

St. GASPAR BERTONI



Saint Paul Parish in Verona, Italy, where Fr. Bertoni was baptized and began his ministry as a young seminarian. In this parish he preached most of the sermons as young Priest (1800 – 1808].

Early Spiritual Writings

PARISH SERMONS

Translation into English
Rev. Joseph Henchey, CSS
1972

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St. GASPAR BERTONI



At Saint Paul Church, in Verona, at the Baptistry, a plaque in homage to the 200 years of St. Gaspar Bertoni's birthday, dated of October 9, 1977. It reads that 'Blessed Gaspar Bertoni was baptized there in October 10, 1777' and he is the 'Pearl of the Clergy of Verona, Apostle of the Youth and Founder of the Stigmatines'.

Early Spiritual Writings

PARISH SERMONS

1800

[Manoscritti Bertoni ## 371 – 405]

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1800371

SERMON 1

Humility

1800. Verona, in the Church of St. Paul, Campo Marzio, June 8, the 11th of the Sunday's dedicated to St. Aloysius. This lasted about one half hour.

Blessed are the poor in spirit [Mt 5:3]. This is the beginning of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. How fortunate I am, as it is my task to shed some light on these very words, *Blessed are the poor in spirit*. In this sense, I, too, can say: *Learn of me* [Mt 11:29] - in much the same sense that the Apostle was able to say: *Wherefore, I beseech you, be followers of me, as I also am of Christ*. [1 Co 4:16]. I know all too well the heavenly beauty of this virtue of which I speak now. Whenever a living example is seen of it, even without any words at all, this becomes most eloquent to make itself loved. However, it is my challenge to find the proper expressions in order to be able to direct your thoughts. So, I ask you, do not take my example, gentle audience - do not be hindered by my most proud nothingness, because I am really a sinner. I ask you this so that I might not destroy with my deeds whatever my preaching might build up. Direct your thoughts rather to that holy and very innocent young man [St. Aloysius], who was all that he became, in the final analysis, because of his great humility.

372: See how beautiful humility is. It is something like a stunning garment - and I do not know if I should say that it embellishes, or covers. It caresses, something like a gentle breeze on that visage and crowns it. If itself, humility draws more attention than do tasteless garlands that strive to draw the glances of an admiring world. In modesty, humility is as a veil over one's eyes that are never raised to look down on the defects of others, or that scan incessantly seeking to notice faults that really are not there. Humility colors one's face in embarrassment, even at the suspicion of being praised. This virtue imposes a rigid silence regarding the internal qualities that one indeed may possess. Rather, humility is not afraid to make known one's own unnoticed faults, and personal confusion, to lower oneself in the esteem of others. This humble self-deprecation is really sweeter than honey to the taste, and is more melodious than the most harmonious music to the ears of God and of other human beings. Humility shakes loose from one's hand those sturdy canes offered by nature, and rivets one's attention of the Crucified. This enables one to gaze upon the Cross and to imitate this in one's own life. Humility guides one's steps to prefer to be lowly in the house of one's Lord, rather than to be seated and revered in the tabernacles of sinners [cf. Ps 83:11].

373: This is humility, and how beautiful it is! My listeners, direct your attention to me, while I speak of this to you. Be content, I beg you, to extend to me your courteous attention. I really hope that I am able to offer even additional reasons to embrace this virtue which is both beautiful and lovable. If only I am able to show you

how necessary this virtue is, how useful and how easy it is to acquire it. this is the challenge that is before me now.

374: DEFINITION: Humility lies between two opposed vices

- pride, which raises a person beyond the confines of reason;
- and disordered abjection, which crushes one excessively.

Humility, through the proper acceptance of oneself, moderates one's spirit that it does not raise one's self, thus entering into the sphere of pride. The virtue tends rather to lowering oneself, but keep one always sustained by right reason, and thus does not fall into excessive abjection.

375: Its NECESSITY: the first reason is simply because Christ has recommended it. Humility is so necessary as Christ has said: *...Unless you... become as little children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven..* [Mt 18: 3, 4].

In these words:.. *unless you become as little children...*, St. Bernard claims humility is his theme. There is a different tone than what is found in this other passage:.. *Whoever can take this...* [Mt 19:12], where the theme is virginity. Bernard, therefore, with other Fathers of the Church, concludes that therefore *the latter is a matter of counsel, whereas the former is required*¹. Virginity is a matter of counsel, while humility is a matter of precept. Where are you now, you who make think that humility is just a counsel that is useful for perfection, and not a precept necessary for salvation? How can you think, then, that humility is not commanded to you, when it is a commandment for everyone to be saved, and that without humility, without 'becoming as little children'. you cannot be saved?

376: Christ teaches this.

Please listen, then, also you, since the lessons of your Master are necessary for you: *Learn of Me*, He says [Mt 11:29], *because I am meek and humble of heart*. Learn from Me, being by nature equal to God, I emptied myself [Ph 2:6, ff.], taking the form of a servant. I was not only humble by becoming like a child, but I was born a baby, whimpering as I was stretched out on the hay. For thirty years I was subjected to those I had created. I did this to make Myself obedient and subject to the Father, even unto death, death on the Cross. He was reputed with the wicked, a sinner, acquainted with infirmity [Is 53:12]. I have given you an example of humility, that as I have done to you, so you do also [Jn 13:15]. The servant is not greater than his master [Jn 15:20].

O, Christian! Should Christ be this humble, and you remain proud? The name Christian really should no longer be applied to you. And it would only be fitting that if you do not resolve immediately to embrace humility, that not only would you renounce the kingdom of heaven, which is the kingdom of the lowly - but, even further, you would have to change your title. Think on this a while, as I now turn my

¹St. Bernard, *Super Missus*, Sermo 1, 5

attention to those who love this virtue more than you do, and who are already actively pursuing it.

377: Furthermore, Humility is the foundation.

I can already see that they are already committed to building on stone and on a basis of very solid faith. They are putting up column and walls of unconquerable hope. They are constructing magnificent canopies of charity. They are adorning the building with most beautiful virtues. They are planting gardens where the most pure virginity, or most tender love invite the **Spouse** into the most refined delights. They invite Him to take His afternoon repose in the restful silences of the shady valleys.

What a beautiful building this is! How richly adorned! How inviting! But, have you entertained the idea that first you have to excavate from your hearts all the removable earth of pride, in order to render it more open for grace? Do you not realize that most capable architects can raise a building only on the solid base of humility, and that only thus can there be built such a charming estate only when it is on the firmer foundation?

378: O, if you have not laid a good foundation of humility, your building falls into a ruin” this is what St. Bernard predicts. O, if your lilies do not have roots of humility, they will wither, St. Gregory adds. And let us put aside all metaphors. The virtues themselves I will turn into your ruin, because as you notice them in yourselves, you will look down on others with utmost pride. And so while you will be thinking that your conversation reaches the heavens, you will still stand so much in need of an extraordinary grace of conversion. And, it is much easier that a manifest sinner be converted, whose very fall is humiliating, than the hidden and concealed sinner who goes around covered with the mantle of virtue.

And now I pass from showing the necessity of being humble, to making clear its usefulness, and first of all, in sinners.

379: ITS USEFULNESS: In Sinners

Listen, therefore, to the insights offered by [St. John] Chrysostom ². Pay attention to these, all of you, who think you are in the state of grace, and be careful that you do not fall. And give heed to them, all of you who have fallen, and take courage to get up again. Give me, he says two swift carriages; hitch up to them generous steeds. Put pride into one of them, together with all the virtues that there are. And then hitch humility up to the other carriage, even accompanied by all the vices. Lash out with the whip, urge on the chargers, so that they might set out on the course. You will see that the carriage with sin will always pass that of justice, not because of its own power, but due to that very special benefit brought by humility that is riding in it. The other carriage will lag far behind it, not so much because of the weakness of the virtue, but solely because of the excessive weight of pride.

²St. John Chrysostom, *De incomprehensibili Natura Dei* Hom, 5, 6, ff. t. I, 302, 1 E.

Would you like to see a proof of this? The Pharisee coupled justice with pride: *I am not,* says the proud man, *like the rest of men, extortioners, unjust... as is also this publican.* [Lk 18:11]. The Publican, on the other hand, brought all his failings to humility and cries out: *...O God, be merciful to me, a sinner...* [v. 13]. *I say to you, that this man went down into his house justified rather than the other..., the Pharisee who in his pride looked down on him...* [v. 14].

380: Should there be here within these walls some sinful soul, whom I have not upset either by the sense of discomfort for sin, or even with the burden of its chains: I would like to say to such a one - get up, you, too, into this carriage of humility to experience its advantages in the face of the Pharisee who might reject you. God does indeed listen to the supplications of the lowly ones. His word will extend to you a hand that you might climb in. God will know how to lift you up out of all the mud, to place you among the princes of His reign.

381: Usefulness of Humility Among the Just:

But, if humility, all mixed in with sin, can still run so well that it would pass by justice mixed in with pride, where would humility not arrive if it were joined to justice? It would reach the very throne of God, in the midst of the Angels.

St .Aloysius Gonzaga was able to achieve this. So it was that by gifts of intelligence and grace that there was no one who surpassed him - yet, very willingly did he subject himself to all others, even to the most lowly of the coadjutor brothers in his religious community. However, that Lord always exalts those who humble themselves - and raises them up not only over other human beings but even above the Angels. St. Aloysius was so exalted by that great gift of virginal purity, of which the mother and guardian is always humility. In like manner, the gardener, in order to bring the water to higher levels in his garden, first makes it run down and conceals it underground. O blessed descent in order then to ascend! How useful is this lowering of oneself in order then to be raised up! How necessary is humility to us, even all the more to our advantage! Where have you concealed until now your benefits, so successfully that we have not been able to recognize them? O, if only we had first known you, and loved you before now! It is true that now we have found you, but we will never again lose you. So, beloved listeners, search your hearts, and embrace this so lovable spouse, humility.

382: She is comparable to a fertile mother who brings you to birth and acquires for you, as noble children, all the gifts of God. Added to this are all the virtues, like very charming daughters, because the Lord gives grace to the lowly [Jas 4:6]. The virtues received educate you and sustain you, because the Author of all gifts, the Holy Spirit, comes to rest only within the heart of the humble. Thus, He sustains you and brings to perfection, because in weakness and in humility virtue is perfected [1 Co 12:9]. Finally, those who have been perfected [2 Co 12:9]. Finally, those who have been perfected, she crowns, because with this the kingdom of heaven is purchased. *Blessed are the poor in spirit.* [Mt 5:3], or, rather: the humble in spirit. Why are they 'blessed'? Because of them is the kingdom of heaven is composed.

Humility does not wait to crown them only in heaven, as though it did not also bring its own reward on earth. The reason is because if you will learn to be humble of heart, you will find peace and rest for the spirit. Thus, humility accomplishes in itself all those qualities praised by Solomon for the most lovable **spouse**: i.e., humility renders joyful the heart of the happy man who possesses her [Pr 31:10, ff.]

383: Its FACILITY: provided that one knows him/herself

My listeners, I have thought of three realities that could keep you far from humility:

The first one is that many might be of the opinion that they are not bound by any precise duty to practice it. However, here I have demonstrated from the beginning that humility is necessary for all.

The second is that some may look upon it as counter-productive, or at least, that it is of no value. To these, I have shown already that humility is still useful.

The third obstacle, finally, is that some might look upon it as full of difficulties that for all practical purposes are insuperable. Therefore, now I have to show that humility is indeed easy. After this proof, I hope that there is no other impediment that needs to be overcome in order to win over all your hearts.

384: So, will you say that humility is difficult? Should that be the case, time does not allow me very much space for the proof. However, here is one means that could render it most easy. And what would this be? Simply, know yourselves. The fact is that the whole difficulty that one might encounter in humbling him/herself springs from precisely this that one lacks such self-knowledge. Some finally esteem themselves more than they really merit, believing themselves superior to all. However, once a person comes to know him/herself, that each is made up of dust and ashes- that no one has anything that does not derive from God - how could it not be easy for such an individual to render the tribute of obsequious reverence of all praise, due to God? The realization that one is indeed a sinner, worthy of hell- that no one has assurance of pardon - that each is capable of the worst iniquities, that there is no certainty of perseverance: how could anyone with like convictions feel any repugnance in his heart, in becoming more unassuming like other human beings?

385: It really is easy to know ourselves:

It is quite clear to us now, as you can see, that once a person comes to self-knowledge, it becomes even easier to be humbled. Even further than this, we would add that it is impossible to be aware of one's own miseries and not to be humbled. The whole difficulty, though, comes in knowing oneself well. This seems clear to me. So, it seems that you would wish to bring me to the point of proving actually how easy it is to know oneself. Nothing sounds more pleasant to my ears, nor would make me any happier, because I have already demonstrated this to you. Therefore, I

conclude - as you have very well come to the conclusion yourselves, that humility truly is quite simple. Play close attention to me.

386: For anything to be able to be considered easy to know, it is necessary that it be close at hand. Even this, though, would not be enough if one does not have the ability of sensation. Neither is proximity alone enough when the object does not come into one's range, even to the least observant. Now, what is closer to us than ourselves, in order that it might be known? *Your humiliation shall be in your midst.* [Mi 6:14]. To be able to experience our own nothingness, what could be more sensible to us? This would prove to be true even to the least observant - the realization of one's own sins, defects, temptations are obvious to all. Even though we might chose not to think of our sins, but conscience itself constantly brings them before us. The defects that we so often commit are noticeable to all those with whom we may come in contact. The temptations that come to us are so bothersome that they render even our quiet times disturbing. Therefore, it s very easy to know ourselves. So, the practice of humility is easy.

387: PERORATION

Now, if all this is true, what excuse can we give to hide behind? Should we not sincerely resolve right away to practice it - for, at this very moment it entices us on the one hand, with its extraordinary advantages - and, on the other hand, obliges us by its necessity? Does it still seem to us, despite all, to be difficult? does it appear impossible, even in the light of all this? Is it that we just do not know how to exercise it? Well, all right, let us listen to the Prophet as he shakes us up with his cry: *O, sons of men, how long will you be dull of heart?* [Ps 4:3] Human hearts have been created to dominate over this earth [Gn 1:28]. Since you have been born for heaven, how is it that you condemn yourselves to not look at anything else, and not to love anything other than the mud? Do you not, therefore, know how to debase yourselves, and yet do not know how to humble yourselves? Is it not true that you know how to humiliate yourselves in the quest of truly corrupt appetites, that you respond to the least hint of passion? Then, why will you not humble yourselves following the examples of Christ, in response to God's command? You do know how to humiliate yourselves in falling - why can you not humble yourselves to get back up again? You do know how to lower yourselves to give way to the shame of nature - why can you not humble yourselves to be adorned with supernatural gifts, embellishment dear to all heaven? You do know how to degrade yourselves under the very feet of beasts of burden -then, why will you not learn to become humble as other human beings, with whom you share the same nature?

388: Let this suffice, then, as I realize that I have gone too far. I see that some are embarrassed on hearing the degradations of others among my devout listeners, even though in themselves they recognize no such conduct. The deformity that I~ have just placed before your reflection is considerable. Alas! just allow me, most kind listeners, to alleviate the most bitter anguish of my spirit by crying out: what blindness! What pride! What stupidity! To you, to you - our most holy protector, St. Aloysius, is reserved the triumph of these hearts, that are so weighed down and full

of vanity. No, I am not amazed, either at their, or at my own guilt. I know all too well that while our land is suited to receive genuine humility, it is not capable of producing it. Humility is a perfect gift that descends from heaven. And so, you can have it. And from that blessed soil where this heavenly plant takes root, you can transplant it into our hearts by your own hand. You can water it, then, with your own example, you can hedge it in with your protection, so that it might grow and be nurtured. We, for our part, can smell the blossoms of sweet joyfulness of peace even on this earth - that we might one day enjoy that fruits of eternal life with you in heaven.

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Fathers and Doctors of the Church

St. Bernard, <i>Super Missus</i> , Serm. 1, 5	# 375
St. John Chrysostom, <i>De incomprehensibili Natura Dei</i> , Hom. 5, 6, ff. t. I, 302, 1 E	# 379

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389:**SERMON 2****Fear of God****1800: Verona in the Church of St. Paul, Campo Marzio. November 23rd: the Last Sunday after Pentecost. - It lasted 28 minutes.**

In speaking of the holy fear of God it is not all that certain that this reality is one praised by you as most worthy of glory, recommended as most useful, or reputed finally as the most necessary. "So-and-so is a God-fearing man" - may often be on your lips when you wish to praise someone. This title is held in honor by all, much like a summary of a thousand accolades. Even the most malicious tongues respect such a person with reverent silence. *With fear and trembling give glory to God*, you say with Tobias [13:6] to your children. Just keep in mind that you could not leave behind for them any other testament of greater use for them in their inheritance. You do not entrust your earthly goods, not to speak of your off-spring, their endowment in the hands of anyone unless you are at least sure that this person does indeed fear God. Is it not true that you can say most frankly: Where there is fear of God everything is safe? On the contrary, even where there is some suspicion that this is lacking, then you keep a close watch on your possessions, you remain most jealous of your own honor, and take very good care of your lives. And why is this? And you respond that without the fear of God, there is no justice, no faith, no virtue, there simply is no good whatever.

390: PROPOSITION: Do you speak in this way? Are these your inner-most thoughts? It seems quite evident to me that I can see how fitting is the theme of my talk that the Spirit of the Church has placed before me and which I follow today. In presenting to you the Gospel of today, we are given for our reflection the terrible signs of the Last Judgment, almost as though the Gospel itself were crying out to us: *Fear the Lord, and give him honor, because the hour of His judgment is some.* [Apoc 14:7].

Now I yearn for that eloquence which certainly is lacking to me to persuade you that you should engage every means, all art, every industry in order to introduce, radiate and maintain in your hearts the holy fear of God. I can see that you are already endowed with a most just estimation of its glory, its advantages and its necessity.

DIVISION: It suffices for me to show you that this fear of God is in His own words, such as you correctly think it to be: glorious, useful, necessary. It is certain that as the esteem for it increases in you, then in equal manner the commitment to acquire it will intensify as well.

391: DEFINITION ³: I am speaking of that fear through which a person is converted to God, or is the more closely bound to Him. So, there are two ways in which an individual could fear God: by fearing a most just punishment, either temporal or eternal, with which God can punish our sins; or, by fearing the sin itself by which we can become separated from Him.

If through the fear of the penalty, we have recourse to the mercy of God, being sorry for our sin, or abstain from sin, this is servile fear. Such fear is good...⁴

Such fear is good.

If through the fear of sinning, we turn to God, or become more closely united to Him, such fear is filial, and this is properly the Gift of the Holy Spirit. For your instruction, these distinctions suffice. From now on, I will speak of these today, including both aspects. To begin with, I say that the fear of God is glorious, in the words of God Himself.

392: 1. The divine claim that the Fear of God is glorious:

Who would have any doubt concerning this? *The fear of the Lord is honor.* [Si 1:11] - this is how the Scriptures speak. Other virtues will indeed be so honored and worthy of some glory, by which human beings are rendered useful in peace, or strong in war. Yes, it is true, the great people, the judge, the powerful, are held in honor. However, the Holy Spirit goes on to say [Si 10:27]: *... there is none greater than he that fears the Lord...* As a result, the fear of God is not only glorious, but I would also claim that it is almost one and the same reality as glory. *The fear of God is honor.* [Si 1:11]. In fact, the Psalmist assigns one and the same dwelling for the fear of God and for glory. *Glory,* he says [Ps 111: 1 & 3] *shall be in his house,* and of whom? - of “the man who fears the Lord.”

393: Do not deceive yourselves, then, any more by seeking this glory in the palaces of rich princes of this world. That which you see glittering in their vestibules, or sitting majestically on their thrones, is not authentic glory. This is all a vain facsimile, a false and veneered statue, in imitation of the real thing. These baubles have been placed there by the princes that they might fatuously emulate genuine glory, excessively loved by them, but which they do not merit. And you will therefore see at a clash of bad luck, with a breath of envy fall upon that tall statue - or, at least, the drying up of those appearances and the blackening at the same time of their bones along with their images on their tombs. *He made some of them to wither away ... and has made the memory of them to cease from the earth...* [Si 10:20]. But, this is not the direction to take: authentic glory does not look down on the poverty of one's home, or the simplicity of its inhabitants; it goes equally toward the one who is the center of applause and toward the one who seems dishonored. Yes! the authentic

³St. Thomas, II-II, q. 19, a. 1.

⁴The words of the Tridentine Canon. Sess. 6, De Justific., Can 8 - Denz 818.

glory of the wealthy of those held in honor, as well as of the poor, is the fear of God [Si 10:25]. *The fear of God is honor.* [Si 1:11]

394: But, let us come now to facts, that are usually more evident than arguments. In the broad abundance of these facts which the Scriptures present to me, I leave aside all else to lead you into the most significant theater. In this, no less than the whole world is the spectator, and is applauding. I bring you there to ponder a most sublime glory, resulting from such praise of which God Himself is both judge and authority. You may be curious to know just who it is and what kind of heroic virtue could ever merit such praise. ‘Lift up your eyes to the mountain’ - Abraham is sacrificing his only son on it. He is the hero, and his is the action that merits such glory. Do you wish to see how much glory it is that God ascribes to him? *And in your seed, says God [Gn 22:18], shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.*

395: What virtue would merit such an encomium? Faith, some might say. But, just a minute: God Himself has assigned another accolade to this: *Abram believed God and it was reputed to him unto justice.* [Gn 15:6; Rm 4:22]. Other responses might be: obedience, fortitude. But, the answer is still: No. Just listen to God Himself to which virtue there is to be given the merit of this glory. Abraham put forth his hand and took the sword, to sacrifice his son. And then God immediately intervened: *...now I know that you fear God...* This is the root of such merit: *... you have not spared your only begotten son for my sake...* This is the proof of his fear of God. Because you have done this is because you have proven your great fear, and this is because you fear God: *...And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed...* [Gn 22:12-18]. This is the glory, the root and merit of which is the fear of God. O supreme glory of the fear of God! O fear of God, how glorious you are, as God Himself has indeed made clear! How can human beings ever praise you enough?

396: My listeners, allow me some time for a heart to heart talk. My brother, you entertain that girl friend, that relationship. You maintain those flirtations which indeed may not be immoral, and you live in a certain style. I know this: these are trappings that are dear to you, and perhaps the uppermost reality in your heart. But, climb up this mountain and there sacrifice these attachments, this central affection. Yes, in the sight of all, give some proof of the merit. And He will proclaim before heaven and earth from which the sweet echo will arise as it is repeated: *... now I know that you fear God...* [Gn 22:12]. What glory will be held in store for you! I do admit that this undertaking is arduous, because only with real difficulty can one detach the human will from an affection that consumes it. It is really difficult to undertake conversion. But, fear God and all will become easy and sweet. Yes, I can prove this. It will be so good for me to see you reach this glory with its splendor. This will more than cover all the shame with which your vices have stained you. In giving up this more pleasing terrain, I will show to you alone, or to sinners, that the Fear of God is useful.

397: Its USEFULNESS: In God's own words to sinners, because it renders conversion easy.

You see, then, based on the faith of the Scriptures, how this renders conversion easy, sweet and prompt, by gradually sharpening the will.

This is the first step: through the medium of a most moving apprehension that is aroused in the heart of the sinner, of the supreme evils that surround him in this life, and even more terrifying for the life hereafter, one is inspired to enter into oneself. A person begins to think over his/her own shallow and distracted thought and to reflect on the unfortunate state of life into which one has fallen: ... *he that fears God will turn to his own heart...* [Si 21:7]. Weeping bitterly over these defects with their accompanying terror, and seeing flame up brightly the single unfortunate source of such wrong being one's own sin, very soon the individual is reduced to indicate an abhorrence for it all: ... *The fear of God hate evil...* [Pr 8:13].

In this state, one begins to become detached and to withdraw his/her affection, and this leads the person to change direction from the sinful path: ... *by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil...* [Pr 16:6]. However, it seems that very violent temptations remain and do not consent to this withdrawing of one's affections. The passions that have been denied are aroused, and do not seem repulsed. Do not entertain any doubts, for: ...*No evil shall happen to him that fears the Lord, but in temptation God will keep him and deliver him from evils...* [Si 33:1].

398: Fear of the Lord is thus victorious over temptations and puts sin to flight [Si 1:27]. Sinners, in fact, hear in their hearts, after a few victories, something like a voice from heaven that says to them: ... *You that fear the Lord, hope in Him, and mercy shall come to you for your delight...* [Si 2:9]... *They that fear the Lord, will prepare their hearts, and in his sight will sanctify their souls...* [Si 2:20]. Then they will hear deep within themselves the voice of a thousand Angels in festival, chanting their conversion: ...*salvation shall be to them that fear Your name...* [Mi 6:9].

And even more than this, in their hearts they will have proof positive with a thousand consolations of that mercy that reaches out from generation to generation to those who fear the Lord [Lk 1:50]. Does it seem to you now, o sinners, that the fear of the Lord is useful? What do you men, just useful?

399: Its NECESSITY, in God's own words, for sinners

I should really have said that it is necessary: ... *For he that is without fear, cannot be justified...* [Si 1:28]. Therefore, just as justification and the expulsion of sin are necessary for salvation, so, too, the fear of God is necessary. Without it, sin cannot be driven away, nor is the soul justified. And you still do not make the resolution to fear God? Are you, therefore, so little moved toward salvation? I will return to you in a few minutes: in the meantime, allow me a word also to the just who are listening to me here and who may today be unhappy with me. I will be with you, all you who are just, after a brief rest.

400: To the Just

Does this, therefore, mean that for you who are just that the fear of God will not be necessary? Unless *you hold yourself diligently in the fear of the Lord, your house shall be quickly overthrown* [Si 27:4]. Thus speaks the Holy Spirit. It is so - your spiritual edifice will fall down, that which you have painfully built up with such real effort at fasting and mortification, only after such a long exercise of the most arduous virtues. This edifice of yours will fall down even if you have rooted its foundation in the most perfect holiness. Ezechiel states: *Even the greatest saints... shall be in the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them trembling, every one for his iniquity.* [Ezk 7:16].

401: I will go even further: if you do not attain to the fear of the Lord, your house will fall, and it will fall swiftly, even if you have built it in heaven. In fact, even those who can say: *.. But, our conversation is in heaven...* [Ph 3:20] - and: *... we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in heaven...* [2 Co5:1] - and even when we do not have it precisely that way, but we dwell there in contemplation, really assumed into the third heaven and we have already, as it were, taken possession of it, still the Apostle was afraid: *... lest perhaps... I myself should become a castaway...* [1 Co 9:27].

And how many there are who do not fear with him; even though they, too, might seem to be immovable stars in the heavens, and they fell. And so, for how many did the immortal light of their virtues suddenly be transformed into an insane flame of impure affections. This has rendered them, I will say, not only the butt of the jokes of the uncouth lout, but they become the object of the ridicule and derision of hell itself.

402: Let us not speak ill, my hearers, at the fall of these cedars, since we are like fragile fir -trees, and we howl [Zc 11:2]. We have been shaken by the awful terror the ruin of others, and we exhort you, too, to fear lest you fall. Even further, it is no longer we who exhort you: it is God Himself, God Himself who commands this to everyone. He commands the just: *I am clean and without sin ... he has found complaints against me...* [Ps 33:9, 10]. *And now, Israel what does the Lord your God require of you, but that you fear the Lord, your God, and all in His ways, and love Him and serve the Lord, your God...* [Dt 10:12]

He also commands this to sinners: *And fear not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul: but, rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body to hell...* [Mt 10:28].

403: PERORATION: So, who among you would be that foolish servant who would refuse to obey such express commands of the sovereign God? Would it perhaps be that individual thinking that he/she is in the state of grace, and is so sure that he can remain there without living in perpetual fear? Or, would it perhaps be some other person who has already lost grace, knowing that it cannot be gained by any other means than through fear? Or, lastly would it be the one who is already convinced without any fear that he cannot be saved? Who would ever resolve thus to be lost eternally, just for not choosing to set out on a street that is recognized as the only sure one - only one who is insane. Oh, no: it could be that sinner, who has been blinded, and who refuses to express fear in order not to embitter those dear to him. Where could this wretched person be? I would like to throw myself at his feet, and embrace them, and even more with my tears than with my words, I would beg him to be careful, to accede at least out of pity for his own soul.

404: Even should he not surrender to my tears, I would like to say to him: Come on now, such fear is necessary for you. You do not want to express it now? All right, rejoice in peace, and even make fun of the one who is trying so hard to persuade you to express such fear. The day will come - and it is no longer very far away - when on opening your eyes from this sleep of yours, you will finally realize that your salvation could be lost: *Those seeing it, shall be troubled with terrible fear...* [Ws 5:2]. ... *repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit...* [v. 3] - but all to no avail. How much better would it not be to express fear now that the fear of the Lord is still so useful and glorious for you?

But alas! where am I? What do I imagine? Am I not speaking to a people that is docile by their natural traits? How, then, can I even imagine that this people is closed to the commands of God? These are devout listeners, on whose lips nothing sounds more often than this beautiful name of God, either to honor Him with praise, or to recommend this to others. Could I even begin to think that such people would ever contradict with their deeds such beautiful words?

405: And finally, is not this that city in which all of us are proud to have been born, especially since our ancestors procured for it the very glorious title of “God-fearing City”? Am I to be led, therefore, to believe that she is about to lose this glory? Even further, were we not the very ones who, in past misfortunes, gave proof of maintaining this glory? And is it not true that such glory has increased even in our name? Let us keep, therefore - I would say even better - let us keep for ourselves this glory, in order to leave it as a precious heritage to our next generation Thus will the fear of the Lord render praiseworthy our memory here on earth, and assure us forever of the possession of immortal glory.

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SourcesOT

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St. GASPAR BERTONI



At Saint Paul Parish, in Verona, another homage to St. Gaspar Bertoni: behind one of the altars, a painting of his Ecstasy, by A. Del Vecchio.

Early Spiritual Writings

PARISH SERMONS

1801

[Manoscritti Bertoni ## 406 – 592]

**Translation into English
Rev. Joseph Henchey, CSS
1972**

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1801406:**SERMON 3**Jesus' Name

Preached in the Church of St. Paul. of the Campo Marzio section of Verona, on the 11nd Sunday after the Epiphany, in the year 1801. The Sermon lasted 26 minutes.

Even though it is true, my listeners, that no matter how lovable an object might indeed be in itself, it can never inspire a heart-felt response unless it is first seen and contemplated from near at hand. It so happens, nonetheless, that a rare beauty is able to attract the hearts of others, even when it is traced only on **the lifeless canvas by a well-directed brush**. While this is so, it does not upset me excessively if to our mortal eyes there is denied the possibility of seeing face to face a more lovable object, such as Jesus is. He is able to enkindle in my and your hearts a raging inferno of love. On my part, I am able to show you the portrait of His beauty, and the most vivid painting that is borne to us from heaven by the hand of those angels who gaze on Him there.

407: Come now, my devout hearers: prepare your hearts this day. Prepare them not only to love, but to do so with ardor. I could say even better, prepare your eyes to see, as surely very soon your hearts would respond with fervent affections.

Bring out the portrait, then - this is what it seems that each of you with almost impatience turns to me, saying: if such a beauty can indeed be seen on earth, why is there any further delay in seeing it?

PROPOSITION: There will be no further delay, my hearers, no more. Here it is. The august Name that we venerate on this day- yes, indeed, Jesus' Name is a portrait of a most loving lover. I will only ask you for a few more minutes of your time, then you will be able to see it. This will leave your hearts in full liberty that they might indeed direct your affections.

408: PROOF: And so that you will not think that I have had the courage to hazard such a new and unproven proposition, I am quite sure that before all else, I should make clear the foundation on which I base this. My proof is St. Bernard, who makes quite clear to me that in this very Name he found a portrait painted with all those perfections that made his Jesus so lovable to him:

“When I see the Name of Jesus”, he says in fact ⁵, “I place before myself the most perfect man, the most holy, adorned with all beauty and virtue. He is at the same time the omnipotent God, all just, clement, merciful, the supreme and infinite good. All these qualities resound in my ears when I

⁵St. Bernard, *Sermon 15 in Canticles*.

hear the word, ‘Jesus.’ And this is why this Name is honey on my lips, a melody to my ears and sweetness to my heart.”

409: APPLICATION: Having stated this, I believe that I have, therefore, proven my point, as well as also demonstrating that solely in this Name of Jesus, that is without anything added, all those qualities are manifested that tend to establish Jesus as the most beloved Lover. This is the property of all authentic portraits: they present to the eyes the object depicted by them, even when this is unknown to the viewer. They thereby present the idea that I form in contemplating the illustration as fully adequate, or at least, something like the original, very close to the idea that I could form were I to see the Object in Person.

410: INTRODUCTION: Let us continue, then, let us explain, unveil this Name! Please do not think that I pretend to speak with such authority with my ordinary intelligence. That Angel who first came down from heaven, it was he who made this Name known with a sureness to his voice: *...you shall call His Name, Jesus, he said, for he shall save His people from their sins... [Mt 1:21].*

Now, it seems to me that we can see, and very clearly, in this Name: a Savior, a Mediator between God and human beings, One Who satisfies divine justice for the sins of the entire world. However, all of this I see only as an enigma and confusedly. How can indeed He be called Savior of the world unless He is also God. St. Cyril, the Alexandrian, penetrates my darkness here ⁶, and he sheds some light on this point, In fact, if Jesus were not of infinite dignity, equal to that infinite God Who is indeed offended by our sins, one could not understand how He could have given satisfaction equal to the offense. Jesus, therefore, is God.

411: However, if He is only God, St. Augustine adds ⁷ by asking how could there ever be a Mediator between God and humanity? Otherwise, God would have made satisfaction to Himself, and not humanity which has been offensive to God, as every reason demands. Jesus, therefore, in so far as He shows Himself us a Savior of the whole world from its sins, presents us a man who is at the same time God, with all those perfections that would be fitting both to human and divine nature.

412: Amiability: The veil has already been removed from this **portrait**, and there has already been introduced sufficient light to emphasize the coloring. There only remains now, my listener, that we fix our gaze devoutly in contemplation to savor His amiable qualities.

Do you love beauty? Here is the most perfect man, Whose beauty was already foreseen from a distance in spirit by the Prophet. He exclaims out of wonder that He is beautiful above all the sons of men. Grace is not merely dispersed through His lips, but is diffused in abundance [Ps 44:3].

⁶St. Cyril Alex., *De Trinitate*, 1, 4

⁷St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Bk 10, 41, 67. t. I, 194 A; *De Civitate Dei*, Bk 9, 15. t. 7, 22 9 B, ff.

Do you love a spirit rich in knowledge, endowed with virtue? Here before you is a mind in which are all the treasures of God's knowledge and wisdom. He is a holiness that is so perfect that it challenges all the models, who come up short in comparison.

Do you love gentleness, courtesy, goodness of heart? Ah, but here we are reflecting on Jesus' gentle, kind, affable, clement, merciful heart! Who ever experienced Him delay in feeling pity over human miseries, or hardened to requests, or severe in offering pardon for one's sins?

413: O Jesus, all lovable! Indeed, I no longer find wonder in other than fixing my concentration on You. This like Mary Magdalen, who has forgotten all else, both loves and lovers, being unable to love anyone other than You, to listen to anyone but You, and to live with anyone else but You, and for You alone. And Martha, Martha, do not disturb those sweet colloquies with her only good. See her now in that domestic setting, all alone, at the feet of her Jesus, as she pours out all the most tender affections of her heart. Mary has chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from here [Lk 10:40-42]. And what will she do in heaven? Even further, what else will we do, my listeners, than see God, and in seeing Him, to love Him, and being blessed in loving Him? But, in seeing Jesus, do I now also see my God? In loving Jesus, do I not also love my God, that God Who is so perfect in every type of perfection? Is it not so that informing an eternal beatitude for Himself that He renders blessed all the Saints by this vision? What else, then, could be a worthy object of my love, other than Jesus?

414: 2. Love. But, let us move on, my listeners. While it is true that we have seen in this Name that which may render Jesus to us as the most lovable reality, there still remains to be seen that which qualifies Him as the most tender of Lovers. This will accomplish my goal, to show that Jesus' Name is a **portrait** of a most beloved Lover.

And do you not see in fact, in Jesus' Name a Savior, that is, a God Who for us human beings and for our salvation, descended from heaven, and became man⁸? Did He not give His precious life in redemption for those sins that had rendered our souls slaves of the devil, condemned to hell? Did He not wash us with His blood, embellish us with His grace, in order to crown us with His glory? And what else is all this than to see a most passionate lover?

415: Is it a trait of passionate lovers to love so strongly that no difficulty slows them down, no danger discourages them, not even death itself, even when it approaches in a most cruel form, it is just unable to terrify them. Such lovers are entirely forgetful of themselves - they do everything, suffer anything - and dare all, in order to bring pleasure and to be joined to the one who is loved. And it even happens sometimes that love so blinds them, that they cannot even see those very defects that could indecently vitiate the object of their love, rendering such a one disgusting to the eyes

⁸The Nicene-Constantinople Creed.

of all but them. Even more, the base ingratitude with which they receive in exchange for their love, does not douse their flames, like water would on a strong fire - rather, this response seems to enkindle them the more.

416: Jesus is a lover of this sort. God, as He is, has loved you, my friends, because in you He sees His own image. But, this image has been spoiled by sin; this soul, created by Him was sold out as a slave of hell - this soul has become an enemy of God. His love is powerfully contrasted with His Divine Justice, which cannot tolerate anyone who loves sin. And yet, what can you imagine? His love overcomes every difficulty. A way has been found to satisfy His justice and to content His love. It will prove fitting, I would almost say, to the point of offending His Divine Majesty, by subjecting His human nature already taken on, even to the most shameful death. But, not even death, and even a death of this type, is able to contend with love, since, in the words of the Wise Man, love is as strong as death [Ct 8:6].

417: It is not, then, through corruptible gold and silver that this Lover has poured out to regain His beloved, but all of His Precious Blood. And should the beloved once more fall into the hands of the infernal enemy, staining herself with sin, Jesus would return each day to offer the same victim on the altars, to wash her with His Blood, of which there is opened a perennial source in the bosom of His Church.

418: And just what is it, my Jesus, that you intend by so much love? Listen, give ear to these words, rather - to these transports of love! It is that You love me and give Your consent to chaste nuptials with me. I have already given my word for this to my friends, and there was said in my name: *...Hearken, o daughter, and see, and incline your ear: and forget your people and your father's house. And the king shall greatly desire your beauty...* [Ps 44: 11, ff.].

But she was still too shy to hear these Words of Mine. I, therefore, took the resolve to go to visit her in person - and so that the sheer brilliance of the radiance of My glory would not overwhelm her timidity in responding to Me, I found a way to hide Myself under the sacramental veil. In this way, I devised a way of entering almost furtively into her heart when I could speak to her in gentle manner. Now I am waiting for her consent to My designs. All that is needed is single word, that would be enough to make her blessed eternally, and this word would be sufficient to make my hart happy.

