... [Mt 5:10, ff.]*

4935: [1 K 1:12]: *And it came to pass, as she multiplied her prayers with the Lord, that Eli observed her mouth.*

As she multiplied her prayers before the Lord: ibi, with the desire of giving birth, she poured out insistent prayers for the Synagogue to be converted.

Eli observed her mouth, ib. This is the Jewish priesthood in its efforts to hinder the preaching of the holy Church. He observed her mouth because he strove strongly to present obstacles for the right preaching of the faith.

4936: *And it came to pass, 'as' she multiplied prayers before the Lord, 'that' Eli observed her mouth. v.12: the reason being all the more astutely did he strive to bring harm to her, the more he recognized her insistent desires of preaching.*

Observed her mouth, ibi. The Synagogue, however, did not simply observe, but waited to see if she wished to hear the preaching of our faith might be for the fruit of her salvation.

The breaking out of the persecutions. There was reinforced the impact of the preaching with merits, and with miracles, with the most ardent charity, with confidence in the preaching. There was reinforced also the persecution, with some impatience to listen, with the intention of prohibiting it.

⁴¹ Through St. Thomas, Fr. Bertoni was much impressed with *contemplata tradere* - seeing it as the 'End of the Congregation' = cf. CF # 49

v. 13: Now Anna spoke in her heart and only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard at all. Eli, therefore, thought she was drunk. v. 14: And said to her: How long will you be drunk? Digest a little the wine of which you have taken too much.

4937: *Now Anna spoke in her heart, and only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard at all, v. 13.*

In her heart. ibi. The Heart of the Church: that which she is within herself, the devout and erudite beatitude of the faithful.

Now Anna spoke in her heart, ibi, because the preaching of the holy Church was of benefit only to those who were by a true light of being illuminated by divine predestination.

4938: *Only her lips were moved, ibi.*

The movement of her lips is the promotion of the signs in holy preachers; who indeed although their lips were speaking externally, and they seemed to be standing on high when they gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, life to the dead, they gave evidence of great movements of merits. And hence that enormous capacity of speaking of the most holy Church when it proclaims indeed is seen to stand on high, because it was capable as humble not only of the word and the conversation, but also is sublime in the power of signs, by force of her movement even reaching to heaven, saying: *But our conversation is in heaven.* [Ph 3:20].

But her voice was not heard at all. v. 13.

Eli could only see Hannah's lips moving, and could scarcely hear her voice; because the Jewish priesthood could see the works of the Apostles, but from their preaching was not promoted to salvation. And therefore, Anna's voice was not heard, because even though the holy Church is wonderful in the manifestation of her signs, when it offers her words of preaching, she enkindles outsiders to the love of the redeemer.

4939: *Heli, therefore, though she was drunk. v. 13.*

And this we know from the history of the Acts of the Apostles [2:1,ff], because *on the day of Pentecost, the holy Apostles were thought to have been drunk, when they had received the fullness of the Holy Spirit, they would be speaking of the wonders of Christ in every language. For spiritually the holy Church is believed to be drunk; since Judea did not think that she was asserting the truth, but only preaching heresy and falsehood.*

4940: *Drunk, ibi or the Church is under the influence, not with the elixir of error, but by the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, drunkenness is accustomed to changing one's heart and confusing the mind; having converted the heart of one man, who only recently, on entering the houses of any of the faithful, he continued terrorizing by threats, bringing suffering by blows, this man who had persecuted Him, eventually came to preach Jesus, as the true Son of the omnipotent God. [Ac 9:5 and 20]. Therefore, glorying in a superior sense of insanity, he lost himself, and said [1 Tm 1:13: Who before was a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and contumelious: but I obtained the mercy of God, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. Testifying that he had received a different heart, he says [1 Co 2:16]: But we have the mind of Christ. As a result he preached all the more attentively in proportion to that which he had received the power of a greater love of Christ.*

4941: *And he said to her: How long will you be drunk? v. 14.*

She was drunk, while the holy Church would ardently love, whenever she would confidently preach whatever she loved.

And he said to her: How long will you be drunk? ibi, because the priesthood of the Jews pronounced these words under the burden of impatience, and not in the sweetness of devotion.

Digest a little the wine of which you have taken too much v. 14.

Digest a little the wine, ibi, which she would do if the holy Church would grow tepid from her fervor of preaching, overcome by the threats of the Jews.

4942: *Digest a little of the wine, v. 14.*

Because since the princes of the Jews were trying to withdraw from her the sense of her preaching, Anna is being order to digest her wine forthwith. Once the Apostle had been put to death, they denounced her saying that no one should any longer speak in the name of Jesus. However, because they did not want to get over that wine they had drunk, they responded: *We ought to obey God, rather than men. [Ac 5:29]. For we cannot but speak the things which we have heard and seen [ibi. 4:20].*

The wicked sustain the persecution with their calumnies, spreading the rumor that the Church is ambitious, comfort seeking. She denies these calumnies with her disdain of the whole world, with her patience in tribulations, with her disinterestedness, with her continence, her sincerity and purity of intention.

4943: v. 15: *Anna answering said: Not so, my lord: for I am an exceeding unhappy woman, and have drunk neither wine nor any strong drink but I have poured out my*

soul before the Lord. v. 16: Count not your handmaid for one of the daughters of Belial: for out of the abundance of my sorrow and grief have I spoken till now.

Anna answering said: Not so, my lord. v. 15.

Anna answering said: Not so ibi. Because the Apostles did not want to get over the wine they had drunk, they responded:[Ac 5:29]: We ought to obey God, rather than men. [ibi 4:20]: For we cannot but speak the things which we have heard and seen.

The freedom of the Church is a great scandal to the wicked, or rather, a pretext to intensify the persecution.

4944: Meekness: *Not so, my lord. v. 15.*

She speaks this way because the holy Church among her words of freedom she guarded the virtue of meekness.

Humility: *my lord. ibi.*

She called upon the Lord to Whose ministry of preaching she manifested herself.

Even the Angels serve human beings: *Are they not ministering spirits sent to minister. [Heb 1:14]. The Lord Himself has even made us to us. His Spouse did not reject humility.*

4945: Her cleverness: *Anna, answering, said: Not so, my lord:*

But calling on the Lord, she denies that she is drunk, so that she might comply with the superior order in humility, and might oppose the false objection out of the truth. Calling on the Lord honored Him: denying that she was drunk, she did not show herself to be sufficiently humble.

Not so , my lord, for I am an exceeding unhappy woman.. v. 15.

The objection of drunkenness against the holy Church might be accepted in still another way. For while she would insist on the ministry of evangelical preaching, there would come to her from the gain of believers into the great glory of peoples, the priests of the Jews did not think she desired the height of the eternal goods, but that she yearned for the glory of earthly sublimity. So, when she was called drunk, her state of mind being over-turned, she is accused of postponing the heavenly goods and desiring those of earth.

4946: However, as she disdained the lowly goods of this world, she says:

Not so, my lord, for I am an exceeding unhappy woman. v. 15.

It is as though she said: You think that I desire the happiness of this lowly world; but, I see myself all the more unhappy when I recognize how far away from here are the joys of my happiness. And because I believe that I will be happy there in the future, in this world I consider myself to be quite unhappy, and so desire no glory here.

For unjust witnesses have risen up against me. [Ps 26:12].

A woman, [1 K 1:15]: the holy Church is called a ‘woman’ because of her fecundity.

Unhappy. ibi, in her fortitude; because she was to give birth throughout the whole world by the word, and she could not perfectly disdain the glory of this world, if the superior love had not strengthened her with admirable fortitude. Or: She was excessively unhappy, because her sorrow over the loss of her own people troubled her not a little. Thus, the wise Solomon, in great wonder, said [Pr 31:10]: *Who shall find a valiant woman?*

4947: *For I am an ‘exceeding’ unhappy woman, v. 15,* because no flattery of this world would please her; or, because she had remembered that she had been expelled from the joys of eternal life, by merit of the first sin, and that she could not return to these unless through the many tribulations of this life. [Ac 14:21]. Paul: *Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.* - Or: As though it would draw the Jewish priesthood to itself the holy Church would say in response: You ascribe to me the kingdom in the happiness of time, but it is clear to me that this is not reached unless from the affliction of much tribulation.

4948: Disinterest - Continenence - Purity of Intention.

And I have drunk neither wine, nor any strong drink. v. 15.

And I have drunk neither wine... ibi. because for the office of preaching she did not seek temporal gains.

And I have not drunk ... any strong drink. ibi; for indeed I am one who does not lapse into the concupiscence of the vices of the flesh.

But I have poured out my soul before the Lord, ibi, because she taught that to preach the conceived knowledge of the Word of God is only out of love of the Creator.

4849: *But I have poured out my soul:* since the innate understanding of God's Word is divulged for the usefulness of the listeners.

Before the Lord, ibi.