419: What do you, my listeners, think of all this? Does it not seem to you that Jesus is as much to be loved as He is Himself a most passionate lover? But, how have we been able to deduce this, and see it first-hand, if not by explaining and removing the veils from this most sweet Name of His? I can therefore conclude that Jesus' Name is a **portrait** of the most beloved of loves, as I proposed for your contemplation from the beginning of my sermon.

PERORATION: And so, lovers of Jesus, in this most sweet Name you find the **portrait** of your most lovable Lover. This is what I have proposed to you, at the cost of not easy personal research, to rediscover Him, to place Him before you. And not being content to have Him in our own hands, having contemplated Him delightedly this day, I have placed Him much like a precious jewel on your breast, within your homes. Here is the quiet of your own rooms, in times of solitude, as lovers together, you enjoy each other's presence. You can gaze with fondness, in fueling your ardor,

bringing consolation to your spirit, comfort to your heart. Nothing is more dear to a person in love than to have endured the suffered hope to see and to possess the much loved good, by having before one's eyes a precious portrait.

420: Might it easily happen that among the many devout people that make up this pious audience, some might be concerned by extraneous affections? Might these have more willingly heard me speak of other loves, or would have enjoyed more looking at other portraits? Such as these, even being confronted with such loveliness, can they now forget earlier loves, as I can readily understand? Should this be the case, is the only road open to me to lay the blame on my excessively poor eloquence? Have I been able only to shed a dim light on this very charming portrait? Can I not weep at having lost the more charming portion of that fruit that with a sweet, longing, yearning, inspired me to speak today?

421: Anyway, listen to me, a bit more, however wretched and unhappy you may be. Reflect, as the Apostle already has persuaded you to do, on the fact that the fashion of this world passes away [1 Co 7:31]. Nothing other would be required, therefore, unless for those still bound by bonds that have been contracted, or for those who want to contract them, to remain attached, at least in part, with hearts riveted to the goods of this earth. The appeal to such as these is that the more noble and the more ample portion of their hearts be still reserved to other affections, to other loves and to other yearnings.

What would your desperation be when all these apparent goods have slipped away from your hands and your glances? What will it be like, then, when you finally open your eyes to gaze on the genuine beauty and unchanging goodness of this Jesus - but, then only to have to repent for having so cheaply exchanged Him, and to weep for having lost Him for eternity? What envy will you not experience to see yourself deprived of every good, while others will be called to the **nuptials** of this most lovable **Spouse**, Who is also extending His hand so sweetly? Is it possible that your heart, is so easily enkindled before every lesser lamp showing more wretched and passing beauty? Can it be so tender that it does not know how to deny broader rewards of affection to one who extends meager or flattering invitations, that are then shown to be so cold in the face of the sun of beauty, and so hardened at the sight of such a vivid transport of love?

422: I can already see it now. At this unexpected assault, your heart that is still hardened, seeks to cover itself over under its misery. You think that you are dispensed from the obligation of corresponding to such affection, just by saying that you are not worthy. Nonetheless, Jesus insists on asking it of you, nor does His love cede a whit in the face of your wretchedness, even though it may even be a thousand times worse. You defend yourself in vain in this manner, and you are already forced to surrender. So, what have I been doing? Did I not promise from the outset that I would have left each one free in his affection? I will do no more violence to your hearts. However, if I leave your hearts undisturbed, I will no longer be able to contain my own.

423: Here I am, my Jesus, at Your feet. Yes, here is one who has abandoned You, supreme Good, even too worthy of my love, in order to chase after all too curious vanities: .. *Late have I loved You, ancient Beauty; late have I loved You, eternal goodness...*⁹. Now, I cannot remain in ignorance of You, and can no longer put off loving You. And if my ugliness did not hold back, I would have offered You already, right now, all of my heart to You, Who with such love asks this of me. And so, what do I say now? You do not love us because You find in us such goodness, but You love us only to fill us with goodness. Here, now, is my heart. My soul is now all Yours. Wash it, cleanse it, embellish it, to make it Your worthy **spouse**. Yes, it is all Yours.

424: I am not the only one to offer You my heart. Look here, look at this person whom I despaired of being able to persuade by my sermon, he now accedes to my example. And if some did not believe when I stated that You are a Lover Who is most passionate, now they believe it, seeing themselves adorned with so many gifts, as You extend Your hand to souls as sinful as my own.

Yes, then, here we are, together saying farewell to the empty beauties and to the coarse goods of this earth, now to love none other but You. Let us make resound on our lips this most sweet Name. We now see in it the **portrait** of our most lovable Lover. Let us be a reminder to those to whom we have given our hearts up to this day, that for the future we will no longer do so. All are less worthy than the One Who asks our hearts of us.

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Sources

<u>OT</u>	<u>NT</u>
Bible quote	Bible quote
MssB #	MssB #
Ps 44: 3	Mt 1L21
Ps 11, f. [espousals]	Lk 10:40-42
Ct. 8:6	1 Co 7:31
412	410
418	413
416	421

Magisterium

Nicene - Constantinople Creed	# 414
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⁹St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Bk 10, 27, 38. t. 1, 184 A.

Fathers & Doctors

St. Augustine, <i>The City of God.</i> Bk 9, 15. t. 7, 229, B, ff.	# 411
“ <i>Confessions,</i> Bk 10, 27, 38. t. 1, 184 A	# 423
“ <i>Confessions,</i> Bk 10, 41, 67. t. 1, 194 A	# 411
St. Bernard, <i>Serm. 15, In Canticles.</i>	# 408
St. Cyril of Alexandria, <i>De Trinitate.</i> Bk 4.	# 410

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425:**SERMON 4****The Passion**

Preached in the Church of St. Paul's, in the Camp Marzio section of Verona, on Good Friday, April 3, 1801. - It lasted for about one hour and a quarter.

This Sermon was repeated, with the "Addition" found below, in St. Paul's, Campo Marzio, on Good Friday, April 4, 1806, in the evening. This lasted about one hour and three quarters.

426: The Passion of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. - *The just perishes, and no man lays it to heart...* [Ps 57:1].

Therefore, Jesus has died, and is there no one who is moved? So, the Just Man perishes in a sea, drowning in sufferings, and is there no one to weep? I have to say it again, *and no one lays it to heart.* And so, what is being said here: there is no one who is moved? It would be necessary to be on that mountain a few minutes earlier, when in all His anguish of dying, as He was just about to give up His last breath. One could note however, nature itself responded out of pity for Him: the sun hid its face, the rocks were rent, the earth trembled on its axis. Would I, therefore, see before me only these, my listeners, with tranquil faces, serenely looking on? Why is it these faces are not reddened with weeping? How is it that these hearts are not broken? Why is it that the by-standers are not profoundly moved? And these women, who weep so bitterly over the deaths of their own children, their husbands, their lovers - and these men who are so deeply upset by their own reverses, as well as of those of their fellow-citizens - they do not shed a single tear, nor do they have a simple sigh left for Jesus? Is it that only Jesus is not mourned, He is not wept over? Just listen to His own complaint regarding you: *...Ad I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none...* [s 68:21].

427: Why is it, my brothers and sisters, that there are such coldness, such ingratitude, and even injustice, and that those tears of compassion that you shed so prodigiously at the sufferings of just any poor soul, you so cruelly deny Jesus? Have you perhaps had a change of heart on this very point that the underlying motives - that are even stronger - that Jesus offers you for having compassion in His regard, to not move you? Or, is it that you just do not know these motives? Do you not realize that He has suffered? But, you do know through faith that He had to languish on a cross. Do you understand that He suffered all of this for you? Faith, though, teaches you that "... for us men and for our salvation..."¹⁰ He did this for us. How can it be, therefore, that you are not deeply moved, believing all this? Should we conclude, then, that there is either lacking faith, and that your faith has grown so languid? It cannot be this, my listeners. May heaven keep me from drawing any such conclusion so insulting to your piety.

¹⁰Nicene-Constantinople Creed

428: What, then, is the origin of such insensibility of heart? The Holy Spirit responds for us: ... *The just perishes, and no man lays it to heart...* [Is 57:1]. He is just not considered, and this is why no compassion is given. This is the real reason, while the Philosopher also teaches on the other hand that to bring something within the sphere of compassion so that this will excite compassion in others, it is necessary that it be brought close ¹¹. Thus, we observe that the miseries of others far from us, either distant in space, or in the passing of time, either do not touch our hearts, or do so only in a very slight manner. For this reason, all I have to do is expose these facts, with all simplicity, as they unfolded. My task, then, is to render Jesus' Passion close, not only to your thought, but to your very eyes. In this way, the reality of it which is of all events. the most able to draw a compassionate response, will indeed become the object of your most actual and most tender compassion.

429: However, before going on in drawing out for you this sorrowful narrative, there is suddenly before me that warm Cross, that is still marked with the blood of this Just Man. I now place this before your eyes, prior to any other reality. to test the impression that such a sight is able to make on your hearts.

Holy Cross, that I should now adore as that which alone was worthy to bear that August Victim sacrificed on you for our sins - I know only too well the many and varied affections that you can arouse in the hearts of these listeners. You have now become the standard of their faith, the sure guide of their lives, the foundation of their hope, comfort in their wretchedness, the desire of the just, the terror of hell. But, I ask you that the sight of you arouse today only a sadness and a dolor that will be most vibrant for those terrible sufferings that you brought to our Jesus, when He united Himself to you out of love for us.

430: Show, therefore, to these souls who devoutly gaze upon you those **cruel clefts of those nails** made in you, first lacerating His hands, and then His feet. Show the very place where His head reclined upon you, expiring, as their loving Father, indeed their faithful Friend, their most tender Brother, their most lovable and most kind **Spouse**. Lastly, show that bloodshed out of love for them, with which you still trickle and redden in long streams. In addition to the impression that you can bring about in them, let there be joined also the eloquence of this blood, as the Apostle describes [Heb 12:24]. Let there be attained, therefore, through you such a great commotion in the hearts of these listeners that I believe I will see this very day, even though I cannot achieve this with my words.

431: I do fear, my listeners, that the sheer multiplicity of facts, even exposed in their natural simplicity, might impede your otherwise gifted intelligences, keeping them all straight in your minds at the end of my sermon. But, since you can all the more easily gather all this in by a single glance, I ask you that while I speak, you will keep in mind the various aspects of this mystery: first, the most perfidious betrayal; then, the most unjust sentence; and finally, the most torturous torment.

¹¹St. Thomas Aquinas, 4 Sent., d. 17. q. 2. a. 1, sol. 1 ad 1 um.

432: I am not unaware that you might be able to recall to memory other examples. It is not totally new in this world to see an innocent, virtuous, beneficent person thus betrayed by a friend, and very often one who has benefited the most from the friendship. Nevertheless, there could not be found any other person more innocent, and better than Jesus. Furthermore, there was no one more trusted and no greater beneficiary in this band than His traitor. For these reasons, there could never be heard, and never will be, a betrayal more perfidious than this one. Just who is Jesus? Is He not that God to Whom by title of creation, conservation and final blessed end, all human beings are indebted for what they have, for what they are, and for all that they hope? Who would ever thought that among all human beings there could ever be found one who would prove to be more disloyal, more cruel, more ungrateful, that he would then decide to betray Him? And yet, such a person was found. He was Judas. He did not only think about this, or just plan it. But, he brought this evil scheme to term, that of betraying this most beneficent God. This God proved Himself to be so beneficent that out of greater love for humanity, He gave up His blessed trappings, and put on our flesh. He became like a king in disguise, and enjoyed treating with human beings on friendly terms. He did this with all His servants, and in particular, with Judas.

433: Maybe Judas did not recognize Him for what He was, in that His disguise was so complete? But how could he not have recognized Him after all those truly divine charms that He manifested? Further, did not Jesus many times, in the presence of Judas make known the nobility of His figure? Was not Judas an eye-witness of many of the miracles that He worked? Even further, did not Judas Himself work some of those prodigies with that totally divine authority that Jesus had communicated to Him?

Just think of all the honor that Jesus inspired for him, from the crowd, even the most uncouth. Even if this were not enough honor, Jesus had prepared a most honorable throne among the 12 places that He had promised that the other Apostles would receive, when He would have returned with them to judge the whole world. Judas, among all these, was the most “domestic” minister, His very own brother and friend, with whom Jesus often dealt, with whom He often ate, and with whom He lived, without ever sending him away from His side.

434: That very same night in which Judas had determined to betray Him, Judas was sitting at the same table with Jesus. Jesus could see that his heart was evil, but even so, He did not send him away, He did not reprove him. Rather Jesus reached out to him, showing every manifestation of love. It was that very night when Jesus chose to wash the feet of his disciples, even those of Judas. And when He did mention His approaching death, and even gave indications of his own betrayal, He did this to shake up the hardened heart of Judas, who simply did not grasp these favors. He did all this with such a calm soul that at the same time, He communicated every reason for confidence in His pardon. It happens quite often that such ingrates, harboring evil thoughts of betrayal, are moved to make some response when they are treated well by their friend. It is hard to know whether such as these are moved more by confusion, or by stupor, but often they do make a switch, and transform their

earlier hatred, that was so powerfully nourished in them, into like affections of love. But, it did not turn out this way for Judas, and this points out the fact that among betrayers, he proved to be the most perfidious.

435: As the Supper was drawing to a close, Jesus blessed the bread and wine: *...Take this,* He said to His Apostles [Mk 14:22, ff.]...This is my Blood... which shall be shed for you.... This is the Pledge that I leave you of My love: *... Do this, as often as you shall drink, for the remembrance of me...* [1 Co 11:25]. And you, too, Judas, you take this Bread in your own hands. It is no longer bread, but it is My own Body, take it and be nourished. Bring your lips to this chalice - first drink My Blood and then go, and betray Me.

436: I tremble, quiver and shake. He, too, approaches, to receive His Master in this new and unheard of manner, which His charity imposed upon Him. He receives Him into that heart ... But, I can hardly go on. I can see clearly, my listeners, that you hardly have room in your hearts for the indignation that springs up in you at this malice. You are overwhelmed with stupor at such perfidy, and seek some explanation for what could ever move this wretch to such excess. And contrasting such virtue, such amiability in Jesus, you will encounter ever greater difficulty in trying to find it.

437: It seems to me that you may be making this conjecture: perhaps Judas had been wronged somewhat by his Master. He may have been placed below the other Apostles in some post of honor, and so his ambition was further strengthened by his envy. But these conjectures hardly stand up. Only Judas was given the honor bestowed on no one else, in that he was placed over the meager resources of the little group. Do not try any harder to find out the reason for his perfidy, that I have already pointed out to you.

438: Let us, then, follow Judas, who has already set out to betray his Master into the hand of His enemies who seek to put Him to death: *...And He said to them, what will you give to me and I will deliver Him unto you...?* [Mt 26:15]. Here it is, this is the reason: sordid gain. What a criminal! But you might have thought that some large sum would have been thrust into Judas' hands, that would have befuddled the heart of this ingrate. But what did Jesus' enemies offer him? Just thirty pieces of silver! Just thirty pieces? When such a stingy hand is able to buy off a disciple, and a disciple who had benefited the most, to perpetrate such an enormous betrayal, they must have been sure of the refusal. But, what did Judas respond? What was his answer? He accepts without even bartering over the miserable amount and reached agreement on just how he would do it. Now I am sure that your hearts will burn with indignation against a betrayer that the world has never seen anyone worse. But, are you not likewise moved with compassion towards Jesus, Who is so good, so beneficent, so lovable and so ungratefully betrayed? What a blow this must have been to His heart. Through grace, let us return to Him, to see how He got through such sorrow.

439: We no longer find Him in the Cenacle room, as He has already left with His disciples. But, we will find Him a short distance away, in Gethsemane.

And here He is, and separates Himself a bit more in order to enter all alone that garden in which He was accustomed to praying the nights through. Judas had already set his plan in motion. Jesus was no longer able to hold back the anguish of His spirit: ... *Then he said to them: My soul is sorrowful even unto death...* [Mt 26:38]. ... *For if my enemy had reviled me, I would verily have borne with it...* [Ps 54:13].

But he is a person who is so dear to Me, and one for whom I have done so much good - this really pierces My heart.

440: And do you think that this betrayal was not sufficient to fill His heart with sadness? Just say, any of you who have experienced it, or who may have known this in the bosom of your own families - or, those who have loved with excessive affection and extended special kindnesses toward some disguised enemy who then about your present calamity. Just think of David when he had to flee by this same path from the rebellious Absalom [2 K 1:1, ff.]. David experienced the greatest pain in abandoning all at once his palace, his people and even his wives. There was great suffering in seeing all of this brought about by his most loved son. It was he who betrayed the King, the one who incited the most faithful subjects in the plot against his own father. He even dishonored his own father's bridal chamber.

441: But, there is hardly any comparison in this! Just think of Jesus, and what a bitter sight that is! All the horrible apparatus of his sorrowful Passion is arrayed against Him. He could see that His most favored disciple was the very one who had handed Him over to the unjust judges, to those very cruel butchers, to those horrible sufferings. It is true, of course, that the horrible sight of the sins of the whole world that He was destined by the Father to carry was overwhelming. However, among all these, the most horrible aspect before His face was Judas' enormous crime: .. *Therefore, He confessed, he who has delivered Me to you, has the greater sin...* [Jn 19:11].

It is true that He felt the heavy weight of so many people for whom He died who would separate themselves from Him: and what a cruel separation He saw this to be! He could see in this how many would share in Judas' betrayal.

442: This is the very kind of argument that His envious enemies would raise against Him to withdraw the simple of hear from following Him! Just look, they would say, what a great success His disciples have had, those first disciples, and most steady students in His school. Did we not say that He is an impostor? If anyone would give credence to Him, then it should b His most intimate friends. But, you can see that these are the very ones who have raised up their hands in opposition to Him.

What do you think of all this, my listeners? Could Judas have wounded Him any more in life? Could we not say that this betrayal alone would be enough to overwhelm Him with sadness? Or, at least, would this not add one more very strong reason among so many others that had already invaded Jesus' heart? This injury by one so close, would this not have been a kind of *coup de grace* to his spirit?

443: And now just look at Him: even though Jesus is the stronger [Mk 3:27] and indeed is invincible, nonetheless, of His own free choice, to satisfy for our sins, He subjected Himself as man to those afflictions that we still experience. Even more, because of the superior knowledge of His mind and the greater sensibility of His heart, He was even further disposed to suffer all this. He is already being constrained to hand over His heartfelt freedom to that sadness that scourges Him, and He falls face first on the ground. Not even the very powerful resistance that He brought to opposing the dolor which oppressed Him was beaten back. This brought about His sweating right through His clothing in abundance, and dampened it, leaving many drops on the grass, and the stones on the ground under Him. This is a very strange sign of a totally new type of pain, supreme suffering.

444: Hurry, Judas, hurry! Hasten forward that band of assassins that you are leading with you. Even should you be unable to witness your Jesus killed by the weapons of His enemies to whom you chose to betray Him, you will take delight in knowing that you alone have killed Him, killed Him first with immense suffering that you brought about.

Alas! what will happen to Jesus? Have no doubt about it: there remains still so much for Him to suffer. However, an Angel comes down to comfort Him, and then we see that He even takes the first step to go to meet the betrayer who seeks Him.

445: *Friend, why have you come?* [Mt 26:50].

What is Jesus' response to all this? Judas approaches with peaceful air and reached for Jesus neck, to embrace Him. It seems, therefore, at long last Judas is beginning to be moved. What would Jesus' heart do if this were the case? How He would have willingly received him, how He would have comforted him, by giving him pardon for all! Yes, my listeners. He does not reject him, but receives him, allows Himself to be kissed, and then says:...*And Jesus said to him: Judas do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss...?* [Lk 22:48]. How can he betray You, Jesus, if he is coming to see your peace?

But no, my hearers. You can finally see the supreme perfidy of this betrayal Judas had already made some agreement with those soldiers who had to arrest Him. You can see that at the agreed upon signal, they charge Jesus, they bind Him, they drag Him away, they rain blows down upon Him, with sticks and they kick Him. And where do they drag Him? And here is still one more motive for your deeply felt compassion: an innocent man is being arraigned before the Tribunal, to receive from it the most unjust of sentences.

446: It would be, it is true, a major injustice to condemn to death even one who is truly guilty, without first having heard the case. But, Jesus is not the only one among the innocent upon whom a similar destiny has fallen, being dragged to the place of execution by an angry mob. He is, though, brought before a tribunal to experience deeply the pain that is all the more unjust in that His enemies wanted to go through the motions of making use of the organs of justice to condemn Him.

447: But how can you gaze on this scene, without an almost overwhelming commotion deep within your hearts? As you look at Jesus, innocent, alone and abandoned, even by his own, standing before those judges who are already His enemies - do you not see how they almost tremble in their haste to carry out their duty which they see as putting Him to death? They look for the witnesses, and even pay them so that they will bear false witness. They interrogate Jesus, and then do not let Him respond - and if He remains silent, they take this for the admission of guilt. And yet, when He does open His mouth to speak, they punch Him in the face. I just do not want to lead your thought, and with that, your hearts that are already very sensitive, before tribunals such as these. But, this is where Jesus has been led, where everything has served to pervert justice, and where only anger, fury and tumult dominate.

448: Suffice it for me to lead you to Pilate's tribunal. He is a more reasonable and impartial judge for Jesus, as well as for the Hebrews, His accusers, since He is the Roman Governor. And so it was that Pilate, having examined Jesus in accord with the accusations leveled against Him, had clarified His innocence. He had been able to see that it was only out of envy that they wanted Him dead. He goes out from the Pretorium, where all His enemies were gathered awaiting His condemnation, and Pilate declares Him innocent. Praise the heavens, then. Jesus has received a just sentence. He had been betrayed by His own disciple, He had been judged unjustly by the priests who ought to have been favorably disposed toward Him, but finds justice before a foreign judge. I can see that you are consoled, seeing Jesus absolved by that tribunal, which alone had jurisdiction in such cases.

449: But, just a minute! Do you not hear that those who earlier were judges, have now become the accusers, and that they are insisting on His death, and they even bring forward new charges? ... *We have found this man perverting the nation... saying He is king... [Lk 23:2].* Jesus is brought back to be examined under this point. He confesses that He is indeed a King, but that His Kingdom is not of this world [Jn 18:36]. ... *If My Kingdom were of this world, My servants would certainly strive that I should not be delivered...*

So much evidence is lacking for Him to be convicted of sedition, because it would be necessary to show the arms that He would have cached away, to uncover His secret plots. However, all His actions, His public statements testify to the contrary. so, the Judge goes back out and proclaims once more that he can find no cause in him. This is all the more significant in that even Herod himself, to whom Jesus had been sent, even though he was more versed in the Hebrew law, let Him

go. Then Pilate makes the declaration that he would punish Him with blows and then he, too, would set Him free.

450: How is this explained? If Christ had been declared innocent, how can it be that He is first to be scourged, and then allowed to go free? What injustice is this? - you ask in complete wonder. But, hold back your indignation a little while against the injustice of a sentence such as this. In the interim, listen as Pilate continued the custom that at Passover there would be freed, at the request of the people, a person already condemned to death. Pilate leaves this up to the crowd to decide which of the two they would want to set free. They could choose either Barabbas, who was a real criminal, caught in sedition, and homicide - or, Jesus. I can see, my listeners, that now you tremble all the more, seeing Jesus first declared innocent, and now placed side by side with one condemned. I know that He should not have to wait to be pardoned, as justice would demand that He be allowed to go free. But, what happens? In order to calm down the furor of His accusers, Pilate has decided to make the choice, and he turns toward the people.

451: Entertain no doubts about it. The people seemed well disposed toward Jesus. This multitude is made up of those blind men whose sight He had restored; of those lame whose limbs He had restored; of those mute to whom He had given the ability to speak; of those hungry people, who - after He had abundantly satisfied them - they sought to make Him their king; of those countless infirm, whom He had cured. What is there to be afraid of, then? And with all the less reason, because He is being put up along side of a criminal who was the most hated of all, an enemy of both the public as well as the private good.

452: *..Whom do you wish that I release to you, Barabbas, or Jesus...? [Mt 27:17].* The people will certainly choose Jesus.

But, alas! everyone at this gathering of the people presented with the same question, replied to it at the top of their voices: *Barabbas, Barabbas! [v. 21].* How perfidious they were! What, then, should I do with this innocent man, toward whom you are all indebted? *Let Him be crucified, let Him be crucified! [v. 23].*

What wickedness, ingratitude! What insult, what fury! Here will an innocent Man have to pay as one guilty? Is Jesus to be compared to a revolutionary? Pilate, though, who is convinced of the innocence of this Man, should not give in to such injustice. And yet, Pilate sends Him to be scourged.

453: Shortly he would deny Jesus the justice due Him as an innocent Man under judgment. What is worse, he still denies that He is guilty as He is being condemned. In such sentences imposed on all guilty persons, the judge first specifies how many blows to be imposed, what kind of instruments are to be used in tormenting Him, and the number of those involved in meting out the punishment. These would rarely inflict more blows than had been prescribed. But, Jesus hands Himself over to the discretion of the most irresolute ruffians. They were not content with the simple scourgings, but take up into their hands knotted clubs, heavy chains, iron switches.

One is missing the point should he think that the number of the blows was counted, even though these were already prescribed according to their laws. They were not supposed to go over forty lashes, but in this case, they were multiplied without number. No effort was made to stop even when the blood flowed down His body in little streams. Up and down went the blows until the flesh was literally torn. No effort was made to stop until the arms of the executioners had become tired, even though they worked in relay teams. Each new scourge attended to the task with new strength and renewed vigor, leaving Him alive only to entertain their cruelty.

454: My soul rebels in mentioning here that harsh joke played on that innocent Man, so badly wounded, and hardly breathing. There was placed on His head a crown of very sharp thorns, beaten down with plaited maces. There was placed in his hand a kind of reed for a make-believe scepter, and a red mantle was draped over Him. In this way, they made fun of Him, making believe that He was a king and bowing down before Him in fake acts of homage. You could hardly tell whether His physical pain, or His shame were the greater. While He was gasping for breath in real pain, they laughed, they struck Him in the face, pouring out over Him their inner bile in mockery.

455: And what court sentence ever allowed the executioners to mock Him as a false king? And all of this took place in the very hall of the Pretorium, under the eyes of the judge, and the judge made no effort to impede them. What a barbaric and unjust judge! Is this how, therefore, that justice, innocence are betrayed? What can you say in your own behalf? Is it that you wanted to allow the people this satisfaction, and then you wanted to let Him go? No, just no. Kill Him as well, kill Him! The people are not content with His death. All right, let Him die, then, but with a single blow. It makes no sense for you to cry out from your balcony: *...Behold the Man...!* [Jn 19:5]. And then show Him so disfigured, so lacerated,. The crowd once more took up the cry, even stronger, that He be condemned. Get on with it, then, condemn Him, and at least draw to a close by an unjust sentence the dolor of this innocent man.

456: And thus, my listeners, Pilate conducts his tribunal in public. He sits down in order to pronounce his sentence before the crowd. Just wait - you would imagine an unjust sentence: but, none will be worse than this one. I do realize that many others have been condemned, innocent though they may have been. But, if there have been unjust judges, where has there ever been one like this one? Was there ever one who first declared that he found no cause for the capital punishment, and yet condemned Christ to death? This, the height of injustice, was perpetrated on Jesus.

457: Just listen: *... I find no cause in this Man...* [Lk 23:4], then, such a person should be let go. No: for the judgment is that He should die, therefore, that He should be crucified. Therefore, let Him be condemned as you have asked.

Poor Jesus! He is yours, handed over to you, raging Hebrews. What else is left? You have already heard the sentence: He is in your hands. Even hungry lions and wolves do not leap on their prey as all do now: the executioners, the soldiers, the

crowd. The entire city is set in motion, and thus there is prepared the most terrible execution for Jesus.

At this point, however, kind listeners, I cannot go any further to present you an even more dreary scene, if first you do not grant me a brief rest, in order to give some comfort to my own heart.

[Translators' Note: here could be substituted here the addition that opens with the words: "...Listen to the uproar..." - cf. ahead, # 467].

458: The facts that remain now. beloved listeners, to be placed before your consideration are so cruel - that if I was not afraid of lacking excessively in my duties, I would omit them. But, if I do I would conclude my sermon very shortly, not mentioning a point I had proposed to myself to offer these very facts for your reflection. I do believe that you are already sufficiently moved by what you have heard up until now. Take some comfort at least that I will spare in part my own and your spirits, from an additional and even stronger pain. I will rescind now from the most bitter circumstances that you might experience, in theory, that the torment that Jesus underwent were the most terrible.

459: We are still talking about generalities. There is no doubt that among all the ways of dying, that on the Cross is the most bitter. We have this on the testimony of those gentile writers who lived in such barbaric times. In this kind of death there is no kind of torment that is unknown and not employed on these poor condemned wretches. In fact, in this form of execution of the Cross, the greatest torment that the poor guilty person suffers, reach precisely those parts of the body that are the most sensitive because of the presence of delicate nerves in them. These are the hands and the feet; the weight of the whole body itself hanging on the cross continuously increases the pain. The fact that the pain lasts for such a long time renders the death all the more bitter, as it is protracted over a longer period of time.

460: Even within this same general heading, just notice how the execution of Jesus surpasses and thus transcends other deaths on the Cross in its torments. He not only had **His hands and feet torn open by the nails which brought their own pain**, but also all the other parts of His body. Covered with wounds, as He was, He experienced most penetrating pain. These openings must have been all the more agonizing in that they were all reopened as His garments were stripped from Him in a very rough manner. These garments had been put upon Him after the scourging had become attached to the open skin. The cruelty increased as His arms were stretched beyond limit so that His hands could be nailed. This stretching of His limbs was so fierce that it disjoined all the bones from their natural place. This suffering was augmented further when the Cross was allowed to slip into the hole on the ground prepared for it. The shock of the Cross falling into place produced a horrible effect on the body hanging from it.

461: Job [7:5] complained that the Devil, allowed to be his tormentor, had left only the lips around his teeth healthy. However, Jesus' executioners were even more cruel than the demons. They did not leave all over His entire body even a single member in which He was not wounded. They saw to it that not a single sense was without its own torment. With gall, they soured His taste; His sense of smell was tormented because they crucified Him in a place where dead bodies had been thrown, making a fetid odor. His sense of hearing was violated with the most horrible cries, with the insults and most biting slogans they hurled His way, along with the most gross curses.

462: For His sight, they prepared a particular torment, by crucifying Him between two thieves. Hence, anywhere He could turn His head, He would meet that shameful scene they placed before Him. And what I think was the torment to end all torments, before His eyes they hurled countless insults against those languishing in such agony. They ridiculed His moans, and laughed at His suffering.

463: I am just skimming over these facts: but, what do you think of Jesus' torment? What do you think brought the greatest agony? I have already pointed out that this punishment, to which He was condemned with the most unjust sentence, by the most perfidious betrayal. This morning I have placed before you Jesus' Passion, then, as a reality drawing the most sublime compassion. I have just noticed, however, that I have given every effort to rescind from the most bitter circumstances, in order to diminish that dolor that I see is gradually increasing in you. By so doing, perhaps I have only poorly corresponded to the affections of your hearts. I note that once you have come to consider more fully the situation of this Just Man, that there was the desire to remain with Jesus overwhelmed in His sufferings. It seems that there is the yearning not to deny Him the most just response of compassion. What is there to fear Should I not also carry out this pious desire of yours, of extending your tenderness Jesus' way?

464: And now, therefore, no longer just with your thoughts, but also with your eyes you can see His pain. *Behold, behold the Man!* [Jn 19:5]. Just look at this body, how lacerated it is with so many wounds. Not only have they taken from Him every beauty, all graciousness, but even the very figure of a man [Is 53:2]. Just look at His head, pierced by so many thorns. **Look at His hands, His feet that are so wounded; this side that is gaping open.** Look on in sadness, and this will help you grasp this scene and also will satiate the desires of your hearts. You could never weep over Him as He merits to be mourned.

465: And You, o Jesus, take note of the compassion that these pious souls offer you: for such is what I proposed for myself with Your grace obtained this morning. My purpose is to move them and soften their hearts with an affectionate compassion. This was all to dispose them to bring You some comfort in Your pain. It is now up to You to speak, to show and to make known to the what they ought to do and how they can bring consolation to Your most afflicted heart. Even before You open Your mouth, see that they are disposed to anticipate Your requests. Since they know that nothing can bring You more comfort than to see in them that fruit come to them for

which You have suffered so much. All You want is for them to love You and to destroy all sin in them

466: They are already disposed to offer You their hearts, freed from every wrong affection. They are planning now the way, the means to be taken, and the time to give up entirely the sin in their lives. They are disposed to despoil themselves of that affection that is displeasing to you, so that they can begin a new conduct of a virtuous life, in accord with Your wishes.

But, no - they do not intend that all their compassion should be consumed in tears. They want the compassion that they feel for You should move them to console You with their deeds. Come now, give them Your blessing as a kind of pledge that their tears are pleasing to You, that their tenderness for You is beloved to You. our out on them the abundance of Your most efficacious graces, whence they will be moved when they proceed now to kiss Your wounds, and to mingle their tears with Your blood. they will be able to grasp and to carry out for Your comfort whatever You request of their hearts on this point.

[Here begins the third part, following a brief rest. This could substitute the paragraph above, that begins with the words: *The facts that remain now...* -cf. # 458].

467: Listen to the uproar! More than the sound of trumpets and drums, it is the unsettling roar of anger, fury, tumult, hoots and insulting whistling. It is like a sea of people in agitation. Christ is being dragged along the street, outside of Jerusalem, to the place of His execution. Why is there such a crowd? *Why have the Gentiles raged...?* [Ps 2:1]. To execute a malefactor, one executioner alone would suffice, and sometimes it is even hard to find one. Is it that against this one innocent man, maliciously condemned, that all have conspired to torment Him? Yes, all play their part, since His personal torment is to be the most painful. All are there, of every order, class and condition.

468: There have been times that an innocent person was persecuted by many, but was always able to find some defense, refuge in others, or at least compassion. It is only Jesus, in being hated, all play their role to bring about His death. There are princes and ministers, Jews and soldiers, lay people and priests, nobles and the masses, learned and ignorant, citizens and foreigners, Jews and Gentiles, Romans and barbarians: all concur in this execution, of the most painful kind. All are able to have a share in it, to incite further the executioners. Some shout their insults from afar. Some seem to enjoy the sight of His spasms of pain in His death: ... *they stood up... met together...* [Ps 2:2].

469: How is it that there is such a furor in everyone, and how is it that in such furor there is also such harmony in such a disharmonious mob? This is what brings the greatest pain to the heart of that innocent Victim: ... *They are multiplied above the*

hairs of my head, who hate me without cause... [Ps 68:5]. They give Me evil for good, hatred for love. What is the source, then for such wrath, for such fury? And just notice, my listeners, what wrath, and what fury! Just look: with a slow pace Jesus moves ahead, led like a sheep to the slaughter [Is 53:7], for many dogs have encompassed me [Ps 21:17], wild bulls have besieged Me... [v. 13].

470: Drained as He was from the excessive flagellation, they placed on His sagging shoulders the cross-bars of His gibbet. How barbaric, and cruel they are! Every step He takes, He grows more weary. He wavers, and falls. Just look at Him, o heavens! Look at Him, stretched out on the ground under this weight. Alas! Just look at Jesus, *the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people... [v. 7]*, no longer a man, but He is a worm, crushed under those villainous feet. On the strength of the kicks and blows they rain upon Him, they vainly strove to have Him climb Calvary.

471: Still, what is the source of such fury in the human breast? But, it is not just human beings who are tormenting Him: the Devil himself is among His tormentors. For it is the Devil who, on entering into human hearts, changes them into such fury. Human beings assume his ancient livery against this man-God. Rather, it is not just a single demon, but all hell has broken loose: *...this is the Power of Darkness... [Lk 22:53]*. Do not even begin to think, however, that it is from any sense of compassion in those inhuman executioners for the remainder of the climb. They only did this to keep Him alive for even more cruel, and more protracted torments.

472: And yet they had to harass one another to see who would carry the Cross in His place. And where are His friends who do not step forward, freely offering to carry it for Him? They have abandoned Him.

Hence, the distress of Christ had to be all the more painful as His torment was universal. His suffering was universal not only because it was brought on Him by all, but He hurt in every way possible for a human being to do so. He experienced anguish not only from His friends, but also in the loss of reputation. They dragged two thieves long with Him, and so, *He was reputed with the wicked... [Is 53:12]*, being placed among the condemned and the evil. Thus, losing His reputation, He experienced a loss in the honor and glory due Him.

473: The Cross was the torment bringing with it the greatest shame. Such a death was the most shameful *[Ws 2:20]*, *for he is accused of God that hangs on a tree... [Dt 21:23]*.

There remained His robe. Despoiled of all else, even now His clothes were stripped off Him. He was stripped nude! and this in the sight of such a huge crowd! and it all took place at high noon! and on a high hills! *..He shall indeed be filled with reproaches... [Lm 3:30], shame has covered his face... [Ps 68:8]*. And that whole day long, the sham He bore wounded Him more, pierced Him more painfully than all His wounds, than all those openings brought to His body.

And now, where are the beauty, the decor, the most pure candor of those members? There is no beauty in Him, no comeliness [Is 53:2]. He is all one large bruise, one terrible wound.

474: Look over all the members of that body just to see if there is a single part that is healthy and without torment. There is no crown of gold, but one of thorns. The black tresses of His hair are all streaked with blood. His eyes are no longer those of a dove [Ct 1:14], but are daubed with mud, covered with dust and spittle. His cheeks are no longer rosy red, but are bruised, swollen by the slaps, the punches, His tresses totally bereft of comeliness. His neck, once a tower of ivory [Ct 7:4], is livid and bruised from the ropes they used to drag Him along like an animal. His shoulders, His back, His sides and legs, all are lacerated by the whips. And, o my God, on what a bed of pain they place Him now, and stretch Him out!

475: O God, how those arms and wrists are stretched and cut and by such crude knots. Now He is fully flattened out on the Cross. **And His hands and His feet are contorted... those very hands and feet that offer themselves now to the nails. The measure is taken for the blows, and how heavy are the hammers raised above. Dear God! It seems that even before they fall, the blows strike my very heart...** I cannot stand, beloved hearers, I cannot stand these particulars that are so atrocious, so sensitive. Let us proceed rather to consider the kind of pain being administered.

476: There is no doubt that among all the deaths that of the Cross is the most bitter. We have this on the testimony even of those gentile authors, who, even though they were living in the most barbarous times in which there was no form of torment that was unknown, or unused to carry out execution on condemned unfortunates. These writers, therefore, can offer a sure witness. In fact, on the Cross the greatest torment that the wretched guilty one endured was suffered precisely in those parts of the body where the nerves are the most active. Hence, the most sensitive areas of all seem to be the **hands and feet**. The weight of the body itself as it hangs, increases continuously the agony. And the slowness of the distress renders the death all the more bitter, as it is all the more slow.

477: Not only are all the other forms of execution surpassed by that of the Cross, but all other kinds seem to be compressed and included in this one alone. Therefore, the gashes brought by the swords, the pulling and drawing of other instruments of torture, the tearing of the limbs, being crushed by wild beasts, all this followed by convulsions, the spasms of the most acute suffering - it was like a fire that burned deep within, literally broiling His members and slowly consuming Him.

478: Furthermore, along these same lines, just see how this awful pain inflicted upon Jesus almost exceeds, and it might even be said, transcends Him. The reason is that He was afflicted not only in His hands and feet, but in all the parts of His body. He was wounded in every way, and in an instant was the recipient of most acute distress. And these terrible wounds became all the more sorrowful as they were reopened as He as furiously stripped of His garments. These had been draped over

Him after the flagellation, and had become attached to the forming scabs. This was all very crudely intensified when He was most roughly stretched out on the Cross to bring the arms to the holes already made to nail Him to them. This stretching was so excessive that His bones were dislocated from their proper place. His suffering was augmented even further when the Cross with Him affixed to it was raised up, and then dropped into the deep slit in the ground prepared for it. With this, His distended body was horribly shaken.

479: Job complained bitterly that the demon, who had become his tormentor, had left nothing well, other than the lips about his teeth [Jb 19:20]. Jesus' executioners, however, did not even leave a single member of His entire body unwounded. They even willed that not even any one of His senses should remain without its own particular torment. With gall, they embittered His taste: to torment His sense of smell, they crucified Him in that place which because of the number of bodies buried there, was most fetid; they continuously wounded His hearing with the most horrible shouts, with insults and the most biting sayings, and the most enormous curses. For His sense of sight, they had prepared its own particular torment: right before His eyes they hurled scorn at Him as He languished, they made fun of His groans and laughed at His pain.

480: And so, after having tormented His body in every way, they insidiously took steps to wound even more profoundly His spirit. What more bitter wound could there be for a loving hart than to see one's death being obtained, but being subjected to insults unto death, precisely by those for whose salvation He has chosen to die? And what deeper laceration could there be for that hart that is already wounded and full of compunction for the sins of all, of all human beings who ever were, or ever will be until the end of time for whom He underwent all this, and for each one is particular? Did He not suffer all this especially for those committing the horrendous crime of Deicide? Was it not He personally Who experienced most bitter contrition as if all these were His own sins, in that He had applied to Himself these words: ... *these are the words of my sins..* [Ps 21:2].

481: Nonetheless, Jesus prays even for them, and also excuses them: ... *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do...* [Lk 23:34]. Yet they do know how cleverly to curse Him: '*...He saved others..*', they derided Him, saying: '*Let Him save Himself...*' [v. 35]. And these are the leaders of the people, and there are Levites among them, and they are the well-educated among them who talk this way. As for the vile members among the crowd, and even the thieves crucified with Him, all join in insulting Him: ... *If You be the Christ, save Yourself...!* [v. 39]. At these wicked voices, the sun left this world, ... *and there was darkness over all the earth...* [v. 44]. And what about Jesus through all this? If even one of them would withdraw into himself and recognize his sin, Jesus is ready to say to him: ... *this day you shall be with Me in paradise...!* [v. 43].

482: But, even this actually aggravated His pain. Thieves are saved: "but, My People, My Chosen Nation; My dear Disciple, and Judas are damned." Only one repents and he will be followed by so few. The greater part of those for whom I suffer

so much will profit nothing by My distress. What good will there be from so much blood being poured out? [Ps 29:10]. For many, all this blood will serve only for judgment [1 Co 11:29], and this Cross will prove only to be a scandal [1 Co 1:23]. He sighs heavenward, and then looks in great affliction toward the ground, and there He sees Mary.

483: At this sight, the bitter floods of compassionate suffering that had inundated the Mother's heart, turn in all their might an impetus, to the most bitter sea of pain [Lm 2:13]. They rush into the Son's heart, and He is overwhelmed by them, as this time the tide sweeps all in its wake.

Sharing thus in His pains, only increases them in the Son. The barbarians do not block her in this, but only deny her the possibility of extending comfort to Him. There is no veil allowed to cover the confusion of His nudity, nor is there permitted a drop of relief to His dying lips burning with fever.

Mary weeps, and with her, John does too: "... Ah, woman [Jesus no longer says, 'Mother'] ... I now leave you. Behold the one who from now on will be your son in My place [cf. Jn 19:26]. ...And then He turned to the disciple... [v. 27]. And she, He said, now that I have to leave, will be your Mother".

484: Now from that heaving chest, His panting breath blocks His throat. At the violent shaking of His body, all His members shake in convulsion, and the whites of His eyes appear. O God! Jesus is dying! But, no, my listeners: the end of His sufferings has not yet come. This is but the natural horror of death, it is the love for her life, and one that is so precious, and a life that is so dear. This combat between love and life together seem to exhaust His nature. It is a veritable flood of pains arising from every part of His body, and rushing up out of His spirit, that they seem almost to bring shipwreck to His heart. This distress transcends all human judgment, or experience, in that Jesus' senses are the more perfect and thus more capable of suffering.

485: His Body is that formed of the most pure blood of the Virgin and through a miracle formed immediately by the Holy Spirit. So, in the words of St. Bonaventure¹², His body was all the more delicate, and therefore, the more sensitive. The sole of His feet was more capable of pain than would be the pupil of our eyes.

Christ's soul, both because of the sublime excellence of His mind, and the immense depths of His Heart, was, as St. Thomas teaches ¹³, the most disposed to be saddened to a supreme degree for all the motives for sadness that came to Him in abundance.

¹²St. Bonaventure [precise citation not given].

¹³St. Thomas Aquinas, III, q. 46, a. 6.

486: Would that at least this humanity that was agonizing in the dolors and the sadness of the most tormenting punishment, have had at least some comfort from the Divinity, conjoined and inseparable to it! But, what do these words entail: *...My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me...?* [Ps 21:2; Mt 27:46] - if not to mean: is it not so that the Divinity, as far as easing My human nature from its distress, conducts itself with this humanity as though it were not conjoined to it by any union? And not only by a prodigious barrier there is kept in full His glory in the superior part of My soul - but, this very glory, immovable in Me, of a blessed fruition, also militates in Me to even greater discomfort.

487: Even if in others who suffer there is often mitigated either the sadness of the spirit, or the dolor of the body, by reflections that appeal to reason - in this case, by a certain redundancy of the superior forces over those that are inferior, there was closed to Me this path of consolation. And so, since the way to every torment is open in My Body and in My Spirit, with all natural efficacy, thus - every sense, or strength, or potency, is allowed to suffer. This holds true in all intensity and purity for that sadness and that dolor proper to them.

O, all of you, therefore, who pass by today in compassionate meditation along the path signed by My pain, fix upon Me the look of your contemplation, *... and see if there be any sorrow like to My sorrow...* [Lm 1:12]. O, my Jesus!

488: But, does not the sheer power of Your love not diminish Your pains, or at least, Your interior sadness? Is it not this powerful love that forces You to say: *.../thirst...!* [Jn 19:28]. Is not this the thirst for the salvation of souls, a thirst of suffering even more for their salvation?

So, my listeners, thus His sufferings increase beyond measure. Therefore, if He willingly assumed these in order to liberate us from sin, then He had to take them on in such quantity that they would be in proportion to the greatness of the fruit that He desired. This quantity and proportion He achieved not only by the strength and by the worth that His Divinity always united to His pain and dolor. Hence, even a single drop of His blood was superabundant in removing all the sins of the whole world. Even further, even according to His human nature alone, His distress would have had a certain sufficiency, and His pain would have achieved a notable satisfaction. The reason is that He emptied all of His blood from His veins under the crushing press of the most tormenting execution.

489: O Eternal Father! Your will, Your Decree is now accomplished by me. Now the human race is liberated from sin, not by power alone, indeed possible for Your omnipotence. But, all is accomplished with justice and with full rigor of justice, as Your violated honor required of Me: *... it is consummated..!* [Jn 19:30]. Your justice is satisfied. Enormous was the debt of human sin - and enormous were the pains that My will, in harmony with Yours, assumed in this torture. In this distress, My very life is now lost, and is rather consumed. *... It is consummated... Into Your hands I commend My Spirit...!* [Lk 23:46]. And here, Jesus bows His head and dies.

490: So dies the Just Man. In a most tormenting torture, condemned by a most unjust sentence, by the most perfidious betrayal. Thus, Jesus' suffering ends. Here His enemies have ceased tormenting Him, but their cruelties have not yet terminated. **They insult Him even in death, they lash out against His dead body. With a lance, they open in His dead body a large wound on His right side. The cruel iron penetrates right through to His heart, and the point comes out the other side. What cruelty! what barbarity! O supreme injury! even worse than the torture itself! O, our love, Jesus! O, who would give to us that dead and bloody body, that we might make reparation with the just obsequies of our tears for the most atrocious injuries of those cruel men!**

491: O my God! Look at Him, my hearers. Unleash your hearts, loosen the bonds of your tears, satisfy the warm affections of your compassion. The motive is all too just, honest - this alone is reason enough to cry, to weep. You are alone on this day to offer your compassion for this innocent, betrayed Man, this Just Man Who has been condemned, this Crucified Love. Weep for Him. He is Your Father, Your Redeemer. It was for you, for you, that He chose to die. This tribute of your tears is all that the One Who gave all His blood for you is asking.

492: O God! Stop ... What do I hear?... Alas, do you also hear the eloquence of this blood. I am shaking... and I tremble. And what about you? Is your heart still deaf? Well, must I tell you what I feel, that these **wounds** correspond to our tears? But, even better, pay close attention yourselves. Listen: ... *weep not over Me...!* [Lk 23:28]. Does this mean, then, that Jesus refuses the tribute of our tears? But, how can this be? Listen as He goes on: ... *but, weep for yourselves and your children...!* [ib]. O God! I understand You, I get it. Our sins are the sole reason for Your suffering.

493: Let us weep, then, Ladies and Gentlemen, let us weep, all of us. Mourn for Jesus, but let our hearts feel compunction. We are the cause of the death of this Just Man. We have betrayed Him, and how many times, and at what price! Just for some sordid gain, for some unclean pleasure. We have been unfaithful to promises made, ungrateful for gifts received, with no understanding of His love. We have been more perfidious than Judas, the traitor. What betrayal, what perfidy, what sin! Pardon, my Jesus, give me pardon: give vent to your tears always. Let us commit no more sins, no more sins.

494: O God, just what have we ever accomplished by sinning! What injury have we heaped on Jesus! We have placed the King of Heaven below the mud of our own bodies. What should have died in us was that degrading passion, and yet our evil will cried instead: Let Jesus die, let Him be crucified, but long life to that passion in us. What perversity of judgment, what injustice of choice, what disorder of sin! Give me pardon, O Jesus, pardon! Let us sin no more, no more sins! Death to sin, let sin be put to death! Our evil will is condemned to perpetual contrition. As long as life lasts, these eyes of ours will find good reason to weep - this heart of ours should feel sorrow - these members, suffer.

495: Give to us, O Lord, give to us these thorns that pierce the temples, the horrible fruit of our bad thoughts. **Give us those nails, tragic result of our bold and lascivious hands and feet.** Give to us this cross, shameful accounting for our sin. Our pride, our anger, our gluttony, our lasciviousness, all are Your Cross. We have put You to death, we have crucified You. What cruelty, what barbarity!

496: **And even dead, our scandals continue to lacerate this Body, to wound this side, to open Your Heart, to wrench from You the souls that are so dear to You, and to snatch them from Your paternal bosom.** And your veins are emptied still, this blood is bludgeoned out by us. He is trampled underfoot on every corner, in every street, and in every square by so many blasphemies. He is trampled underfoot in these temples, at the very feet of these altars, with so many sacrilegious profanations. He is still being trampled underfoot in every place, at all hours, by all of us, washed clean from sin so many times by this blood - yet, we sin, and we go on sinning.

497: What supreme fury! What heights of cruelty! How excessive the sin! And should anyone not know what sin is, come to the Cross and learn. Right now, I myself will place it before your eyes, I will stretch it out at your feet. And whoever has not sinned, I am content that such a one would not have to weep this evening. But, we sinners, we who have re-crucified this Son of God so many times in ourselves - we who have trampled underfoot the Blood of the Covenant: we should weep, we should all weep, and weep even more.

498: This is most suitable for us, all of us who would merit to weep eternally, buried in hell, even below the perfidious Judas; worse than the evil Hebrews, even the very demons themselves. We have beaten all these in perfidy, in insult, in cruelty. It could very well be that the last blow awaits us in the next few minutes. Let us all weep, Ladies and Gentlemen, before this day of copious Redemption and Salvation draws to a close, and gives way to the day of wrath and vengeance. Let us cry at the feet of the deceased Christ, Who reaches out to us - before He turns in His Majesty and in His anger to pass judgment on our fault. Let us weep, Ladies and Gentlemen, let us weep even more. It is more than helpful for us to weep this day. For this is the day in which pardon is extended even to the crucifiers. This is the day in which Jesus manifests to us His Mercy and gives us His blessing as pledge.

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499:**SERMON 5****The Ascension**

Preached in the Parish Church of St. Paul's in the Campo Marzio section of Verona, on the 14th day of Mary in the year 1801.

At the harmonious sound of the angelic trumpets [Ps 46:6], at the joyful jubilation, Jesus in triumph ascends toward His Kingdom. I am quite sure, devout listeners, that you, too, direct your yearning on this day toward heaven. There you have affixed your hearts where indeed is guaranteed happiness¹⁴, where there is perfect beatitude and where peace is eternal. You are indeed exultant, animated by these noble promises with which Jesus consoled you before His departure, when He said: *...I go to prepare a place for you...* [Jn 14:2]. Indeed, your affections have been inspired and placed on such a sublime level.

500: But look, it would not be terribly offensive to your inspired charity to direct a compassionate regard toward so many of your brothers and sisters. They, too, are participants with you in the same promises, and yet, they are discouraged with their eyes lowered. The reason is that they are afraid of being forced to give up those wretched delights that they still badly enjoy. They make no effort, therefore, or they lack the confidence to lift up their eyes boldly toward heaven to where they have also been called.

501: PROPOSITION

As for me, I have to confess, the pain that I feel at their loss does not allow me to do anything other than to direct my words up this day for their salvation. In order to shake them up, I will make clear to them just how stupid it is for anyone to deliberately enjoy the present goods at the cost of an irreparable future good. You should not refuse to extend your helping hands in the form of your most fervent prayers. If you do, then I have absolutely no doubt that we will succeed in lifting them up out of their most sorry abjection.

502: 1. The first point is that one should come to elect quality goods in contrast with those that are excessively inferior; in other words, the choice is between short-lived goods as against those that are eternal.

Let us imagine, then, my brother or sister in sin, that you could accept as directed to you all my words this day. Let us just imagine for a little while that it were possible for us to choose one of these two realities: either to enjoy for a single night a pleasant dream, and then on awaking the next day, to be confronted with a series of misfortunes that should have to last the rest of your life; or, to go without that very brief and only apparent sweetness, and even be willing to suffer a somewhat sad

¹⁴cf. Liturgy for the 4th Sunday after Easter.

dream, but with the assurance, however, that there would be placed in our hands until death all the goods that this earth could offer ¹⁵.

503: Should there be anyone, desirous of that vain happiness of a short dream, who would be content to lose an entire life-time of joy, then I do not know what judgment to make. It would be hard to say whether such a one making such an extravagant choice would merit the more to be pitied as imprudent - or rather derided as ridiculous. What else is this present life than a fleeting dream, a waft of smoke, a shadow, a vapor, that dissipates when confronted with eternity? The choice now is up to you: either to enjoy in this short dream some delight forced out of creatures, as it were - or, to enjoy a blessed life that would know no end.

504: That such a choice is given to you, you have from the very words of Christ: *...the world shall rejoice; and you shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy...* [Jn 16:20]. And do you resolve to rejoice now with the world and thus lose eternal joy? And are you not ashamed of yourself to entertain such a sorry deliberation? What opinion can the truly wise form regarding your judgment? Is not this already some indication of that rectitude of understanding with which each and every one of you, to your great honor have been endowed by God?

505: But, I do not want to find any further fault with you in this since I notice that you already are beginning to be a little ashamed of yourself; I can see that such an unfortunate deliberation has proceeded in you rather from not fully understanding the reality as it is in itself, rather than from any malice in your mind. This is also confirmed because I notice in other matters regarding which you surely have full knowledge, as regarding affairs that have to do with the necessities of this temporal life, you make use of prudent and praiseworthy counsel. Hence, let us understand well the quality of temporal goods and heavenly goods, and then all the more clearly will you perceive the ill-judged choice of such a determination. It is not just that you elect a delight that is at best fleeting, but even more you opt for a good that is only apparent over one that is authentic.

506: Apparent goods, over those that are authentic: Indeed, what are these benefits that are enjoyed in the brief dream that this life is, if not just that, goods that are merely dreamed? The avaricious person dreams of having his hands full of gold and silver - but, then with the new day, he gets up thinking that he is still clutching that wealth in his hands, but rather finds his hands empty. Thus is the way it is with the goods of this world, says the Holy Spirit - Who, however, speaking of those persons who abound in this, thus expresses Himself?

They have slept their sleep; and all the men of riches have found nothing in their hands... [Is 75:6]. And just as the illusion of a dream that does not render the state of anyone more comfortable than that of the poor person. He has dreamt that he had become rich, but this only increased his wretchedness realizing to his greater inner sorrow that he was indeed bereft of the wealth that with such pleasure he

¹⁵St/ John Chrysostom *Ad Theod. lapsum*, Bk. 9, t. 1, 8/1 A.

imagined that he possessed. Much like this, the goods of this present time will never satisfy our hearts. This is an evident sign that such appurtenances are not all that they seem to be.

507: Just listen for a minute: what else does that emptiness mean that you experience after having satisfied your passions; after you have not denied your senses some pleasure that is really forbidden to you? What is that inner yearning, always desirous of other trappings, of ever new delights, over and above those that you achieve only after much effort? What is that regret that still weighs on your heart, and what is this restlessness that only increases, as your desires intensify even the more? Is it not that you are something like a feverish person who wrongly thinks that with just a little water he might be able to extinguish the burning fever, and yet seems to increase it even further?

508: These are inadequate benefits, in comparison to the last end, which is perfect beatitude: But, I would like to point out that these goods seem to be genuine. However, they are not adequate for the deepest yearnings of our hearts: and this is why they can never be fully satisfying. Whatever delight and joy that might quiet our spirit put in motion by desires spring from the application of the faculties to objects pleasing to them. However, the object of any being, practically infinite in its desires, can only be an infinite good. How, then, can we want such insignificant rewards, that are so limited, for our satisfaction? If indeed our heart is as vast as another ocean, how could these little streamlets of water ever fill the immensity of its capacity?

509: O, but in heaven, only in heaven will we ever find an object suitable to our heart: a God, an infinite good. O, my God, only then, then only will I be satiated, when Your glory will appear [s 16:15]. Only You can slake my deepest yearnings with the torrent of Your delights [Ps 35:9]. This is why You have created me with an insatiable heart, that it might come to understand that it has been made for You, and that it will always be restless until it rests in You ¹⁶. Human heart, understand your folly! Just to enjoy a passing dream, you would lose eternal beatitude. You chase after the shadows, vanity, and you leave the genuine good, Uncreated Beauty, you lose that God Who is everything.

510: 2. In the last analysis, it is only a matter of depriving yourself of just a few counterfeit goods, and delights that are really base.

These arguments that I have advanced up to now prove of themselves that whenever it is a question of renouncing each and every one of the goods and the pleasures of this life in order to be assured of eternal blessings, it would be supreme folly to prefer the present over the future. However, it is not necessary to go this far. God did not forbid Adam from enjoying all the fruits of the earthly paradise: He forbade only one tree. And the condition with which Adam could have assured for himself and for all his descendants his felicity was so easy to comply with, that his bad judgment is all the more deplorable when he lost so much for such a small gain.

¹⁶St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Bk 1, t. 1, 69 B.

511: This is our own situation now. Are those delights truly honest ones, and are those pleasures truly innocent that you enjoy so much? If so, then continue to enjoy them. However if due to bad intentions of your mind, or if there is an unregulated manner in which you make use of them, or if you love them - you yourself make illicit what, in other circumstances, could become licit. Nothing other is being asked of you than that you reform your heart and that you regulate the use of these realities. Hence, it is apparent that you can indeed enjoy these benefits or delights in this life provided they are correct in themselves, or that they can be rendered good by your manner of making use of them. In this way, you can pass on to eternal joy of heaven, as passing over from what is imperfect to what is more perfect. What it really all comes down to is the necessity of depriving yourself from those false goods and pleasures which are already unworthy in themselves. The reason here is that there is nothing that can change the nature of evil that is intrinsic to these.

512: And will not your poor judgment be all the worse when it is simply a matter of giving up some very insignificant delight that would dishonor your right reason with its malice? Is it not true that you can enjoy abundantly other benefits promised to you? Why would you be willing to lose eternal delights which are promised to you and which, by contrast, and so incomparably advantageous to you? Even further, you really do not have to wait all that long, as in this life as well, you will be compensated with a superabundance of joy.

513: 3. Because such deprivation will be compensated with an even greater delight:

In fact, even before condemnation to hell, a life of vice forms also in this life in its unfortunate followers, a very grave torment of bitterness and bother. By contrast, virtue is not slow in rewarding its noble lovers, nor does it wait long to crown them with immortal glory in heaven. But, it showers in the meantime with anticipated delights their entire life with sweet hopes nourished with pure pleasure ¹⁷.

514: But, pay no heed to my words, any of you who perhaps is used to looking at a mortified and virtuous life as one of melancholy and sadness: I would not be surprised. The sick person believes that wine is bitter and that music is bothersome, while the healthy individual enjoys its taste and takes pleasure in its sweetness. As long as Augustine lay in the filth of his own pleasures, he himself confesses that it seemed impossible for him to live, in that he could find no comfort outside of them. But, when he made the generous resolution to hold back his passion from those unclean pleasures, he himself tells us ¹⁸: O, how very quickly, how very soon was I able to experience the sweetness of being deprived from that vain sweetness! And those pleasures that just a short while before I had dreaded losing, were now a delight to leave behind - since You, o my God, You expelled them from me. You Who are true and supreme Sweetness, You ejected them, and You entered Yourself in their place, much more sweet than every supreme delight.

¹⁷St. John Chrysostom, *In Ps 124.*, 2 t. 5, 216/ B, C.

¹⁸St. Augustine, *Confessions*, 9, 1. t. 1, 157/B.

515: For this, you could very well believe a person who, after having experienced the bother of illness, the sweetness of restored health is made all the more evident. Let us conclude, then. If the deprivation of some benefit and of a very vile pleasure is compensated not only with an immense excess of beatitude in heaven, but also with the superabundance of joy even on this earth, then what is the extent of poor judgment of anyone who would decide not to give them up - even at the cost of having to lose forever one's future perfect and ultimate happiness? I leave this for you to judge and do reflect upon for a while, until I catch my breath, and then will draw this to a conclusion.

516: PERORATION: And now, sinner, here you are, and all are waiting for your resolution. Yes, all await it. We wait for it impatiently as he desire of all of us, for whom the salvation of your soul is as much in our hearts as our own is. God knows with how much affection, we have begged today for your conversion, and we have not even yet given up the most fervent appeals to obtain it.

517: Heaven awaits it, that I see opened up, above your head. Jesus is sitting there at the right hand of God [[Ac 7:55](#)]. He is holding between His hands a crown, and He is inviting you to win it with the victory over that passion of yours. I can see all the saints, who are encouraging you onward to come to where they are now. Do not be afraid, they are saying, do not put it off. Even to us, this ascent seemed too difficult, but the grace in which we placed our confidence, has made it very easy for us, all sweetness, by extending its living arms out toward our weakness. Many of us living in this land have sinned just like you have and perhaps even more than you have. However, since fortunately in good time we have renounced the vain pleasures of this world, confiding in the mercies of God. And this is why we are now here to give praise to those mercies forever.

518: I can see that the Angels are preparing already to place everything in Paradise in motion for a new, most joyful festival, for the conversion of your heart which they feel is by now proximate. What more? Hell, too, is waiting, with indignant agitation and with fear of your resolutions. And I can almost see it yawning wide at your feet. This is the moment that decides - perhaps it will snatch you to have you lost forever. They are very much afraid, these enemies of yours, offering temptation that the vision of heaven and of so many eternal and incomparable blessings that are being promised to you, might in the long run move you to resolve to cast aside these very empty earthly delights, with which they have for so long filled your hearts' desire.

519: What do you think, then, what are you going to do? What do you decide? What are your resolutions? Are you still uncertain? Are you still doubtful? But, if you want to go on living as you now do, there is no need to make any resolution. Hell is for you. And I can already see that the demons are making even greater efforts to tighten your chains, while you delay making the resolution of escaping from their hands. Come on, now. If you do resolve, resolve in this very instant. The grace of

God does not know of slow preparations ¹⁹. Have you, therefore, resolved to kick aside your unregulated passions? Yes, you have, I no longer have any doubts. It would be already an indication of poor judgment that you have not done this before; but, it would seem absolutely impossible that you do not do it at this moment.

520: Lift up your eyes boldly to heaven. Yes, heaven is yours. Already at this hour the Saints of heaven recognize you as their fellow-citizen. Jesus has already prepared the place that you are to occupy, the glory with which He wants to reward you. He already disposes the graces to assist you even unto the final realization. All the high-ways and by-ways of the heavenly city resound with most joy-filled chants and with most sweet music, with which they celebrate as a festival this most blessed moment of your conversion.

521: O, my God, my Jesus! If this is the way it is, if this is the state of the matter, I cannot longer put it off. The proposal of this soul who hands himself over to you - by the words of a poor sinner such as I am, assisted by your grace - and by the intercession of so many prayers of such a pious and devout audience - have gained on this day even a single happy soul to be added to the squads of those blessed souls, like happy prisoners, conquered by Your grace - they now form the most solemn pomp of Your triumph, following Your glorious Ascension into heaven. If this is the way it is, then, I do not request of You any other consolations for myself, no other comforts in the hardships of my life and my spirit. This is enough for me, joined to the hope with which I trust that my innumerable sins are benignly condoned, I will be together with all of these, my devout brothers and sisters, after these few days, to enjoy your glory forever.

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Sources

<u>OT</u>		<u>NT</u>	
Bible quote	MssB #	Bible quote	MssB #
Ps 16:15	509	Jn 14:2	499
Ps 35:9	509	Jn 16:20	504
Ps 46:6	499	Ac 7:55	517

¹⁹St. Ambrose, *In Luc.* 2, 19. t. 1, 1288/ E.

Liturgy

4th Sunday after Easter	# 499
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Fathers and Doctors

St. Ambrose, <i>In Luc</i>, 2, 19. t. 1, 1288 E	# 519
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St. Augustine, <i>Confessions</i>, Bk 1. t. 1, 69, B	# 509
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<i>Confessions</i>, Bk 9, 1. 1, 157/B	# 514
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St. John Chrysostom, <i>Ad Theod. lapsum</i>. 1,9. t. 1. 8/1 A	# 502
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<i>In Psalm 124, 2 t. 5, 216, 2/B</i>	# 513
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522:**SERMON 6****Charity towards our Neighbor**

Delivered in the Parish Church of St. Paul's in the Campo Marzio section of Verona, on the 21st of June in the year 1801, on the Fifth Sunday dedicated to St. Aloysius Gonzaga.

A virginal purity, really angelic - an heroic rigor of penance - a most sublime and almost uninterrupted contemplation of spirit along with other similar virtues and gifts, are presented to you, devoted listeners, for your reverence, with obsequious admiration, as well as for your emulation of your beloved St. Aloysius Gonzaga.

Keep all these before your minds, as the most sublime, as well as the most perfect form of life to imitate.

523: Just notice, however, how I believe that I am sufficiently sustained by a doctrine as certain as it is clear, of the Apostle. This removes all fear from saying openly what I am going to state in proposing to you today better gifts to emulate in your saint [1 Co 12:31]. This is a more excellent path to show you, which you can follow in his noble footsteps with greater assurances. This will enable you to arrive more comfortably, whenever you want to do so at that sublime indication of perfection to which you see that He has arrived. If such a lofty ideal should disturb you, have the precise words of the Apostle ready for you to present to you immediately. Just listen: *... but, the greatest of these is charity...* [1 Co 13:13].

524: Yes, my listeners. If you notice all the other virtues of this angelic young man shining forth, like so many stars in another spiritual heaven in his beautiful soul, charity stands out among them all like a brilliant sun that surpasses all the others with its splendor and with its excellence. Charity not only conquers them, much like less noble and lesser stars, but they receive from his charity that light which is so beautiful that they are enflamed by it. The reason is that charity is the form, the complement and the crown of all virtues ²⁰.

THEME: This is precisely the virtue that I propose to you this day to imitate in St. Aloysius: in the way he lived it and practiced it with such perfection. This will be so that you will now hear from me here, if you will choose to favor me with your customary patient attention.

²⁰St. Thomas Aquinas, II-II, q. 4, a. 3, etc.; St. Albert the Great [no citation]

525: DEFINITION ²¹:

Charity is the perfect friendship that passes between us and God, which, however, from God's perspective, is extended also to our neighbor. It is a reality that is totally of God and totally pertaining to God ²². Each neighbor is created by God to His image, redeemed with His Blood and made by him capable along with us for eternal beatitude. It is in the communication of this that this entire holy love is based.

526: REDUCTION: It is precisely about this holy friendship of charity, in so far as it is extended to our neighbor, that I must speak to you this day, and nothing else. So that I might not go beyond the limits already marked out for me, I would like first of all to show it to you as in a vivid **portrait**, just as the Apostle had precisely described it for you. There it has such distinct characteristics that you simply could not but come to know it with perfection.

527: DESCRIPTION [1 Co 13:4, ff.]²³:

Charity, the Apostle says in the very first place, is patient in supporting the defects of one's neighbor: ... *charity is patient...*

It is kind for the purpose of gaining with sweetness the souls of one's brothers and sisters for Christ: ... *[charity] is kind...*

Yearning for their eternal salvation, and with this, for every good in their behalf, charity does not envy their prosperity: ... *[charity] envies not...*

In order not to give them any occasion to trip upon the way to salvation, it takes special care not to work any evil: ...*[charity] deals not perversely...*

It never swells in pride for any qualities of spirit or body, by looking down on other human beings: ...*[charity] is not puffed up...*

It is not ambitious, wanting to lord it over, or dominate over others: ...*[charity] is not ambitious...* [v. 5]

Rather, in order to serve others in a pious manner, charity is entirely solicitous for the well being of others, and does not seek its own advantages: ...*[charity] seeks not her own...*

528: Whenever charity is provoked by injuries, it is not irritated into taking revenge: ...*[charity] is not provoked to anger...*

It never thinks badly of others, but also puts the best possible light on situations, while maintaining the truth, seeking only emendation: ...*[charity] thinks no evil...*

It weeps over the sins of others as though they were one's own, and never rejoices in any iniquity: ...*[charity] rejoices not in iniquity ...* [v. 6].

Charity always seeks to further the genuine virtues of others, is exultant in, and rejoices with the truth: ...*[charity] rejoices with the truth...*

Charity, then: ... *Bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things...* [v. 7].

²¹St. Thomas Aquinas, II-II, q. 23, a. 1 c, et ad 1 um.

²²Antoine, *De caritate prox.*, t. 1, 200.

²³Nat. Alex., *De Caritate Prox*; Concina, ib.; St. John Chrysostom, *In Epist. S. Pauli*, ib, Hom. 33. t. 10, 178, 1, ff.

Charity does all this out of love for one's neighbor, whenever it is a matter of procuring authentic good for the other. In this life, this is principally grace, and for the future life, it is glory. In this way, charity knows that it brings great pleasure to that God for Whose love it is gently moved to love its neighbor.

529: INTRODUCTION: Of all these characteristics of charity, for the love of brevity be content that I choose only one. This one seems to me to be the most proper and special, so I will try to point it out as the expression of this most excellent virtue in the life of our Saint: ...[charity] seeks not her own... [v. 5]. Anyone who genuinely loves with an authentic friendship ought to seek what is most useful for the friend - whereas, anyone who seeks what is useful for one's own pleasure in the friend, such a person is more in love with himself, and indeed, does not love the friend ²⁴.

530: 1. In what manner, and with what perfection, St. Aloysius Gonzaga practiced it:

What more luminous proof could we desire in St. Aloysius than that which he gave that time in Rome. There was a terrible plague there, and he threw himself into the care of others with such little concern for his own life. He exposed his own health to danger for the comforting of his afflicted neighbors. He went directly to the place where the disease raged with greater ferocity, in the public hospitals. Did he not show in a brief time that he had much to lose by contacting the common scourge ...[charity] seeks not her own... [v. 5].

531: And so, what wonder is there that he, out of love for his neighbor, had manifested a most sublime act of perfection? He thereby surrendered his life that he most willingly sought to exchange with the perfect union with Christ! It is the more to be amazed that he had been called by an extraordinary gift of a truly celestial union with God, also on earth. He even surrendered in part this sweetness out of pure zeal for the salvation of the souls of his brothers and sisters.

532: For, what other reason did he have for abandoning the thought, that had already taken shape with him, in accord with the most sweet inclination of his affections, to enter into a cloister of peaceful solitary contemplation? And Who was it that drew him instead to give his name to that Company just shortly before instituted by that great saint, and companion of Christ, Ignatius of Loyola? Was it not so that there, in an almost perpetual exercise of apostolic discipline, new soldiers were being prepared to sally forth into the open field, and there sustain the heavy weight of the most arduous and fatiguing expeditions? What else could have moved him, if not charity, which does not look out for what is one's own, but rather what is for the benefit of others, for the greater glory of God? What love, what zeal, and what charity, not unworthy of the most fervent apostolic heart, of a St. Paul?

²⁴St. Thomas Aquinas, I - II, q. 66, a. 6, ad 2 um.

533: Do you not see now, my listeners, with what a display of light of mid-afternoon that this soul flames out in St. Aloysius? But, sad to say, that in the face of such light I can hardly perceive that there scarcely appears our charity as nothing more than an excessively languid flicker. Who is there among us who would be willing - I dare not say to be disposed in this same way, to surrender his life out of love for other human beings, as this is proper only to the already perfect ²⁵? But, would any of us be willing to hand over what is superfluous of those riches to be distributed to sustain another human being, perhaps already struggling out of hunger - as this would hardly fulfill the simple precept? Who would, out of zeal for other human beings - I would not ask it - who would renounce spiritual consolations and undertake extraordinary endeavors, such as Aloysius gave such clear indications of doing? But, even would there be any among us who with the discreet use of fraternal correction, at last by good example, or by prayer, would be dedicated to recover another human being? Would it not be a demand of ordinary virtue that it is required to observe, without going beyond it, that rigorous precept which God: ... *gave to everyone of them commandments concerning his neighbor...* [Si 17:12]?

534: How, and in what manner, it is proper for us to imitate Him: Come on now, it is only this to which the precept obliges you - just this little bit, and nothing more. This is what I would like to propose to you today, and by so doing, you might in some manner, even though from a great distance, imitate St. Aloysius his charity. This is what he principally distinguished himself in, not in seeking what was his own, but seeking only what was best for his neighbor.

535: But, my God! If everyone from now on, if all this day should no longer seek anything that is useful beyond their own interest, their own taste, what is useful, just for them! ... *For all seek the things that are their own...* [Ph 2:21]. Now, therefore, can so little be hoped for? What should I do, then? Should I become disheartened? Should I give this all up? But no - but, rather here I am trying to catch you with the same nets. You, therefore, seek nothing other than what is best for you. And I will tell you that you could never have what is truly best for you, when you do not take every care for that which is to your neighbor's benefit ²⁶.

536: Motive of Usefulness: For now, you have to grant me that all our advantages are in the hand of God and depend on God: as for the spiritual benefits, this is already manifested. As for those of the temporal order it is already very clear as St. Paul stated when he said [1 Co 3:7]: ...*neither he that plants, is anything, nor he that waters; but it is God who gives the increase...* In fact, all is in God's hands: the favorable, or adverse seasons; the fertile rains, or the destroying hail; the wars that destroy the friendly piece of art and commerce - and so many other similar matters. All are independent totally from human industry and are solely subjected to the free and most provident will of God, which may concur for our usefulness, or disadvantage.

²⁵St. Thomas Aquinas, *In Io. XV*, , 24. t. 3, 779.

²⁶St. John Chrysostom, *In I Cor.* Hom. 13, 3. t. 10, 180.2 B.

537: Now what would you say if God had bound all our advantages to the care that we ought to have for our neighbor ²⁷? This is the way it is, as I will point out to you clearly in the Scriptures, which is the same as saying it is based on immutable decrees. You will find it written in Proverbs 19:17: *... He that has mercy on the poor, lends to the Lord and He will repay him...* For confirmation, just read Malachias 3:10: *... try me in this, says the Lord: if I open not to you the flood gates of heaven, and pour you out a blessing even in abundance...* In Proverb again, we read: *... he that despises the entreaty of the poor shall suffer indigence...* [Pr 3:27].

538: Let us come now to the spiritual advantages, which are the more desirable. Is it not God Himself, Who - as Isaiah says, speaking of the generous man who redresses the afflictions of his neighbor is promised that his soul: *... shall be like a watered garden, and like a fountain of water whose waters shall never fail...* [Is 58:11]. And once again, the Book of Proverbs states: *... He that stops his ear against the cry of the poor, shall also cry himself [to the throne of Mercy] and shall not be heard...*

539: Listen finally to the New Law: *...for with what measure you meter, it shall be measured to you again...* [Mt 7:2]. This is what the Gospels say. And again, in the Catholic Epistle of James: *... pray for one another that you may be saved...* [Jas 5:16]. And there, after having shown how efficacious is such prayer, concludes with this motivation: *... He must know that he who causes a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins...* [Jas 5:20].

540: And here note Tirinus ²⁸ where we read: “...he will save his soul...” The reading here is **eius** - but, many other interpreters read **suam** in this place - such as Bede ²⁹, the Gloss ³⁰, Denis ³¹, Cornelius a Lapide ³² And this is the meaning of the expression: Anyone will save his/her soul when having been instrumental in converting another person, either by praying, or by instructing, or by drawing by example, or by other charitable interventions, as the interpreters also point out.

541: And just note these words: *...and he shall cover a multitude of sins...* [Jas 5:20]. These words are explained by Scripture itself in another place: *... charity covers all sins...* [Pr 10:12]. That means “all”, each and every one. It covers those of one’s neighbor, a very learned exponent continues ³³, those of the past as well as the present sins, by means of penance. It covers future sins by means of prudence. Charity covers one’s own sins and extinguishes them with zeal; that is, the venial

²⁷St. John Chrysostom, *In Ep. I ad Cor.*, Hom. 33, 3. t. 10. 180/2 B.

²⁸Tirinus, *ibid.*

²⁹St. Bede, *In Jas 5:20*

³⁰The Gloss, *In Jas 5:20*.

³¹Dionysius, *In Jas 5:10*.

³²Cornelius a Lapide, *In Jas 5:20*.

³³Tirinus, *loc. cit.*

sins, if we are in grace, and the penalties due to past sins. Charity also arranges it that the occasions and the dangers of falling in the future will be scarce. And, if we have been sinners, this new commitment, this solicitude and ardor of sharing in the conversion of one's neighbor, excites - and it might almost be said - merits, by a certain fittingness, the efficacious grace from God. By means of this, we are also excited to detest earlier sins, and to change our lives for the better.