Whoever preaches the Word of God for human favors, whoever does so for its earthly comfort, or because he would expect something else from the preaching, before the Lord such a person does not offer that Word for one's soul. [2 Co 2:17]: *For we are not as many, adulterating the word of God; but with sincerity, but as from God, before God in Christ we speak.*

But I have poured out my soul before the Lord. ibi.

Because the holy Church is perfect in the culmination of all virtues and she offers words of fecundity for the great erudition of the faithful, but from the words of life she has desired to please God alone.

4950: **The Church maintains silence before the calumny from wickedness, from irreligion, from those who violate both the law and the Gospel. She rejects such calumny, by commending and by showing her ministry to be directed to eternal life. The proof of this: She remains in her preaching with affection and fortitude even in the face of persecution,** she is the witness of innocence and truth.

Count not your handmaid for one of the daughters of Belial: for out of the abundance of my sorrow and grief have I spoken till now. v. 16.

4951: *Count not your handmaid for one of the daughters of Belial, v. 16.*

This was as though she were saying: Who speaks to you of the goods of eternal life, does not merit to be despised as idolatrous. That is, she commends the ministry of preaching.

Your servant, ibi.

She speaks in this way so that he might know that in the name of ministry she would like to enroll him in the eternal rewards.

For out of the abundance of my sorrow and grief have I spoken till now. ibi.

As though more openly she was saying: From this realize that I have nothing of an evil spirit, because from the great pain of persecution I come to speak, and I do not give up the instance of my preaching, overcome by any penalties:

From the abundance of my sorrow, ibi, this could refer to the affection of the holy Church; *of my grief:* this could refer to the passion.

4952: *I have been speaking from the depths of my sorrow, ibi, meaning she pronounced her word of preaching to the perishing Jewish people, from the affection of her compassion. [Rm 9:1, etc.]: I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit: That I have great sadness, and continual sorrow in my heart. For I wished myself to be anathema from Christ, for my brethren, who are my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites...*

From the abundance of my sorrow, ibi.

[2 Co 11:24, f.]: Of the Jews five times did I receive forty stripes, save one...once I was stoned...

The Church thus proves her innocence from the material of her preaching, by her ministry, from her preaching after persecution, from her insistence on this, even in her pains, all from her affection.

v. 17: Then Eli said to her: Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant you your petition, which you have asked of Him. v. 18: And she said: Would to God your handmaid may find grace in your eyes. So the woman went on her way, and ate, and her countenance was no more changed.

4953: The outcome: some among the persecutors were converted by the patience of the Church.

Then Eli said to her: Go in peace. v. 17.

The holy Church, patiently tolerating adversity, manifesting humbly the virtue of her innocence and truth, persuaded some of the priests of Judea speaking well in her preaching. Earlier, Eli contradicted Anna who was praying by the contumelies he uttered, but then he took cognizance of her devotion. The Jewish priesthood and through other ministers of her office, hindered the preaching Church; and finally consented through others to the truth of our faith. By opposing them with blows, they denounced the Apostles, saying that they should no longer speak in the name of Jesus [Ac 5:42]. Regarding those who consented, Luke 6:7 speaks of them: Many in the crowd of priests obeyed the faith.

And the God of Israel grant you your petition. v. 17.

Then Eli prayed for Anna's appeal for fertility, since many of that group of priests obeying the faith through the preaching of the holy Church, desired to multiply the number of the elect.

Go in peace. v. 17.

He said this because he wished that she would obtain the fruit of her preaching without the suffering of the passion.

4954: Thus, the desire of the Church increases.

To which she said: Would to God your handmaid may find grace in your eyes. v. 19.

And she said. ibi.

The reason is here that the holy Church took pleasure in their prayer.

Would to God your handmaid may find grace in your eyes. ibi.

It is as though she was saying: In accord with the intuition of your desire, the work of my ministry will go on with the grace of the divine dispensation.

4955: The resistance of some is compensated by the reduction of many others.

So the woman went on her way, and ate, and her countenance was no more changed. v. 18.

And the woman went on her way. ibi, because the holy Church preached the word of faith to the gentiles. [Ac 13:46]: But because you judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, we turn to the Gentiles.

And the woman went on her way. ibi.

It is then said that the woman receded, because through the preaching of the Redeemer she would exhibit among the Gentiles the fruit of great fecundity.

4956: She ate and her countenance was no more changed, v. 18, because she would realize great gains in the conversion of the peoples; but, she found again also among the gentiles that persecution that she suffered in Judea.

What is her countenance like? I am bronzed, black of color, but beautiful [Ct 1:2], of lineage. When her Spouse will appear, she will be reverberated by His light, she will allow her blackness, in order that it be transformed by His glory. [1 Jn 3:2].

v. 19: And they rose in the morning, and worshipped before the Lord: and they returned and came into their house at Ramatha.

This states the order of events.

And they rose early in the morning and worshipped before the Lord. ibi.

Above, in v. 18, it is stated in the singular: the 'woman went away'. Now here, it is said in the plural: *They rose in the morning*; this means she went back home with

her husband. The 'Man' of the holy Church is the Redeemer of human kind, who had already ascended into heaven, when He left Judea overcome in the darkness of her incredulity.

4957: How can it be understood concerning Anna and her Husband, Elcana as a type of Christ and His Church, that together they got up in the morning and went together to return to their own town: **Wherever the Church goes, Christ goes with her with His grace.**

They returned and came into their house at Ramatha. v. 19.

Ramathah is the heavenly homeland, as we have said. So how does the Church arrive there, which had just ceased in her preaching of the Jews, and has not ascended into the heavenly homeland? It is true that when the Lord arose from the dead, she spoke through the doctors who were sent in preaching, saying, [Mt 28:20]: *And behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the earth.* Hence, **it is not absurd that holy Church would consider herself having risen and returned with Him**⁴². He would never desert His chosen ones through a spiritual presence, and He remains with those still here, and withdraws from those who leave her.

4958: In the carrying out of His unfathomable decrees.

Ramatha, also in this place is understood the fulfillment of the prophecy in the call of the gentiles, the realized vision of the prophets.

They had uttered this vision, but it had not been fulfilled. [Ps 85:9]: *All the nations You have made shall come and adore before You...* [Ps 72:15]: *And all the kings of the earth shall adore Him: all nations shall serve Him....* This vision is fulfilled because undeniably, under God's authorship, the gentiles have believed according to the oracles of the prophets in the Redeemer of humanity.

The Church does not set out except in following His light⁴³.

And they rose in the morning. v. 19.

Anna, with her Husband, because the holy Church when the interior light arose, she passed over to the gentiles with the word of her preaching. Or, she got up early in the morning, because she deserted Judea gripped in the night of her infidelity. Or, she got up early in the morning, because she found a prosperous path in the conversion of the gentiles.

⁴² St. Gregory the Great has a strong sense of the Church having already risen with Christ – **the integral dimensions of the Paschal Mystery**. [cf. this Web Site, under **Studies: Stimmate Integre**.

⁴³ Cf. Fr. Nello Dalle Vedove, CSS, *The Model of Holy Abandonment* - found on this Web Site, under **Studies**.

4959: In setting out, she adores the incomprehensible decree.

And worshipped before the Lord. v. 19.

This is explained because in the rejection of her by the Synagogue, she venerated the incomprehensible judgment of the almighty God.

She obeys the decree which she does not comprehend.

And worshipped before the Lord and they returned.... v. 19.

She adored and withdrew, because when she withdrew from the preaching of her own people, through the ordination of the omnipotent God, under divine judgment, she followed through obedience, which she could not penetrate by understanding.

4960: The manner of preaching she sought through prayer⁴⁴.

Adoring, she returned, because she proposed to fulfill her ministry of preaching in the vocation of the gentiles, but she only **sought the manner of this preaching in sublime contemplation**. For to go back to the preachers, they need to have recourse to the light of divine contemplation. Thus, they indeed drew upon the light and which they then shine for the veneration of the faithful, and which by their speaking, they shed also on the minds of their listeners. Thus, the outstanding preacher, before being elevated to the secrets of the third heaven, is seen thus to dispose of earthly goods: and on entering perceived the secret words of paradise, which it is not permitted to human beings to mention, that he could discern and speak of to the outside in a useful manner.

4961: And it is recalled that Anna returned, because when the holy Church, has disposed of the challenges of this earth, whatever these earthy goods are to be disposed of in her as often as she goes back to them, she is instructed by her contemplation of God.

And came to their house. v. 19.

The reason is because she could have placed herself in the devotion of her listeners, when approaching them, she would recognize them again in going back to things on high. For the devotion of the gentiles built the House of the early Church when she established herself in them, and dwelt in the solitude of her guardianship.

⁴⁴ As noted, Fr. Bertonni insists much on *contemplata tradere*... [cf. CF # 49].

4962: *And they came into their house at Ramatha. v. 19.*

Having been placed in the situation of a fulfilled vision, because previously she could not have known this, as the time of her vocation had come as predicted by the prophets.

Prayer, beloved seminarians! Meditate during the week⁴⁵, so that you might know how to behave yourself in the House of the Lord [1 Tm 3:15]. All servants, before going into any house, are first informed of its customs, so that they might be able to please its masters.

COLLOQUY: Grant, o Lord, that we might fear Your judgments, *I am afraid of your judgments* [Ps 118:120]. Let us find comfort in persecutions of the Church.

4963: O Lord, we have known the tribulations of your Church, in which there equally stand out Your admirable Providence, Her Spouse⁴⁶, and the prudent conduct of Your Bride. We adore Your most wise government, and we pray You to make us imitate Your Bride, in conforming ourselves in everything to conduct ourselves well in this: *If any man will come after Me, let him take up his cross... [Mt 16:24]. Grant that we might carry, and not just drag the cross, and that we carry it willingly until we even come to glory in it, and that we carry it with such love that we might even come to glory only in it: But God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world. [Ga 6:14].*

4964: But this could only happen if first, through Your grace, the world is crucified to me, and I to the world: *through whom the world is crucified to me and I to the world. ibi.* And this cannot be until the world is only a cross for me, as I am to the world, because of the irreconcilable contrariety of sentiments: *the world is crucified to me and I to the world. ibi.*

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⁴⁵ This concept seems to indicate that these Conferences were weekly.

⁴⁶ The Church as the Spouse of Christ is a sublime Model of Holy Abandonment according to Fr. Bertoni.

4965 - MEDITATION 6

[MssB ## 4965-5001]

Preparatory Prayer. *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.* To the glory and in the name of the Most Holy Trinity⁴⁷, Whom we adore by firmly believing, we offer and begin this prayer, being promised to us in this name the assistance through the merits of the Passion and Death of the Son of God, Christ our Lord, the sign of which we now devoutly form on our bodies: *In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

4966: Prelude 1: [1 K 1:19]: *And Elcana knew his wife: and the Lord remembered her* [that is, and she conceived. *And it came to pass when the time was come about, she conceived etc. - LXX]. v. 20: Anna conceived and bore a son, and called his name Samuel:* [and the meaning of this name is:] Sought by God: is the Hebrew etymology. – His name is God⁴⁸ *since, she said, I asked God for him,* according to the Hebrew etymology. *v. 22: And Elcana her husband went up, and all his house, to offer to the Lord, the solemn sacrifice* [this was the offering of the stated days in the LXX; as was his custom: which means he was accustomed to doing this every year] *and fulfill his vow* [Not only did he consent to the vow of his wife, but he further made this his own vow]. *v. 22: But Anna went not up,* [the women were not obliged to go up on the stated days, but only the men: nor were the Levites obliged to offer their first-born, because they were already dedicated to God; nor did they seek redemption; nor the sacrifices of purification, because they ceded all this in their utility⁴⁹]. *Anna said to her husband: I will not go till the child be weaned, and till I may carry him, that he may appear before the Lord and may abide always there. v. 23: And Elcana, her husband, said to her: Do what seems good to you, and stay till you wean him: and I pray that the Lord might fulfill His word.* [For the Lord stated that all which comes forth from your mouth: LXX]. *So the woman stayed behind, and gave her son suck, till she weaned him.*

4967: In this reading of the letter of these lines, with its spirit being brought to us through the Fathers of the Church, let us say that we know now sufficiently well that in Anna and Elcana, the House of God is brought home to us in which we are to serve, and in the personal qualities, and in the character of the principal persons who make

⁴⁷ Fr. Berton's ideal of the *Apostolic Mission* begins and ends sublimely in the Mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. Cf. this Web Site: [Studies, A Trinitarian Charism of Hope](#).

⁴⁸ A series of names appears here in the text: *St. Gregory, Angelomus. – placed. or ordered by God: Franc. Goerg., t. 1, Problem. 442 asked of him by the Lord...*

⁴⁹ The text offers here what might be the source; *Ambulensis*.

it up, that is, Christ the Husband, and His Wife... We have come to know that the Husband, which is Christ, and the Wife which is the Church, and in their personal character and in the form of the domestic administration, in order to form a perfect idea of this House of God....

[A re-writing of the above].

4968 third: After having come to know the Husband and the Wife, and in their personal qualities, and in the form of their government, and of their domestic conduct, in order to form an exact idea of this House, it is necessary also to come to know their off-spring, and their manner of bringing Him up. Now Samuel is the figure of a child of the Church, and in him there may be encountered the most holy conduct of the Church in Christian education. But, since he is dedicated to God and called also by God expressly to serve Him, so this allows us to meet principally all the divine Providence of the divine vocation and the signs and the manner to correspond to it. This vocation is usually indicated in an anticipated manner with various signs in very good time by divine Providence, which for its own ends, sweetly and strongly disposes of the means.

4969: In accord with this first part of our division of these meditations, after having met in Anna and Elcana, and in their actions having come to know the House of God in the principal persons who make it up and in its government, we will go on today to consider in Samuel, their child, principally our vocation to this House of God, and regarding God in His Providence, and regarding the Church in her prudence, and regarding ourselves in our conduct.

Under all these perspectives we can find the dispositions for this vocation - the vocation itself - its effects.

Today we will begin with the dispositions.

[Now the definitive text].

4970: In this reading, the spirit of which is brought home to us by the holy Fathers of the Church, we say that we have formed a sufficient knowledge of this House of God, in which we are to serve. This is had in the character of the principal persons who make it up, that is, of both the Husband and of the Wife, and in the form of their domestic administration, there remains only to perfect the idea of this House, by coming to know the off-spring and the conduct of his education. All this will be easily encountered in the boy-hood of Samuel. But, since this son, offered by his mother and called expressly by God into the service of the Tabernacle, offers us from the beginnings to the end of his life, the entire admirable economy of the divine

vocation, through which alone does one legitimately enter to serve God in His House, so in this point of view, concentrating on Samuel from now on, we are in the second part of our first partition.

The first design: *that you might know how to behave in God's household.* [1 Tm 3:15]⁵⁰.

4971: The vocation, then, is the effect of the gratuitous election of the Spouse. *You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you.* [Jn 15:16]. For the purpose of this election, His Providence disposes the means *strongly* and at the same time *sweetly* [Ws 8:1], and commits one as in accord and the maternal care of His Bride, and indeed the free cooperation of His chosen ones. Under these relationships we will notice in Samuel the dispositions for this vocation, and therefore, of the vocation itself, and then finally the effects of this vocation.

The dispositions are found in certain preparations of operating and cooperating grace, and in certain trials of various spirits.

Today I will treat of certain Remote Preparations, and then on Sunday⁵¹, of those that are more Proximate.

4972: Prelude 2. We will imagine that we see with our own eyes this newly born baby Samuel, in the arms of his mother, Anna, and with what great consolation and affection she offers him to God and for God nourishes him with her own milk; and Elcana, her husband, in the act of departing in much happiness for Silo, to fulfill his vow.

Prelude 3. O Lord, grant that as we come to know Your loving Providence in calling to this ecclesiastical state those You have chosen, and the prudent conduct of the Church in the carrying out of this, Your Providence, we might adore the former and faithfully correspond to it, under the most gentle laws of such a good Mother. [Pr 1:8]: *My son, hear the instructions of your father, and forsake not the law of your mother.*

4973: The dispositions [to the ecclesiastical vocation consist] in the preparation of operating grace, as well as that remote and proximate cooperating grace, and in the trials of various spirits: by the good spirit and by the evil spirit.

The first Remote Preparation.

⁵⁰ Translator's Note: cf. # 5904 [[?]] - cf. above # 4854, etc. [This is a note in Fr. Benaglia's hand-writing].

⁵¹ There is evidence here of a another conference to be given within the next few days.

v. 19: And Elcana knew Anna his wife, and the Lord remembered her. v.20: And it came to pass when the time was come about, Anna conceived and bore a son..

4974: *And Elcana knew Anna his wife. v.19.*

The Lord has appeared from afar to me. Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn you, taking pity on you. [Jr 31:3].

And Elcana knew Anna, his wife. v.19.

This happened when our Redeemer in the fullness of time looked to the calling of the gentility. At that time, He infused into the womb of his New **Spouse, that is, the holy Church**, the grace of His supreme love and would generate from her the new offspring of the faithful. When He had not yet 'known' her that way, when preachers wished to go to Asia, they were prohibited by the Holy Spirit. [Ac 16:11]. Thus it was He would send His disciples to the preaching of Judea. Truth by itself prohibited that, saying: [Mt 10:5]: *Go you not into the way of the Gentiles, and into the city of the Samaritans, enter not.*

4975: *Elcana knew Anna his wife and the Lord remembered her. v. 19:* because the gentility is seen to have come into the memory of God, with the holy Church, joined by the word of God through the grace of love, and is visited in salvation.

And the Lord remembered her. ibi : and also of me, from the moment that He sent His Apostles to preach in these parts; in the Supper when He instituted the Eucharist and ordained the Apostles; on the Cross, when He produced the sacraments.