542: Therefore, St. John Damascene³⁴ teaches that the most sure manner of doing away with one's own sins is the commitment to abolish those of others. This is also the constant view of St. John Chrysostom in many places³⁵, and also of many other of the more accredited interpreters of this passage.

What do you think now, my listeners? What could you desire that is ore clear, more uniform, and more expressed? Impress it well, therefore, on your minds that anyone who desires that which is best for oneself should begin by striving to find what is best for our neighbor. The not seeking for what is one's own, as charity teaches, is precisely the true, and indeed, the only way to achieve this.

543: CONCLUSION: Come on, now, revered listeners, and you, most beloved brothers in Christ. I will speak to you more with my heart than with my words. Come on, now - begin from this moment on to extend that loving care of your neighbor which is so highly recommended to you by God Himself. Resolve to do this at least for your own good, even though you should do it out of love for your common and most lovable Father Who commands you to it³⁶. But, just note how this reciprocal care weighs on His paternal and most loving affection. Whenever the gentleness of His love does not suffice to lead you to it, He has not hesitated to move you to do it by the very necessity of your best interests.

548: You are all but one body, I will conclude with St. Paul. And as I began with his words, and as with his doctrine I have brought you thus far with my preaching, such as it is: ... *you are one body...* [1 Co 12:27], And therefore, as members, you ought to be solicitous one for the other; solicitous of your mutual temporal well-being, and all the more, for that of eternity. Do you not see in our bodies³⁷ how one member helps, bears, sustains, holds up, defends, nourishes another member? It is from this reciprocal care that the health of the whole body springs, no less than that of the individual members. But, just imagine what would happen if each member would only seek its own interests: the foot would hold back in lazy repose, refusing to bear the weight of the other members. In like manner, the hand could refuse to bring the usual food to the palate; and the palate, in its turn, enjoying the taste of the food, might not end it on its way to the stomach. Or, if the digestive tract were already full, keeping everything for itself, it would deny to the other members their necessary nourishment

³⁴St. John Damascene, Commentary on Paralipomenon [Chronicles] 21

³⁵St. John Chrysostom, *De Sacerdotio*, 6, 10. t. 1, 265/10; *In Mt*, Hom. 59, 6. t. 7, 375/1 E; *In Ac. Apo.* Hom. 20, 4. t. 9, 98/2 A.

³⁶St. John Chrysostom, *In Gen.*, 9, 2. t. 4, 401/10.

³⁷St. John Chrysostom [no citation: maybe *In 1 Co 12:27*].

- what would be the end result of all this? The body would perish, as would also each of its members. This is what will happen to you if you seek only what pertains to yourselves, since: *...you are the body of Christ, and members of one another...* [1 Co 12:27]. These are beautiful words - *... one for another, the members might be mutually care for one for another...* [1 Co 12:25].

545: COLLOQUY: Behold us now, o Holy Protector, our Aloysius, as I have found these, my hearers, in the devout yearning to imitate your virtues. And I have proposed to them your charity as the most excellent of them all. I have not been lacking in any industry on my part in order to dispose them to set fire to this beautiful flame of love. There remains now only to set the fire with a most ardent peroration, all animated with zeal. But, how can these fiery sparks come out from my heart, which is so cold? To us, therefore, has been reserved this, which is the most noble undertaking, and this is why I now turn to you.

546: Please, beloved Saint, just a spark, a single one, from your roaring charity, and set it in our hearts. If you will only enkindle this vibrant flame within us, it would then spread in behalf of our neighbor. It would then be nourished, intensified, purified, and would merit to be raised up to your much desired sphere, that is, to heaven. There it would be united to God, immense Fire of Charity, by His very essence, from whence it first sprang. It would be completed in Him, as in its center, finding eternal quiet for all the centuries.

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547:**SERMON 7****Pride**

For the 10th Sunday after Pentecost - preached on the Sunday before, July 26, 1801, in the Parish Church of St. Paul's of Campo Marzio. It lasted about 36 minutes.

There is no more prevalent vice in the human heart that wreaks more commonly and with greater efficacy its slaughter. There is nothing that is more insidious that covers over and unleashes its assaults. And lastly, there is nothing that is cured with greater difficulty than pride. This is evident if we are to give faith to the Scriptures that are so clear in this point. So, do not reject this teaching that is the constant doctrine of the Masters and the Saints.

548: it is altogether reasonable, therefore, that I turn my attention and give all my strength to this matter today. Up until now, beloved brothers and sisters, in accord with the level of grace granted to me, up to the present I have exhorted you to the love of the most beautiful virtues. It seems now time that for your benefit, and for carrying out my duty, that I must now be committed to speaking to you against the more dominant vices, so that you might be forewarned against them. But, what fine and well-tempered strong sword may I make use of that is capable at a single blow, of killing this hydra with so many heads? Here it is, right here - it is the Gospel itself that puts the weapon into my hands: .. *everyone that exalts himself, shall be humbled...* [Lk 18:14].

549: In fact, a person feels nothing more than disdain, while living nothing more than exaltation. One's head swells only by thinking that the former can be avoided, while the latter gained Right here is where the deception lies.

CONJECTURAL PROPOSITION: Should such a person come to realize that pride, rather than exalting one, depresses, lowers, humiliates one, makes an about face, of the use of reason remains in his head. Then, after having confessed the error, very shortly puts aside the pride, precisely as something that excessively harms the much desired goal.

And this is why I set before myself that of leading you to touch with your hand this very day these truth, if you would be kind enough to favor my spirit with your courteous attention.

550: DEFINITION ³⁸: Pride is usually defined as a disordered appetite of one's own excellence and thus leads a person from raising himself up beyond that which is prescribed for him by divine rule and measure. This is reached by insisting on the etymology of the word as does [the following] ³⁹, as St. Thomas teaches ⁴⁰. And it

³⁸Antoine, *De Pecc. Cap.*, Chapter 7, art. 1. t.1,124; St. Thomas Aquinas, II-II, q, 162, a. 5 c.

³⁹St. Isidore, *Etym. Pecc. Orig.*, Bk. 10, c. 18

should be noted that which the Angelic Doctor teaches in the same question ⁴¹ - that in the other sins, a person pulls away from God, whether through ignorance, or weakness, or through the desire of some other good. Pride, however, brings with it aversion from God for the very reason that an individual does not wish to be subjected to God and to His Rule.

551: CONJECTURE: Even God's resolute mind of humiliating the proud: For the one who distances himself from God, which in other sins is as a consequence, of itself pertains to pride, in that its proper act is disdain of God. Boetius ⁴² writes: While all other sins flee from God, only pride rises up against Him. The proud person reaches his hand out against God [Jb 15:25], and flexes his muscles in the face of the Omnipotent. It prances against God with defiance, and is endowed with a fat head. Such a person is a rebel, as Sirach had already written: *...the beginning of the pride of man is to fall off from God...* [Si 10:14]. As to the most bold rebel, with his weapons in his fist, he goes forth to assail his supreme Sovereign, His God on His Throne, in order to despoil Him of His glory.

552: We should keep in mind that while all other Princes oppose with all the power at their command, all rebels to humble them, is our God any different? Is not He alone, the most powerful of all, a God so jealous of His own glory, as He has clearly stated in the most resolute terms, that He does not wish to cede this to others, under any conditions whatsoever? Has He not stated: *... I, the Lord, this is My name: I will not give My glory to another...* [Is 42:8]?

Could we ever imagine that God after having been offended in a point that is so delicate, would pass over it indifferently? Is it possible that when He is assaulted, He would not defend Himself - that when He is under attack, He would allow Himself to be despoiled of His most august rights? No. God resists the proud, the Scriptures cry out [Jas 4:6]. To reject contumacy, St. Ambrose writes ⁴³, God wages a very special war against pride to humiliate it, as though He were saying: so this is My adversary who does defy Me. It is up to Me, then, to respond with this blow, with this attack.

553: Even more serious, my hearers, is that in this wicked rebellion, the proud person uses no other arms than the very gifts that he has received from God. The rebel raises these gifts up in defiance, and rather than laying down his crown before the Throne of God [Apoc. 4:10], he refers all to himself as though it were his own merit. He wants to have others attribute to him all that glory that is due to God alone, thus erecting a rival throne against His. It seems that I see God as an angry Prince, who takes away the honorable weapons, the privileges, the dignities of the feudal tributes from that disloyal knight who abused all these in his rebellion. And so, He

⁴⁰St. Thomas Aquinas, II-II, q. 162, a. 1.

⁴¹ib. a. 6.

⁴²Boetius is cited here by St. Thomas, l.c., art. 6, c.

⁴³St. Ambrose, *In Ps 118*, Sermon 3, c. 37. t. 1, 1005 F

hastens now to remove His most generous gifts from the one rebellious to Him, and reduce him to shame. He will then invest the humble with these gifts, those faithful subjects who with prompt obsequiousness promise to employ them in His service. It is from these that He hopes to garner the glory that is due to Him: ... *He has scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart. He has put down the mighty from their seat, and He has exalted the humble...* [Lk 1: 51, 52]. ... *And I will visit in that day upon everyone that enters arrogantly over the threshold...* [Zp 1:9].

554: And what will the nature of these visitations be as accomplished by a God brought to such anger by the proud? The Book of Ecclesiasticus will tell us: ...*for pride is the beginning of all sin: he that holds it shall be filled with maledictions, and it shall ruin him in the end... He has made the roots of the proud to wither... He has overthrown their lands. He has made some of them wither away, and has destroyed them, and has made the memory of them cease from the earth...* [Si 10:15, 180-20].

And thus to remove that self-confidence that is so common among the wicked, He says this: ...*For he has said in his heart: God has forgotten, He has turned away His face not to see the end...* [Ps 91, or 10, according to Hebrews, v. 11]. ... *The Lord has sworn against the pride of Jacob: surely I will never forget all their works...* [Am 8:7].

555: Nor should you entertain the idea that the Mercy of God would intervene in this case to lighten the consequences for His children, although they may be rebellious. For God not only insures the rights of His supreme Being when He humiliates the proud, but at the same time, makes provision for our well being. In fact, pride is considered to be a very special kind of vice among all the others, and in respect to them, is the greatest. Considering what influence it has on other sins, it is thought to be the queen and the mother of all others: ... *for pride is the beginning of all sin...* [Si 10:15].

It is also the ruin of all the virtues. Promptly the proud person seems himself thrown into the chasm of every evil, and notes that his soul is like a devastated field, bereft of every virtue. All is suddenly changed into a den of all the most monstrous and horrible wild beasts. He would be prone to all these evils, were not God to intervene with a ready humiliation.

556: A further consideration is that pride is very difficult to recognize, both because it is a spiritual sin, and further, because it is specious. It covers all of its deformity under a specious vesture that imitates the virtues. Its presence among virtues, even the most perfect, is hidden, not unlike a poisonous snake among the flowers. For this, the saints feared it more than any other vice. They understood well that pride is the very first to insinuate its presence, and is the very last vice to allow itself to be conquered. Therefore, they used great diligence to investigate its traces in the most secret depths of their spirits. And the more that the light increased within them, all the more did they fear being proud. Very often, they confessed themselves to be so, and they referred to themselves as rebels and thieves of the glory of God.

557: And so, even the fact of not realizing that we are proud is perhaps a sign of greater pride in us! Is it not, then, a great grace to have been humiliated by God, when thereby we come to recognize and begin to take steps to correct such an evil? But, is not this the way it truly is? Is it not true that God's Mercy rather than handing the proud over into the hand of the scourgers, it is rather there to stimulate those so afflicted that they might the sooner fall from it? Who could still doubt, then, the most decisive spirit of God is to humiliate the proud?

558: 2. From the Power of God to humiliate the Proud: Would there perhaps be anyone who would doubt His power in this regard? Would He not, therefore, have thunderbolts all aflame to knock down these well fortified towers? Doe He not have in His possession whirlwinds that are so violent to uproot these most robust cedars? Can He not call upon tremendously powerful earthquakes to topple over those high mountains of presumption? And, yet He really does not need such an arsenal. It would simply suffice that He turn His face in another direction in order for all immediately to be upset. He could bring confusion by an untoward experience of the proud soul's basic weakness, which but a short time before would have succumbed to vainglory because of the freely given supernatural gifts that might have made fun of the falls of others.

559: The slightest of fevers suffices to tame that young man who, much like a roaring lion, presumes on his own strength. An insignificant illness might wither a bit the flower of good looks, and this would be enough to bend the proud head of the proud woman. So, then, all that would be required would be that He would recall, or no longer take care to conserve His gifts in us, in order for us to be humbled. Let the proud then realize the most resolute decision n God and the equally powerful arm at His disposal to humiliate them, even if He does not actually do so. Let it suffice, then, to say that they should think over the best means at their disposal to resist it.

560: And who are you, man or woman, who would resist God? Are you not in God's hand, much like a vessel of clay in the hand of its Maker? How could you ever resist the heavy blows of an iron rod, which, as the Psalmist describes: *You shall rule them with a rod of iron, and shall break them into pieces like a potter's vessel... [Ps 2:9]? ... Why have the Gentiles raged, and the people devised vain things..? [Ps 2:1]. ... The kings of the earth stood p, and the princes met together against the Lord and against His Prophet... [Ps 2:2].* And what will God do? What will He do? ... *and the Lord shall deride them...* The Lord will laugh at them, and will make fun of them, much as though a powerful warrior, rather a giant, were put under attack by a swarm of shy, defenseless children.

561: Argument from the facts: because the proud have always been humiliated by God: Come now, let us take a look at what the result is of the undertakings of these bold people.

It is Lucifer in heaven who was at the head of an uproarious revolt and attracted to his side a good third of the Angels. But, I see him overthrown, he and all

his followers, by one and the same decree. They all fell like a meteor into hell, there to be bound by God by eternal weights [Apoc 12:4, ff.].

562: Our first parents, in their earthly paradise, thought of becoming like God: *...knowing good and evil...* [Gn 3:5, 22]. They then open their eyes, but only to see their nakedness, and to discern what an enormous difference there now was between the good that they had enjoyed up to this moment, as long as they kept themselves faithful to God - and now the evil to which their pride had dragged them ⁴⁴ And God makes fun of them. This is what He says: *....behold, Adam is become as one of us...* [Gn 3:22]*...And the Lord shall deride them...* [Ps 2:4].

563: Shortly after the flood, that awesomely powerful proof of God's might, human beings tried to build a tower to repair their memory against the weapons of the time and perhaps even against the blows from heaven. And the Lord confounded their tongues and they were forced to leave their undertaking in embarrassment [Gn 11:3, ff.]: *...and the Lord shall deride them...* [Ps 2:4].

564: The Pharaoh answered Moses: *... who is this God...?* [Ex 5:2]. Will He perhaps be able to liberate His People from my hands? To confound a proud man who was at the same time, so powerful, God chooses the most infirm [1 Co 1:27]. He uses timid flies, spineless frogs, but the powerful man is forced by this terribly bothersome siege, pressed in on all sides, to agree to the pact And if the Pharaoh, the more as he was the more obstinate, once he had obtained a truce of some days did not choose to give in to the demands of God, God finally buried him with his whole army under the foaming vortices of the Eritrea [Ex c. 8, ff.].

564: Can you see, my listeners, that proud king who strides so arrogantly on the balconies of his palace? He is Nabuchodonosor, and he says *....Is not this the great Babylon, which I have built to be the seat of the kingdom, by the strength of my power and in the glory of my excellence...?* [Dn 4:27]. this is how he exalts himself, and in a short time, God will depose him. The proud man had scarcely finished speaking this way in such pride, when there was heard a powerful voice from heaven: *...to you, o king... it is said: Your kingdom shall pass from you. And they shall cast you out from among men, and your dwelling shall be with cattle and wild beasts: you will eat grass like an ox...I* [Dn 4:28, ff.].

What an extraordinary change! He is already taken off his balcony, and thrown out of the company with other human beings, and begins to eat grass. The evening dew bathes his body; and his hair grows much like the feathers of an eagle, and his finer-nails were like birds' claws [Dn 4:30].

But, I will stop here, since it seems to me that I sufficiently have proven that the more exalted one raises up with pride, so much the more quickly should such a person expect his fall to be the more ruinous.

⁴⁴St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, 14, 17. t. 7, 368 E.

566: CONCLUSION: That proud king, about whom I have spoken to you a few moment ago, spent seven years among the beasts of the field. Touched by God, he eventually raised his eyes to heaven [Dn 4:33], he confessed his airs of grandeur, and that all genuine power comes from God, and so humbled himself under the hand of the Almighty. His senses and spirit were restored to him. His nobles and magistrates came to seek him and he was restored to all his former splendor of his royal dignity, and even greater majesty was added to him.

567: If only many other proud people would raise their eyes to heaven in this way, and would that they would reflect on the error of their ways. This would mean a good many of our Christian men, and I would include also our Christian women. There are so many with an exalted view of themselves and who are on a collision courses with being also humiliated in this way - and not only with an equal but perhaps even a stranger metamorphosis. And what is worse, they do not even know it. And therefore, I believe that rather than go wandering around through the forests and woods, I do not know if more with a sacrilegious insult to God's Majesty, or with the greater horror to the good, should they dare to enter so brutally transformed into our churches. And, that I would have here a mirror, not one that would be flattering, but one that would give the true shape of reality!

568: Just look at yourself, I would like to say to that young fellow - just look at yourself from the top of your head to the bottom of your feet. And I will ask you if indeed this is the image of that man created by God in His likeness, adopted by him as his own Son, and constituted him an heir of heaven.

Look at yourself, madam. Just look to see if this is the real figure of a Christian woman. And rather than say an honest woman, I ask if this is the way even for a reasonable woman to appear. Of whom, then, is this image, I ask you - of whom is this figure? I can see that this comparison is too humiliating. And yet this is what results just from looking at the way some are dressed, from their exterior appearances. What should be remarked, then, for the feline, almost animal like, even brutal manner of dressing?

569: But I have no desire here to insult your confusion. As I think it all over, I could almost weep. I much desire your revision of your lives and this is why I have gone to such lengths so that you might come to realize what would happen to you should such a ruinous fall come to you, if previously your heart had not been very foolishly exalted [Pr 16:18]⁴⁵. In fact, this is what happened to the Roman philosophers, as St. Paul makes known [Rm 1:21, 24] when they knew God, they have not glorified Him as God, as they should have. But they became vain in their thoughts. God finally let them follow the systems and the inventions of their hearts that were in rebellion, and abandoned them to the most reprobate dishonor. The unhappy person trembles at this example, and let it humble you. This is the sole means that still remains for you to repair, if you wish, the honor already lost, and thus to work out salvation.

⁴⁵St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, 14, 13. t. 7, 364 E.

570: But directing myself now more to you, devout listener, let us also tremble. I would even say that we should all tremble, and at the sight of such deplorable failures, we should also tremble ourselves. My God! Who knows whether perhaps we, too - by some hidden pride, and far more abominable in God's eyes? Who knows, therefore, whether there is already imminent and very close to us an even more grace and unfortunate ruin? And who knows whether by chance, we, too, at this very moment, in all the more hidden manner, and one that is all the more dangerous, have already fallen?

571: Let us lower our heads, therefore, and cast our eyes to the ground. Let us look beyond what we wear, what our bearing may be - and may all pride be far from our lips, from our hearts. Let us immediately reflect within, let us withdraw if we are still in time, and humble our spirit. Let us fix before minds the recognition of our own nothingness, of our sins, of our weakness. Let us never again allow ourselves to be drawn even an iota by any thought or any event that may take place in our regard. Let us remain sure that the more we lower ourselves, all the more will God be close to us with His grace. And to anyone who might ask of us an explanation of this manner of our conduct let us respond with the most prudent simplicity of that saint - St. Egidio⁴⁶ - who said: "... have seen many who by desiring to go too high have fallen. I stay well attached and firmly on the ground so that I will not fall..."

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⁴⁶St. Egidio - no citation given.

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[NB: for the sake of chronology, the translation of Fr. Bertoni's Sermon delivered at Illasi, on November 8, 1801, on the 24th Sunday after Pentecost - using the readings for the 5th Sunday after Epiphany. This is found in *Manoscritti Bertoni*, I ## 1464-1483, pp. 335-339]

1464: PARISH SERMON

Or, the exposition of the Gospel of the Vth Sunday after Epiphany for the 24th Sunday after Pentecost. This was delivered in the Parish Church of Illasi, on November 8, 1801. It lasted 20 minutes.

The Kingdom of heaven is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field. But while men were asleep, his enemy came and over-sowed cockle... Mt 13:24-30]

[And the rest that follows in this Gospel].

1465: The Parable of the Holy Gospel that on this day, most beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, that is my challenge to expose for your piety, needs little explanation. It seems that it should suffer no other exposition than the one that its divine Author has given to it. It is evident, as the evangelist himself refers, that the divine Author Himself explained it so distinctly to His disciples in His own words [Mt 13: 36, ff.]. This is all the more pleasing to me, in that you can be quite sure that **there will be nothing of my own in this exposition.** While I assure you of this, I hope that you will kindly accept my words into your hearts, as this is an instruction that comes directly from Christ's own mouth, or is drawn from the doctrine of the Holy Fathers and Doctors ⁴⁷. All of these have very wisely interpreted the Gospel, and I have been able in a short time to leaf through them, and consult them.

1466: STATE OF THE PARABLE: It is necessary, then, first of all, to know that Christ wished in this parable to denote the present state of his Church here on earth. For here, both good and bad Christians are all mixed in together.

MORAL PURPOSE: This may be for many an occasion of undue stupor; for others, it might be a reason for unjust complaint; and for still others, and these would be the most weak, it could give rise even to scandal.

1467: DIVISION: St. Thomas ⁴⁸ first points out the source from which proceeds so much diversity of virtue, on the one side - and, malice on the other. The purpose of this is to remove the wonder from some observers. He then descends right away to show the progress of both of the good, as well as of the malicious. He points out at

⁴⁷St. John Chrysostom, *In Matth.*, Hom. 46, aliis 47. t. 7, 305/1, ff.; St. Augustine, *Serm. 73 de verbis Ev. Matth.* t. 5/1, 407, f.; *Sermo* 88, 19, 21. ib., 479 F, ff.; St. Thomas Aquinas, *In Matth.*, c. 13. t.3, 183 [b], ff.; Cardinal Ugo.

⁴⁸St. Thomas Aquinas, *In Matth.*, c. 13, 6, t. 183, b.

the same time with what reason He tolerates the wicked in this world, to justify to the second category, His Providence. Finally, He predicts the very different final end that awaits both the good and the evil in the future - as against these latter, He will raise up His justice.

We will begin now with the help of God to explain this whole parable already understood by you, and in all its parts. In doing so, we will limit ourselves always to the sacred text in order to comply at the same time with equal effort, with both a simple clarity and an easy brevity.

1468: 1. THE ORIGIN OF GOOD AND EVIL:

THE ORIGIN OF THE GOOD: *The Kingdom of heaven is likened...* With the expression, "Kingdom of Heaven", Christ in this place refers to His Church, because in heaven, as God reigns in glory among His saints, so in this Church He reigns by grace in the hearts of His faithful. And the Gospel states that the Church is like a man who plants good seed in his field [v. 24]. The One Who plants is the Son of Man, i.e., Christ [Mt 13:37], and the field is this world. The good seed means the Children of the Kingdom, i.e., the good Christians, those who are heirs to the Kingdom and destined to reign together with Christ.

1469: But, some might object: is not the Word of God the good seed that God plants in the heart of the saints [Mt 13:23]? How is it then, that now it is said that the saints themselves are the good seed?

O God, my brothers and sisters, the good Christians have little worth alone! They do draw with their words, with their prayers, and much more with their example, many others to serve God. This is the way they are in the countries, in the cities, in the world in which they are planted, as the good seed of piety, devotion, and every virtue. Blessed are those lands in which this excellent seed takes root! O, perhaps we, too, could say with Isaiah 1:9: *...Except the Lord of Hosts had left us seed, we had been as Sodom and we should have been like to Gomorra...*

1470: This, then, is the origin of all good that you notice in the Church of God: *... every perfect gift... comes down from the Father of lights ... [Jas 1:17]*. He plants the seed of the Divine Word in the hearts of the good. This, then, fructifies in a way that these persons themselves then become the good seed that Christ sprinkles throughout the world to spread, to propagate, the increase of His Church ⁴⁹.

1471: THE ORIGIN OF THE WICKED: O blessed field, planted with such good seed, and with such hopes has not the good Sower and Master placed within you? But: *... while men were asleep, so proceeds she sacred text [Mt 13:25], his enemy came, and oversowed cockle among the wheat and went his way...*

⁴⁹St. Thomas Aquinas, *In Matth.*, c. 13, ib.

The men asleep here ⁵⁰ are the Holy Apostles, to whom Christ had entrusted the care of His field and of His Church. By their “sleep” is understood their deaths, according to a phrase used by the Scriptures. In fact, St. Paul states: *...I know that after my departure, ravaging wolves will enter among you not sparing the flock...*

1472: The enemy who takes advantage of the situation and comes into the field is the devil, an authentic enemy of God and human beings. The cockle he oversows [Matthew 13:38] are the children of iniquity, all those who live and work iniquity, especially the very bad Catholics, the schismatics, the heretics. The Devil has oversown this cockle in the midst of the good grain. The reason is that it matters little to him that there are very evil people and of no faith at all among the gentiles, where already all belong to him. But his work is to over-sow these among the good faithful.

1473: *...and after having done this, the enemy goes away...* [Mt 13:25], because as Scripture says: *...he lies in wait in secret like a lion in his den...* [Ps 9:9]. And this is likewise the source of all that evil that has also been germinated in the holy Church. After the deaths of the Apostles, the Devil - seeing the Church spreading - experienced and moved the hearts of heretics, and of other depraved Catholics to injure her even more greatly. These were and still are the evil seed that then have pullulated and been diffused even to our own times, through so many scandals, so many divisions in charity, so many errors, so many heresies. But let us come to see now the progress that both the good and evil have made and the reason why God tolerates these latter for a while anyway. This is the second point of the parable proposed from the outset.

1474: 2. PROGRESS OF BOTH THE GOOD AND THE EVIL ⁵¹: as the good grain came to fruition, there appeared also the cockle. The evil, as St. John Chrysostom ⁵² comments, are the heretics, the seductors, who first were hidden, because they do say things that have good in them. They pretend zeal, compassion, humanity, in order to deceive the simple; but then, they insinuate some harm against ecclesiastics, Bishops and Religious. What they have to say is willingly listened to, and thus they succeed in drawing the people away from their love of priests, their Shepherds and other ministers of the Church. They then succeed, as a consequence, in attracting many away from the love of the Church herself. In this way, there is seen that after the good grain had grown a while by itself, and even after such as these have manifested some good fruit, and not before then - the cockle ultimately makes its appearance.

1475: THE ZEAL OF THE GOOD AGAINST THE EVIL: in the meantime, the servants of that good father of the family, come to him, saying: *.. Sir, did you not sow the good seed in your field? whence then does it have cockle [v. 27]. And he said to them: an enemy has done this. And the servants said to him: do you wish that we go and gather it up...? [v. 28].* These servants indicate the zeal of good

⁵⁰St. Thomas Aquinas, *ib.*

⁵¹St. Thomas, *as above.*

⁵²St. John Chrysostom, *ib.*, cf.# 1465, *above*, p. 305, 1 D.

Christians against those who are evil. They are double laudable, both for the correction intention that animates them, as well as for the prudent discretion that accompanies them. They do not want to undertake anything by themselves without first consulting the Lord's Will and to wait upon His command.

1476: THE REASON WHY GOD TOLERATES THE EVIL IN THIS WORLD: Beyond all their expectation, he responds: ... *No*, responds the good father of the family - *lest perhaps gathering up the cockle, you root up the wheat also together with it...* [v. 29]. *Suffer both to grow until the harvest, and in the time of the harvest...* [v. 30]. Do you see, my brothers and sisters, the reason why God supports the wicked in this world? For this, you have a primary source as you note in St. Thomas⁵³ that goodness always has the advantage, and always overcomes evil. Good can exist without evil, but evil has no existence without good. Therefore, God tolerates many evils, and allows them to happen, and also so that many good realities do not cease.

1477: And truthfully, the evil do serve for the exercise of good. The Apostle writes: *...For there must also be heresies: that they also, who are approved, may be made manifest among you...* [1 Co 11:19]. And, in another place: *...the fool shall serve the wise...* [Pr 11:19]. Furthermore, it happens that those who right now are evil can become good, as was the case of St. Paul. If God had not fulminated Saul, the persecutor, the Church would have been deprived of those doctrines of such a great master, and would have missed an Apostle who worked more than all the others [1 Co 15:10].

1478: The third reason is because many may seem to be evil at first sight, and they really are not. This makes St. Paul cry out: *... judge not before time...* [1 Co 4:5]. And this is why the prudent master did not want the harvesting of the good grain until it had arrived at perfect maturity.

- Does this mean, then, that one has to pardon always, and hold back on the punishments always?

- No, but only to a certain point: up until the harvest. The in-gathering is the Day of Judgment, and the harvesters will be the Angels [Mt 13:29].

1479: 3. THE FINAL END OF BOTH GOOD AND EVIL

THE FINAL END OF THE WICKED: *...and in the time of the harvest, the master will say to the reapers: Gather up first the cockle, and bind it in bundles to burn it...* [v. 30].

GATHER IT: This is the end of the wicked. They will first be gathered up, i.e., separated from the good. As long as this life lasts, the cockle and the grain will grow together, much like the lily among the thorns [Ct 2:2]. But, when the Son of Man comes, He will separate the just from the wicked, the goats from the lambs [Mt 25:2]⁵⁴.

⁵³St. Thomas, *ibid.*, p. 185/1.

⁵⁴St. Thomas Aquinas, *ibid.*, p. 186/1, about mid-way.

1480: For now, good comes to both the righteous and the wicked; but then, there will be rendered blessing to those who have done well, and evil for those who have lived quickly.

BIND THEM: This is so that they will not remain mixed in and confused with the good, and for this reason, it is necessary to bind them. In this binding, there is implied the perpetuity of the penalty, that indicates their impenitence and their irrevocable damnation.

TO BURN: They will be bound to be burned in the eternal fire, as the wretched Dives cried out: *...for I am tormented in this flame...* [Lk 16:24].

1481: THE FINAL END OF THE GOOD ⁵⁵: The Good Master continues now: *... but the wheat, gather into my barn...* This is the final end for the good.

PURITY: And just note that the grain is beaten and shaken free of all hay, while the cockle is not beaten at all, but put into bundles for the fire. And this means that the wicked will go to hell with all their ugliness, but the good will be well purged and scrutinized closely, because as Isaiah 35:8 predicted: *...And a path and a way shall be there, and it shall be called the holy way: the unclean shall not pass over it...*

1488: UNITY: And the Good Master said further: *...but the wheat, gather into my barn...* This is to show the unity that will be among them. Among the wicked, there are always disputes and they do not ever have union. Of the good, however, it is said that they will congregate: *... Wheresoever the body shall be, there shall the eagles also be gathered together...* [Mt 24:28]

TRANQUILLITY: Lastly among them, there will be supreme tranquility, and thus the master orders: *... but the wheat, gather into my barn...* [v.30] The barn is constructed for the conservation of the harvest. So, that homeland will be the barn of the Saints, where: *... there will be praise and everlasting joy shall be on the heads...* [Is 35:10].

1483: CONCLUSION: O, let us pray, my brothers and sisters, that we might be reposed and congregated, all of us, in this barn. O God, in a very short time that good Master, of whom I have been speaking to you about in this parable, you will see Him with your own eyes, descended from heaven: I will show Him to you right between these hands of mine. So, pray to Him also for me: and I will pray to Him for you. At this point, I can already feel my heart swelling beyond measure with the desire for your salvation.

What more can I say to you? Love God, my brothers and sisters. And may the peace that surpasses all our senses protect your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus [Ph 4:7].

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⁵⁵St. Thomas Aquinas, *ibid.*, p. 186.2.

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Mt 13: 24-30	1464	Mt 13:39	1479
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572:

SERMON 8

**The Holy House transferred into our Hearts: or, Our Hearts
made Temples of God**

Preached on the 3rd Sunday of Advent, in the Church of St. Paul, Campo Marzio, in the year 1801, on December 13th, for the Solemnity celebrated by the Young Ladies of the Parish at the Translation of the Holy House of Loreto. It lasted 38 minutes.

573: It is very hard for me to say, my listeners, whether these devout young ladies, so committed on this day to honor Mary, could better satisfy their intense fervor by nourishing in themselves this very tender devotion, or by spreading it also to us. The best way to achieve both seems to me in this, their solemnity, is to recall to our spirits the memory of that prodigious venture in which the holy House of Mary, taken from Nazareth, out of the hands of barbarians, was seen to fly one day over large tracts of lands and seas on angel wings, until it came to our shores in Italy, and ultimately to be set up among us in a stable manner at Loreto.

574: And what else is this if not a sweet invitation extended to our hearts? Are we not being invited to visit in spirit those sacred walls, in order to see and kiss them, together with devout pilgrims from the most remote parts of Europe? O blessed walls! happy custodians for a time of that beautiful lily of the heavenly gardens that grew within your enclosure. There the lily grew and diffused its most precious odor, that sufficed to fill the entire world with its fragrance. You are more splendid than sovereign royal palaces, and there received the Queen of Heaven, **the Spouse of God**. You are witnesses of that ambassador's mission of the Angel. And what is even more, you were witnesses of that august mystery of the Incarnation. O blessed walls! A House consecrated by the divine mysteries! O what sublime, and most sweet affections you inspire in us!

575: So, I have put it very well, my hearers, that these young women could not have presented any more sweeter object for our devotion, nor could they better satisfy their own. Except, though, it seems to me that the Virgin Mary herself wishes to compensate on this point, with the present occasion with her own most pleasing obsequious devotion. If, then, it is true that all our sufficiency comes from God, and that we are incapable of ourselves to produce a single good thought - I do not know of any other source for what I will say. This is the origin of the holy thought that has formed in my mind and has remained there always with great constancy, in order to communicate it on this day to you, my entire devout audience.

576: PROPOSITION: It seems to me, my hearers, that God is asking of each one of us, on this day, our hearts. He does this so that just like the House of Loreto, so these hearts of ours, He wishes to consecrate, by making them a Temple where He resides. I will do nothing else, then, than follow in this thought the traces of the present Gospel [[Jn 1:19-28](#)]. This will prepare the path for the Lord by disposing you **to give yourselves over to Him** with even greater willingness. This is particularly

necessary should there be anyone among you with a spirit so disheartened that such an individual might refuse out of excessive timidity such a sublime coming.

577: FOUNDATION: And so that no one might think that I am perhaps excessive in proposing very beautiful considerations, rather than those based on what we believe, or practices that can be verified, just listen here at the beginning to how the Apostles speaks: *...Do you know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?...[1 Co 3:16]*. In fact, while it can be said that God by His immensity is everywhere, He dwells in a special manner in the hearts of the just. To these, He communicates not only grace with all gifts, but the Spirit Himself, the author of all grace and of every gift.

Now, for the sake of our leading you to love such a state even more, I beg you to consider with me for a little while, the happiness of a soul who already, must fortunately possesses Him.

578: 1. Supreme happiness of a soul in which God dwells, as in His Temple:

Absolutely: Here is such a soul, which is much like a most pleasant, delightful temple, or palace. He Himself, God, has chosen and prepared to reside there, and to find His happiness. We notice, by the way, that all Princes have a place of their delight and for their recreation. And here there is explained all that magnificence of a prince, in embellishing its balconies, providing it with superb and splendid halls, and most amenable gardens. And just where is the place of the delights for this King of Heaven - do you know where it is? Here it is: *... my delights were to be with the children of men...* What I want is to converse with them, in the most intimate way, in their hearts, and there speak with great peace, with My Servant. It is to here that He calls out to them, with sweet invitation, by saying: Come! liberate yourselves from all anxious cares, empty yourselves from all impertinent affections of this world. Then you will experience how good, how sweet is your Lord, your God.

579: How fortunate is such a soul! She does not have to arise and go about the city in the streets and the broad ways, seeking Him alone whom she loves [Ct 3:2]. But, she has already found Him Whom she loves [v. 4] - she already has found Him in the midst of her heart. Such a soul can put it even better: *...My Beloved to Me... and I to Him...* [Ct 2:16] *... I will hold Him and not let Him go...* [Ct 3:4].

What peace, then, what serenity, do we believe, my listeners, should such a soul not enjoy? St. Paul has already predicted it, by saying: *... being justified, therefore, by faith, let us have peace with God ...* [Rm 5:1]. Not only does one enjoy it in the present, but in an anticipated way, also that of the future, by hoping for the glory of God's own children, as the Apostle continues [v. 2]. David has put it well when he said that it would not come in drops, but in streams of great power that would bring joy into the soul that God sanctifies [Ps 45:5; 35:9].

580: And no matter how much the tribulations of this life seem to put up a dike to the free course of heavenly consolations, rally all they do is gather them into a greater abundance. They seem to re-double their full impetuosity, so that in their superabundance they overflow. This is why we can even glory in these trials, as the

Holy Doctor of all the just states: *...And not only so; but we glory also in tribulations, knowing that tribulations work patience.. [Rm 5:3]...and patience in trial, and hope in trial... [v. 4]...and hope confounds not: because the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts... [v. 5].* O, what beautiful words these are: *.... by the Holy Spirit, who is given to us...!* The Spirit of God, in fact, making the soul a participant in His love, sanctifies the person and therefore, **approaches the soul as a most sweet spouse**, dwells within her, and finds His delight there.

581: What happiness, Ladies and Gentlemen, to have God within us! He is the supreme good Who can perfectly fulfill all our powers, because in Him are all the hidden perfections. All the just are at home here, as each one is satisfied in accord with the personal inclination. And this is why in one place in Scripture [Apoc 2:17] it is called hidden manna. Another passage puts it this way: *... Delight in the Lord, and He will give you the requests of your heart... [Ps 36:4].*

582: COMPARATIVELY: Do we love pleasurable goods? But, when could we ever have them in greater abundance than when we will possess that One Who is all good, all sweetness?

Do we delight in friendships? And what friend can be ever more dear than God? Friends love us because here is some good in us; but, it is God's love that causes this goodness. Hence, God loves us even while we are evil, in order to make us good by extending His own goodness. He loves us even in our deformity, in order to embellish us with His own glory. And who can put off such love as His? Through all your cares on the Lord, says the Prophet [Ps 54:23] and He will sustain you. He is liberal in our needs; He is light in our doubts; consolation in our travail; refuge in our sufferings; repose in our fatigue. He is our Support, our Strength and our Peace.

583: Do we love honors? But, what greater honor is there than being Temples of God [1 Co 3: 16], to glorify and to carry God in our mortal bodies, according to the phrase of the Apostle: [1 Co 6:20]. If so much honor is due to churches because they are the material temples of God's majesty, how much more should a living temple be honored both by the Angels and by other human beings? **Is not such a Temple all splendid, so interior, in which are conducted the most chaste espousals between God and the soul? This was already predicted by His Prophets: ... And I will espouse you to Myself forever... [Ho 2:19, ff.].** I will espouse you in faith, in justice, in charity, as these are the three precious gems with which He adorns her.

584: Surely you would like to see also the **wedding-dress of this Heavenly Spouse**. St. Paul will show you how truly wondrous it is! He tells us: *... But put on the Lord Jesus Christ... [Rm 13:14].* And to what beauty might there be compared to that of a soul whom God forms **to make of her His own spouse? The colors to paint this are lacking to me.** I will only say to you, full of stupor, with the Apostle himself: *...But whoever is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him... [1 Co 6:17].*

585: 2. Happiness is possible even to sinners: And what do you think, my listeners? I can see that on this day I could not sound more sweet chords than in the hearts of such a pious and devout audience. However, I also see still that some

souls among you hold back out of an excessive timidity from such a sweet invitation as this. Perhaps there are those who are saying to themselves: O God, these are pretty things, but they are not for me.

I understand you, I understand. You do fear perhaps your grave sins and your familiar wretchedness. But, what if despite all this, I could make you see with your very eyes Christ Himself at the door of your heart? What if you were to hear Him asking to come in? Well, open for yourselves the divine Scriptures and you will read in the Apocalypse 3:20, where it is written: just listen to Christ's own words: ... *Behold, I stand at the gate and knock...* Who could doubt this, or that faith itself would not give you greater certainty than any senses you have?

586: Yes, I am standing at the gate of your heart. And of what heart is He speaking if not your own, o sinner, while He is already within the just and well received as a peaceful Possessor? He is knocking at your heart's door in this very instant with so many lights, with so many impulses. He is putting before your eyes the supreme happiness to which you can arrive, with those very affections that by chance this sermon is inspiring you. Yes, I am knocking. If anyone will open the door to me, I will come in to be with him. He speaks as would a guest who comes in the night, and means that He is forgetful of all past injury and ejection. He truly wants to be with you with the great intimacy of friendship, and to receive your obsequious response.

587: He not only says: *I will come into him...*, but also: *... and will sup with him, and he with Me...* [Apoc 3:20]. In other words, I will make Myself right at home and allow Myself to be entertained with utmost confidence. This will be My delight, conversing in familiar manner with such a person, just as bosom friends do, and with much happiness. And this person will deal with Me in the same manner in this delicious chamber of heavenly pleasures, in the use of My Sacraments and in the communication of My most sweet and loving secrets. I will not refuse this individual at My Table. It is clear that here Christ is speaking always as a guest, but One Who is most wealthy and accommodating. And is entering the home of others He benefits this considerably and brings more gifts than He could ever receive.

588: Are you surprised at such goodness to sinners? For my part, I would be much more surprised in seeing that He is not merely content in having spoken to us of His love through His servants and prophets. But, the fact is that He has descended from heaven, has vested Himself as a man to chaste after us in Person. He is much like a King St. John Chrysostom would say ⁵⁶ - **He is like a King, Who has fallen in love with a lowly shepherd girl. He is resolved to take her from her hut, to bring her to His royal palace to make her His spouse. He does not content Himself merely in sending illustrious ambassadors to her, but comes down from His Throne and puts aside all His glory. It almost seems as though He were afraid of frightening her with His overwhelming splendor and of confusing her simplicity. For this reason, He Himself dresses in Shepherd's guise, and looks for her through the forest. He assumes lowly and simple manners, in order that He might strike up a conversation with her and speak to her about His love.**

⁵⁶St. John Chrysostom, *In Ps 5:2*. t. 5, 19/1 D, ff.

O God, and we wonder about the transports of lovers? But, here we have a **loving King, who goes far beyond any of them being transported by His love, even to the point of leaving behind His life for us.**

What love, what love! Our insensitivity can no longer find reason for denying entrance into our hearts to a King Who is so loving and so tender, who is asking this of us, and begs this of us, only to make us happy.

589: PERORATION: That unusual jubilation that shows on your faces, beloved hearers, is even more manifest on this day. This leads me to the conviction that you have not opened up your hearts to this loving Guest. So, I could not even describe the joy that this causes me. But, at the same time - alas! - should there be even a single soul among you who has not experienced such a loving invitation, then how could my joy be perfect? Would I not be then denied the most beautiful portion of that fruit that I had already thought was the most sure?

590: However, I do not despair of this now. Just look, unhappy and wretched soul, the total boldness that inspires me, and I address myself to you, should there be such person here. I ask you to pay heed to these my final words. It is true-God wants you. God is following after you to ask of you your heart. What do you do? What are you thinking? Why do you still doubt? You see how sad your heart is, even to the point of moaning. Just think of how long it is that you find yourself captive of a tyrannical affection that oppresses you. You are anguished by all kinds of wild thoughts, fed only on suffering, closed in the shadows of sadness and fears.

You have been made for God. Why do you persist in serving sin? How many times has He not asked of you that aft so many unhappy experiences, that you let yourself open up to a priest? Why do you not return to your God, whom you have cruelly denied thus far? And is not all this really true? So you see that God Himself right now is moved with compassion in your regard, He is looking for you, **He is drawing you.**

591: Whoever you may be, o brothers and sisters, whose hearts God might be touching so powerfully on this day, have compassion yourselves on Him. Offer solace to this poor Heart, just do what He asks you, who only seeks what is best for you. What contentment you will then experience! How new it will all seem to you to experience yourselves totally belonging to God, finding yourself surrounded by so many delights, now that so many disturbances have passed! What comfort you will experience in seeing your soul, much like a magnificent temple. You will be able to converse with God with a good conscience in peace - where earlier all was a den of demons and of evil affections that troubled and pummeled you at every hour! You will find within every consolation, and will no longer be afflicted by the past, but will know only the sweet joy of this present and the joyful hope of the future. And would you delay even a single moment in obtaining for yourself such a sublime happiness? Christ is already waiting for you. Mary calls out to you. Yes, she really yearns that you open your heart to her Son. If you should still be resisting my words, do not resist any more her loving hands.

592: COLLOQUY: Holy Virgin, behold us at your feet. to you, all our vision, all our confidence, and all our supplications are directed to you. Yes, to you is due the honor of this victory, as you have inspired its counsel. Look, even a few tears appear, expression of a more profound regret, and these will wash away past faults. It is toward you that the sinner now turns, is already resolved, and already makes hi offer. The triumph is complete.

Let us rejoice in this love, in the Mother of such beautiful love. Let us exult, all of us, my brothers and sisters. Let us praise God, let us praise Mary.

And you, most chaste young ladies, more than all others, the Virgin, your Lady, has so well compensated your obsequious offerings. You honor her house, and she has made your hearts the Temple of her son. And not only this: but because of you, great happiness has come to us. So, we hope that after having welcomed our loving Kin as a Guest in our hearts, He will make room for us in His Kingdom, where with Him we will live forever.

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St. GASPAR BERTONI



St. Gaspar's Ecstasy painting, by A. Del Vecchio,
behind one of the altars at Saint Paul Church of Campo Marzio, in Verona, Italy.

Early Spiritual Writings

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SERMON 9

[And the Second of this Theme]The Most Holy Name of Jesus

Preached on the Second Sunday after the EPIPHANY, in the Parish Church of St. Paul, Campo Marzio, Verona, on January 17, 1802.

It is my task on this day to speak about that most admirable - or, rather, I should say, lovable Name of Jesus. I confess to you, my hearers, that I would be simply overwhelmed to open my mouth to respond to your most pressing expectation, were it not for the courteous expressions of your goodness had not encouraged my experience to hope for some comfort.

594: Indeed, the excellence of this Name is such that even after a brief consideration, I was forced, almost despairing of ever being on the level to achieve this, to withdraw from the task, because of my very meager eloquence. However, I had recourse to the most sweet amiability of this Name, so much so that this lifted up my spirits. Nevertheless, I very soon found myself before this vast ocean that opened up in front of me. For this reason, I could very well be fearful. But, by launching out and swimming a bit by courageous thoughts, I was able to make some little headway in this wavy path where almost all of my hopes had been nearly shipwrecked.

595: In fear, my proposal encountered the difficulties of keeping to my arguments, just to shed some relief only on those qualities that could prove to be beneficial to the majority of my listeners, or to respond to the needs at least of some. Then, however, through my good fortune, I came upon those very golden words of **the Spouse of the sacred Canticles**. She compares the Name of her Beloved to oil that is diffused: *... Your Name is as oil poured out...* [Ct 1:2]. I seized upon these words as the most secure support, to find assurance against every danger and to base my whole theme. I say all this to you in the sincerity of my spirit, and as a stimulus to your kindness. I ask that this kindness be moved to sustain by a more solicitous attention my mind that is still quite timid and still just wavering. so, I will now set about my task.

596: The fact that this Name of Jesus is an oil that is poured out, or one that is diffused, would be quite simple to establish. It could be demonstrated with the help of witnesses to this truth that I could produce of certain souls. For them, just as soon as this most sweet Name had touched their ears, it would penetrate their hearts, and would pour out, diffuse within them a most delicate unction of the most delightful affections. But, I would prefer instead to give this day a proof of the virtue of this Name on the heart of a most obstinate sinner. If I am successful, I can possibly heal it gently with this same oil. Then, on the other hand, I may also be able to satisfy your expectations by meeting the challenges of my theme.

597: Then, it will indeed be clear that the Name of Jesus has every reason to call itself “all poured out.” For when it is diffused into this heart, it produces effects similar in every way, as oil generally produces when spread over the members of the body, and for other human uses.

Now, among the many effects that I will consider, in the first place, there is the effect of softening. This is in opposition to that hardness which is in strong opposition to healing. This is what it offers to an obstinate heart. Let us see, then, if this Name can indeed render one more gentle, and be able to move one.

98: And what does the Name “Jesus” mean, if not “Savior”? Is He not a God Who has come to manifest to humanity that excessive love that He loves all from eternity. Is He not the One Who has descended from heaven so that human beings might ascend there? Did He not assume the vesture of our flesh in order to make of us **consorts of His own nature**? And did He not die to give us life, and life eternal? And does not a love of this type, of its nature, come across as most pleasing, and able to penetrate even the hardest of hearts? Is not all this true? Yet, even further, through a more distinct consideration, the more this oil goes on spreading and being diffused further, we will see it almost overcome in sorrow, as this Love has not been loved anew. It will seem that it has only paid for the injuries inflicted, and for having offended such a beneficent Goodness.

599: It is still not enough to insure a perfect restoration to health for a heart that has been this ill, to see it almost reduced to tears in expressing a most tender compunction. Because quite soon, a second opponent to its being restored raises its head, namely pusillanimity, or diffidence. When the sinner has come to realize his own wrongs, he comes to grip with the heavy weight of so many iniquities is such a load, that it may prostrate him to the ground. It is all such a burden, that he can hardly get back up again. The recognition that increases more and more of the sheer excessive number and monstrous deformity of sins committed, seems to diminish and render ever more weak the hope of obtaining pardon. Hence, the need is seen clearly of encouraging the person who is already downcast, and feeling lost.

600: But here is precisely a second effect of oil: it fortifies the members. The story of these famous gladiators is well known. Before going down into the arena to give a barbaric proof of their strength, they would rub oil over their sinewy arms and hard members. From this, they acquired a new vigor and a reinvigorated second wind in their desperate contest. But, who could be ever so disheartened that he would not feel immediately being picked up, and finding his hope made more vigorous within his breast, at just hearing this Name: Jesus?

601: The Name, therefore, means a Savior, not simply a particular savior of but a few, but the universal Savior of all. St. Paul writes: *... one [Christ] died for all...* [2 Co 5:14]. Jesus was not limited by time, since He has an eternal priesthood. So, He can save anyone who approaches God through Him. He is always alive to make intercession for us, in our behalf [Heb 7:24, f.]. He is not limited to a specific number, as there can be found with Him a Mercy without any addition that would determine it, or restrict it: *... Because with the Lord, there is mercy, and with Him plenteous*

redemption... [Ps 129:7]. And so, there can always be verified that principle, that:...where sin abounded, grace does the more abound... [Rm 5:20].

602: Thus, David would cry out: *... For your Name's sake, O Lord, You will pardon my sin: for, it is great... [Ps 24:11].* This clearly indicates the level of confidence that could give strength to a diffident heart: the admirable unction of this Divine Name.

And then comforted in this way, the sinner could rise up. But not even through all this would such a person be yet perfectly healed, even though it can be believed that health is now very near. Therefore, the sinner is much like a sick person who has just experienced a long and serious malady. This has much weakened his constitution and diminished his forces, even though, supported by someone else, he might stand for a while. Yet, he is still fearful and almost despairs of being able to stand alone for any length of time, without a most doleful and very easy relapse. So it is that the sinner hands still somewhat in doubt whether he can even once resolutely stand on his own two feet.

603: In order that such a person might proceed further in such a most important deliberation, it is necessary immediately to make provisions against all those circumstances that he might reasonably fear. It is necessary to take precautions against them, and to be sure regarding them by means of an efficacious remedy, that would entirely impede their every activity and effect.

Some of these causes are internal, and others eternal. The internal causes would be ignorance, malice, the passions. The external causes of future falls would be the devil, the occasions of sin, seductions to it, and the scandals of this world.

Regarding the former, we are here to make opposition to them by means of a clear light against the darkness of the intellect. A wholesome good may be offered to combat the unruly food of the will, and a **salubrious medicine** against the disorders of the senses. And all this, you see achieved by this most Holy Name alone. Thus, it is indeed like an oil poured out, offering light, providing nourishment, and **medicine**. All of these are the properties of sensible oil, as St. Bernard has noted so well ⁵⁷.

604: In fact, before this Name spread about, the whole world was immersed in thick darkness. But, very soon, the Apostle was chosen to bear it, as a lighted candle in his hand, held up to the King of the Nations [Ac 9:15]. From the outset, he cried out: *...Let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light... [Rm 13:12]....Let us walk honestly as in the day... [v. 13].* For Christ Himself had said" *... I am the Light of the world: He that follows Me, walks not in darkness... [Jn 8:12].*

605: However, Jesus' Name is not only light - it is also nourishment. St. Bernard goes on to say ⁵⁸ when did you ever recall it to mind and not feel immediately a profound comfort? what other object so feeds in equal manner the mind of the one who considers it? What else is capable of restoring the tired senses, of

⁵⁷St. Bernard, *In Cant.* Sermon. 15, near the middle, 138.

⁵⁸St. Bernard, *In Cant.* Sermon. 15, 136.

strengthening the virtues, of nourishing good and upright manners, of fomenting chaste affections? All other nourishment is too dry and tasteless to the soul by comparison - just this oil that is poured out and serves as seasoning.

But, it is at the same time **medicine** against unruly passions. In fact, just as pronouncing this Name there is presented very soon to our spirit the most perfect Man who is God at the same time. He is, then, the mirror of every virtue and the font of every grace. He not only extends an invitation by His gentle example but even more inspires us with the efficacious assistance to repress these passing, and to moderate them.

606: The world might try to pervert with its maxims of untruthful dogmas to seduce with very pleasing illusions, of bringing corruption through false friendships. But all will be in vain, every artifice, every machination, every attempt to draw away a heart that has been anointed with this Name. It communicates the courage to flee all this right away. In fact, those gladiators about whom we spoke earlier, combat in the nude. They rub oil over themselves not only to fortify themselves, but also to make it all the more difficult for their adversary to get a hold on them, to pin them in the fray.

And like a smooth parchment resists with inherent obstinacy the unlettered hand that would write upon it - even one hundred pens would tire out before making a mark on it. A hundred pens, no matter how much they bear down, would ever leave the impression of ink upon it. In similar manner, it is even more impossible, as may be seen from what has been said thus far that in a heart in which the unction of this admirable Name, there would be any attachment, and that any impression be made that would bring harm to it from the outside.

607: All hell is in a frenzy, takes up arms, aligns itself in battle array, and puts its best forces on the front for the final encounter. The Psalmist of long ago gives us courage to break every assault, saying that this Name is not only holy, but that it is “terribly” so:*Holy and terrible is His Name...* [Ps 110:9]. He almost seems to say that just as this Name “Jesus” is like a most sweet smelling oil that diffuses itself through the heart of anyone who would invoke Him - but, in like manner, it is also a boiling and fiery oil that spills out over His enemies and puts them to shameful rout in order to exterminate them.

And what does it seem to you, my listeners? Does it not appear clear to you that all the properties, or the effects of oil have been verified in this Name? The proof of this has already been placed before your eyes. I can therefore hope to have demonstrated my theme, that “the Name of Jesus is an outpoured oil.”

608: So, dear brothers and sisters, if there are any sinners among you, just look at the kind of **precious oil that by my hand there will be spread on your wounds as medication**, without pain, and with such gentleness.

Have you then been restored to health? Has your heart that has been so hard been in any way softened? But, is there not place here for even a single tear? Where are your sighs, your manifestations of grief? Is there even the slightest indication of your revision of life? Rather, it seem to me that I can still see, and not without my

great sorrow, that you have maintained to this point, and seem still decided to retain through to the end, a certain disposition that you will also take with you when you leave - that same light-heartedness and set look about you, with which you came in here tonight to hear me. What, then? Should we say perhaps that the medicine that I have brought for you is ineffective? But, how can this be, after such an evident demonstration, and even after such a sensible proof?

609: The divine Scriptures are clear. They even go much further than this, even to saying that there is no salvation that could even be hoped for outside of this Name [Ac 4:12]. The fault, then, is totally your own, that you have blocked the effectiveness of the medicine. You are like those death asps that stops up their ears [Ps 57:5]. Thus, there cannot pass that health-giving unction of this Holy Name into your heart. Come on now, do something about this. It might be that in preference to this your hearts have been impressed, sculptured by other names, infamous names, of those impure idols that you love. These might still be more sweet for you, and they still might for a while be more preferred delights. But that day will come, and it may not now be very far off, when you will be stretched out on a death-bed, in bitter worm-wood when these names will change for you, when these idols will no longer be pleasing to you.

610: Yes, such a day will come for you. And then remembering, on your already cold and dying lips, you will make every effort time and again with a weak and trembling voice: Jesus, o Jesus! I will certainly do all I can that you hope and that you hope for all. But, what if at that hour, with all your other troubles, the most difficult of all torments you, the real suffering comes to you? This is DESPERATION, which, sad to say, has already afflicted many like you and it happens every day. This could easily happen also to you, both from the demon's suggestion and also by the malice of your own heart. Is it not so that each day it becomes more set in its ways, refusing to take such health-restoring **medicine**? What if you die obstinate, impenitent?

611: Then, this Name would no longer be for you an oil of sweetness, that you so ungratefully rejected while still alive. But, at that moment, it will be aflame in the fury of the already proximate and threatened justice. It will be to you as a fire horribly burning. It will lie in wait for the wicked soul, in order to engulf it in flames, thus vindicating the injustice and disgrace already heaped upon it.

How unfortunate you are! What river of tears will then be able to extinguish such a powerful fire? What confusion you will encounter from your severe Judge, the One whom before you had rejected as a kind of Savior! What horror you will experience in seeing come out against you, much like a roaring lion, ferocious and ravenous with anger, that most meek Lamb, Who had already let Himself bleed to death out of love for you! What desperation will you undergo at seeing your eternal condemnation sealed by that very blood that had been shed for your salvation!

612: However, I do not want to end this sermon, I do not want to end this sermon, with its most sweet theme, with such harsh words. Nor, should I suffer because of just a few who would disturb the great majority of devoted souls who on this day have every reasons to find consolation. What more can I say to you, then, most obstinate

614:**SERMON 10****The Sinner rendered Mute by Shame, invited to Confession**

Preached in the Venerable Parish Church of St. Paul, Camp Marzio, on the Third Sunday of Lent, in the year 1802, on March 21st, in Verona. This lasted 27 minutes. This same Sermon was repeated, then, on the last Tuesday of Lent, in the year 1810, on April 20th.

What an unhappy condition does that soul experience that has been seduced by its yearnings, the flattery of its false lovers, by the world, or by the flesh! For such an individual has conceived sin in his heart, the rather tragic sign of a faith already betrayed, in rejecting its true and only celestial **Spouse**, its God! But that situation is even more miserable when a person is tortured by the remorse of its conscience, or deeply moved by the stirrings of grace, and does not act! Some are defeated by a base embarrassment that keeps them from a sincere confession, by closing their lips. The end result blocks repentance from ever being born, without ever unburdening oneself by bringing it to the light of day. The infamous beast will bring about sure death!

615: And yet, how many of our sinful brothers and sisters do you think, devout listeners, are already reclining in such a deplorable state? Who, though, would not weep at such a mis-adventure? Who would not fear such an extreme danger to themselves? And who would delay any longer from helping them in their very grave time of need?

Even though the undertaking is arduous, and by far exceeds our ability, I will trust in the efficacy of the Divine word of which I am a minister. I will rely on your prayers, with which, I hope you will accompany my preaching. With these as my support, I can only confront this task with great courage. I beg and beseech you, silent listeners, that if you do hear the voice of God on this day [Ps 94:8], harden not your hearts. For the rest, I do not doubt that Jesus, in Whose Name I preach, has put to flight in the Gospel of today a mute demon from that unfortunate possessed person [Lk 11:14-28]. He can also loosen all your bonds, having expelled all vain fear, and tongues in a salutary manner.

616: The explorers sent long ago by Moses into the Promised Land reported back to many wrongs regarding the land to the excessively naive Hebrews, even to stating that the land devoured its own wretched inhabitants [Nb 13:33]. This is what I think has happened in your case, o sinners. For God is calling out to you, desirous of pardoning your sins and of restoring you to grace. He is exciting you, inviting you to confess your sins. But, to what avail! There is scarcely sent forward in your minds some good thought regarding the Promised Land, pointed out to you by Divine Mercy - then, there comes back to you that a rather mournful report of empty fears in your bosoms. You suffer the fear of an almost insufferable shame that you think awaits you.

617: The devil himself amplifies these fears, exaggerates them and depicts them so vividly to timid imaginations. He works on these false apprehensions and finally as prevailed in you, with successive damage to your soul, his deceptions regarding the truth of the divine promises. And this same one who just a while before removed all embarrassment from you, so that you could sin with even greater abandon, now redoubles in you the confusion in order to keep you from confessing in sorrow your failure.

And will it be true that in a matter of such great consequence for your salvation, you allow yourselves to be deceived by the false reports of your most sworn enemy? Does the God Who so tenderly loves you, a God who is so faithful in keeping His promises, does He merit less faith, is He less meritorious than a lying betrayer? And is it not God Who reassures you, whenever you might resolve to put down with lively sorrow and ingenuous simplicity or failings at the feet of His minister? Does He not take from you not only the confusion, but changes it into an equivalent glory?

618: It cannot indeed be denied, without denying the faith at the same time that He is here to remit amply and to cancel entirely all stain from your soul. No matter how grave a sin may be, while it is a genuine and sole reason for embarrassment and shame - one can be made to flourish again, and to be reinvigorated. The spirit has been put to death by the crude freeze of sin can come to life once more. It is here that the soul is washed, purified, embellished with a ray of that most pure light that the Divine Face, lovingly once more turned toward her, will communicate to her. He invests anew the soul with the precious habit of grace, places upon its head a splendid crown, interwoven with the rare gems of all the virtues. Once again, He will place on its finger, the golden ring of charity. And all the other noble gifts and rich treasures of merits that sin had robbed from the soul - all is restored, as they had been before the sin occurred.

Indeed it could even be that the soul in coming back might acquire an even more intense degree of grace than was enjoyed before the fall. For so many who have made use of the sacrament, their confession gave them a kind of beautiful garment, well suited not only to cover their nudity, but also to surround them with much glory. What is there to be afraid of by remaining so vainly in confusion, and why not rather accept the supreme honor of inestimable glory that awaits you?

619: All this is good, some might respond. Nevertheless, that responsibility of making known all the intimate and stark details and secrets of our hearts to a priest, is an insupportable burden to our embarrassment. What kind of an opinion will he form of us? With what bitter recriminations will he not scold us, thus aggravating all the more our shame?

I understand, I see. But, I would like you, for your part, to grasp very well from what source do all these fears of yours arise. In the last analysis, they are really nothing more than a dreary cloud-cover placed before your line of vision. by means of this, your infernal enemy, like he has blinded to many others, so is almost sure of

being able to blind you. I, though, will show you that you ought rather to await to be received by your Confessor with extreme kindness, and held in high honor in his opinion.

620: The priest, in fact, when he sits in that Sacred Tribunal of Penance, represents the Person of Christ Himself and takes His place. Christ Himself is very far from ever rejecting with disdain any sinner, no matter how evil he may have been. This is particularly true when the sinner shows genuine signs of repentance. So, any such person who approached Christ, He treated with much affability, as the Publicans. He treated with loving kindness the repentant tears of the lost Magdalenes, and set free in absolute liberty the adulterous women, already condemned to death. He promised to lead that very day into Paradise the thief who was on the Cross along-side of Him and who had turned to him, after first perhaps having cursed Him. If this is Christ - how then, could His Minister not treat with the same spirit of leniency, meekness, the more timid penitents who may present themselves to him? How could he ever show any horror at those **wounds** that the divine **Doctor** sets about to heal? Is it not so that to **heal** them, He did not use wine and oil, but rather poured out all of His own Precious Blood as a celestial balm? Does not the Divine **Physician** restore health with a gentleness equaled to His efficacy?

621: Keep in mind, too, lastly, that your Confessor is a man, similar to you. He is subject to the same dangers of falling, he is enveloped in the same weakness. He is thus rendered compassionate by the experience of his own, as well as by the sins of others. He, too, has to present himself to that salvific bath of repentance in order to cleanse his own sins.

He knows all too well the human weakness and knows that a person living in the flesh is not yet an Angel. The fact is that even the most spiritual and most holy human beings, sometimes have gravely sinned.

622: Whenever a Confessor sees in the penitent a heart well disposed, he desires for the sinner only his eternal salvation. He conceives a tender compassion for such a person, and his zeal is enkindled all the more. He comes to experience the fervent desire of assisting him and helping him. The Confessor witnesses your humiliations, and you change over to being just in the very act of accusing yourselves to be sinners, according to that golden line of St. Ambrose⁵⁹: "...Since we are all sinners, the more praiseworthy is the one who is the more humble. the more justified is the one who recognizes himself to be the more unworthy..." The Holy Spirit Himself, however, gives even more eloquent witness: ... *The just is the first accuser of himself...* [Pr 18:17].

623: And where else if not in the Sacrament do you propose that a matter is scarcely sufficient for very light faults [keeping in mind, though, the very grave temptations and dangers in which human life is immersed]. Perhaps in such a case there could arise some suspicion that your confession is not altogether sincere. On

⁵⁹St. Ambrose, *De Poen.* 2, 10; 91. t. 2, 436 A.

the contrary, though, the more serious the sins that you manifest, how much the greater are the difficulties that you have to encounter. There is much consolation in seeing you provided with a most efficacious and superabundant grace. Thus, one is supplied with an almost sure foundation to believe that you pertain already by divine preordination to that sturdy platoon of those chosen, already seen in the vision of the Contemplative on the Isle of Patmos. He saw them in their white robes standing before the Throne of God, and they had already: *...washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb...* [Apoc 7:14].

624: All of these reasons adopted by me up to this point are indeed quite true, and they are more than sufficient to clear away all the darkness of an excessively vain fear. However, it might even occur, which is something that I would find very difficult to accept, that the fear of some imagined shame still predominates in you. This could reach such proportions that it could render you speechless at the cost of your soul. I would desire, though, that it be precisely this fear itself that ultimately would move you to speak.

625: In the final analysis, it is a matter, if you do speak at all, of manifesting your troubles to a single man, to a priest who does not know you - or, if he does know you, he would cover you in compassion. Should you still be suffering some confusion, this will be but brief and momentary. There follows immediately a profound peace, a joy not experienced before, a sincere and inexhaustible glory. And as far as the past failures are concerned, they will remain buried, as it were, in the most sublime silence. They will have been placed under a most rigorous sacramental seal. In this, there is no case possible where the priest either by speech, or even the slightest gesture, or by any other external indication - made either to others, or to yourselves, outside of the sacrament - could make any mention, or give any hint whatsoever, or even arouse the slightest suspicion.

626: On the other hand, if at the sacramental encounter you make up your minds to be silent, a number of effects follow. Not only will you experience a most bitter conscience and a perpetual sense of embarrassment, as your consciences will continually to mull over in you the wrong committed. There will come the day in which it will all be made public and you will be discovered. You will then be standing before an entire world that will be witness to your confusion. God Himself has made it clear in the Scriptures that on the last day of the Final Judgment, that the proud sinners will be indeed shamed. There will be revealed before heaven and earth their most hidden and shameful indecency [Lk 12:2; 1 Co 4:5].

627: Consider now with St. Augustine⁶⁰ where he maintains that it is better standing before one other human being to tolerate a bit of shame - rather than on the Day of Judgment. Then, one will be confronted by many thousands of other human beings and the Angels, and having to crumble before the dishonor of a very grave rejection. Those very persons before whom you are now pressed to hold your sin hidden - will they not know all about it on that day? And your Confessor, of whom y

⁶⁰St. Augustine, *De Visitazione Infirmorum*, 2, 5. t. 6. Append. 258 C. - spurious.

are now so afraid, will he not also see it? What will then be remarked regarding your folly, seeing that you have paid greater heed to a slight confusion now than to your eternal salvation?

628: What will your many acquaintances, friends, members of your own household say then? Is it not so, perhaps, that in life they nurtured a good opinion about you, while then they will be the spectators of your infamy and of your desperation?

Come on, now - since you have sinned, it is only right that you should suffer some confusion. But, at least choose the lesser of the two, by confessing your sins now - if you persist in still referring to “confusion” which really will be in you the mother of such glory.

629: Come now, silent sinners, what is your decision? Are you still uncertain, still doubtful? And yet you can see to what terms your choice is reduced: “Either victory, or death!” Yes, you can either generously conquer every pretext or embarrassment, or lose your soul for all eternity. The choice is either to confess, or to amend. Do you by any chance think that there is some other means that is available to avoid hell? You can fast, if you want to - even scourge your own body - condemn it to sleep on the bare earth - you can wear a very rough hair-shirt - feeding on tears and ashes - perform the works of the Saints, and even those of the most rugged among them - but, what will all this count? You will still be damned.

So, either confession, or damnation: there is no other means: either damnation or confession.

Would you confess, for example, all your other sins, but hold back on that which gives you the greatest embarrassment? But, you know very well that not to confess hem all is the same as not saying anything. It means to go out from the Sacrament with the same sins as before. Rather, it even means that you will be in a more pitiable situation than before: as you will have added a horrible sacrilege to your soul. Do not let this happen! The choice is this: “Either conquer, or die”: either go to confess everything, or to be damned!

630: What is your decision, then? Would you wait until the moment of death to make a good confession? But, if you already know that you will have to do it at that time, why not go ahead with it now? For, in the meantime the falls will be repeated, the sacrileges will be multiplied, and your confusion of having one day to confess hem altogether will be considerably increased. what else? From holding back and from suppressing a shameful sin in one’s heart there springs such a blindness, such a darkness, that leads ultimately to obstinacy, and then to hardness of heart. This is the final step on the way to final impenitence.

What, then, will your resolutions be? I ask you once again: what will you decide to do? Will you perhaps be able to sneer at all the devices of the evil one, your adversary? Will you be able to overcome courageously every empty fear, to put in safety this time your eternal salvation? Blessed are you, if indeed this is what your

choice is. Blessed indeed are you! Begin, then, right now, if your resolution is so firm. And you should render all the more fervent acts of thanksgiving for that mercy that has led you on this day to hear His voice and has moved your heart with all efficacy.

631: Do not delay a single instant in cooperating with such a prodigious and extraordinary help from God. But indeed, this Divine Mercy, through His Minister, is waiting also for you. As prodigal children who have come back, place yourselves sorrowing at his feet. You will then rise from there quickly and be able to hide your nudity in his loving open bosom. Desire nothing other than being restored, together with your peace of conscience, all the honor, all the glory and all the rights of genuine children of God.

What sweeter, or more supersubstantial banquet could be prepared for you! What more joyful festival will there be celebrated in heaven, because of your conversion! ... *there will be more joy in heaven [before the Angels of God] over one sinner who does penance...* [Lk 15:7].

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Sources

OT

Nb 13: 33	# 616
Ps 94:8	# 615
Pr 18:17	# 622

NT

Lk 11:14-28	# 615
12:2	# 626
1 Co 4:5	# 626
Apoc 7:14	# 623

Fathers & Doctors

St. Ambrose, <i>De Poen.</i> 2, 10 91. t. 2, 436 A	# 622
St. Augustine, <i>De Visitatione Infirmorum.</i> 2, 5. t. 6, append. 285 C, spurious	# 627

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632:**SERMON 11****On Devotion**

Preached on the Tuesday after Easter, in the Venerable Church of St. Paul's, Campo Marzio, in Verona, in the year 1801 [1802 ??], on April 20th.

The lovable Master, Christ Jesus, enters on this day among His disciples, to console them with a royal testimony of His glorious resurrection, extending peace to them: ... *Peace be to you; it is I, fear not...*! [Lk 24:36] And yet, who would believe this? At such a consoling sight, and with His words of such genuine affection, they were all terrified, as though they were seeing some horrible specter. They paled before Him and trembled as thought at a mournful announcement of a said death: ... *but they, being troubled and frightened, supposed they saw a spirit...* [v. 37].

Is this surprising to you, my listeners? The scene is in truth quite unusual, but not altogether rare, even in our own days. How many Christians are there not even among modern Christians, who withdraw in fright from approaching their Lord more closely! How many express fear rather than coming to serve Him with greater perfection in their state! They do indeed at certain times, feel alive, with lights penetrating into their minds, and at the same time, experiencing strong but gentle inspirations in their hearts. But to what avail! The more evident pledges and surer offerings of peace become for them as many arguments for discouragement and consternation.

633: They look upon the devout life as an object of sadness, of anguish and horror. They make quite clear by their very actions, the extent of the errors and deception anyone would be subject to who would care to judge spiritual matters with an earthy eye, even carnal. What means is necessary, then, to straighten them out? Let them just briefly suspend their judgments until I have spoken. And I will do my best to have them consider devotion under such an appealing, joyful and lovable aspect that they themselves will hasten avidly to embrace it.

Come here, therefore, all of you, who have formed such a false idea of genuine devotion: come with me while I clarify your view from all deception. And so that we might proceed with some better order, I believe it best not to expose with some contrived order, I believe it is best not to expose to you the naked truth, if first you do not pierce the darkness that perhaps impedes your admiring eye, it is not cleared away.

634: Devotion, then, according to the image that your senses might draw of it, might seem rather to be a dreary matter, instead of a desirable part of life. It might come across as pallid and pale of visage, severe in its look, horrid in its likeness. It is seen as a reality that thins down the flesh by perpetual fasting; it lacerates the back with heavy scourging, the whip never being taken out of the right hand; it covers under a coarse garment the harsh hair-shirt. It is thought to flee discourteously sweet friendships, and is hostile to every delight, insensible to every pleasure. It is viewed as making every haste to close itself up in total solitude. It is understood as riveting

one's knees immovably to the ground, seeming to nourish one solely on tears, and sighs as the only sign of life. Should it ever once in a while allow one to come out into public view, it would only beg for insults, so that it would then return satisfied with shame.

635: I know that some perhaps will tacitly find fault with my shrewdly having been excessive in exaggerating an objection, that might bring real harm to my theme. However, such a concern is so far from me that precisely from such a gloomy description, I am planning to draw the strongest argument possible. And what is it, then, that one would want to conclude from such formidable premises? Does this mean that devotion is indeed less attractive? My response will be precisely the contrary.

In fact, I pose this question: is there lacking to devotion, all covered over in such a severe guise, by devotees and lovers? I see rather to my wonder that every age, both sexes, of every condition in life, every walk of life - witness avid followers seeking devotion. How many have not been seen, and are still being noted among the ranks of generous young people, still in the flower of their lives, so full of hopes - still turn their backs on splendid nuptials, to offer to devotion alone their right hands? In like manner, how many gracious young women, put aside all their delights and comforts, do not still make every haste to enclose themselves in solitary cloisters, to make themselves more tranquil companions to devotion?

636: And how many among the wealthy, who live in great abundance in their state, entirely despoil themselves of it all, and put it all aside, in order to run more freely and agilely along the desired paths, to follow Devotion. How many others declare themselves happy to have exchanged ample honors and the most sublime dignities, for the most hidden and neglected abjection. And lastly, how many have there not been who put down the much sought after scepters of power, and glorious diadems from their foreheads, in order to enroll themselves among the faithful servants of Devotion, in order to serve her laws in obedience. These facts, illustrious as they are luminous, are not rare in the world. Such deeds may be attested to in abundance in the memories of so many people, and they surpass beyond measure the stories of all the centuries.

So, it is necessary to conclude that there can be found in devotion a beauty, a sweetness, a wealth, an exultation, a glory that we do not expect to find at first sight. But, the fact is that so many have loved her, and at this beloved sign, they have shown that they prefer devotion to all the beauties, delights, treasures, and honors of this world. And it is fitting to note further that all that very frightening exterior matters nothing in arresting so many fervent lovers from such a harsh pathway in following her.

637: Right here, then, is the deception. The majority only look at some of the externals of Devotion. Anyone, though, who does this, does not consider the interior consolation in which the authentic servants of God abound, that is all the more sweet as it is all the more secret. This is that hidden manna: *....which no man knows, but he that receives it...* [Apoc 2:17]. This is that perpetual banquet enjoyed by a secure

mind in peace of heart [Pr 15:15]. This is that most sweet conversation with uncreated Wisdom from which is excluded all boredom, all bitterness [Ws 8:16]. O, how good is the Lord to those of upright heart, exclaims the Psalmist [Ps 72:1]. And in another text [Ps 30:20]: *...O how great is the multitude of Your sweetness, O Lord, which You have hidden for them that fear You...!*

638: Now if it is indeed true that, among its harsh points, devotion appears nonetheless so beautiful and lovable to anyone who looks at it attentively with a well purged eye, what will happen, then, if we rise above such horrible externals? It could not fail to draw after it most gently bound, our hearts that are still weak and infirm. The time has come, then, that I should descend to unmask the other deception that is committed in making judgments about Devotion. For one is to define it solely from externals - I would like now to show the other extreme. That would be to try to present what is particular and proper to a few, to make this common and almost necessary for all.

639: What a great misconception this might easily be seen if one would put in mind the more exact definition that is proposed with St. Thomas⁶¹. With him are all the more learned and illustrious masters. They hold that **true devotion essentially consists in a will ready to give oneself to God, and to be dedicated to those matters that pertain the more to His services**. Now, while it is true that God calls all to serve Him, and indeed all can, and it is fitting that all should aspire to be sanctified in their state of life. Nonetheless, it is false to think that God wishes to be served by all in the same manner. It is necessary to attend to the difference of the states in which all human beings have been constituted by the same Divine Providence.

640: For this reason, Devotion ought to be practiced in one way by a religious in a cloister, and by a lay person in the heart of the world - and differently by a sacred minister in the offices of his Church than by a father of a family in the government of his own home. God is served one way by a virgin who dedicates herself to God, and a married woman who is also obligated to her husband. Genuine devotion does not disrupt any kind of vocation, for indeed it would not be authentic if it should impede even in part, the duties proper to one's state in life.