4976: *When the time was come, v. 20: after so many centuries, we have been generated into the faith.*

And it came to pass when the time was come. v. 20.

There is indicated here the clear manifestation of the divine will by the innumerable rays of the Holy Spirit; which, while the minds of her preachers were suspended in contemplation, He exhibits the numberless clarifications of the superior disposition, which He had held closed for many days, for the due course of time.

Anna conceived and bore a son. v.20.

Because the word of God was not infused previously to the holy Church to be taught since the rays of this superior disposition would not be the more fully recognized by her.

Hannah conceived and brought forth a son. ibi.

Because those whom in the faith of the Redeemer she brought forth were robust in their new conversation.

She conceived in faith: and brought forth by Baptism⁵².

4977: *Elcana knew, etc. and bore a son. [= those whom He foreknew, these He also called];*

And the Lord remembered her: and she bore a son. [= these He also predestined: He justified.] [Rm 8:29, f.].

Let us adore the Providence of God, carrying out the divine election: first in having us born: gifts of nature; secondly, in calling us to the faith [even better, having us re-born] in the midst of the faith; thirdly, in having us enter into the Church through Baptism; fourthly, in enriching us with virtues and gifts, suiting us for so great a ministry.

She bore a son, v. 20.

We must adore, thank, pray, purge ourselves from vices, in order to be re-born into a new life in Christ. [That is, we ought to follow] the purgative way.

4978: The Providence of God regarding the ecclesiastical vocation, in the remote preparation and in the more proximate preparation of His chosen ones.

v. 20: ...And called his name Samuel: because she had asked him of the Lord.

Samuel means: His name is God.

There is indicated here the **order of preachers**, which is called to the faith from gentility, because it is strong in conversation, sublime in power, and while in it there is seen a special sign of divine grace, its devout crowds of listeners are led to the veneration of preachers. [Ex 7:1]: *Behold I have appointed you the God of Pharaoh. - [ibi, 22, 28]: You shall not speak ill of them...*

4979: It should be noted that anyone whose name is 'God'. is a son, and not a daughter; because the pastoral dignity is lowered by inferior conversation. and is not endowed with the splendor of such a sublime name.

She named him Samuel, since she had asked the Lord for him. v. 20.

⁵² Ven. Bede.

Therefore, because **the order of doctors**, promoted to the ministry of **evangelizing** among the gentility, was not unequal to the excellence of its dignity by the grace of merits.

She had asked: ibi, this means in this place: by asking, she merited. There is thus shown why the first-born of Anna is gifted with such a name. It is as though it was being said: therefore, she gave him such a name because he who is born to a supreme task, he was great also by the grace of merits.

4980: *She named him Samuel. v. 20.*

*Those whom He justified, those He also glorified [Rm 8:30], in this life, the militant Church, symbolizes **the triumphant Church**⁵³, as the Synagogue symbolized the militant Church. He glorified **with the name, with the gifts and with the infused virtues, with merits.***

God gives to those whom He calls to any given state whatever is necessary for that state of life. Therefore, God has done much on His own. The Church, too, His Bride, we will see that she is not lacking in her own prudent and provident commitment⁵⁴.

4981: The Church offers her provident care both concerning her activity and her prayer.

Concerning her activity, she gives milk proposing to the candidate the doctrines and the most simple examples, so that each might begin to practice the moral virtues; she also gives each nourishment by having him advance then to the religious virtues; and she confirms each in the perfection of the exercise of those divine and theological virtues.

As to prayer....

4982: *v. 21: And Elcana her husband went up, and all his house, to offer to the Lord the solemn sacrifice and his vow. v. 22: But Anna went not up: so she said to her husband: I will not go till the child be weaned and I may carry him....*

This shows the provident care with which the Mother favors the child.

⁵³ This seems to be a further instance of Gregory's grasp of the **integral** Paschal Mystery.

⁵⁴ In his very important CF # 185 of the *Original Constitutions*, Fr. Bertoni makes clear that the **difficult and arduous vocation** of the Stigmatine is not based on *human strength but on the grace of the Holy Spirit, Who has begun and inspired this good work [cf. Ph 1:6], will bring it to perfection, if He is not hindered in this by us; for this is the special grace of this vocation...*

To offer the annual sacrifice. v. 21.

There is to be understood here **the oblation of the love of the holy Church**, by which she is joined to her Creator in eternal contemplation.

4983: *And Elcana her husband went up and all his house to offer to the Lord the solemn sacrifice.... v. 21.*

Then it happened that our Redeemer, after triumphing over death, after overcoming the darkness of our possibility, took on flesh for our salvation, and elevated all to the heavenly realms.

And all his house, ibi, because he extolled all prior chosen members of the Synagogue into the heights of immortality.

4984: *To offer the solemn sacrifice. ibi.*

Then it happened that when he manifested Himself in heaven to His Father through the matter of **His glorified flesh**⁵⁵, and the nature of the Angels, as well as our redemption, so also He rejoiced in their reparation.

To fulfill his vow. v. 21.

In the head of the book it is written of me: that I should do your will...then I said: I have desired it... [Ps 39:6, ff.]⁵⁶.

To offer: ibi. Then, he made the offering when He made it possible for us to take our place in the heavenly realms.

4985: *But Anna went not up: for she said to her husband: [v. 22].*

Anna is invited to share in this solemn oblation, because the holy Church by the spiritual exhortation of **her Spouse** is enkindled from the daily desires of love to the eternal contemplation of divine clarity.

Till the child be weaned. v. 22.

She abstains from going up until she gives milk to her infant; because she sustains patiently this spread of His glory that it might the more benefit the little children of Christ.

⁵⁵ Translator's Note: the recurring interest in the Risen Lord.

⁵⁶ Translators' Note: Biblical abandonment? Ps 39 {40} is the 'Disciples' Prayer.' [cf. Heb. 10:5-7]

4986: *But I am straitened between two, [Ph 1:23], as she is attracted by the desires of love to the countenance of **her Spouse** and she says: *having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ*. She loves to breast-feed her children, and adds: v. 24: *But to abide still in the flesh is needful for you*. In proposing to breast-feed, she is saying: [1 Co 3:2]: *I gave you milk to drink, not meat*. - To breast-feed the little ones of the holy Church is the work of the Shepherds: that is to nourish the hearts of **the weak, or the simple listeners**⁵⁷ with the nourishment of the fuller Scripture. [1 Co 2:2]: *For I judged myself not to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ and him crucified*.*

4987: *Till the child be weaned. v. 22.*

Which she does when the little ones receive the increases of both the **spiritual erudition of the holy Church** as well as her **good conversation**; and they do not require further increases of sacred eloquence, but rather her sublime Sacraments.

Till I may carry him [the weaned infant] that he may appear before the Lord.

This takes place when, through the encouragement of the preachers, each subject making good progress, is adorned with good works. For each one is led forward to this that he might appear, not so much is one led that he might see, but that each might be seen.

4988: For indeed at the end of the world, many are to hear from the Lord: *I do not know you, [Mt 25:12]*; Samuel is said to appear before the Lord, because he is an elect and humble subject, when he perfectly despises the present goods, so when the final judge does come he is reprov'd in nothing. All those whom the world retains as obsessed with its love, and who yearn to be seen more elated in the honor of passing realities, for this is done by proudly acting. So, by that One before Whom only the honorable should be seen, such as these, are never seen. So, the chosen king, placed in the high spot of all things, so that there is no deception in the flower of this world, begs the Lord saying: *Cast me not away from Your face. [Ps 50:13]*.

4989: *I will not go up until the child be weaned, and till I may carry him before the Lord.*

And she promises to breast-feed, to bring him up so that he might appear, because **the holy Church renders erudite those elect subjects, teaches** them to perfectly disdain present goods and to perform good deeds, and to hasten through humility toward the eternal goods. Each is led from the place of his being breast-fed

⁵⁷ In line with Augustine's *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, Fr. Bertoni proposes his ideal also for the *Professed, Apostolic Missionaries*, the confessions, teaching catechism to the simple, the young, the *unlettered* [cf. CF ## 72; 165; 182].

so that he might appear before the Lord because of not a little interest is the spiritual journey, since **we tend toward the One from Whom we learn the heavenly magisterium**, into the use of the works of perfection.

4990: *And he may abide always there. v. 22.*

And this is because one is never to cease from the commitment to such good deeds. Soon we appear there but remain, from where we never depart; this means never to obscure the decor of conversation with the darkness of life; because the one who never wanders into anything that is illicit, never departs from the secret of the divine intuition, and is as though placed in the light, such a one divine goodness respects; because he has damned that darkness of sins, and does not attend by the choice of His examen.

But Anna went not up [to offer to the Lord the solemn sacrifice] till the child be weaned [v. 21].

The reason is because the holy Church proposes to protect her children, as long as this is needed to take care of their secure perfection, so that these might not any longer withdraw from the accepted goodness.