True Devotion equally has wings to fly to heaven, as well as feet to walk on the earth. While it has hands that are continuously in motion, it knows how to repose its heart in God. It has eyes to maintain the vigil, to supervise and to take care of temporal matters. And at the same time, it has an even more acute vision in the human mind never to lose sight of one's last end. It knows how to enter into counsel with the divine good pleasure in its every action to direct all to His glory.

641: Devotion endows one with a tongue in order to speak with other human beings. And, at the same time, secretly, it opens up as many other mouths, all of one's internal potencies in order never to cease praising and blessing its God. Devotion enables one to treat with the world and, at the same time, converses in its

⁶¹St. Thomas Aquinas, II-II, q. 82, a. 1, c.

spirit in the heavens - thus emulating, as it were, those blessed fellow citizens there. By means of love, Devotion draws God to itself and possesses Him in the abundance of peace, and rejoices already here on earth in another paradise.

642: Therefore, it is admirable gentleness with which it permeates all actions, giving that unchanging uniformity of spirit. The world can perceive nothing in it that makes it stand out from the ordinary, in the mannerisms, the activities, and the duties proper to the state of life of the devout person. And yet, there is no end to the wonder at being forced to love in Devotion an indescribable singularity and sense of the divine, that the world does not know. In prosperity, it does not raise itself over the less fortunate - and in adversity, it does not give in to sadness. It rejoices in the happiness of others, as though it were its own.

It surrenders all its own personal choices, and extends a discreet condescendence to the gifts of others, provided these are upright. It communicates in goodness its consolations to those who are prostrate in affliction of their spirits. It is most liberal with its friends, and generally beneficent towards all. Without any pretension, it awaits from its God alone the reward, and it is in His service alone that it delights.

643: I could just keep on going, my hearers, in speaking to you about such a lovable virtue, if time were not hurrying me on. Yet, the time allotted does not make me hurry so fast that I will miss heading into the port. What are your views now, then, regarding Devotion? And where are all those difficulties that seemed so overwhelming that you objected against my view? Where are those horrible hues with which you depicted Devotion? Does the reality not now seem altogether different from that which you had judged Devotion earlier? Is the view now not all joyfully, sweet and lovable? You see, then, that also today I have lived up to the expected promise to which I committed myself from the outset.

644: And now, my beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, now that there have been removed - as I hope it is so - those difficulties which alone distanced your spirit from the devout life, what remains? What else is there other than for you to follow with every readiness the impulse of the Holy Spirit? Is it not enough for you now for you to **offer your hearts** at this point to Jesus Christ who is asking this of you? Is it not up to you still, then, to resolve efficaciously **to serve from now on**, all the days of your life, that God who merits so well your **obsequious** service?

645: You have been given being and life by His creative hand and for this reason alone you were introduced into this world: to know, to love, to praise and to serve the author of every good. You have been created to promote His glory on this earth, thus to merit also yourselves a glorious recompense up in heaven, a perfect beatitude, enjoying and possessing your God forever.

646: You have been purchased back by the Blood of a God; you have been adopted as children of the King of Heaven You have been made sharers in the divine nature by the habit of grace. So, you are not our own, but belong to God, to serve Him alone: ... *we are debtors, not the flesh...* [Rm 8:12]. We are not enslaved to flesh and blood in order to have pleasure in depraved desires. We are rather

servants to the Spirit, to allow yourselves to be governed gently by His instincts and to follow His principles. You are no longer of this earth, as though you had to follow this world. But, you are celestial, to work and to live as saints.

647: ... *The time is short...* [1 Co 7:29]... *for the fashion of this world passes away...* [v. 31]. We are taking giant steps forward every day and are preparing for a stable eternity. So, all that we still have to do should be done in great haste [Jn 13:27]. Should we wait for the night, perhaps, before setting down to work [Jn 9:4]? Should we await the arrival of the spouse, in order to provide our lamps which have almost gone out [Mt 25:1-13]? Should we wait until we are invited to the **nuptials** to prepare only then the **nuptial garment** [Mt 22:12]?

648: ...*Behold I come quickly...* [Apoc 22:12]. I am here among you and I bring My reward with me: [ib.]. How happy is that soul who will be adorned and disposed to receive Him Come, He will say, come, My Spouse, receive the crown that your Lord has prepared for you forever ⁶²: ...*Blessed is that servant whom the Lord, when he comes, shall find watching...* [Lk 12:37]. ... *The Lord will say: well done, good and faithful servant, because you have been faithful over a few things, I will place you over many things...* [Mt 25:2]...*Enter into the joy of your Lord...* [v. 23].

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Sources

OT

Ps 30:20	# 637	Pr 15:15	# 637
72:1	# 637	Ws 8:16	# 637

NT

Mt 22:12 [<u>nuptials</u>]	# 647	Jn 9:4	# 647
25:1-13 [<u>Spouse</u>]	# 647	13:27	# 647
21	# 648	Rm 8:12	# 646
23	# 648	1 Co 7:29	# 647
Lk 12:37	# 648	31	# 647
24:36, f.	# 632	Apoc 2:17	# 637
37	# 632	22:12 [<u>Spouse</u>]	# 648

⁶²Liturgy of the Common of Virgins, Vespers.

Liturgy

Common of Virgins, Vespers [Espousals] # 648

Fathers & Doctors

St. Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life* ## 632-648

St. Thomas Aquinas, II-II, q. 82, a. 1 c # 639

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649:**SERMON 12****Love for God****[To be imitated in St. Aloysius Gonzaga]****For the Sixth Sunday dedicated to the above-mentioned saint, that was the Third Sunday after Pentecost. Preached in St. Paul's of Campo Marzio, on June 27, 1802.**

There is perhaps no other name that is able to penetrate with equal delight the delicate ears of a gentle heart than the word "love". Nor is there any more pleasing spectacle that can be offered to the eyes that is more moving, than to see other hearts follow the triumph of a victorious love, after having been **wounded** and conquered by another.

650: To you, then, gentle squadron of young people, devoted to running along in the blessed footsteps that in his early years your angelic Protector and example, St. Aloysius Gonzaga, has traced out for you. To you, therefore, on this special day, I direct my sermon in a particular manner. What other theme could be more suitable that could resound here and be heard from my lips, than "love, love"? And under what more beloved vision could I draw for you than the fervent emulation of your Saint - if not he, as the happy prisoner, who would draw you after him with the sweet chains of that love that was so beautiful that it held him bound?

651: You can see already that I am speaking of a celestial, supra-human and divine love. And I also take note, nor is there any need to hide the fact, that this nude abstract word delights from the very outset, as much as would an object that is so superior and sublime that I have proposed for you. Yet, such admiration is so surprising that your senses remained suspended from taking any flight. In fact, every step of your affections remain quite timid. However, this is not too upsetting to me, as I believe I have already seen the reason for this. if you would just allow me to move your hearts, right and docile as they are - allow me courteously to enter them with my theme. I am sure that right away I will treat them with every kindness in order to achieve that goal. It is towards this now that the Saint himself turns in his own gaze of love.

652: From every day experience it is known to all that secret and wonderful power that draws iron to the magnet. It attracts with a gentle violence and succeed in uniting it to itself. A similar sway is exercised over the human appetite by good. So, just as soon as it comes from the intellect that grasps it and proposes it to the will, that it draws it to itself and unites itself gently and embraces it. And this movement of the will towards good is precisely that which is called "love." You can see what a wondrous, but true reality this is. It happens at times that a good that is all the more sublime in itself, that has, therefore, the greater force to attract - yet, all the less does it move the will. In fact, it may even exercise the contrary effect, and of itself, the will rejects it.

653: Just imagine an illustrious princess, endowed with beauty, gracious youth, good fortune, honor, good moral training, tastefully dressed, and all this in abundance. It seems that all these embellishments compete with one another to see which predominates to make her the more lovable. The imagine a simple, unlearned shepherd, not used to courtly manners, moved by some inexplicable yearning to see her. He enters into the royal palace and sees the sweet majesty of her virginal decor. There he is able to observe the noble appointments of all her other, very rare qualities. And then we see him, suddenly astonished and fearful, hastily withdraw his eyes and retreats. And if you want to know the reason for this, it is not because the goodness is all that grand, but rather because he considers himself in total disproportion.

654: In fact, the Wisdom writer assigns proportion as the principal cause of love: ... *Every beast loves its like; so also every man that is nearest to himself...* [Si 13:19]. Now, this is precisely your situation. I have extended to you an invitation to divine love; but you, considering the Divinity as a good in its supreme sovereignty that is excessively disproportionate to your own extreme lowliness and wretchedness. What wonder, then, is there that you then experience deep within a timidity, and that your thoughts and affections end up in confusion? But if now there is already uncovered the cause of your fears, it would be easy for me to destroy them, in order to set your heart in complete freedom.

655: We are made up of two substances quite different in themselves: soul and body. If we do want to consider the bodily part, I can well concede that we will not find between God and us, only disproportion and a lack of fittingness. St. Augustine⁶³ would say here that God is not color, so that He could be taken in by our eyes; He is not taste, in order to be experienced by our palate; He is not sound in order to be heard by our ears. Nor is He any other material quality in order for Him to have been the slightest convenience for our senses. However, if it is true that from the external sensible world we do obtain our most just reflections on the soul, as this is the superior and the formal part of ourselves - so, then, right here we will be able to find much proportion and suitability.

656: Our soul is spiritual: and God is likewise spiritual. His Being is most simple, incorruptible, immortal. God is pure intellect and His will is most free: the human soul is likewise endowed with free will. But, what good would there be if trying to uncover other similar particular points of contact, when God Himself makes clear to us in the Scriptures that He has formed us in His image in creating the soul:

657: ... *Let Us Make man to Our image and likeness...* [Gn 1:26]? And so, just as the soul in the unity of its substance represents the unity of the divine nature - as it is in the three distinct potencies, the most august Trinity of persons. Even more perfectly: just like God knows Himself and loves Himself as the most perfect good - so, too, the soul is capable of knowing God and also to love Him. And would not such a great relationship of similarity be sufficient to display the most sensible affection of satisfaction and of love?

⁶³St. Augustine, *Confess.* 10, 6, 8. t. I, 173/D.

658: But I can sense that some would want to object to me: but, God is supreme good, and we are miserable, defective, sinners. Just observe, though, how I will make use of this very objection in order to conclude in my favor. God is indeed Supreme Good, you say: and, therefore, I immediately reply then He is supremely communicable. The Philosopher understood it in these terms ⁶⁴: good, in that it is the more perfect, it is all the more diffusive.

659: We are indeed wretched, and if you want, miserable to the extreme: then, that means we are needy also to the extreme of help and of goodness. Furthermore, our spiritual potencies have a marvelous capacity, since they are perfectible to an indeterminate degree, according to this word: *...and he that is just, let him be justified still... [Apoc 22:11]*. Now, what could be more fitting, more suitable to an infinite goodness that yearns, and I would almost say, without any restriction, to communicate His perfections - than to find one as capable as well as deprived and needy of every type of good?

Even among human beings, those who are genuinely liberal are not made happy when they find someone as rich as they are. But they do rejoice when they meet the poor and the needy, so that the lavish on them their wealth, while they rejoice deep within. Would not this be all the more true regarding God?

660: He is not content, in fact, just waiting for them, or hoping to encounter them. Rather, He goes in search of the most needy, and calls them strongly, crying out through Isaiah: *... All you that thirst, come to the waters: and you that have no money, make haste, buy and eat: come buy wine and milk without money and without any price...Why do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy you? Hearken diligently to me, and eat that which is good, and your soul shall be delighted in fatness... [Is 55:1, 2]*. Christ Himself has stated: *... I have not come but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel... [Mt 15:24]*. *... I have come to save that which was lost... [Mt 18:11]*. *... that they may have life and may have it more abundantly... [Jn 10:10]*.

661: Now if all this still seems insignificant to you, I would further add that our hearts are so made for God that there is nothing outside of Him that could not be brought into proportion with Him. What else do those very broad desires,,, that inability to be satiated with any good, or pleasure - all of which only enkindle the appetite the more? Does not all this imply that the goods of this world are indeed out of proportion to the fullness of our hearts? Does not all this tell us that a heart that is almost infinite in its yearning can only find its fulfillment in a good that is likewise infinite? But, now it is time that I come to the example of Aloysius Gonzaga in order to convince you with his example.

662: It can very well be said that Aloysius had just begun, at the first light of his dawning use of reason to know God, that he already began to love Him. You could have seen him, still a tender child, in the most remote corners of his home, seeking his God in solitude. And just as God is always ready to manifest Himself to anyone

⁶⁴St. Thomas Aquinas, I, q. 5, a. 4 ad 2 um.

who would seek Him in simplicity of heart, so Aloysius committed himself to Him. He strive in all his thoughts and affections that nothing else would distract his mind, nor occupy his heart. This was why he worked so diligently at the custody of his senses.

663: He elevated his spirit, already orientated toward a most sublime contemplation of the divine beauty. As his knowledge of this increased, in like manner, so do his love. And o, how I wish that I could show him at the foot of those altars. When there was granted to him to receive his God for the first time under the sacramental veil, how expressive his face became! From that warm flow of tears from his eyes, you could come to know that flame. Could you not imagine that fire burned and even raged in his young chest - and what rapid progress this fire made within Aloysius?

664: The world with its hardy obstacles would close off all the paths in order to hold him back in its clutches. But, the love in his heart had already become strong and most vigorous. This opened wide for him that which he chose to follow in order to be more united to the Good he had chosen. He wished to enter into the peaceful enclosure of a cloister. And it is here that his love grew to such a sublime level that in just the few years that remained to him, one could no longer tell if this was really just Aloysius, or rather God Who lived in Aloysius.

665: In his mind, God was all that mattered. In his will, the only affections were those for God. Whenever he spoke, his conversation centered around God. And in his eye, all that he saw was God, as nothing pleased him other than his God. All his exterior actions were not only dedicated to God, but there was evident in him an inexplicable sense of the divine. This was at such a level that in any activity that he undertook, the hearts of the many who noticed him were moved all the more toward divine ideals through devotion. The mere sight of him more than any other specific means very often was more than enough to excite them to fervor.

666: This, then, is the height to which love carried Aloysius. It was not without purpose that I wanted to trace his path, as though he ascended by so many steps. This is the journey that he took. My hope is that your hearts are already directed in this way, having put aside your initial fear and hesitancy. I am hoping that now you are animated, and almost spurred on to follow him. Your hearts will rejoice even more as you learn better how to direct and guide your steps more securely in this way even to the goal desired.

667: So, my listeners, we have already arrived at the end of the six Sunday's that we had promised in honor of St. Aloysius in preparation for his Feast. This was all to dispose ourselves better with the imitation of his most beautiful virtues. I do not know any better way that we could conclude this than by exercising our spirits with his example for the love of God.

668: So, my hearers, if we should only know who God is slightly, what sublime joy would be ours to be able to love a goodness that is so sublime. And what an immense good is it for such a holy love to be so fecund in us. I am convinced that with this we would forget all else, and even our own selves, so that all our thoughts, all our affections would be of God - of, in God alone.

669: So, let us push aside once and for all the darkness, this gloom that is so thick and dense around us that it blocks our view. Let us receive at this opportune moment that vibrant ray of light that already comes alive in this moment, enkindling our spirit of faith. God commands us to love Him and threatens us with eternal death if we deny Him this love. He promises us with eternal life and Himself as a reward to anyone who loves Him. He has taken the initiative in loving. Even before we existed, He loved us. We could not even think of Him, and He had already taken the most tender care of us. He lavished upon us a large abundance of the goods of nature and grace upon us, while it still was not even possible for us to recognize the benefit, and much less the beneficent Hand from which it all had its source.

670: We have finally come to know this, and even more that His goodness was paid for by the most base ingratitude. Even though we were hostile and ungrateful, He never ceased to love us, and it even seems that He reinforced His love. O, my listeners, just a glance at this cross, and it will clearly testify how this Man-God has already paid for your hearts, with the dear price of all His Blood. And to whom else will we give these hearts of ours if not to God?

671: Our souls are the adopted children of God. We bear impressed upon them the most illustrious likeness and clear image of Him. By grace, we have been raised above our own nature, by being divinized, deified, made like the very one the Angels dedicate themselves to serve with ambitious courtship. Christ is our Brother and with Him we have in common the inheritance and the kingdom.

A soul, then, of such exalted origin and embellished with such ineffable qualities - to whom should we give ourselves as **Spouses?** To whom, other than to the divine love?

Let us love God, then! Let us love God!

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Sources

OT

Gn 1:26	# 657	Is 55:1	# 660
Si 13:19	# 654	2	# 660

NT

Mt 15:24	# 660	Jn 10:10	# 660
18:11	# 660	Apoc 22:11	# 659

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St. Augustine, <i>Confessions</i> ,	10, 6, 8, t. 1, 173 D, ff.	# 655
	10, 10, 17. t. 1, 176 E	# 655
St. Thomas Aquinas, I, q. 5, a. 4, ad 2 um		# 658

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672:**SERMON 13****Respect for Priests**

For the Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost - September 26, 1802, Verona, in St. Paul's, Campo Marzio.

There is a truth that is so evident that is in a way in need of being brought forward. It is a dogma of faith, already established even by an Ecumenical Council⁶⁵. The truth is that human beings have nothing of their own but falsehood and sin. There is every reason, then, that by the constant opinion of men and women that through the infallible sentence as well of the Gospel of today, Lk 14:1-11: Anyone who would exalt himself is judged worthy only of shame and humiliations: ... *Because everyone that exalts himself, shall be humbled...* [v. 11].

673: It is not in this way, most gifted listener, this is not the way to be exalted by God. Whoever possesses Him as a most just good and a well-founded right to that honor and that glory that much like one's shadow, merit proceeds along at equal place. Hence, in this case, if it is well thought over, there is not so much honored what pertains to men and women, but rather that which is of God that may be found in them. God's gifts merit always greater esteem, and every reverence of human beings wherever they may be. His gifts are given as coming from His most sublime providence.

674: If this is the way it is, and this truly is the situation, on the one hand, I cannot find any whom God wised more in this world to be exalted than His priests. So, on the other hand, I see that many run the real risk of making themselves culpable of a seriously grave, harmful and insufferable presumption. I cannot grasp, unless with great damage to their consciences, why so many among our Christians, so many, give signs of understanding so poorly and venerating even less, a dignity that is so sublime and a character that is so sovereign.

675: The very fact that I am speaking to you here today regarding the respect due to priests can only be a theme that is very necessary for some among you. For others, it will prove very useful, and at last opportune for everyone. For this is a day in which with such solemn ceremony, we have seen for the very first time this morning this fine young priest ascend the altar⁶⁶. Our eyes were loving spectators, with tenderness and happiness We have this day been witnesses of such a sublime, portentous, and ineffable exaltation.

676: The fact that you owe, ladies and gentlemen, an obsequious subjection to priests appears in the first place from that super-human dignity with which they have been invested by the Most High King of Heaven and earth. St. Paul has said: ... *Let a man so account us as of the ministers of Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries*

⁶⁵Denz. ## 793; 811, ff,

⁶⁶**Translator's Note:** It seems that this is the homily for a First Mass of newly ordained Priest.

of God... [1 Co 4:1]. This is the right idea that the Christian People should form of its priests. This is the way in which one should refer to them: this is Christ's minister; he is a dispenser of the heavenly ministries. this is an Ambassador of the supreme Monarch, just as the Apostle expressed himself in another place: ... *For Christ, therefore, we are ambassadors, for God, as it were, exhorting us...* [2 Co 5:20].

677: Now, if so much honor and respect is attributed to the ministers of an earthly king and to his ambassadors, by all his subjects, what do you think should be the obsequious reverence due in this case? What reverence do you think would be fitting to these most illustrious ministers of a court that is not of this earth, but of heaven? It is noted that the princes of this world are so solicitous that there be tendered to their delegates an honor that is almost the same due to their own august personages. This is so true that they do punish any outrages with that same severity meted out to those who would offend them in person. God will not do otherwise when it is a matter of the honor due to His ministers.

676: By grace to attend to the force of one's senses with which He Himself forms but a single law, in Ecclesiasticus: ...*with all your soul fear the Lord and reverence His priests...* [Si 7:31]... *With all your strength, love Him who made you: and forsake not His ministers...* [v. 32]... *Honor God with all your soul, and give honor to the priests...* [v. 33]. Three separate times he repeats the same precept. And how many other times does He not command that His ministers should be loved, revered, feared, as well as directing that they should be honored. This only goes to show clearly that in the very first place, after God, honor, reverence and love are due to them. He Himself has constituted them that they should take His place and represent to us His image here on earth.

679: In the old law God commanded that the blasphemers of His divine Name should be stoned. His judgment also was that the lack of respect toward priests was a situation no less worthy of death. These are the very words of another one of His laws, in Deuteronomy: ... *But he that will be proud, and refuse to obey the commandment of the priest... that man shall die...* [17:12]... *And all the people hearing it shall fear, that no one afterwards swell with pride...* [v. 13].

680: He was not even content with having determined such a grave penalty that would then be carried out by the leaders of the people on the culpable. He Himself anticipating their judgment, in more than one case, carried it out Himself. Hardly has the three proud Hebrews appeared, Core, Dathan, and Abiron, the first among the people, to insult the new priesthood of Aaron, that there opened a fearsome gulf at their feet. They were suddenly swallowed up in it, along with their numerous family and their rather substantial holdings, all enveloped together, in a whirlwind of flames, down into its most gloomy depths [Nb 16:1-19:22].

681: Another time, forty youths got together on the top of a hill to mock a prophet who was going that way. Among their shouts and their laughter, they said to him: ... *Go up, you bald head, go up....!* [4 K 2:23]. But what a tragic ending their ridicule had! For, by the order of God, from the near-by forest two hungry bears came forth, and

they attacked the worldly flock. In a very short time, the animals made of their tender, but crushed and torn members big meal, by filling their stomachs. Thus, God chose to punish them, judging their childish prank to be no less a wrong than the crime of their unhappy elders. It seems that their parents had done nothing to restrain the foolish temerity of their very unfortunate children.

682: Many other examples! For the fact that he raised his voice a little out of duty, brought upon Elias a royal command. And did this not cost the lives of that Tribune and his entire company of fifty soldiers sent after him? Thus, God has shown to what extent he wished those ancient priests and ministers of His to be honored. And they were nothing more than a figure of the priests of the New Law, and of the even more illustrious ministers of his Gospel. Indeed that old law was nothing more than a shadow of our more perfect law of grace.

683: It would suffice to ponder that sovereign and indeed divine authority that Christ had communicated to them. The reason is that we are convinced that all reverence that might be given to them is insufficient for the eminent character with which they are endowed. The Divine Redeemer had cured that paralytic of which mention is made in the Gospel [Mt 9:1, ff.]. The whole crowd looking on practically lost sight of such an extraordinary happening, as they were most amazed in considering these authoritative words: *...your sins are forgiven you...[v. 2]*. Thus, it is clear that the divine **Physician** chose to heal first the soul of that sick man, even before his body. And they began to say among themselves: *... who is this man who forgives sins? Who can forgive sins but God alone...? [Lk 5:21]*. Does it not seem to you, my listeners, that you could repeat these some words about even the least of priests? Is it not so that when any priest raises his hand to absolve you, do you think: 'who is this man who forgives sins? Who can forgive sins, but God alone...?'

684: And you see here an authority that is proper to God alone, by means of His extension, He has communicated it to priests: *... Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; whose sins you shall retain, they are retained... [Jn 20:23]*. What prince, what king on earth has such power? Even more, what saint, what Angel in heaven, has indeed been commissioned with such sublime authority over the Mystical Body of the Church? And yet, what wonder is there that God has chosen to subject to priestly authority all the subjects of the broad kingdom of His Church - when, in fact, He has subjected Himself, who is its Sovereign, to it?

O most lofty, sublime, o ineffable dignity of priests! For they call down on earth their God - and he obeys: *... the Lord obeying the voice of a man... [Jos 10:14]*. Thus, he inclines, comes down, to be under them, even to being held and blessed in their hands.

685: I do not know, my hearers, whether up to the moment you have garnered valid arguments to submit yourselves with a good spirit to the authority of your priests. I am not sure whether you revere in them such an august character. With this last phrase, I have touched upon the main argument, that is the crown and the complement of all the others. Nonetheless, I will not cease investigating other

arguments still, as for yourselves it is almost too important, such subjection. And I really want to present what would be a strong motive for your interest.

686: Tell me, please, what good in the order of your salvation could you hope for without such a just dependence - when all the good you have received up until now has it not come to you through any other hands than those of the priests? This is an argument of St. John Chrysostom⁶⁷. If no one can enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, unless first being reborn in the water and the Holy Spirit; and if it is true that anyone who does not eat of the Flesh of the Lord is deprived of eternal life; and if these gifts cannot be had other than through the hands of priests - then, who, without their works, can either escape the inextinguishable fire of hell, or achieve above those incorruptible crowns that have already been prepared?

687: For priests have brought you into life and regenerated you through Baptism; through their mediation you have put on Jesus Christ and have become members of His holy Body. Your parents have generated you into this world, and meant you for heaven. They have given you a life which they cannot defend against the maladies that assail it, and much less, can they keep you from death. How many times, though, have priests been able to rescue your weakened and dying soul. How many times have they restored you to life, to grace, even when you were already in the very threshold of hell to be eternally buried there. How often have they snatched you right out of the hands of demons, and closed the doors of that horrendous prison, by reopening the gates of heaven. How often have they adorned you in your nudity, filth and deformity with those earlier gifts and your lost beauty.

688: If indeed you have now already grown and you abound in spiritual riches, it is because of those who have nourished you with the salvific pasturage of the divine word. It is because of them who set the banquet table for you each, with that super substantial food, and with that angelic bread is ministered to you by their hands. If you are at peace in the depths and the calm of your hearts, if your enemies do not prevail over your spirit, and if among the threats of a disturbed justice, there can still be seen in the world the ever propitious countenance of mercy - much is due to priests. By their office and by institution they pour forth daily and most efficacious prayers to the Almighty for common peace and tranquility. They offer on these altars that Host that is so acceptable to the Divine Father in order to placate His disdain against sinners. They offer this to incline His favor on the desires of the just, and finally to open up an inexhaustible mine of graces to respond to the spiritual and temporal needs of all. In the last analysis, it is the priests, perhaps uniquely and alone, who watch over what is for the greatest good for the salvation of your souls. They are responsible to render a most strict account to the severe Judge, in the same way as they must for their own souls.

⁶⁷St. John Chrysostom - precise citation not given here.

689: The time has come now, my hearers, for me to take advantage of that generous confidence that your courteous presence inspires in me. After having pondered up until now, on what is best for you; now grant me these last few minutes at least for my own benefit. The evidence of the arguments adopted here by me have brought to light in you, as I am sure they have - a sentiment of veneration and dependence on the priestly character and authority. All this, though, is uniquely for your own advantage. Provided you keep the order already established by God, you merit His grace. He considers as rendered to Him the honor show to His ministers. the most precious fruit that you gain from the same order maintained by you, are indeed all the benefits that are necessary and that lead to your salvation. All this, He has annexed and bound to your dependence on His ministers.

690: The priests themselves, then, do not draw any personal benefit from this - whether they are revered or not by other human beings. Either way, it does not increase nor diminish their praise of God, for which He alone proves them. I will say even more. It would be in their behalf if they could desire this without bringing harm on you, to be held in low esteem and scorned by you. Truth itself has made known to us: *...blessed are you when men shall separate you, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil... [Lk 6:22]... for behold your reward is great in heaven... [v. 23]*

691: Do you really know what is best for us, rather what we can yearn for, as our only good? Well, I will tell you: when we assist our fellow human beings in order to obtain salvation, we should come with mutual dedication, assisted with prayers by them in order to achieve this. Since we are superior to you in dignity, like the Angels in our office, we remain men by condition, equal to you by nature. There weigh down upon us on all sides the same tribulations, we are assailed by the same enemies, we are threatened by the same dangers, and even greater difficulties.

692: Yes, it is true, my listeners. If, for you, it is impossible, as I have already demonstrated, to obtain grace and salvation without us, as for me, I have no hesitation to state that I am much afraid of my own negligence and tepidity. With such an excessive burden, the concern I have is to lose myself before this Judge Who clearly states: *... Horribly and speedily will he appear to you; for a most severe judgment shall be for them that bear rule... [Ws 6:6]*. This is the situation unless the prayers of many do not precede to render Him more propitious and placated.

693: We are certainly nothing more than very fragile fir trees in comparison with that very robust cedar of Lebanon, Paul, the Apostle. Yet, in so many of his Letters he seeks nothing other as recompense for the faithful for his tremendous travail and solicitude in their behalf, than that they pray incessantly for him. It almost seems as though that he stood in need of being held up by the prayers of the whole world. In his need, he had already spread out a protective shade by his more than paternal care of them. Inspired by such an example, we, too, exhort your charity not to defraud us of this most necessary reward for us, no matter how meager our fatigue may have been for you.

694: Pray, pray very much to the Lord for all your priests, for those especially who watch over your way of life, both interior and your exterior conduct for the good of your spirit. Do not ever forget also this priest before you now, the useless servant who now speaks to you. He is the most needy of all. Pray so that it might never happen that after having preached to others, that he himself become a castaway [1 Co 9:27].

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Sources

OT

Nb16:1-19:22 [anti-priests]	# 680	Ws 6:6	# 692
Dt 17:12	# 679	Si 7:31	# 678
13	# 679	32	# 678
Jos 10:14	# 684	33	# 678

NT

Mt 9:1	# 683	Lk 14:11	# 672
2	# 683	Jn 20:23	# 684
Lk 5:21	# 683	1 Co 4:1	# 676
6:22	# 690	9:27	# 694
23	# 690	2 Co 5:30	# 670
14:1-11	# 672		

Magisterium

Trent, Denzinger, n. 793 [Decr. on Justif.]	# 672
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Fathers & Doctors

St. John Chrysostom, <i>On the Priesthood</i> [no citation]	# 686
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695:**SERMON 14****On the Universal Judgment**

For the First Sunday of Advent. Preached in the Venerable Church of St. Paul's, Campo Marzio, in the year 1802. November 28th.

...Fear God and give Him honor, for the hour of His judgment has come...

[Apoc 14:7

...The great day of the Lord is near, it is near and exceeding swift: the voice of the Day of the Lord is bitter, the mighty man shall there meet with tribulation... [Sop. 1:14]

...That day is a day of wrath, a day of tribulation and distress, a day of calamity and misery, a day of darkness and obscurity, a day of clouds and whirlwinds... [v. 15]. [Is 13:6, ff.].

696: Give way yourselves to such loud shots and cries, because that day God has set for universal devastation is now near. You will see the most robust arms fall down languidly, and the most staunch hearts will weaken and melt. The insides of all will be contorted in most bitter pains, and unbelieving eyes will stare at one another, lifeless and consumed by fear. This is the terrible day, so cruel and full of indignation, wrath, furor. This will place the whole earth in solitude and sinners will be dispersed from this world. The stars in the heavens will no longer send down their rays; the sun will be darkened from the instant of its rising, and the moon will no longer shed the light of its beams. A great and terrible day: *... and who can stand it...? [Jl 2:11].*

697: My God, how and when will this terrible day come? St. Peter cries out: *..But the day of the Lord shall come as a thief, in which the heavens shall pass away, with great violence, and the elements shall be melted with the heat, and the earth and the works that are in it shall be burnt up... [2 P 3:10].* Now, when will this day come? The Apostle responds: *.... For when they say: peace and security; then shall sudden destruction come upon them as the pains upon her that s with child, and they shall not escape... [1 Th 5:3].* But, more specifically, when will it be? The Gospel answers this one: *... But of that day and hour no one knows... [Mt 24:36]... as in the days of Noah, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be... [v. 37].*

698: *.... For as the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, even till that day on which Noah entered into the ark... [v. 38].....And they knew not till the flood came, and took them all away; so also shall the coming of the Son of Man be... [v. 39]. ...Fear God, then, and give him honor, for the hour of his judgment has come... [Apoc 14:7].*

I would, however, not even be happy, my listeners, that you this evening should see that the judgment is indeed near at hand. I would prefer that you consider it already present. Do not wait from me the order and manner of expressing this in such confusion. I would not want to note in you a sterile stupor, or just apparent grief. My theme here seeks rather a much more solid resolution on your part, to better, or even to change your way of living,

699: Look around you in the meantime, for the world itself gives the appearance of being a desert. The skies are covered with a dark and funereal sack-cloth. Across the burnt out face of the earth, it still seems to be smoking from the vast conflagration. Nothing passes over it but an ominous silence from on high. Where are those powerful and populated cities now? Where are those monuments and those proud trophies, raised up by ambition and display? where are those broad fertile and delightful fields? Alas! Where now are there so avaricious owners, where are your fanatic lovers? - ... *And the voice of the harps, and of the musicians... shall no more be heard in you... [Apoc 18:22]... And the voice of the bridegroom and the bride shall be heard no more in you... [v. 23]. ... for the fashion of this world passes away... [1 Co 7:31].*

700: Indeed God has already sent four angels: ... *standing on the four corners of the earth... [Apoc 7:1]* - to announce with the strong blast of trumpets the end to the mute, sleepy world. Arise, all you dead, arise! - ... *And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and hell gave up their dead that were in them... [Apoc 20:13]: ...there was a noise, and behold a commotion: and the bones came together... [Ezk 37:7]* - and the dust dispersed by the power of the Almighty God came together” ... *behold the sinews, and the flesh came upon them: and the skin was stretched out over them... [v. 8].* Arise, you dead. Heaven is open, hell has been closed. The blessed souls fly joyfully to revive those members that served through life for their sanctification, and now are companions in their glory.

701: The souls of the damned come forth from their pits and violently they are forced to be imprisoned in their old bodies. They are horrified to see themselves immersed in such fetid and monstrous looking filth. This permeates the air with a heavy odor, and frightens them with its horrid specter. And yet, this is indeed your body, o vain woman, unthinking young man. this is what you pampered with such care, what you dressed with such delicacy, that you loved unto such perdition! O wretched human being, to what have you dedicated your thoughts, your concerns, your loves? “ Arise, arise, come now to judgment!” Come to the great valley, to the valley: ... *and I will bring them down into the valley of Josaphat and I will plead with them... [Jl 3:2].*

702: Flee, o sinners, run away from the sword of an angry God: ...*Where shall I go from you spirit? Or, where shall I flee from Your face... [Ps 138:7].* What, then would you do in such a terrible day of visitation and of such bitter calamity? to whom, then, would you turn in the quest for help? How wretched I am, what will I do when God arises to judge me? And when he asks me for an explanation, what will I ever be able to respond to Him? Where will I be able to shield myself from Your indignant face? - ... *Who will grant me this, that You may protect me in hell, and hide me until Your wrath pass...? [Jb 14:13].* In vain, will sinners dry out: ... *And they shall say to the mountains and the rocks: fall upon us, Hide us... Cover us...! [Apoc 6:16].*

703: ... *and immediately the sun shall be darkened... [Mt 24:29]... and then shall appear the sign... in heaven... [v. 30].* The Cross is raised on high. Sinners, here is the Legislator, the Judge Who alone can save, or condemn you [Jas 4:8, ff.]. ...*Behold, he comes on the clouds... and every eye shall see him, and they also that*

pierced him... [Apoc 1:7] ... and crucified him with so many sins. And they will have much to weep about over Him, all the tribes of the earth [Jl 2:3; Apoc. 1:7]. ... *a fire shall go before him, and shall burn his enemies round about...* [Ps 96:3]... *For behold the Lord will come with fire, and his chariots are like the whirlwind...* [Ps 66:15]. All will be engulfed in the flames. And after Him there will be only be the solitude of a desert. There is nothing that can flee from His hand: majesty, power and glory will be over-turned. His ardent and heavy wrath are most difficult to sustain: His lips are filled with indignation, and His tongue is much like a devouring flame. His spirit is like a torrent that inundates up to the neck, in order to submerge sinners in His impetuous flood.

704: ... *So shall it be at the end of the world. The Angles shall go out, and shall separate the wicked from the just...* [Mt 13:49]... *and He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats...* [Mt 25:32]. What a bitter separation this will be! Forever, the son will be divided from his father, the mother from her daughter, the brother, the spouse - from brother and other partner, friend from friend. Some will go to the right, others to the left. Two may have lived together in the same family: two might have worked in the same office; one is taken among the elect, while the other is abandoned among the reprobate. The elect will be taken away on white clouds to meet Christ, with peaceful and joyful countenances. He invites these to His bosom and to repose: ... *Come all you blessed of My Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world...* [Mt 25:34]. And thus, they will be seated, forming a kind of majestic crown around Christ, and they: ... *shall tread down the wicked when they shall be ashes under the soles of their feet...* [Mt 4:3]. This is also in accord with this other thought: ...*do you not know that the saints shall judge the world...?* [1 Co 6:2].

705: ...*And the wicked shall fall after this without honor, and be a reproach among the dead forever: for he shall burst them, puffed up ad speechless, and shall shake them from the foundations, and they shall be laid waste, and their memory shall perish...* [Ws 4:19]...*They shall come with fear at the thought of their sins, and their iniquities shall stand against them to convict them...* [v. 20]. ... *The heavens shall reveal his iniquity, and the earth shall rise up against him...* [Jb 20:27].

Some have not known how to overcome human respect on their way of life, or now to put aside a little embarrassment, just by whispering their sins into the ear of one of God's ministers that would be beneficial for their salvation. At that time, they will suffer the useless confusion in seeing their most hidden shame then laid bare before the whole world.

706: In but a single point are the innumerable and grandiose benefits of God distinguished from their most ungrateful lack of correspondence. They manifest the strange abuse made of heaven's most outstanding gifts. They reveal the whole wonderful mechanism of infinite kindness, that always sought to lead them to penance and to salvation. They come to realize that it was not so much grace that was lacking to them, but that they were deficient in regard to the grace offered. They will know all too well, then, how empty without it would be their lives. They come to understand how wrong were their habits and manner of dress, so little in accord with

the Gospel of Christ. they came to see finally their exaggerated human weakness was against God's Law.

707: We, too - the elect, will then cry out against sinners - were vested in the same nature, enmeshed in the same weaknesses. And yet, we always supported that weight as sweet and light. This is the very same weight that you did not even want to look at, thinking it as insupportable. Other saints will chime in: we, too, were sinners, and great sinners at that, once. And yet we were able to overcome both the occasions as well as the habits, and our excessive self- respect in order to convert our hearts totally to God: ... *Then shall the just stand with great constancy against those that have afflicted them, and taken away their labors...* [Ws 5:1].

708: At this sight, the wicked will remain disturbed by a horrible dread. They will be overwhelmed with the sudden blow that scarcely preceded their ruin. They will then say among themselves, but too late, their words of repentance. These will be interrupted with the troubled groans of their anguished spirits. They will cry out: are not these the very ones that one day we had derided and made fun of them. How senseless we were! We thought their lives were crazy and that their ends would be without glory: and now look, just see how they are computed among God's children, and their sort has been placed among the saints. Therefore, we are the ones who were wrong, we fell by the way-side, along the path of truth. We tried out along the way of iniquity and perdition: we have walked along difficult paths, and we have ignored the Lord's way. Of what benefit was our pride? What good now is the pomp of that wealth we enjoyed? All these realities have passed like a shadow. But now, there is no time left: time has run out.