4991: Regarding prayer, she feeds him having him meditate on the mysteries of His humanity; she feeds him making him meditate on His Passion; she brings him to the temple, making him meditate on the mysteries of the resurrection and the divinity, so that he can then preach with unction, etc.⁵⁸

We should correspond also in action, progressing⁵⁹ from virtue to virtue, [Ps 83:8], from the moral virtues to the religious, to the divine; and in prayer seeking to profit from the life of Christ, to His Passion and to His Resurrection. Accomplishing all this methodically, and not by fits and starts. All is based on the divine Scriptures, from which one derives precepts for action, and knowledge for prayer. *All prayer: All scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice.... [2 Tm 3:16, f.].*

4992: *Elcana went up ... to offer the solemn sacrifice... 21.* This could be referring to the height of holy preaching; for it makes reference to her husband going

⁵⁸ **Translator's Note:** the need to meditate on the resurrection, in order to preach with more unction. In Fr. Bertoni's retreat for young priests [September 13-22, 1801], Fr. Bertoni developed both aspects of the Stigmata: *Imagine that you see Him with the scars of his wounds... inviting you, too, to heaven... Christ has entered new life with the scars of His wounds...* [cf. MssB ## 2632; 2635-2647, passim.] [cf. also this web-site, "Life & Spirituality", *STIMMATE INTEGRÉ*].

⁵⁹ Progress is a concept dear to St. Gaspar Bertoni's heart and expressed in his ideal –cf. CF P. IV, ## 47-68]

up [Ps 17:11]: *He ascended upon the Cherubim, and he flew; he flew upon the wings of the wind.*

He ascended upon the Cherubim, ibi, because he ascended on the sublime minds of his preachers, and establishes the height of his knowledge.

And he flew on the wings of the wind, ibi, because before their spiritual eyes, he elevates himself to the height of the wonderful intelligence, by the breaths of the Holy Spirit. *And He made darkness His covert, Ps 17:12*, because he hides the sublimity of his majesty from the reprobate. *His pavilion, dark waters in the clouds of the air, ibi*, because those whom he elevates by his sublime gifts, to these he manifests the glory of his majesty.

4993: *And all his house [1 K 1:21]*; because he had those in whose minds he stands out, in the height of his contemplation, he maintains as domestics and family members.

The solemn sacrifice. ibi.

This solemn oblation is the love of internal erudition in the hearts of his Saints. For each one of these would ineffably find joy in him in that the manifested sublimity of the Redeemer so sublimely instructs them.

4994: *But Anna went not up. For she said to her husband I will not go till the child be weaned v. 22.*

The reason is that the holy Church avoided preaching the sublime truths as long as she knew her listeners were still **unlettered, as little ones unable to understand sublime truths**⁶⁰. Thus, in the early beginnings of the holy Church, it happened that the milk was provided for the still infant child of Anna, through the writings of three of the Evangelists, Matthew, Luke and Mark. They wrote the history of the humanity of the Lord, but treated little of His divinity.

4995: But, when this insignificant people of the Church grew, and advanced in the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ, [Ep 4:13], for which the nourishment of milk no longer sufficed, it required to be fed with solid food. And then the mother Church was compelled to go up, and she herself became as a Cherubim and flying above herself approached the Redeemer, she took on wings, she traveled above these

⁶⁰ These *rudes et pueri* – are found together in Fr. Bertoni's Rule: - cf. CF ## 72; 165 [for Catechism] – and in # 182: ... *Eorum [Professorum] munus est docere non solum in concionibus, exercitiis, lectionibus, quae ad vitam aeternam consequendam necessaria, vel utilia sunt; sed etiam rudimenta fidei et morum, praesertim rudibus et pueris...*: once again a broad range of *varia et propria ministerial...accomodata* for the Apostolic Missionary in Fr. Bertoni's ideal. This is the motto *Euntes Docete* - cf. Mt 28:19

in the heights of the sacraments, and from her majesty came to understand, that she would give nourishment to her unique off-spring. And then it happened that requested by his brothers, the Evangelist John did not only transcend human truths, but surpassed even the angelic realities and all other created goods and he preached Him Whom he had merited to see, the Only Begotten Son in the bosom of the Father. [Jn 1:1]: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.*

4996: Then, Anna did go up, when the holy Church so wondrously raised herself up in **the heights of divine preaching**⁶¹. Then, she also offered the solemn sacrifice, v. 21, because she enkindled into the hearts of her listeners in the knowledge of the divinity, the flame of wondrous devotion. This solemn sacrifice is of an incomparable eloquence of the singular oblation of devotion. The she brought her son before the Lord, when she had communicated to the hearts of her listeners, a perfect knowledge of the supreme divinity. Such knowledge of God is not only to be held by just faith, but also by confession; and what we believe and confess, it is not permitted to be ignorant of it any longer, nor to keep silence concerning it.

The boy who is weaned, who is brought into the House of the Lord, remains forever now in the presence of the Lord.

4997: This is the execution of God's Providence, with Him inspiring the Church when He so chooses, and bestowing the merited grace from His Son to the chosen one. This is the execution of the maternal care of the Church, as she acts in accord with the knowledge received. The correspondence of the chosen one is manifested with acting in accord with her discipline.

v.23: *And Elcana her husband said to her: Do what seems good to you and stay till you wean him: and I pray that the Lord may fulfill his word. So the woman stayed at home, and gave her son suck, till she weaned him.*

4998: **Obedience to the Church in her Prelates**⁶².

⁶¹ For St. Gregory, 'preaching' is a broad term, indicating any manner of community revealed truth. Like Ignatius after him, and so many others in the Catholic tradition, Gregory offers a much broader understanding of *preaching*: ...*veniens Dominus, quia sapientiam suam per carnem voluit praedicare ...* [cf. *In Cant # 13*] - ... *sapientiam [secularem] sancta ecclesia despiciat, humillimam praedicationis Dominicae incarnationem appetat...* [cf. *In Cant # 16*]

⁶² Translator's Note: A characteristic of Fr. Bertoni's first Constitution, introducing the *Compendium Rude*, [CF # 1] in *obsequium Episcoporum*. And then developed further in CF # 185 [*the Compendium Rude* put into complete sentences]: *Cum ejusdem Sodalitatis scopus sit, Ecclesiae sub dependentia Episcoporum directione, obsequium praestare per varia et propria suae vocationis munera...*

And Elcana her husband said to her: Do what seems good to you and stay till you wean him. v. 23.

Hannah's counsel was then strengthened by the authority of her husband, because the proposal of the holy Church does not presume a mere human judgment, but a divine one. For whatever the holy Church wished to dispose regarding the subjected nations, she would then have as approved, when she recognized from the judgment of internal truth whatever was to be disposed.

4999: Confidence in Christ.

And I pray that the Lord might fulfill His word. v. 23.

We have an advocate with the Father, and He is the propitiation for us [1 Jn 2:1].

His Word, v. 23, is to be carried out as the conversion of the gentility is predestined.

And I pray that the Lord might fulfill His word, v. 23. Because through His blood we are reconciled to God, He is beseeched for the carrying out of His word, and when this is obtained our salvation is perfected.

And I pray, v. 23.

Christ is beseeched when in His assumed humanity, **He continuously exhibits to the eternal Father for our salvation; since then He does not give up offering Himself**⁶³, He opens up the entrance to life for our reception.

To act according to what is known.

So the woman stayed at home, and gave her son suck, till she weaned him v. 23.

The reason is she perfected the counsel of his disposition by instruction.

5000: From all that we have found in this meditation there are easily made known the signs of whether one is called, or not: because if one does recognize from the

Perhaps a word on Gregory's understanding of preaching is appropriate: it refers to an activity that is far more encompassing than preaching understood as the delivering of a sermon. To preach is to proclaim and teach the Christian gospel by one's words, actions and example. God preached the knowledge of himself through the entirety of his incarnate existence in Christ Jesus; a priest preaches the gospel by his words, by his deeds and by the moral character of his life. This understanding of preaching may help one understand the unusual use of 'preaching' in the commentary. [Cassian DelCogliano, ocso – cf. English Translation of St. Gregory's Commentary on the *Canticle of Canticles*.

⁶³ Translator's Note: Eternal *obsequium* of the glorified Christ?

outset the gratuitous honor of his election, and gives effort to conserving his innocence – or, even if one should purge away from himself any stains that have been contracted, and forthwith hastens to enrich himself with the merits of good deeds: who then adds on the quest for the virtues, and in this makes progress⁶⁴, and then is committed to the search of holy prayer, such a man rightly proceeds and advances: whoever does all of this out of obedience, and with insistence, shows that he has been called. Whoever does not seek all this, it is clear that such a man is not called, or that he is not corresponding, and so merits to be sent away, as he is not elected.

5001: COLLOQUY: O lord, You have let us know Your will in the marvelous plan of Your Providence, in our election and vocation. *As He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unspotted in His sight in charity. Who has predestined us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ unto Himself, according to the purpose of His will.* Ep 1:4, ff.

It is not sufficient just to know it. Grant that we might love it, and by loving it, that we might observe it: *Thy Will be done*, Mt 6:10, so that we might with perfection observe it here on earth, the same will with which your Angels serve you in heaven: *On earth as it is in heaven; ibi.* And so sharing the name with them, we might not manifest any inferior quest for obedience.

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⁶⁴ 'Progress', as is known, is a key ideal in the charism of Fr. Bertoni – he dedicates his entire Part IV, of his *Original Constitutions* to this ideal: cf. CF ## 47-68: Spiritual and Intellectual Progress – cf. 1 Tm 4:16: *Attende tibi doctrinae...*

5002 - MEDITATION 7

[MssB ## 5002-5041]

Preparatory Prayer

Prelude 1. 1 K 1:24: *And after she had weaned him, she carried him with her, with three calves...* [or, a calf of three years according to the LXX]. – *And they immolated a calf* [it is said] it can be understood that it was one, as the text says; others [understand here that] there were two – about which Scripture says nothing – or, for a common meal, or as a peace offering, or perhaps these were destined in the proper duty of the priest [Bib. M] and with three measures of flour [it seems as though one calf had been immolated, in the rite of a peace offering, to which one Ephraim, or three measures of flour and wine were added – cf. Nb 15:4, ff.] and a flask of wine – *and she brought him to the House of the Lord in Shiloh. Now, the child was as yet very young*⁶⁵. v. 25: *And they immolated [i.e., Anna with her husband] a calf,, and offered the child to Eli. v. 26: And Anna said: beseech You [she said this out of grace], my Lord: I am that woman who stood before you here praying to the Lord. v. 27: For this child I did pray, and the Lord has granted me my petition, which I asked of Him. v. 28: Therefore, I have also lent him to the Lord all the days of his life, he shall be lent to the Lord. [According to the Hebrew text, as Cornelius a Lapide points out: ‘I’, says Anna, scelti, I have begged Samuel from God and have implored for him; I also ‘hiscelti, : I now give him back to the Lord, so that he might be Saul, i.e., dedicated to God all the days that he lives, for whatever use or good employment he might make of him. Another interpretation: Understand here: I commended by prayer: therefore, the name is interpreted ‘commended’ by St. Gregory⁶⁶. And they adored the Lord there. [They thanked God].*

5003: Now in this reading, there is encountered on the one hand, the Providence of God, and then on the other hand, the maternal care of the Church – the second proximate disposition for vocation.

Prelude 2. Imagine that you see Anna leading her tender little child by the hand to the temple, with the three calves, three measures of flour and a flask of wine; imagine that you see Anna and her husband willing to offer the child to Eli; imagine that you see Eli, that you hear Anna’s words in the act of offering her child.

⁶⁵ Fr. Bertoni quotes here Cornelius a Lapide, stating that the child was three years old.

⁶⁶ Fr. Bertoni’s quote here of St. Gregory is accompanied by this addition: p. 880/2 D – 881/1 C.

5004: Prelude 3. *Draw me after You [Ct 1:3] You draw, O Lord, Your Spouse by Your right hand, and we will run after You to the odor of Your ointments: ibi, and the teachings of the Church in words and deeds and disciplines: in the odor of Your ointments” this is the fruit of Your grace. To the odor of Your ointments Ct 1:3. And if we cannot follow you with a strong love of a Spouse already adult in the school of holy love⁶⁷, draw me ibi. We will follow you with the first-fruits of the most tender, nascent and youthful fervor.*

5005: *We will run after you to the odor of your ointments Ct 1:3. Therefore, the young maidens have loved you v. 2.*

O Lord, you draw everything to the designs of Your Providence with the sweetness and effectiveness of Your grace, the precious fruit of Your House. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself. [cf. Jn 12:32]. Thus, You draw Your Spouse, which is the Church, our Mother, and Yours and her children, which we also are.

5006: But, Your Spouse You draw as it were, by the hand, by Your right hand, and so she does not so much follow You, as accompany You: *draw me Ct 1:3* . Thus, you divide as though with your maternal care the execution of your paternal Providence over us. We, as your tender young children, cannot run with You, as You go not with steps, but with leaps, and leaps of a giant: *He has rejoiced as a giant to run the way [Ps 18:6], We too will run after You” We will run after You ibi, in the odor of Your graces: to the Odor of Your ointments ibi, and of the teachings, and disciplines, and of the examples of our Mother, and these are also Your graces.*

5007: The second preparation for vocation consists in the conversation, the example of the saints, living and dead, which the Church proposes for her children. In these examples there is enkindled for them the desires to assist one’s neighbor, and of uniting oneself to God intimately: One is to be beneficial to his neighbors to the extent that he so adheres to God.

The first preparation is that of a perfection of common justice; the second is extended to the desires of ecclesiastical perfection.

5008: *v. 24: And after she had weaned him, she carried him with her, with three calves and three bushels of flour, and a bottle of wine. And she brought him to the House of the Lord in Shiloh. Now the child was as yet very young.*

⁶⁷ Fr. Bertoni uses this same expression in his *gradated Espousals Principle* - cf. his Panegyric on St. Francis of Assisi, perhaps the morning of the Feast, October 4, 1808 [cf. MssB ## 1844-1874, especially cf. MssB 1868].

*After she had weaned him ibi. As the Church leads forth as new-born babes, desire the rational milk without guile 1 P 2:2, she has administered, and led them forward by educating them from **the youthful rudiments of the new man, to the more perfect levels.***

5009: *The calves: v. 24:* Understand the proposal of imitating the life of the perfect ones. The calf [for this is the vocation to the priesthood] since this arises in the heart of the proficient. The ox, since through the strength of virtue is led forward for the affection of great conversation.

And she brought him ... with three calves ... to the House of the Lord. v. 24.

This is so stated that that there might be implied the form of those who are to be instructed by the ministry of preaching.

5010: For the **perfect doctor** watches over both the sinners to be converted and the just to be guarded. Much like a farm manager of the Master of the Household, He connects both oxen to the plows, so that keeping over those who stand, that they might not fall, but also that he might pick up those who have lapsed, so that they might stand again. But he who does have two oxen taking care of subjects, that this be perfect, he joins a third beast of burden; he is in divine contemplation. So, as by a complete yoke in plowing, that he might both open up the hearts of his neighbors by speaking, through the singular fortitude of love, he might always keep before himself the visage of his Creator.

5011: Therefore, Samuel is carried with the three calves to the House of the Lord, as each one making some progress in good proposes that from his work of preaching this might prove beneficial to his neighbors, so that from the secrecy of quiet each might inhere in the intimate vision of the Creator.

And with three bushels of flour v. 24.

Because the spirit of one untrained might never be able beforehand to manifest good in this way.

5012: **There needs to be desires to learn the Science of the Saints in order to convert sinners, to watch over the just, and to advance in union with God.**

When out of the flour breads are made, the preparation of perfection is perfected. Since the child is offered not with the bread, but with the bushels of flour, there is shown good intention of proposing doctrine, and not to exhibit as yet the doctrine itself.

5013: *She brought him ... with three bushels of flour* v. 24, because when **we propose to preach, we prepare the word of knowledge for the conversion of sinners, the just for the state of perseverance, and ourselves for sublime contemplation.** Or certainly, one bushel is, as we have said, for the conversion of the sinner; another bushel is for the discipline of the espoused; and the third bushel stands for the excellent purity of the continent.

Bushels: v. 24: for the measure of discretion. Rm 12:3: Not to be more wise than it behooves to be wise, but to be wise unto sobriety.

5014: **The Church corroborates the intention of the chosen with the most ardent and the most pure charity, withdrawing him from the world, so that he might not operate out of vanity.**

And a bottle of wine v. 24.

Because as has already been said, the order of preachers is not had out of any lightness of vanity, but from the virtue of a good intention. *The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit Who is given to us, Rm 5:5*, this is the wine.

5015: *Of wine: 1 K 1:24*, because this occupies the mind, and withdraws one from earthly affections, so that it would not maintain any intention for this world, as it enflames to yearn only for the celestial goods.

A bottle. ibi.

So that there might be designated not so much the perfection of this virtue, but rather its beginning, the word *bottle* is used, and not [little cup] *wine glass*. Indeed, we place into the *bottle* what we eventually we will drink out of the *wine glass*. This is said rather of the one who has tasted of the perfection of sublime charity. Ps 22:5: *You have anointed my head with oil; and my chalice which inebriates me, how goodly it is.* In the *bottle*, therefore, Samuel is offered, because when each of the Elect is prepared for the ministry of evangelical preaching, he propounds the good of this preaching, not out of any vain ambition of this world, but to be committed out of charity alone.