709: But, what about Your mercy, divine Judge?

If they have abused this in life: now they will experience Me and call me: 'Merciless, Merciless' [61:6]

But, what about Your blood?

They did not want to make use of it for their salvation. Let it serve them now unto condemnation.

But what about you, Guardian Angels, holy Advocates? And you, what about you, Mary? Mary!

Yes, they all did their share, they prayed for all in the proper time, as long as life lasted. Now, in the awesome flood of the excited wrath of God, there is no one who would either want to, or be able to approach them. Rather, all are committed to glorifying His justice. They cry out: ... *Yes, Lord, God Almighty, true and just are your judgments...* [Apoc 16:7]. Now, o Kin, o Lord: revenge, revenge against Your enemies!

710: O sinners, sinners all! The judge has already sounded against you His immutable sentence: Desist from your sins, desist from them. Depart from Me, go away from Me, you accursed...: ... *depart from Me, you accursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels...* [Mt 25:41]. Struck and knocked down to the ground by this lightning stroke is the experience of sinners. The earth already trembles under their feet and chasm opens up. Stones crash down

upon them burying them in the deepest abyss. And the earth once more closes over them, and the chosen remain alone with Christ.

O blessed sort of the just, who will be with God, always with God! O wretched sort of sinners, to pine away, always separated from God! What an unequal lot, and yet equally unchangeable! O eternity! Human beings go beyond time, and already are at Your doors, and are established in Your house: there they will stay forever. O eternity, o eternity!

711: Why would you delay any longer? Why do you hesitate from throwing yourselves into the arms of this Mercy while there is still time? Act now before this Mercy gives way to all our offenses, to an enraged Justice - why not? Now is the acceptable time for our repentance: for then, it will be absolutely vain and useless. These are the days to insure our salvation. On that day, all hope will be lost: ... *for it shall surely come, it shall not be slack...* [Hab 2:3]. When we are least thinking about it, it will come.

To neglect a matter of such importance, is the same as declaring to wish one's own damnation. To put off deliberation, means to expose oneself to the supreme danger. It is the matter of a soul: once it is lost, it is lost forever. This is a matter of a state that will be perpetually unchangeable. This is a concern of an eternity, either of glory, or of pain. Why, then, do you delay?

712: This Man-God, our Judge, no matter how tenderly He loves us as a loving Father, acts in a given way so that He will not lose us eternally, His Children, under the scourge of His most just vengeance. He threatens us, He warns us, and cries out strongly so that we do not fall under the bitter fatal blow. He commits all His Blood in order to wash our sins. He shows us His merits, because we are invested with the just rights of His Kingdom. He makes us participants in His satisfactions, to lighten for us the weight of our penance: ... *Come to Me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you...* [Mt 11:28].

713: O merciful, infinitely kind Lord! Indeed anyone would be most worthy to share with the demons should he refuse now to participate with such a good Lord. It is only right that such a person should experience all the fury of Your inflexible justice. This is fitting for whoever would disdain Your most excessive Mercy. Anyone rejecting You, merits to be struck down on that day,, with that very bitter condemnation: "Depart from Me!" this will be the lot of anyone who still remains deaf to the gentle invitation: "Come to Me!"

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SourcesOT

Jb 14:13	# 702	Ezk 37:7	# 700
20:27	# 705	8	# 700
Ps 96:3	# 703	Jl 2:3	# 703
138:7	# 702	11	# 696
Ws 4:19	# 705	3:2	# 701
20	# 705	Hab 2:3	# 711
5:1	# 705	Sop 1:14	# 695
Is 13:6, ff.	# 695	15	# 695
30:27, ff.	# 703	Ml 4:3	# 704
66:15	# 703		

NT

Mt 11:28	# 712	1 Co 7:31	# 699
13:49	# 704	1 Th 5:3	# 697
24:29	# 703	Jas 4:8	# 697
36	# 697	Apoc 1:7 [Pierced]	# 702 [2 x]
37	## 697 698	6:16	# 702
38	# 698	7:1	# 700
39	# 698	14:7	## 695; 698
25:32	# 704	16:7	# 709
34	## 704; 713	18:22	# 699
41	## 710; 713	23	# 699
1 Co 6:2	# 704	20:13	# 700

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St. GASPAR BERTONI



A view of the top of the Saint Paul Church in Campo Marzio,
where St. Gaspar Bertoni preached most of the Parish Sermons.

Early Spiritual Writings

PARISH SERMONS

1803

[Manoscritti Bertoni ## 714 – 875]

**Translation into English
Rev. Joseph Henchey, CSS
1972**

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1803714:**SERMON 15****The Beauty of Grace****For New Year's Day 1803. - Preached in the Venerable Church of
St. Paul's of C.M.**

...so we also may walk in newness of life... [Rm 6:4]

A new year, a new life, ladies and gentlemen. And many among you indeed - rather, all of us, as I am firmly convinced, want this. Thus, all love what is best and only naturally yearn for this for themselves. All want to be good and to acquire virtue, if this is lacking - and to increase it, if they are already in possession of it.

715: With all courage, then, I can on this day, with the holy Apostle, excite you to lay aside all that for years in the past you have done. My effort will be for you to extend significantly your desires for better goals that await you. Thus, when you will have finished your course it will happen that you will obtain that reward for which God has called you. Whatever opposition that I might pretend to presume regarding any among you, does not come with regard to the final end of it all. Rather, the difficulty may come with regards to the means of achieving this, these means that I of necessity have to propose to you. **All that is arduous, all that is difficult** ⁶⁸ that might be perceived in these means, this is what frightens some, disheartens them, and almost lends them to despairing to take up the challenge.

716: And it is precisely this difficulty, which is not insignificant, that is my challenge to overcome - or, at least, to lessen. I trust in God's favor to meet perfectly this challenge. And I would want to conquer it by not paying any heed to it. I would wish that you direct your affections toward the goal that you do love it. And I am sure that love conquers all⁶⁹. This newness of life, which is the scope set before myself, and also you, is nothing other than the state of grace, desirable in itself. And since many and excellent qualities in themselves explain the grace of God for it to be loved, for the sake of brevity, I will select only one. This quality is not by chance, nor is it the least of all, nor the least convincing: it is its beauty. As you, both by nature and by your fined education, have hearts that can either be touched easily, or swept away with violence by such an appealing motive, I have no doubt to have already captivated your hearts and have them tightly bound.

⁶⁸**Translator's Note:** an expression reminiscent of **CF # 185**; cf. above also **# 532**.

⁶⁹Virgil, *Eclogues*, 10, 69.

717: My challenge is to make known the beauty of grace that is totally spiritual and heavenly. So, the task before me is to do my best to draw this beauty closely to your senses, and have it come down to you, and present it within your grasp. On your part, it is fitting that you rise up to meet this challenge, to sharpen well your view. I would even say that you will have to open other eyes in order to be able to admire it.

No matter how refined and pleasurable the judgment you may have formed regarding the beautiful, you have done this by observing and comparing the sensible objects that surround you. Yet, all this is too lowly and crude to be applied to discern a beauty on the spiritual level. These other realities can only serve as a kind of ladder so that your minds might climb out of the mud of corporal appearances. It would be necessary to have a purified view that one would encounter in seeing a most excellently beautiful reality, but one that is beyond the grasp of the senses. Perhaps it will be the view of some that I have already gone too far in my reasons regarding this principle, thus leaving much else aside that needs to be said. And indeed, not all have the facility of concentrating on a single point and of rising up to other considerations from it.

718: Just picture before you two individuals. The first that I present to you for your consideration is an old man, already full of years and stooped. His head is bald, his face furrowed, his eyes sunken in, his cheeks hollow. His mouth seems almost as though inserted between his nose and chin. He is all bent over, as though tipping toward his grave, hardly able to hold himself up on spindly, thin and trembling legs. Observe him well, in that he is lacking all exterior charm.

And then near him imagine a boy, who is very nice looking, in excellent form, as is evident by the color on his cheeks, his graceful proportions, his graciousness, and most comely in his gait. Now you have these two before your mind's eye. Now imagine that this young man is really a thief, a liar, one who commits sacrileges, dishonest, avaricious, an adulterer, an assassin, homicidal. The old man, by contrast, thinks of him as a just man, innocent, from his childhood years. He is chaste, an alms-giver, gentle, kind - one, then, who expresses every virtue that would render him lovable before God and other human beings.

719: What does it mean, ladies and gentlemen, that all of you after such a testimony would already withdraw your gaze, in some bitterness and disgust from the second of these two individuals? Would you not look away from him as though from a plague? And would you not draw near in your hearts to this old, but virtuous man? What if he is indeed emaciated and deprived of all apparent beauty? Do you not feel simply drawn to love such a person, and to delight in him? See, then, as St. Augustine⁷⁰ would say and you will see that the hidden and secret beauty has a much greater force than that which is present to the senses. Spiritual beauty that can only be seen by the mind as the stronger of the two. And you have already seen this for yourselves, in that your hearts have been attracted by such beauty, taken in by it, and conquered by it. This is the beauty of virtue.

⁷⁰St. Augustine, *In Io*, tr. 3/21, 312 A, ff.

720: You have already, then, taken a healthy step forward to ascend to where I would like to lead you, but we cannot stop here. The reason is that grace is of a superior order than even virtue. Now, the beauty of virtue is such that it so strongly attracts the human heart, in spite of its rather displeasing and disagreeable appearance. This is because sensible beauty is all the more seductive in comparison to it, so that virtue seems abominable and odious. [Yet, virtue that we have observed is nothing more than a natural perfection of the spirit]. Yet, how much greater will be the beauty, the splendor, the decor of grace, which is a supernatural and indeed, celestial quality?

721: Indeed, I could tell you that a soul in the state of grace possesses such a rare beauty that is quite close, and indeed, is equal to that most brilliant and pure beauty that is proper to those celestial spiritual natures. I am referring here to the Angels, indeed to those spirits which are among the most sublime and even supreme, namely, the Cherubim, or the Seraphim. Even admitting this, I still am saying very little. The truth is that grace is a participation in the very nature of God, as St. Thomas ⁷¹states: that which God is substantially, comes to be accidentally in the soul that shares in the divine goodness.

722: It would be necessary to understand God's own beauty in order to have a correct idea of the beauty of a soul in grace. The realization that our thought cannot reach such a sublime level is really having already achieved it in some way. One correct idea is that which exceeds every material idea is to have come to the conclusion of not being able to formulate such an idea.

The soul in God's grace is much like a mirror that is quite shiny in which there is reflected only the very brilliant sun of the divinity. What, then, is its light in itself? What would be its candor, what would be its clarity? Would you like to see it? Christ tells us: *...And the glory you have given Me, I have given to them...* [Jn 17:22]. Like the iron immersed in fire shines in the nature of fire, in like manner, the soul permeated by the grace of God participates in the divine being.

723: I am treating of most sublime matters with you, because it is to these realities that you have been called. You have not only been called like those to whom such sublime promises were made, but you are already in possession of such precious gifts, as St. Peter writes: *... By whom he has given us most great and precious promises: that by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature...* [2 P 1:4].

I am speaking of your souls, my brothers and sisters, those of you who fear God, and who remain in His grace. I am speaking of your soul, poor, hard-working artisan - of yours, simple woman. I am speaking to all of you, who in the shadows of a lowly existence, under the squalor of rough, poor garments - all of you, who have kept unobserved to the eyes of this world, a gem that is so rare of a celestial splendor. O happy poverty that defends such wealth! O lovable deformity, under which is covered such a divine beauty!

⁷¹St. Thomas Aquinas, I-II, q. 110, a. 2, ad 2 um.

724: However, I do not want to forget my promises. Up to this present moment, you have responded well to my expectations, by elevating and sharpening your vision on higher realities. It is indeed my challenge to approach your thought with more sensible images. Perhaps I had left myself open for some criticism, but now I can do this with greater assurance and freedom.

725: Let us consider the beauty of grace by descending to its effects. Justification itself, that is, the justice of the soul, is one of its effects. And this justice implies a rectitude of order in the same interior disposition of the human being. The result is that the superior part of such a person, that is, the spirit, is subjected to God, and these interior forces of the soul are under the control of the superior. And who is there who is not able to form from such an outstanding effect of grace some idea, not far from the while truth, of its sublime beauty? Is it not true that such beauty, as has been defined by St. Augustine in several places ⁷² has nothing other than a pleasing, harmonious, ordered correspondence, or a sweet ordering of well proportioned parts? And so that you might be able to see even with your very own eyes, **I take from Sacred Scripture the colors to paint this beauty** in almost sensible manner as it is found in a soul that possesses it.

726: Let us begin from the beginning. Do you wish to see first its hair? The hair is blond, on a par with gold. The hair is neatly set, since the heavenly thoughts that the Holy Spirit places in this soul inflame its heart with love. And by the same Spirit in God, and in Christ, all is ordered, closed in, composed [Ct 5:11].

The eyes are like doves [v. 12], as they are supremely clear and shining with a natural splendor. They are still simple, that are not threatening, nor malicious, but sincerely fix their gaze on all. There shines out from them a bright light of wisdom. There is in them a lovable sincerity with which they are endowed, by which they do not attach themselves on earthly matters that are abject. This is why they go up to God, in Whom they find their repose as in their own home. The cheeks are rosy and endowed with bright red of modest shame, which proceeds from their internal delicacy and chastity [v. 13].

727: The lips are red, almost ruby, that is, full of the most ardent charity. Thus, whenever a person so endowed speaks with God, or with another human being, it is not so much the individual who talks - rather, it is the love within and the charity itself that seems to control the discourse. And because charity is always joyful, it is not dissolute. This explains why its lips have on them a sweet modest smile. This enables the teeth to show, which are like white pearls, in a double row, composed in good order.

728: But here, I have to cede **my brushes to a better painter**. This would be St. Bernard ⁷³ who so delicately describes it. He tells us that the teeth are white. And what indeed could ever be more candid than this soul, which rejects from itself every exterior uncleanness, thus keeping its purity even to its thoughts? They are strong.

⁷²St. Augustine, Letter 3, 4. t. 2, 5 E; *De Musica*, 6, 38. t. 1, 531/B, ff.

⁷³St. Bernard, On Canticles - no citation given.

And who is any stronger than this soul before whom tribulation is considered relief; contumely is thought of as honor; and poverty is looked upon as abundance? The teeth do not have flesh. Yet, grace living in the flesh, is forgetful of it, as the Apostle puts it: *... But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit...* [Rm 8:9].

729: They do not have skin, or a rind, that covers them, because they do not have any restless concern and the excessive worry about worldly matters. They sleep and repose in God [Ps 4:9]. The teeth do not suffer unless some small particle gets in between them and exerts pressure on them. This implies that any and every impediment grace considers intolerable, when it slows one, or separates one from God. The teeth are closed over by the lips. In similar manner, grace buckles up within and defends itself with the tireless exercise of the virtues, at the very appearance of its enemies.

The teeth chew the food for the whole body. Grace thus prays and intercedes for the entire body of the Church, that is for the living and no less fervently for the deceased. These teeth lastly are not so easily consumed, because as the years go on grace increases in fervor. With ever greater rapidity, it hastens to run, the more it sees the palm of victory is the closer at hand.

730: Do you want me to continue with a description of the neck? This is its prayer. And just as the neck supports the head above the shoulders, in similar manner prayer raises the mind from earth to God. And just as through the neck there is drawn the breath from the mouth for the cooling and the comfort of one's insides, in similar manner, through prayer, the Spirit of God is drawn in, who cools the heat of concupiscence. He animates the soul and strengthens it in accord with this saying from the Psalms: *... I opened my mouth and panted...* [Ps 118:131]... and drew the Spirit within me.

However, I notice now that the time allowed for me is running too short for me to complete my picture. Let it suffice for you that I have been able to draw only the heard, and that you have been able to see to this point the very many and very beautiful virtues. You will have noted that all are connected by a delicate order. This enables you to note some idea at least of these and from their effects alone. This might give you some adequate idea of the indescribable beauty of grace.

731: I really believe, my revered hearers, that there is no one to be found among you, who, after heaving even so briefly contemplated the beauty of divine grace, would not experience a fire enkindled deep within. At least, there would be the fiery sparks in each heart in the form of fervent desires. Allow me, then, to speak to you with all simplicity and from the heart, which is my usual manner of speaking.

Just reflect within yourselves for a few moments, and undertake a careful scrutiny of your inner life. Do you possess such a lovable beauty? Are you now in such a desirable state of God's grace? If God's grace indeed is in you, what resolutions will you make today never to lose it ever. To what extent will you commit yourselves with supreme fervor to study the means most necessary and most useful in order to conserve it? With how much boldness and holy bravery will you not act to remove immediately those occasions that tend even from a distance to destroy it?

732: And if you have already done all this, both by yourselves and with the counsel of the one who interiorly guides you, You will have already taken the cautious provisions and those well planned by thoughtful people. And will you not now make every effort with God's help each and every day to increase it and further it? Have you not heard many times perhaps that the path of the just is like the shining light of the sun: *it goes forward and increases even to perfect day...* [\[Pr 4:18\]](#)? Have you not often been advised that the Lord has disposed in your hearts many grades, much like a ladder? Is it not so that as you ascend, you do not stop from going up until you come to see the beautiful face of your God above in heaven?

733: However, should there be any among you, who on inner reflection, realizes that he, or she, has already lost grace, what then? O God! If there has indeed been a mortal sin, would you not make every haste to get rid of such a foreign deformity from your spirit? Would you not make the resolution at this minute to wash yourselves clean as soon as possible in the waters of sacramental penance? Will not these waters remove all the ugliness, in order to vest you once more in the former beauty that has been lost? How could anyone put off even for a moment, cleansing through the tears of much bitter contrition those stains? Is it not so that these faults really stain one in a most marked way, and stain so indecently the human heart?

734: ... *O sons of men, how long will you be dull of heart? Why do you love vanity, seek after lying...* [\[Ps 4:3\]](#). You have before your eyes the true light, and do you still choose to remain in the darkness? Truth has shown itself to be so sweet and lovable, and will your vain errors still hold you with their empty flattery? There has been uncovered for you a beauty that merits all your affections, and your heart is still bound and disheartened in the mud and filth?

But, o, if so senselessly and brainlessly such as these may have looked at the years that have passed, may they take another look on this day and be renewed. Let us all turn to God with all our hearts; let us convert ourselves to Him once and for all, and grieving for the faults already committed, let us implore Him for His Mercy. Have mercy on us! Be merciful to us, o Lord!

735: ... *Create a clean heart in me, o God...* [\[Ps 50:12\]](#). O my Creator, my true Principle, my God! Just look at all these creatures who at my word alone prostrate themselves in Your sight. All are confidently united here in one single desire, and they pray to You with a new and strong insistence: "...create in us a clean heart..." And just who is it who could ever make clean what is drawn from uncleanness from its very origin, if not You Alone, my God? Thus, who is it who is able to produce from nothing and to call to new being anything at all? And here I would not be referring to such a good reality as is Your grace - but, who else could cleanse, purify, and re-embellish our hearts, if also not You Alone, my God?

736: We recognize absolutely nothing in us regarding being, nothing pertaining to merit. We are in fact, so to speak, included within nothing, because of our multiple sins. But You, we still hope, can and still choose to do so, constitute our hearts from such a horrible nothingness, into a new being according to grace. In pardoning and in

bestowing of mercy you are used to manifesting singularly Your omnipotence ⁷⁴. And once we have become as new creatures, we can walk in this newness of life [Rm 6:4].

And this is why we dare, knowing that our good desires are acceptable to You, to pray to You still to renew a good spirit deep within us [Ps 50:12]. Renew our spirit, o my God, since they have aged excessively through long practices on our part and due to the old habits of iniquity. And straighten them because our enemies have bent our souls down. And we, on our part, by consenting have cured our spirits downward by lowering them toward earthly concupiscences.

737: Then straighten up anew with that rectitude with which You first created them. Lift up these spirits to a higher hope in You, so that each one of us might experience how good You are, o my God, as those whose hearts are in order [Ps 72:1]. And we ask that one day we might, at long last, see you, no longer under the veils and in the shadow of obscure faith how we now adore You under the sacred species. But, we ask that we might see You face to face, as You have promised those who are clean of heart [Mt 5:8]. We ask that we might contemplate You, love You, possess You forever, true Center, sole term and ultimate end of our hearts. ...*create a clean heart in me, o God: and renew a right spirit within my bowels...* [Ps 50:12].

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Sources

OT

Ps 4:3	# 734	Pr 4:18	# 732
9	# 729	Ct 5:11	# 726
50:12	## 735[2 x];736;737	12	# 726
72:1	# 737	13	# 727
118:131	# 730		

NT

Mt 5:8	# 737	Rm 6:4	## 714; 736
Jn 17:22	# 722	8:9	# 728
		2 P 1:4	# 723

Liturgy

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost	# 736
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⁷⁴cf. Liturgy. Tenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Fathers & Doctors

St. Augustine, <i>De Musica</i> , 6, 38. t. 1, 531/B, ff.	# 725
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<i>Epist.</i> 3, 4. t. 2, 58	# 725
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<i>In lo.</i> , tr. 3, 121. t. 3/2, 312 A, ff.	# 719
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St. Bernard [no citation - Portrait of Grace]	# 728
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St. Thomas Aquinas, I-II, q. 110, a.2, ad 2 um	# 721
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Other Authors

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738:**SERMON 16****The Lenten Fast to be accepted in Joy****Preached on the First Sunday of Lent, in St. Paul's of Campo Marzio, Verona, on February 22, 1803.**

Most revered listeners, and very welcome brothers and sisters in Christ - if ever before, if at any other time, that I have ascended this pulpit, to discuss with you regarding various matters of great interest for your own spiritual progress, I have never felt more joyful than right now. My heart is indeed in jubilation at your devout presence. I find great comfort as well in my natural timidity at the pleasant sight of seeing your faces, courteous and modestly composed. So, this time, prior to presenting myself, I experience the joy and the courage increase within me so that I am forced to manifest this in words.

739: It is so good to see you, with such piety gathered in this Church on a day when the world is proposing to you its indescribable invitation and yearnings, for its seductive delights. The world would like to draw you from all Christian recollection. It would keep you from an object such as this that is so appealing that it could not but wound your hearts in tender manner and to move them to love sincerely the good for your souls. I have no hesitation in professing to you this is the direction of my own heart. So, it is therefore quite easy to guess how much love there is in your hearts, how much hunger for the divine word, and how predominant in you is the yearning to offer your obsequious how predominant in you is the yearning to offer your obsequious devotion to the divine even when confronted with the more powerful, desirous, attracting commitments to this world.

740: And here I am again, already given courage by your excellent dispositions. I am here to expose to you simply and without any other preambles that which I did not think could be done, other than presenting the theme with great caution: that is, to offer to you the purpose that is both useful and interesting, for which I have come here this evening. I would like and I think I can dispose your souls to receive with all joy that already proximate Lenten fasting. My theme is perhaps somewhat unexpected by you. But, I know all too well that what is necessarily to you is accomplished with all promptness, almost by choice. Listen to my reasoning for a few moments, and then you, too, will be fully convinced of it.

741: There is just one favor I ask of you, my listeners: that in judging that you never be taken in by first appearances, and even less by the imprudent and prejudiced usual way of thinking. I ask that you weigh very well, with tranquil minds every argument brought forward. Acting this way, you will be able quite easily to perceive how the soft delights and the crude licentiousness have always been the tragic cause from whence are derived the most pitiful diseases, and therefore, the even more fatal death of souls. And for this reason, the Lenten Fast, with all the other exercises of Christian penance that accompany it, are the surest and most valuable remedy to

regain lost health, or to keep it. This is what taxes out the evil from its true and principal root.

742: Remember in the times of Abraham such a large tract of the land was over-run and consumed by an evil that was so [Gn 19:24, ff.] frightful that even God Himself judged it incurable. He finally came to the conclusion of consuming inflames all the numerous inhabitants of the entire five cities. They were like living cadavers and He decided to burn them rather than bury them under the ruins of their own homes, as He did in other cases. This time, though, there was the concern for the contagious stench that would bring havoc to the rest of the world. Just ask Ezechiel now the real cause for such a terrible evil, and he will respond: *...pride, fullness of bread, and abundance...* [Ezk 16:49].

This was that Hebrew people, taken up out of Egypt, nourished and fed by God's Providence. They were taken from the slopes of Sinai, where they were witnesses of the heavenly prodigies. While they were awaiting the Law, the sacred history attests, they sat down to eat and to drink and began to "play". Under this honest word "to play" are implied the most crude and shameful dishonesty [Ex 32:6].

743: However, in the final analysis, our first parents, after the original sin, remained with their nature so weakened and debilitated, that they were like sick people. Even the slightest disorder was enough to lead them to death. What exceeds all wonder is to see Adam, in the state of innocence, surrounded by all those delights, and then falls because of a wretched satisfaction of his gullet. His collapse left him so mortally ill that he lost such a precious life of the soul. And, at the same time, his physical life, that had once been so happy, in those days was radically changed. And you judge if you can what poison was ever so potent as that, that it sufficed to waste a human being who by nature, and been so healthy. By grace, he had been immortal, and this corruption he took in extended to all his innumerable posterity, to infect it and to contaminate it [Gn 3:1, ff.].

Hence, God was very well provided you with the means to stave off such grave damage. Right there in the earthly paradise, He laid down a rigorous precept of fast and abstinence. And how fortunate would we not all have been, had our first parents kept this precept! Nonetheless, even in our misery, we can still find true happiness. Once we take note of their failing and our ruin, we will come to know better to make use of a remedy that is all the more necessary as it is efficacious.

744: The case of Nineveh is a similarly convincing proof of its value and power. The well-being of this unfortunate city had come to such a despairing end that a prophet was sent by God, and at high speed. He had already predicted to them that absolutely, after a brief period of forty days, the city would its procedure under its own ruins. However, this ruin would not fall on these abandoned citizens right away. They were led by their fear to seek through fasting the extreme remedy for their wrongs. They resolutely undertook to attempt the trial, that changed the aspect of their situation. And in this way, God was placated. With all ease, they obtained pardon, and even that decree was changed that when it was enunciated, it seemed as though it were immutable [Jon 3:1, ff.].

745: You see now with what strength and promptness that fasting is able to work such prodigious cures, even in the most desperate cases. Observe, however, again its efficacy, which is no less than its necessity, in still another happening, referred this time by the Gospel.

One day, the disciples came back to the divine Master, somewhat saddened. They had made every effort a number of times to release a possessed man from the devil's power that had been so amply communicated to them. Over this person they had made all kinds of attempts, even without number and experiments that had not been without effect, or themselves.

746: However, immediately all wonderment ceased in them when they received from Him such a beautiful explanation in response: *....But this kind is not cast out but by prayer and fasting...* [Mt 17:20]. It was precisely this type of possession that is the most unclean and filthy of all. And this is the very type which in our own times has taken possession of the hearts of the greater part of our Christian brothers and sisters. Thus, the devil might indeed be thought of as the god of this age.

To cast out such a dominant malady, fasting is made all the more necessary. Prayer, too, is likewise requested for the healing. However, prayer takes on all its force in working, when joined to fasting. The Holy Spirit Himself has said: *...Prayer is good with fasting...* [Tb 12:8]. Indeed, prayer is good, not alone, but joined with fasting. It is fasting that renders the mind agile, alert and free, and lends it wings to ascend up to God.

747: O my Christians, let your complaints cease, that your prayers are empty - and that every day your temptations increase, threatening to overthrow you - and that you no longer can see any way out to liberate you from your infirmity. And understand once and for all that even that which the most powerful exorcisms render vain and empty, can only be obtained - and in fact is obtained - by the most efficacious and proper **medicine**, which is fasting.

748: Do not think, however, beloved hearers, that fasting's total usefulness is terminated in the soul. This would leave for your wretched bodies nothing more than that bitter and badly tasting **medicine**. This would be even the most efficacious remedies that are thus experienced, without bringing any beneficial effect. It is right here that I would want all to hear me well. All who either by malice would want to discredit such discreet and gentle laws of the holy Catholic Church - or, all those who by false concern exaggerate these, should listen. Such as these can bring great scandal to the weak, and aggravate the discomfort of fasting. I speak now to all who are still too timid and delicate, those Christians who look on Lent with such horror. They think of it as a slow martyrdom, or slaughter. They consider it as though they were being asked to destroy their own being, as they are influenced by a very strong self-love, even though really they are incapable of true love of themselves.

749: And so not all such persons know how useful and how necessary is fasting to maintain that body of theirs healthy, in all their worry about it. It could even lengthen their lives for which they suffer such concern. Perhaps you do not believe me? Let them believe, then, in the Holy Spirit. These are His words: *...By surfeiting, many have perished: but, he, that is temperate, shall prolong his life...* [Si 37:34]. By over-eating and drinking many end their lives sooner and shorten their time of living. Abstinence, by contrast, is the most sure means of lengthening life.

This is the way it is. That rejoicing, that taking delight in banquets and cups, that inability of ever denying satisfaction to the gullet, some think that all this will maintain the body even more vigorously and for a longer time. What it does is sicken the body, corrupts it, kills it. Whereas mortification, sobriety, abstinence that they hate as almost the capital enemy of their bodies that they love excessively - these are what cure it, strengthen it and maintain it.

750: Those severe penitents, who used to live in the desert solitudes, battled until evening against their hunger and thirst in starving their stomachs, waited until sundown. As it was setting, then they partook of bitter roots and the insipid fruits of those wild plants, as their daily diet. The fresh waters of the near-by springs served as their simple and customary beverage. And yet, with such meager suppers they lasted entire centuries, as some even lived more than a hundred years.

751: And finally, in our own times, just observe these religious who live enclosed in a cloister. They practice a very austere and very great penance. They keep almost a daily fast and a perpetual Lent. And this is all without considering those other sufferings with which their bodies are afflicted. They walk in the cold snow in bare feet, and have contact with the hard ice in the deep of winter. They walk bare-headed under the blazing sun of the summer heat. They sleep on bare tables or on old hay, and they interrupt their short rest with their lengthy singing of the Psalms. And yet, among such as these, you can often find a very robust health and an even greater old age. Only in vain can there be sought among the well-off and more delicate, well-fed people in the world, those that can surpass these monks. Thus, the statement of the Holy Spirit has been proven to be so true, that the art of prolonging life is abstinence [Si 37:34].

752: If this is the way things are, my hearers, there is nowhere a remedy that is not only useful, but also necessary for the salvation of the soul, why are we not joyful and full of happiness at taking it on? Let us leave aside those worldly people who are afflicted by the proximate cessation of their delights. We, on the other hand, may await in the drawing near of this time of penance, which for us is so happy. Let them go through these days of tumult, feasting, sin and their most pleasant festivals. With more reason, we will celebrate on those days, in which we will be withdrawn from the scandals and the dangers of losing our souls; we will enjoy peace, joy, tranquility, in the security of a good conscience.

753: The Gospel cries out: ... *Woe to you that now laugh: for you shall mourn and weep...* [Lk 6:35]. And Proverbs states: ...*mourning takes hold of the end of joy...* [Pr 14:13]. How wretched indeed and how bitter the present consolations of this world, that quickly pass! How empty it is to neglect an eternal happiness that will never be lost! Of what value will it be for these unhappy people at the moment of their deaths to have enjoyed much here? The Prophet Amos states: ... *Woe to you...* [6: 1]... *you that sleep on beds of ivory, and are wanton on your couches: that eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the herd...* [v. 4]... *they that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the best of ointments...* [v. 6] -- and they think of these delights as lasting, and not as fleeting and passing. Woe to all these! Rather: ... *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted...* [Mt 5:5].

754: O how fortuitous will penance seem on that day! And how fortunate solitude! How precious will not sufferings be esteemed! Christ said: ... *you shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice; and your sorrow will be turned into joy...* [Jn 16:20, ff.] Let us love, therefore, that which lasts, and let us disdain spiritedly that which very soon comes to an end. Let us hold our souls in high regard. Let us think of cleansing them, of healing them if they are infirm. Let us keep them in health that they may presently enjoy, also for the future. Let us be not like children who refuse the most beneficial medicines because they might leave a slight bitter taste on their tongues.

755: Let us look to the saints to see what they have done, how much they endured, how much they suffered for the salvation of their souls. We are Christians. With His example, Christ will give us courage to take this remedy willingly. For He, too, observed a strict fast for forty days. And will we look for exemptions; will we try to find every excuse to dispense ourselves - we who have such a need of this? And will it seem excessive that for just a bit of fasting we will win a paradise, where we will be eternally satiated by an immense beatitude? And will it seem too much for us that for forty days of a rather manageable fast, we will avoid an endless fire? For so little, is it too much to ask to escape from an eternity of torments, that have been prepared for us because of our grave sins?

Let us think these thoughts, and thereby let us dispose our souls to meet with much joy this sacred Lent. For in this way, we will be purged deeply by means of fasting from our faults, and we will be endowed with holy virtues. We have been made worthy to participate fruitfully in the Eucharistic Bread here on earth so that we might then afterwards be introduced into the eternal banquet up in heaven.

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SourcesOT

Gn 3:1, ff.	# 743
19:24, ff.	# 741
Ex 32:6	# 742
Tb 12:8	# 748
Pr 14:13	# 753
Si 37:34	## 749;751
Ezk 16:49	# 742
Am 6:1	# 753
4	# 753
6	# 753
Jon 3:1, ff.	# 744

NT

Mt 5:5	# 753
17:20	# 745
Lk 6:25	# 753
Jn 16:20, ff.	# 754

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756:**SERMON 17****Frequent Communion**

Preached on the Fourth Sunday of Lent, in St. Paul's, of Campo Marzio, on March 20th, 1803. On the left bank, in Verona.

Beloved brothers and sisters, whenever I consider the Gospel for today [Jn 6:1-15], I am always much moved by those hungry crowds which followed Christ. While they put aside all other cares, Christ corresponded to them with a provident liberality. He fed them prodigiously with the multiplied bread. Each time I read this there comes to my mind a kind of pleasant, welcome comfort. This is present in witnessing your devotion towards this most august and divine Sacrament, expressed also in the laudable frequency you approach It. This is particularly so in these days, when you approach the sacred altar seeking there that same loving Master and Lord. He has chosen to remain with us even to the consummation of the world, veiled under the sacramental species.

757: While the fervor of those crowds may be admired, in you there is even more to be admired, your faith. This assures you of seeking with all firmness that which your senses do not perceive. And therefore, without doubt even greater is the gracious correspondence that He renders to our affections. He is not multiplying for you an earthly bread, but offers you a heavenly loaf and Himself as your food, to nourish your spirits superabundantly. But, if the fact from the Gospel crowd has served to excite your faith, your faithful religious practice every day is the ore needed each day for the outstanding edification that is very necessary in these times that see such dissipation and transgressions.

758: The fact that many Christians today are tepid, or almost cold to surprising degrees, and so only rarely, or, at the least, they are almost forced to approach Christ once a year. They all need to be enkindled and inspired to this. And so, far as I can see what provides greater fruit is the good example of the many, if they persevere. This is worth more than words, even though I do add my own today. Perhaps this is easier to do as you all move on ahead of me to obtain with the good odor of your example, the desired result. I follow along, as though to urge onward with the efficacy of the divine word, to attract some. It may very well be that there may be some here who perhaps just by chance are here to listen to me. I hope to inspire in them a greater willingness for the future, to come to this celestial banquet.

It should not be believed, my listeners, that these surely are not very fervent Christians will not have ready their apparent arguments and subtle excuses. All of these serve to dispense the frequenting of this sacred table. And these are precisely the ones that I feel I must have primarily in my sights to take them by the hand. Otherwise, as they are still standing, every other even more efficacious means to persuade them will be in vain.

759: One of the most usual excuses is that of the duties of their state in life, the need to watch over their families that are their responsibility. These requirements do not leave them either the time, nor the commodity as would be necessary in order to come more often to the Sacraments. But, I would really like to ask them if these matters and those cares every keep them from sitting each day down to the earthly tasks that they magnify a bit, ever leave their bodies without food, even for a single day - and I would not say for weeks, or months.

760: And if they reply that these matters are indeed necessary and absolutely indispensable, I would reply: And do you not have a like necessity to feed your souls frequently, and a need to restore your forces lost in sustaining your lives? And is not the Eucharist the soul's daily bread? For the Lord has said: *...For my flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed... [Jn 6:56], ... He who eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, has everlasting life... [v. 55]... except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you... [v. 54].*

So, they feel so deeply the requirements of their bodies that to satisfy them, they feel it necessary at different times every day to interrupt their most interesting cares to meet them. Could they, then, remain so insensible toward the needs of their souls already languishing and exhausted by such a long fast! It seems that it never even enters their heads for many weeks on end that they cannot find even on feast days, the need to nourish their souls with its own bread!

761: But, if they would only they would approach Christ more often than what they are presently doing, how much help would they not find in this also for their earthy matters! By uniting themselves to the true Wisdom, which Christ is, their minds would be better illuminated to handle their interests with even greater prudence. Were they to come and find strength from Fortitude Himself, they would be more able to sustain the weight that wears down on them, without being overburdened. They would even be helped and their cares lightened as Christ Himself tells us: *... Come to Me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you... [Mt 11:28].*

762: And would they not perhaps be better assisted in all their needs? In this day, the disciples showed themselves in the Gospel that they were afraid that such a numerous crowd would die of hunger. They had all abandoned their own self-interest to follow after Christ. And you know how Christ was able to multiply the bread for them, that many basketfuls remained over. Even St. Peter, left behind his own means of earning a living, and followed after Christ. And when it was time to pay the tribute, did not Christ provide it, by having it taken right from the fish's mouth? *[Mt 17:26].* And another time, when they had worked the whole night through without catching a single fish, the divine Master came upon them. In the next instant they drew in the net so full of fish that his own boat, and that of his companions, almost gave under the weight *[Lk 1:5, ff.]*. This is all so true that the loving Lord not only takes delight in bestowing graces on the soul, but also takes very special care of the interests of those who lovingly approach Him.

For we see indeed - for it seems to me that I am being approached by these tepid ones - we can see how useful it would be for them. And we will then be even the more easily convinced to interrupt our occupations to participate more often in such a wonderful good. We should pay no heed if the observation of the world come to deride our frequency, and call us names that surely would be displeasing to us.

763: O, such an excuse is more worthy to be pitied than to be combated! O, such an excuse is more worthy to be pitied than to be combated! This would mean that the Christians of this time would be ashamed to follow Christ and to be called Christian. They would be like those important people among the Hebrews who really did believe in Christ. Yet, they did not dare to approach Him out of respect for the Pharisees, and for fear of being excluded from the Synagogue. They would lay more account to the honor of this world than being honored by Christ. And so, for a vain and base glory they lose one that is authentic and eternal. Christ has already made it quite clear in the Gospel: *... For he that shall be ashamed of Me and My words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed...* [Lk 9:26; 12:9]. If anyone will not be ashamed of confessing My Name before men, then neither will I be ashamed of confession his Name before My Father, Who is in heaven. And in another passage: *...Blessed are you when you shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, for my sake...* [Mt 5:11]...*Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven...* [v. 12].