5016: **The Church tries to inspire into the Elect proposals of fortitude to imitate the Servants of God, by expounding on their examples with placing the candidate their conversation; with desires to be indoctrinated in the Word of God, in order to help the neighbors and to be united himself to God with prayer; the intention of pure charity, in order to please God, and not out of vanity.**

5017: *And after she had weaned him, she carried him with her, with three calves v. 24, for the proposal of fortitude, and with three bushels of flour, ibi, for the doctrine of the word, and a bottle of wine, ibi, for the intention of charity.*

And she brought him to the House of the Lord in Shiloh. v. 24.

5018: With these words, the beginnings of those virtues which are to be perfected are brought forward: for where the House of God is, this is the Holy Church, and it is in Shiloh, where the Ark of God is, that is, the tradition of the old law. The Church contains the Ark of God, when it manifests the carnal letter to the outside, which it then retains in her own secrets the enclosed spiritual knowledge.

The House of the Lord is situated in Shiloh v. 24. That is, the Holy Church, is known in the Sacrament of the Scriptures, as being established in its proper place.

5019: *And she brought him to the House of the Lord in Shiloh, v. 24:* because outside of the Holy Church, there is no place where the merits of virtues might grow, and come to the culmination of perfection.

All this is verified in the Catholic Church, i.e., close to the Catholic examples, authors, masters, books, methods. Some want to teach perfection also outside of the Church, as by the schismatics, by the Jansenist heretics: but, it is necessary to stay very far from them.

5020: *Now the child was as yet very young. v. 24.*

He ought not to be carried by any other. For not after the experience of malice does one come to the remission of malice, but he chooses virtue from the very cradle. He has no discourse with those obnoxious persons committed to iniquity, nor does it have communion with those assemblies full of impiety; but immediately from earliest youth, he came from the breast of his mother to the spiritual breast. And as the tree by perpetual irrigation grows to a great height, so also this child **irrigated assiduously by the doctrine of the divine eloquence**⁶⁸, comes to the very pinnacle of virtue. *Blessed is the man who walks not... etc.... which shall bring forth its fruit in due season. Ps 1:1 & 3.*

5021: **Observe the care of the Church so that the innocence of candidates for the priesthood might be conserved, by initiating the young men and separating them from bad companions. Not, therefore, to withdraw them from the service of God,**

⁶⁸ Fr. Bertoni offers this central challenge to those who would follow him: ...CF ## 49, 50, 72, 125, 159, 163, etc. – the lack of it is an impediment – CF # 18.

but to protect their innocence, bringing them into union with God and separating them from bad influences. It is necessary to correspond to God's Providence, to the maternal care of the Church, with the simplicity of infants and without weakness; because Samuel, an infant, allowed himself to be led sweetly as a baby; not to cry at the departure of the mother, as a baby might. He also walks, although with assistance; he does not want to be carried, dead weight: *she carried him* [brought him along] *with her* v. 24.

5022: The Providence of God which accompanies with grace the measures taken by the Church, is so that the candidate might make of himself an offering to God⁶⁹, and with great joy. v. 25: *And they immolated a calf, and offered the child to Eli.*

Above it had been stated in the singular: *And after she had weaned him*, v. 24. Now it is stated about both Elcana and Anna together: *And they immolated a calf, and offered the child to Eli.*

5023: Then the calf is immolated as Samuel is brought forward and offered. If, therefore, Elcana was also there, and since the child was brought forward and offered, why does it not say: *they carried him forward*? –To offer milk and to led forward pertains to the Church; **to offer to immolate oneself pertains to Christ**. The Church insists on the word of preaching: The Church insists on the word of preaching; but those to whom the doctrine reaches, she never administers the virtue of fulfilling one's duty. She indeed manifests the letter of the Scriptures by speaking; but, the good itself can be given to those seeking it only with the Spouse.

5024: The calf is immolated when divine grace is infused into the heart of the one seeking to do good, so that he might ponder those goods **by being destined towards them**, by his effort of **good deeds toward which he is inclined** in a joyful manner. The reason is **the victim of a proposed good deed** is received by the omnipotent God through the oblation of a devout mind, provided that which the mind exhibits by vowing to Him, and the whole enterprise is offered out of joy. Concerning this immolation of the calf, the texts Mt 7:11 and Lk 11:13 speak: *If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children: how much more will your Father who is in heaven, give good things to them that ask Him?*

⁶⁹ St. Paul makes a liturgical oblation of the Christian life of Baptism {cf. Rm 12:1, ff. : obsequium - a word that is found often in both the Jesuit Constitutions and the *Original Constitutions* of Fr. Bertoni] - St. Thomas Aquinas then thinks of Religious consecration as a holocaust.

5025: 2 Co 9:6, ff.: ... *He who sows in blessings, shall also reap blessings. Everyone as he has determined in his heart, not with sadness, or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver*⁷⁰.

To determine in one's heart, or to propose out of deliberation, is to bring the calf forward for immolation. This is not done out of sadness, or out of necessity: *for God loves a cheerful giver* 2 Co 9:7, teaches that the calf is brought forward that it be so immolated. The calves are brought forward when we prepare strong deeds well proposed; the **calf is immolated** when **the deliberation of the good proposal is handed over to God** in an **oblation** of great devotion.

5026: *And they immolated a calf, v. 25*, the husband and the wife; because joy is shown to the faithful subjects by the voice of the preacher, and divine grace is propagated into their hearts. Likewise, **they immolate the calf when in the heart of the subjects proficient in good the divine benefits convene with human preaching.**

5027: *A calf. ibi.* Indeed three calves were brought forward, because since we propose to bring help for those who have lapsed and for ourselves, the task of guarding, while with one good intention we show this. Indeed three are manifested with regard to the task, but one in the duty of oblation. They are three because toward ourselves and toward our neighbors they are exhibited in different manner and in different times. But one are the calf, because these are proposed at the same time, and given over to God by a like devotion of oblation to God, and one in these is the joy, and no other is had.

5028: *And they offered the boy to Eli v. 25.*

Eli, ibi, or the persons of the old **doctors** and **doctrine**.

And they offered the child to Eli. ibi.

Whoever strives to be of help to others by preaching, should not only bring out the new realities, but also the old Mt 13:52⁷¹: *Therefore, every scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like to a man who is a householder, who brings forth out of his treasure new things and old.*

5029: Therefore, **Samuel is then offered, as the mind of a subject well proficient is educated in the knowledge of the Law and the Prophets**, that he might read in the

⁷⁰ This final phrase is from Si 35:11.

⁷¹ In Fr. Benaglia's transcription, it seems that Fr. Bertoni erroneously wrote here Mt 53:12 – the correct verse is 52:

books of the ancients the killing letter, but also might understand according to the vivifying spirit. And so he so accepts what sounds aloud, so that beyond the sound of the elements, he might recognize the spirit that resounds within: and would possess the new realities in faith, but as often as would be necessary, he would adduce the ancient Scriptures in confirmation of the New Testament. Then he would be able to defend the new realities, when he recognizes their reason from the ancient realities.

5030: Therefore, aptly⁷² it is asserted that Samuel was offered to Eli, because **he only sufficiently preaches the new who is not ignorant of that reason by which the old are to be understood.** And because we are not able to understand these same old Scriptures without a preceptor, and a doctor makes no headway in us by **preaching if that which is said outwardly is not infused into our hearts by divine grace**, for the mother does not bring the child alone, but with her husband.

5031: We have thus considered the Providence of God Who supports with His grace the provident measures of the Church, opening the intellect to the intelligence of the Sacred Scriptures. We have to correspond to this by offering ourselves promptly to the work and with applying ourselves to the study of the Sacred Scriptures⁷³. Providence provides the support and strengthens hearts to the faithful and ready execution of their proposals with those helps inherent in His grace, and by opening their intellect to the understanding of the Sacred Scriptures, with the most vivid lights of His wisdom.

5032: The profit of the son is the fruit and the reward of tribulations and the prayers of the Church. St. Catherine of Siena [see her Letters] said to her Confessor, Frater Raymond of Capua, how the Church loves her ecclesiastic sons, during the time of persecution, with regard to God. We have to correspond by growing in virtue and by giving ourselves without reserve to God⁷⁴. The effect of the divine guardianship is the giving of oneself totally to please God, because the authentic Apostle⁷⁵ *does not seek the things that are their own, but the things that are Jesus Christ's. Ph 2:21; and the increase in virtue and perfection. The path of the just as a shining light...goes forward and increases even to perfect day. Pr 4:18.*

⁷² A possible textual error - the critical Latin here has apte – and not aperte as appears in Fr. Bertoni's text.

⁷³ The late Stigmatine Father Joseph Furlani has offered a beautiful study on St. Gaspar Bertoni and the Scriptures.

⁷⁴ Fr. Bertoni had a very broad usage of the word *obsequium* – to God, to the Church, to Mary and Joseph, to our neighbors – much in the sense of Rm 12:1, ff.: make of one's life an oblation to the mercy of God.

⁷⁵ Fr. Bertoni legislates that the purpose of the Stigmatines is to be *Apostolic Missionaries...* [cf. CF # 1].

5033: v. 26: *And Anna said: I beseech you, my lord, as your soul lives, my lord: I am that woman who stood before you praying to the Lord. v. 27: For this child I did pray, and the Lord granted me my petition, which I asked of Him. v. 28: Therefore, I have lent him to the Lord all the days of his life, he shall be lent to the Lord. And they adored the Lord there. And Anna prayed and said:*

And Anna said: I beseech you, my lord, as your soul lives, my lord: I am that woman who stood before you here praying to the Lord. v. 26.

5034: Anna stood before Eli, because the Holy Church did not collapse under any persecutions. It was as though the glorying Church said to the leaders of the Synagogue: So, I was able to win over the whole world through the Gospel of God, because those adverse obstacles that you placed before me, I tolerated undaunted; for if I had allowed myself to be overwhelmed by the penalties of old, I would never have generated a new shoot of so many nations for the Redeemer.

I beseech you, my lord. v. 26. Because she speaks out of humility, in her beseeching she calms him 'lord.'

As your soul lives, ibi. Because she desired to give to him the pledge of eternal life in the faith of the Redeemer

As our soul lives, my lord. ibi. Because for this she had chosen to minister the word to him, that he might believe, and that by believing, he might live

5035: *For this child I did pray, and the Lord has granted me my petition, which I asked of Him.*

Because she was glorified in her standing before him, she was able to bring forth great truths about herself; because she related these great realities humbly, and not in a proud manner, and she referred all of these to the praise of the omnipotent God.

5036: *And the Lord has granted me my petition, which I asked of Him. v. 27.*

For this, divine grace provided children for the holy Church, that He might instruct them in the doctrine of truth, embellish them with good morals, and watch over them in pious custody, He leads them to decline perfectly from evil, to prepare a sufficient abundance of goods for the eternal homeland. All of these pertain to the pastoral ministry: but the Chosen Preacher remains diffident in being able to fulfill all this by his own strength. So, therefore, neither by his own strength can anyone bring to light others through the Gospel, nor could anyone keep any that he generates, and so rightly through Anna, as a type of the Church, she now says:

5037: *For this child did I pray, and the Lord has granted to me my petition, which I asked of Him. v. 27. Therefore I also have 'lent' him to the Lord all the days of his life, he shall be 'lent' to the Lord. v. 28.*

For, as she prayed that she would be able to give birth to a child, and that those whom by praying she obtains, that they might remain in holy conversation, and so, by prayers, she lends these to the omnipotent God.

All the days of his life v. 28. Because from these prayers she never desists, for him, and for those whom she generates, for all the time of this life will be supplicate.

5038: *All the days of his life, he shall be 'lent' to the Lord. v. 28.*

There are indicated here the times of this present life, in these days we so much the more need the more valid helps of the divine protection, the more we are attacked by the more serious attempts of the malign spirits.

Therefore, I have also lent him to the Lord all the days of his life, he shall be lent to the Lord. v. 28.

In this life, her children are accommodated by Mother Church. Whatever we lend, we expect this to be returned to us in the faith of the borrower.

5039: *All the days of his life, v. 28.* These days are the clarity of the spiritual virtues.

For which he shall be lent to the Lord, ibi.

Because to him the Holy Church offers the Elect in the clarity of virtues, so that later the omnipotent God might exhibit these to him for the increase of his eternal rejoicing in the splendor of the rewards. - He is 'loaned' for all the days of his life, or 'being loaned' is asserted, so that nothing be lacking to him of what is to be had in the spiritual conversation, which the Chosen Preacher could not receive darkness from any source.

5040: *And they adored the Lord there, v. 28.*

And we members of the Holy Church, since through the Scriptures of the Old Testament submit to the veneration and the precept of the Creator, there indeed we do adore the Lord, because we hold the faith of the ancient Fathers, and we exercise that faith out of love in good works⁷⁶.

⁷⁶ Here Fr. Bertoni abandons the text of St. Gregory the Great, and offers several pages in his own Italian to introduce Meditation 8, [commenting on 1 K 2:1, ff.], where the St. Gregory will return to his typical

5041: COLLOQUY. Lord, bring it about that by corresponding to Your grace and guidance of the Church, we, too, might learn the proposals of great and robust virtues, in order to help others by preaching, and ourselves by praying. And may we gain the desires of the knowledge of God to preach well and to pray well. And may we always have the most pure intention of charity, and be totally bereft of every ambition of this world; and let us seek the virtues and the knowledge in Your Catholic Church. Grant that we might come to the prompt and devout execution of Your projects, and in the exercise of the virtues, and in our being indoctrinated in the divine Scriptures; and that we thus give ourselves without reserve to you⁷⁷, and that through Your grace we might increase in virtue and knowledge⁷⁸.

O Lord, this morning we have gleaned this flour from the seed of the divine words by meditating, and almost by threshing. We offer this flour to You, so that You might grant us bread, and our daily bread, so that we might live to carry out Your Will⁷⁹.

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commentary. Up to this point, the great Pontiff had commented on 1 K 1:1- 28, making use of the typical sense. Gregory continues in his own words: *Up to this point [1270 lines], we have commented on the beginning of this sacred history [1 K 1:1-28] on the level of typology. Now, we will draw from this same historical accounting a teaching which is applicable to us in the moral sense.* [According to the Saint's style, he will return to discuss these same verses [1 K 1:1-28], but now in the moral sense and this runs from lines 1273-1886, which Fr. Bertoni omits entirely. Fr. Bertoni will take up Meditation # 8 with 1 K 1:28, and into 1 K 2:1, ff., and the *Magnificat* of Anna – Fr. Bertoni's commentary picks up with Gregory's Line 1887, on p. 102 of the Critical Edition, about 15 pages ahead. The first sign of this is for Fr. Bertoni may be found in MssB 5055].

⁷⁷ A program espoused and lived by His Holiness, Pope John Paul II: *Totus Tuus!*

⁷⁸ This ideal is presented by Fr. Bertoni in his Part IV, *Original Constitutions: De Progressu Suiipsius* [CF ## 47-48] – *De Progressu in Ecclesiasticis Doctrinis* [CF ## 48-50]

⁷⁹ This is Fr. Bertoni's central ideal: *in obsequium*: Abandonment to God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit - Availability to the Church - this is the Apostolic Mission, conferred by Jesus Christ Himself, as a share in His Personal Mission from the Father, in showing His Sorrowful Stigmata retained in His Glorious Body [cf. Jn 20] – and as exemplified by the Patrons of the Stigmatines, the Holy Spouses, Mary and Joseph.



POPE GREGORY I [LATIN: *GREGORIUS I*], COMMONLY KNOWN AS **ST. GREGORY THE GREAT** [540 - † 604], WAS POPE FROM SEPTEMBER 3, 590 TO HIS DEATH IN 604.

HE WAS THE FIRST OF THE POPES TO COME FROM A MONASTIC BACKGROUND.

GREGORY IS A DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH AND ONE OF THE LATIN FATHERS.

SOME OF HIS WRITINGS ARE:

- COMMENTARY ON JOB
- BOOK OF PASTORAL RULE
- DIALOGUES
- SERMONS
- COMMENTARY ON 1 KINGS
- PAPAL LETTERS [FROM WHICH 854 HAVE SURVIVED]

THE CURRENT GENERAL ROMAN CALENDAR CELEBRATES GREGORY ON SEPTEMBER 3, DATE OF HIS EPISCOPAL CONSECRATION IN 590 [IT WAS MOVED FROM MARCH 12, THE DAY OF HIS DEATH IN 604, BECAUSE THIS DAY ALWAYS FALLS ON LENT, DURING WHICH THERE ARE NO OBLIGATORY MEMORIALS].



ST. GASPAR BERTONI [OCT. 9, 1777 – JUNE 12, 1853] WAS A PRIEST WHO LIVED ALL HIS LIFE IN VERONA, DURING THE WAR BETWEEN AUSTRIANS AND THE FRENCH TROOPS, THAT OCCUPIED THE CITY AND TRANSFORMED IT IN A PLACE OF EXCESSES AND LIBERTINISM. FR. BERTONI DEDICATED HIMSELF TO HELP THE PEOPLE SO AFFECTED BY THAT ADVERSE CONDITIONS, ESPECIALLY TAKING CARE OF THE ABANDONED YOUTH, PREACHING PARISH MISSIONS AND, ASKED BY HIS BISHOP, RESCUING THE DIGNITY OF THE CLERGY, ALSO AFFECTED BY THAT UNHEALTHY ENVIRONMENT.

ON NOVEMBER 4, 1816, HE ENTERED WITH TWO COMPANIONS IN THE COMPLEX OF THE STIGMATA, THAT WAS ENTRUSTED TO HIM TO SERVE AS SCHOOL, BUT BECAME ALSO THE BIRTH PLACE OF THE STIGMATINE CONGREGATION, FOUNDED THAT DAY.

THE STIGMATINE CONGREGATION IS NOWADAYS PRESENT IN 14 COUNTRIES.