764: Surely, if we have been courteously invited by an earthly Prince to His table, and were treated there as friends and members of his household, we would not pay very much attention to the empty criticisms of an unknowledgeable crowd. In comparison to the honor that we would receive from the Prince, and from his courtesans, we would never just because of the futile views of others, lose so favorable a grace.

But we - the timid souls might reply - if only we thought of ourselves more worthy, we would approach this sacrament with every good will. But, we are sinners, full of imperfections, and far from that fervor in which we see so many other good souls. Therefore, we are afraid of receiving condemnation, rather than salvation.

765: And this is the final argument that to them seems invincible, under which they cover their timidity. I would like to respond to this in kind, since they seem to be citing the very words of the Apostle: *...for he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord...* [1 Co 11:29]. Such as these, should also note the text that is connected with this one: *... But let a man prove himself: and so let him eat of that bread and drink of the chalice...* [v. 28]. These words are so interpreted with every assurance from the constant practice of the entire Church. They require that all the faithful examine their consciences. Should anyone find that he is cognizant of a grave fault, he should hurry in sorrow to purge it through sacramental Confession, along with the firm proposal not to sin any more. And then: *...let him eat of the bread...* When this is done, then such a person could

approach and eat without any fear of that bread. St. Augustine speaks of it in these terms ⁷⁵: receive it securely, for He is Bread, not poison.

766: And if Christ is indeed Life, and comes to give this, how could He ever give death to those who come to Him in order to live? And if He indeed did die in order to give us life, even while we were still enemies [Rm 5:10] - how, then, now will He give eternal death of damnation to those who have been reconciled and washed in His Blood?

Such as these should keep in mind the reception accorded the prodigal son whom his father in the Gospel received so lovingly. This son returned to his father's feet after having consumed his patrimony in the most infamous vices. He confesses that he has sinned, and immediately receives the most tender signs of affection. He is dressed anew in fine clothing after removing his coarse garment and he is introduced into his father's house to share in that festive banquet. [Lk 15:11-32]. Let the timid all notice that these importunate fears are nothing more than deceptions covered over by the devil.

767: Let them understand this well, states St. Cyril of Alexandria ⁷⁶ that all the baptized have been made participants of divine grace. If, for a long time, through a false practice of religion, or, out of some very harmful fear of going to communion, stay away from it, they may deprive themselves of eternal life. Should one decide not to receive, even if he should be kept away by fear, or by humility, he creates scandal and sets a trap for other souls. It would be more fitting that one make every effort and take every care to set about cleansing the soul taking on a new resolution to live. All should, therefore, hasten forthwith to the participation in life. The devil uses various stratagems to deceive. First he may induce one to live licentiously. Then, when one has a real heavy burden of vices and sins, such a one is persuaded to have a horror for the very sacrament through which he could indeed be **healed**.

768: Thus far the thoughts of the saint. St. Ambrose ⁷⁷ and St. Augustine ⁷⁸ and St. Bernard ⁷⁹ all agree in this: they all say that the Eucharist is an excellent **medicine** against sin. St. Cyprian ⁸⁰ wrote this: The Lord's chalice inebriates the one who drinks it in such a manner that it makes him sober, that it conducts the mind to spiritual wisdom. It reaches anyone who has a taste for this world and directs such a person to the reflection and taste for God. And as happens to anyone who drinks earthly and common wine, that the mind is loosened, and the spirit is recreated, and there is chased away all sadness. In like manner, when the Blood of the Lord and this salutary drink, the memory of the old person goes away. There is forgotten all worldly conversation. The heavy and sad breast that first was oppressed by sins that

⁷⁵St. Augustine, *In Io.* 26, 11. t. 3/2, 4980.

⁷⁶St. Cyril of Alexandria - no citation given.

⁷⁷St. Ambrose, *De Benedictionibus Patriarcharum*, c.9, 39. t. 1, 525 b.

⁷⁸St. Augustine, *Sermo* 17. t. 5, 96 G.

⁷⁹St. Bernard, *Sermo in Coena Domini.* 3.

⁸⁰St. Cyprian, *Epist.* 63, 11. pp. 229 b, ff.

brought anguish to it, is exchanged for the joy of the gift bestowed by God. All anguish is resolved, and worries are discharged.

769: As for those who do not want to receive Communion and adduce as their reason that they do not feel fervor, act just like those persons whose faith is cold. They do not want to approach the heat until they are already warm. St. John Damascene⁸¹ teaches that the Eucharist is a burning coal that chases away the cold and tepidity. hence, just as those who go away from the fire feel the cold more and more - so, those who keep away, armed with variously depicted pretexts, from this celestial fire, will end up frozen, and totally hardened.

And it is very salutary, as I will conclude with St. Bonaventure⁸², and also useful for person to prepare to take this **medicine** often, and strive to partake of it the most devoutly as he possibly can. And although it sometimes happens that one feels totally bereft of fervor, such a one should confide in the divine mercy and receive it with great trust. When one feels unworthy, then all the more is it necessary for such a person to seek out the **doctor**, the more he feels the illness.

770: I confess, my listeners, that after having responded to the objections of the tepid individuals, that I think that I may have disarmed them from those arguments, under which they covered themselves. Now all that remains is to urge their hearts on. In order for me to do this, it would be only right for me to have my own ardor and all aflame, to be able to accomplish this effectively. I know quite well the task that lies before me. I will beg them to turn their glance but once to that sacred ciborium, and to listen with the ears of their hearts to that sweet invitation that this divine Lover of their souls extends to them: ... *Come, eat My Bread...* [Pr 9:5].

771: This is the table that I am preparing for you: that same food that in heaven the princes of My court nourish themselves with. It is precisely this that I present to you, pilgrim exiles on earth: ... *take and eat. This is My Body...* [Mt 26:26]... *for this is My Blood... which shall be shed for many unto the remission of sins...* [v. 28]. This has redeemed you from slavery to your enemies. Just look at how many sufferings, how many agonies, the kind of death, the preparation of this table for you cost Me. Can you, then, render Me any less gratitude than to go along with My desire that you frequently make use of this Sacrament?

Therefore, I will stay here all days and all nights: ...*and behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world...* [Mt 28:20]. Will you, then, allow even years to pass before coming to Me? Do you care so little for My love? And to whom will you go, then, in order to receive life, if you do not come to Me, Who alone can bestow it on you? And who will give you peace of soul? And who will satisfy your desires of your hearts, if not Me, since: ... *I am the Alpha and the Omega, beginning and the end...* [Apoc 1:8].

⁸¹St. John Damascene, *De Fide orthod.*, 4, 3.

⁸²St. Bonaventure, *De Profectu Religiosorum*, 2, 77.

772: Is it that you are afraid to approach Me? Is it that you are afraid to approach Me? I am your Master, Father, Friend, Brother. And if you are infirm, I am still your **Doctor**. I am your Health, and one day, I will be your Beatitude, your Glory. While I do reside here as though on a throne, with all the splendor of My Majesty, I would have compassion on your timidity on your pusillanimity. But since I am in this Sacrament, hidden and brought to your level to be with human beings - then, why do you not approach with every confidence, knowing that all my delights are to be with the children of men [Pr 8:31].

O, my listeners, my brothers and sisters! Who is there among you with hearing so dense that he would not listen to these loving words, and these most binding invitations in the depths of your hearts? - Blessed are they who hear the divine voice: *Blessed are they rather who hear the word of God, and keep it...* [Lk 11:28].

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Sources

OT

Pr 8:31	# 772	Pr 9:5	# 770
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NT

Mt 5:11	# 763	Lk 12:9	# 763
12	# 763	15:11-32	# 726
11:28	# 761	Jn 6:1-15	# 756
17:26	# 762	54	# 760
26:26	# 771	55	# 760
28	# 771	Rm 5:10	# 765
28:20	# 771	1 Co 11:28	# 765
Lk 5:1, ff.	# 762	29	# 765
9:26	# 763	Apoc 1:8	# 771
11:28	# 772		

Fathers & Doctors

St. Ambrose, <i>De Benedictinibus Patriarcharum</i> , c. 9, 39.	
t. 1, 525 B	# 768
St. Augustine, <i>In Jo.</i> , 26, 11. t. 3/2, 498 O	# 765
<i>Serm.</i> , 17, 5. t. 5/1, 96 G	# 768
St. Bernard, <i>Sermo in Coena Domini</i> , 3 [138]	# 768
St. Bonaventure, <i>De Profectu religiosorum</i> , 2, 77 [140]	# 769
St. Cyprian, <i>Epist.</i> 63, 1 [pp. 229, B, ff.]	# 768
St. Cyril of Alexandria [no citation: on frequent Communion]	# 767
St. John Damascene, <i>De Fide Orthod.</i> , 4, 13	# 769

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773:**SERMON 18****Perseverance****Easter Monday, the 11th of April 1803. Preached in St. Paul's of Campo Marzio, Verona.**

Here you are, beloved sinners, at long last in these days that are so holy, already reconciled with God. You have already been restored into the home of your good heavenly Father and fed at His divine table. You have already begun to: *...taste and see that the Lord is sweet...* [Ps 33:9] - and how: *... rich is His Mercy...* [Ep 2:4]. Your hearts will already be at peace and your spirit consoled in the joyful festivity in which the entire world has entered, to celebrate the most joyful moment of your return. You have already been re-established into the arms of your good Father, never to leave again. You have been invited to dwell in His house all the days of your life. [Ps 26:4].

774: I approve of your resolutions, I rejoice at your fervor, and have no doubt regarding your constancy. However, I still believe deeply that today is a good time to confirm it. Even those disciples, whose story we have read in this morning's Gospel, had very firmly believed in the promises of their divine Master and Savior, that He would indeed rise on the third day. However, they left the city at the setting of the sun of this third day, on their way to the castle of Emmaus. As they still had not seen Him, their faith began to waver and they needed their redeemer to appear to them, already risen up, to re-establish them and confirm them.

Please do not take it badly that I imagine in you now a danger in which I do not think you are actually in, but would only like to take steps to avoid it beforehand. And just listen to what briefly my heart yearns to say to you in order to fortify your spirits in its proposals, and to animate you to a holy perseverance.

775: The Holy Spirit adverts in the Scriptures: *... when you come to the service of God... prepare your soul for temptation...* [Si 2:1]. In fact, the devil is envious of the good of souls, and he scarcely comes to realize that one has been placed on the straight road, making a very good start with strong proposals, that he makes use of all the artifices at his disposal to make one turn back, or hinder and set traps all along the path. He puts before one's eyes the difficulty and the annoyance of such a long and strenuous journey, so that it be tried of and soon that one would lose heart.

776: He would say to some among those sinners, or just recently converted to God: how can you expect to last on this path for thirty, fifty, or sixty years of your life that might still remain before you? How can you go on in such a very hard journey? Will you always be able to resist against your passions, always remove yourselves from capricious conduct? How can you always mortify your senses, and never again to recreate them with pleasing treatment? Can you always be vigilant over the movements of your heart, without ever having repose or peace? This is how the devil insinuates, and this is how he lodges one of the most powerful temptations, one that

is very clumsy to overcome, and even to recognize. Be very careful, then, of his most subtle astuteness in his deceptions.

777: For one thing, he makes it look very sure and amplifies beyond all measure that you have a long life ahead of you. But, this is the most uncertain of all, for no human being can assure himself of a single day beyond this one. Hence, we are advised in the Gospel not to think about tomorrow [Mt 6:34]. And this is also true in our own case here, that you should strive to elude his machinations: Just live each day as though there did not remain anymore time for life.

778: Who is there who would not be able to sustain at least the fatigue of a single day? Would not this be even more possible, by thinking of the reward which God has prepared for anyone who bravely combats against his enemies? Is not salvation promised to those who persevere [Mt 10:22; 24:13]? Is not eternal glory promised, for those: ... *who reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared to it...* [Rm 8:18]? And if life shall be granted to you also tomorrow, then tomorrow you will return to establish again your proposals, and to work through just that day, as though no others were to be granted you to win heaven.

779: Who can ever say to you how far death is from you, death which is the goal of your course? What would become of you, if after having just put yourself to the journey, that you would just stop running? What would it mean if you begin to think that the finish line is too far away, when maybe all that you need are a few more steps to reach it? You would unfortunately lose that *pallium* to which you have been called from above. Those from below are trying to take from you that crown which has already been prepared for you. The Holy Spirit exclaims: ...*Woe to them that have lost patience, and that have forsaken the right ways, and have gone aside into crooked ways...* [Si 2:16]. Indeed, woe to such as these! For just a few days that could really be fewer than one may think, to choose to lose eternity - what lack of judgment this would be, what an extravagant absurdity!

780: The other deception in this temptation is that the devil makes it seem that the necessary fatigue and difficulty are excessive. These are indeed experienced in the beginning from renouncing the false pleasures of sin, and one commits himself to serve God. This does not mean that they have to last that way at the same intensity all through life. It does not stand to reason that this temptation will always increase, making itself each day more difficult to sustain the deprivation of past defects. This is blatantly false. The reason is that the fatigue only lasts for a certain time. It is then rendered easy by force of habit, changing what was once arduous. It becomes even joyful and delightful.

781: This, in fact, is what is written in Ecclesiasticus: ... *A patient man shall bear for a time, and afterwards joy shall be restored to him...* [Si 1:29]. The Holy Spirit also declares: ... *I will show you the way of wisdom...* [Pr 4:11]. “Wisdom” according to the etymology of the word, in the teaching of St. Bernard⁸³, is “the sweet knowledge of

⁸³St. Bernard, *In Cant.*, Sermon 85.

God". So, it is as though He were saying: I will show you the path through which you will arrive at the supreme taste and sweetness in knowing, loving, and serving God, as you see that the Saints have done.

782: And just what is this path? - ... *I shall lead you by the gates of equity...* [Pr 4:11]. Instead, at the beginning, the narrow paths of virtue find the entrance to be difficult. But when you will have entered upon this path, your steps will no more be held back, for: ... *when you run you shall not meet a stumbling block...* [Pr 4:12]. This is precisely what the Wise Man has said in another passage: ... *Behold with your eyes how I have labored a little, and have found much rest to myself...* [Si 51:35]. And again, in the Psalm there is read: ... *Much peace have they that love Your Law, and to them, there is no stumbling block* [Ps 118:165].

783: And observe that the Holy Spirit has not said [Pr 4:11]: When you will have completed walking along these paths, you will then find the way both easy and broad-but, emphasizes when you have "entered" upon this way. The reason is that from the very outset the Lord begins to make it delectable. And He caresses those souls that He sees resolved in applying themselves to His service and to combating their bad habits. If they do not rest, and begin to lose heart, He continues to favor them, until He will have placed them in their repose with His People in the beauty of peace [Is 32:18]. For it is here that the Spirit gently at work reposes one in God.

784: This is why Ecclesiasticus has said in another place: ... *For in working about her, you shall labor a little and shall quickly eat of her fruits...* [Si 6:20]. And the Apostle wrote this to the Hebrews: ...*Now all chastisement for the present indeed seems not to bring with it joy, but sorrow: but, afterwards it will yield, to them that are exercised in it, the most peaceable fruit of justice...* [Heb 12:1]. If you, then, courageously make the resolution to begin, and if you pay no attention to those present and passing difficulties, you will see very soon the Lord at work. Your hearts will become filled with consolation and joy, and you will bless the Lord who has shown you the path to arrive at such peace.

785: Not only will He be content to show you the way, but He shows Himself ready to lead you along this path: ...*I will lead you by the paths of equity...* [Pr 4:11]. Reflect well on this, because in this manner I respond to those fears that disturb your hearts. It is through these that the enemy strives to excite them the more in you, and all of this to make you fall away from your resolutions. No matter how long this road may be that you have to journey: and no matter what the fatigue you experience, never cease in trying to hold on to the right way; and even though the dangers that you have to encounter are really grave; and while the enemies who contest your way are powerful, and the traps they set are perpetual - you should not worry: ...*whom shall I fear...?* [Ps 26:1]. ... *I set the Lord always in my sight: for he is at my right hand, that I be not moved...* [Ps 15:8]. How can you be afraid of falling? - ... *You shall not fear them, because the Lord, your God, is in your midst, a God mighty and terrible...* [Dt 7:21]... *For He has delivered me from the snare of hunters: and from the sharp word...* [Ps 90:3]... *lest you dash your foot against a stone...* [v. 12]. How

can you be overcome? - ... *Your good spirit shall lead me into the right land...* [Ps 142:10]. What greater assurance could be had?

786: And you can see very well that when a soul is indeed guided by God's Spirit, such a person goes with assurance. Note also that this Spirit has promised this to anyone who asks for it. This is the way Christ speaks in His Gospel: *...If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the good Spirit to them that ask Him...?* [Lk 11:13]. *... Ask and you will receive...* [Mt 7:7]...*whatsoever you ask when you pray, believe that you shall receive; and they shall come unto you...* [Mk 11:24].

787: All this is God's word. Does it perhaps seem to you now that He is not powerful enough to keep it? - ... *he has done all things whatsoever he would...* [Ps 113:3; Heb 11:3]. Would you say that He has no will to do so? The apostle responds: *... If we believe not, he continues faithful, he cannot deny himself...* [2 Tm 2:13]. The Divine Word had already declared regarding Himself: *... I am... the truth...* [Jn 14:6]. God cannot fail to be God; therefore, He cannot fail to be the Truth. And therefore, he cannot fail to carry out His promises.

788: What remains to be said? Nothing other than you contribute the sole condition on which He has obligated His infallible word: that you ask for it: *... Being confident of this very thing, that He Who has begun a good work in you, will perfect it unto the day of Jesus Christ...* [Ph 1:6]⁸⁴. This "good work" is your sanctification. He gives you the grace for your conversion, and He accomplishes this by aiding you with efficacious helps, even to the very end.

789: There just is no place in which you should not ask for this help: *...I will therefore that men pray in every place...* [1 Tm 2:8]. There is no time in which you would be impeded: *... Pray without ceasing...* [1 Th 5:17]. And if your tongue were perhaps impeded, the eyes would suffice to intercede with all promptness: *... I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains, from whence help shall come tome...* [Ps 120:1]. And should all the other senses fall silent, the heart speaks, one's desires speak, that are heard even as they are coming to birth and before the heart realizes that they have been formed: *...The Lord heard the desire of the Poor: your ear has heard the preparation of their heart...* [Ps 9; Heb 10:17].

790: Courage, my brothers, Courage, my brothers and sisters. If the time is short, well, the fatigue will be even shorter. If God will come to our assistance, we will stabilize our wills, reconfirm our resolutions. Let us run without stopping, until we have arrived at comprehending that to which all the thoughts of our minds should be directed, and all the desire of our hearts.

Let us imitate those rapid streams that never stop in their head-long flow, until they arrive at the sea. Or, let us be like that heavy stone which, being detached from the stony cliff on the rough summit of the mountain, rushes down precipitously,

⁸⁴**Translator's Note:** Ph 1:6 is a favorite text of Fr. Bertoni – cf. CF # 185.

ruining all barriers that stand in its way. It breaks down every obstacle until it comes to rest almost in the very center of the valley below.

791: Let us rivet the look of our minds on our final end, which is God. Let us never lose sight of Him: *...while we have the time, let us work every good...* [Ga 6:10]....*let us pray without ceasing...* [1 Th 5:17]. Let us combat with valor without tiring, or ever surrendering, until we have succeeded in possessing Him: *... No man putting his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God...* [Lk 9:62] - says the Gospel. But, let us forget our past struggles, and always keep before our desires headed toward greater goals.

792: If we are thus resolved from the very outset, all travail and every difficulty will soon cease. Furthermore, there is nothing more than this that can frighten our adversaries than a courageous person. And just as toward those who show themselves timid and irresolute, these enemies never cease offering disturbance. They seek all means to interrupt the pathway with varied and troublesome temptations. In the words of a great Saint who experienced this in life, bold resolutions of a generous heart suffice to put the enemies all to flight. Thus, they hardly dare to turn around and make any further trouble.

793: If, at the beginning, we were not so resolute in succeeding with such courage, by breaking through the first assault of our adversaries, let us not lose heart at all. And if, due to our weakness, some **wounds** are inflicted upon us, let us not be crest-fallen. We know that both a ready and an efficacious **medicine** is at hand. Let us restore ourselves right away, and with even greater courage than before. Let us trust ever more in God, and continue on with our course. And when we least expect it, we will see every difficulty overcome. The enemy will be weakened and there will be assured to us that crown. This is promised to all who battle legitimately, that is, with perseverance, until the end [2 Tm 2:5] ⁸⁵.

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⁸⁵St. Augustine, *Ad Fratres in Eremo*, Sermo 8, App. t. 6, p. 313 G - spurious.

SourcesOT

Dt 7: 21	# 785
Ps 9 [Hb 10]:17	# 789
15:8	# 785
26:1	# 785
4	# 773
33:9	# 773
90:3	# 785
12	# 785
113: [Heb11:5]3	# 787
118:165	# 782
120:1	# 789
142:10	# 785
Pr 4:11	# 781;782; 785
12	#782; 783
Si 1:29	# 781
2:1 [“ordeal”]	# 775
16	# 779
6:20	# 784
51:35	# 782
Is 32:18	# 783

NT

Mt 5:34	# 777
7:7	# 786
10:22	# 778
24:13	# 778
Mk 11:24	# 786
Lk 9:62	# 791
11:13	# 786
Jn 14: 6	# 787
Rm 8:18	# 778
Ga 6:10	# 791
Ep 2:4 [<i>Dives in Misericordia</i>]	# 773
Ph 1:6[<i>special to Fr. Bertoni</i>]	# 788
1 Th 5:17	# 789; 791
1 Tm 2:8	# 789
2 Tm 2:5	# 793
13	# 787
Heb 12:11	# 784

Fathers & Doctors**St. Augustine, *Ad fratres in eum*. Sermo 8,****Append. t. 6, p.313 G - spurious.****# 793****St. Bernard, In *Cant.* Sermo 85****# 781**

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794:**SERMON 19****The Purity of St. Aloysius Gonzaga**

Proposed for Imitation on the Third of his Sunday's, in the year 1803, on the 5th of June, in St. Paul's of Campo Marzio, in Verona.

Since it is my challenge today to speak to you about St. Aloysius; angelic purity, and to propose this succinctly for your emulation, how happy I am that we are touching upon an argument dear to your hearts. But, at the same time, I am much afflicted in the realization of my own awkward thoughts on the matter as well as my unlearned tongue, that so poorly dispose me for such a task. I feel much like having a rather **rough, unartistic hand put to a very delicate canvas**, that is pretending to draw the outline in light sketches of a gentle face. How I would like to draw at least the plan of the work in its general lines.

795: However, it is not necessary for me to presume on **my inadequate ability. Much like an inexperienced painter**, I really do not have to make **an expressive portrait of a beauty** that you already have before your eyes, almost in the living original. Is it not true that the countenance of this angelic young man is the very face of purity? And if the image is already deceased, still this lovable virtue is not dead, but makes itself still seen. It is still alive, because the devout look of an innocent heart is found in it, that still attracts in a gentle way, and has one come to love it. It is still vivid, because an unclean heart lifts up its face boldly. But, very soon it has to withdraw in shame, beaten back by a tempest of criticisms, and struck by a lightning bolt of confusion.

796: What else remains to me other than, as though with a present object, to point out with attentive observation, the lovable qualities that may elude a general, or confused glance. My challenge, then, is to inflame your wills to love, and to forming the efficacious desire to possess this virtue, is it not so, and in its greatest possible perfection for your particular state in life? For my part, I am really hoping that the excellent dispositions of your souls will supply for the insufficiency for my speech. I rely on this more than a repeated experience that I could rely on of my own capacity.

797: All the virtues are beautiful. However, to this virtue, about which we are speaking, there is attributed professedly a special decor and beauty, as St. Thomas⁸⁶ teaches. And it is the eminence of this quality that I would like to present to you in the first place. Humanity is composed of two substances, the one corporeal, and the other spiritual. Consider this? Thus, human beings are in the middle place between Angels, with whom human beings share intelligence - and the animals, with which humans have in common animal life. If a human being raises up to make use of his mind, he is like an Angel. When he lowers himself, and obeys his ... *concupiscences, which are on his members...* [Jas 4:1], he is more like an animal.

⁸⁶St. Thomas Aquinas, II-II, q. 152, a. 5, c.

798: This is why Scripture, speaking of human beings, who abandon their sublime place to which they had been elevated, by living in accord with reason and the spirit, in order to condescend to their flesh, expresses itself in this way: *...Man when he was in honor did not understand he has been compared to senseless beasts, and made like to them...* [Ps 48:21].

This is like the light compared to the darkness. And the light renders the shadows even more darkened, and the darkness is more luminous than the light. This happens when one does not realize better one reality when compared to its opposite.

799: In fact, one will never understand better, nor with greater clarity, the beautiful disposition of the parts of the human body than after some capricious hypothesis, its order is upset and its inherent symmetry ruined. If a person places the human head under the feet, to take their place - and in-grafts the feet where the head should be - what a horrible monster, what a deformed spectacle would this not be to see?

800: This is the very reason, not someone's imagination, but in truth, what a dissolute human being does with life, and even much worse. Such an individual takes support from that superior place where God has placed it to rule and dominate. He casts it under his feet, making it serve human passions. Of their nature, the passions require law and restraint, and the unruly person substitutes them for his head, to lord it over his life and to prevail. What could be more obscene, more filthy, and more base? These are the deformities that fall before our eyes every day and every hour. They draw the laughter, derision and ridicule from the uncultured crowd, and they bring nausea, horror and rejection from the more receptive.

801: O, just by looking in a mirror, not a false one, or one that flatters, but one that relays a true image, certain men and women are deceived. In these days, they make of their confusion an object of pomp, their shame becomes their glory. I am sure that they would be amazed at recognizing their monstrous appearance, and they would change the motive of their vain and delirious follies into an object of the highest abomination. Those here present would do so. And the reverence of this place does not remove from me the permission to descend to more minute descriptions. I am certain that all would break out in blushing shame, at seeing themselves so basely and vividly depicted.

802: Then, how even more beautiful is this virtue that conserves the order and dignity of human beings! This virtue is presented in its excellence for sublime reverence, in the words of the Psalmist, speaking in such elevated tones, to God Himself: *... Lord, You have made man a little less than the Angels...* [Ps 8:6]. It is this virtue that maintains for human beings that sublime sovereignty in which they have been constituted above all visible creatures. There pertains to purity that august splendor that much like a glorious diadem distinguishes its principality. The Psalmist continues in his description of it: *.... You have crowned him with glory and honor... [v. 6]... and You have set him over the works of Your hands... [v. 7]... You have subjected all things under his feet... [v. 8].*

803: It is from purity that there proceeds the recognition of that noble image of the divinity impressed on human beings, so that it can indeed be said: ... *the light of Your countenance, o Lord, is signed upon us...* [Ps 4:7]. Through its activity as it resides in the human heart, that there is built up a living temple of the Holy Spirit. By it, the human body itself becomes an instrument of God's Glory, and even more His dwelling place and footstool. This is what St. Paul wanted to say in these words: ... *your members are the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you...* [1 Co 6:19].... *glorify and bear God in your body...* [v. 20].

It is this virtue, finally, that renders a human being gracious in the sight of God, His friend, because of the likeness that he finds there. Such persons are much like those immaterial and celestial persons, so dear to humanity, that are both honored and feared even by their enemies.

804: But, let us proceed still further to uncover more the intimate excellency of such a noble virtue. This is why the glory, the decor, the beauty that results almost eternally from that order that purity introduces into human life. Furthermore, tranquility, peace, joy, are also daughters of this same order. Thus, a person so endowed rejoices within his own spirit, without need of going much outside, and enjoys this in the intimacy of his own being for its own worth.

And it should be noted here that in order to make clear the joy of its exercise that is so pure, although hidden, and perhaps by many still unobserved - there should not be neglected the comparison with its sorrowful opposite. At least in this discourse, it is clear that the trouble brought by illness makes all the more evident the joyfulness of good health.

805: Give me a human being, taken over by unregulated love, and you will see how much bother, how much anguish, and to how much turbulence his heart is subjected. His interior is comparable to a city in which everything is upside down, in revolution and tumult. The passions, comparable to a seditious and turbulent faction, assail the reason with blind and furious impetus, and free from all sides, put pressure on it and strive to influence it, as to usurp an improper and violent principality. The spirit groans in its chains of wretched servitude, and the generous character of its native greatness excites it to repair its losses, and to restore itself to its sovereign status.

807: All the while, God with His illustrations does not cease to call upon the will in this spirited war to reestablish god order, and He promises abundant assistance to it. But, on the other side, the devil is employing all his artifices to fan the flames of the war of division and to keep the discord alive. The battle goes on this way day and night. All is confusion, all is frightful, all deception, anxiety, trembling in wrath, emitting ferocious shouts, cries of desperation.

808: Those noble virtues that were like a strong armed guard that kept watch over the bed of the peaceful Solomon, are like what assured the repose of his spirit. But, they fell extinguished and moribund at the fierce onslaught of his predominant vice. O

God, what slaughter, what devastation! The Temple of God had become a throne of sin, and then like a tyrant, it exercises its very aggressive dominion. It despoils the spirit of its arms by taking away from one every confidence of being able any more to be delivered from it. And the armor, says St. Paul, blinded by a frightening, infernal darkness that closes off for one every path from which help might be expected. This is the will, lacerated by the cruel remorse in the grasp of a despairing desolation.

809: From such dismal images we turn our terrified thoughts to find consolation in the rejoicing of chaste and temperate soul. And oh, it is here that there is verified the saying from the Psalms: ... *He has placed peace within your borders...* [Ps 147:3]. Indeed, all the exterior senses with their modest and virtuous composition, give off the impression to the outside, and to the entrance to this realm, an air of tranquility and the security that dwells there.

810: Let us enter into the heart and spirit of this. The reasonable will reigns there much like a queen, authoritative in aspect, but gentle. Her loving courtesans are a thousand affections, vested in candid innocence and of genuine simplicity. I see way down there the passions, but they offer their obsequious service to her laws, They are under the powerful custody of ordered and directed virtues. They increase considerably the glory of the one who restrains and governs them with such wisdom. A pleasing and gracious harmony of all the faculties fills everything with gentleness, joy and jubilation.

811: The only enemy is one who would put itself forward to disturb the calm, because this has been for a long time weakened and rejected. There is a brilliant and serene light which sparkles always in the upper heaven of the soul. This renders it impenetrable even to malicious deceptions and to dark plots. The security and the faithful witness of the good conscience fill the bones with joy, and provide a perpetual banquet of solid joy to the heart. And hope, made even more sure by the experience of abundant consolations that God showers down in comfort, almost opens to it the blessed gates of heaven. And there it can see reserved its crown and as the place of its ultimate possession. And a broad way attracts it to that unchanging happiness, to hurry in anticipation along the sweet-scented and fecund earth of this immaculate soul. The Psalmist already spoke of such persons: ... *Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the Law of the Lord...* [Ps 118:1].

812: Just look at the kind of virtue that I have proposed for your imitation in St. Aloysius. It seems that I can almost see this young Angel in the flesh. He is turning his handsome face of paradise toward you that is joyful and serene, beyond all measure. He is reaching out his virginal hands to call you with his gentle, kind invitation to follow him.

And it seems that he is saying: If I, if I among the most desirable delights, living in the most liberal of courts, among the most manifest of dangers - if I was able to conserve intact my lily of purity, why can you not keep yourselves pure, protected as you are, in the environment of a simple and private condition?

813: I, too, dwell within the same flesh as you do. The blood runs also at war in my veins, and in this sweet April of my days, my members, my members flourish freshly and vivaciously. And if I, by keeping always a virginal chastity have surpassed nature itself, why can you not at least remain within its reasonable boundaries? Why will you not obey its common laws, by keeping that chastity that your particular state demands of you?

814: And if my eyes always willingly abstain even from furtive glances of earthy beauties, no matter how chaste and innocent, how is it that your looks will not suffer a discreet restraint that would suspend them, or withdraw them from staring with an excessively free malice? And if my delicate boy accepts so well such a rigid torment of protecting penance- then, why would not your bodies accept the privation from those voracious indecencies and from those enflaming drinking bouts?

815: Just look, look at this numerous array of innocent young men and virginal young women. Both these young men and women, then, will be able from very close at hand, each day to follow along in my arduous footsteps - could you not, at least from afar, follow the sweet perfume of my examples, that everywhere are so widely spread and diffused?

816: This is how he speaks to you, my hearers, this prototype of innocence. And how do you respond to His invitations?

Would one say perhaps: - It might even be true that St. Aloysius, and many others, who approach him by their imitation, might have been able to follow such arduous counsels. But, as for me, it is impossible even to observe the simple precepts.

The proposal is too absolute and as such merit to be reprovved by the Church as a manifest heresy. It is necessary to limit it.

817: If one would respond to me this way, it is better to speak up with the very words of the Wise Man: ... *And as I know that I could not otherwise be continent except that God gave it...* [Ws 8:21]. I admit this. But I also add with the authoritative words from the Council of Trent⁸⁷ that: "... God does not ask impossibilities, but by commanding admonishes you both to do what you can, and to pray for what you cannot do..." And not only the saints could with their own forces do this, but only with the comfort of grace. God does not deny anyone who rightly asks Him in prayer. Thus, He is most ready to make the burden of His yoke both light and sweet [Mt 11:30]. Surely the weight of His law could indeed appear to seem perhaps to be strange, and even insupportable to the forces of our weak human nature.

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⁸⁷Council of Trent, Senz. # 804.

Sources

OT

Ps 4:7	# 803
8:6	# 802
7	# 802
8	# 802
48:21	# 798
118: 1	# 811
147: 3 [v. 14]	# 809

NT

Mt 11:30	# 817
Rm 13:12	# 808
1 Co 6:19	# 803
20	# 803
Jas 4:1	# 797

Magisterium

Council of Trent, Decree on Justification, Jan. 13, 1547.
 The Observance of the Commandments and the
 Necessity and possibility thereof.

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Fathers & Doctors

St. Thomas Aquinas, II-II, q. 152, a. 5, c

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818:**SERMON 20****The Evangelical Law**

Preached on the Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost, in the Church of St. Paul's. Campo Marzio, on the left bank of Verona - on August 21, 1803.

... Blessed are the eyes that have seen the things that you see... [Lk 10:23].

My very beloved brothers and sisters, these are the very words of Christ to His Disciples. In my opinion, these words were meant not only for those present, as at that moment there the Apostle and others who followed Him. Christ meant this also for His future followers, in whose number we also are called as we are for the eternal praises of God. In fact, our destiny is in no way inferior to theirs.

819: And what is it that they saw for them to be called "blessed"? And what do we see now in order for us, too, to be called "blessed"? Their eyes saw their Preceptor, as had already been prophesied by Isaiah [30:20]: *... and your eyes shall see your Teacher...* However, in that same place it was also predicted for all of the future of the Church, that there would never be taken away from her Master. And Christ Himself has made this promise also to us: *... behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world...* [Mt 28:20]. Will it perhaps be that those who... *have known Christ according to the flesh...* [2 Co 5:16] - will be more blessed than we who have not been able to know Him according to the flesh? Rather, I read now: *...blessed are they who have not seen, and have believed...* [Jn 20:29]. So, what does this mean: *... Blessed are the eyes that see the things that you see...?* [Lk 10:23].

820: The response is that there are two ways that one can "see Christ" by the senses, and by faith. In the first way, Christ was seen also by His enemies. And this sight of itself is so far from making them blessed; in fact, it even made them more wretched, as He Himself has stated: *...If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin...* [Jn 15:22]. The Apostles saw Him in both of these ways, and so their eyes merited to have been called "blessed". In the second and the more perfect way, we can see Him now, that is, by faith. And this is why we are no less "blessed" than they were, even though we cannot see Him in a sensible manner.

821: Let us, then, now consider this beatitude of ours briefly. It consists in God having called us into His own admirable light [cf. 1 P 2:9], to a lot among the saints [Ac 26:18]. He has enlightened the eyes of our hearts [Ep 1:18]. And our hearts have been justified through His Law of faith [Ga 2:16]. And so, we can see how happy is our state in His Gospel and in His grace. In order to emphasize such a great benefit that has almost been forgotten by many in these times, that gratitude that we owe to God commits us. The love for our salvation necessarily binds us, in order to have it for our use for the increase of our justice, that we might never abuse it, to our greater punishment.

822: Three realities have to concur to make a human being happy on this earth: honor, wealth, delights. But, what state in this world has ever been, or, will ever be more honorable than our own? I know the level of honor the Psalmist believed that the Hebrew nation was raised: *...God has not done in like manner to every nation: and his judgments He has not made to manifest to them...* [Ps 147:20]. Then, add to this what the Apostle has said: *... to the Israelites belongs... the giving of the Law...* [Rm 9:4]. Moses, in fact, had received the Law written by God on the tablets of stone for all that people... *so that the children of Israel would not steadfastly behold the face of Moses, for the glory of his countenance...* [2 Co 3:7]

823: But all of this is very much inferior to our own state. The reason is that they had the law written externally on marble, but we have it written intimately into our hearts. Our forefathers were given the letter, but to us has been given the Spirit [v. 5]. This is what God tells us through Jeremiah [speaking of our times]:

... Behold the days shall come that I will make a New Covenant with the House of Israel, and with the House of Judah... [Jr 31:31].

Not according to the Covenant which I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand t bring them out of the land of Egypt; the Covenant which they made void, and I had dominion over them... [v.. 32].

But this shall be the Covenant that I will make with the House of Israel, after those days,, says the Lord: I will write My Law in their minds and I will write it on their heart: and I will be their God, and they shall be My People... [v. 33].

And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying: Know the Lord: for all shall know Me, from the least of them even to the greatest, says the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more... [v. 34].

824: To make this matter even more clear, perhaps it will be not out of place to introduce here the brilliant doctrine of the Angelic Doctor⁸⁸. And even before him was the teaching of St. Augustine⁸⁹. In the Law of the Gospel, two realities need to be considered: the principal aspect, this is the grace of the Holy Spirit, Who is given to us through Faith in Christ. The secondary matter is the letter, or the Scripture of the Holy Gospel, in which are contained only those matters that pertain to grace, either as a disposition to receiving them, or as pertaining to the use of this grace itself.

825: As a disposition, then, of the intellect for the reception of faith, through which grace is received, there are contained those truths in the Gospel that refer to the manifesting of the divinity and the humanity of Christ. As far as the affections are concerned, there are contained in the Gospel those inspirations that pertain to the disdain of the world, through which a person is made capable for the grace of the

⁸⁸St. Thomas Aquinas, I-II, q. 106, a. 1.

⁸⁹St. Augustine, *De Spiritu et Lettera*, 17, 30; 21, 36; 26, 43. t. 10/1, pp. 101 E, f. 1 194 D; 108 C.

Holy Spirit. The reason is that the world, that is, lovers of this world, cannot receive the Holy Spirit, as is read in John [14:17]. The use of this spiritual grace resides in the works of virtue to which in many ways the Scripture of the New Testament exhorts the faithful.

826: Now, just like every other reality is defined and seems that it is constituted by that which is principal in it, as a human being by reason - so, principally, the New Law of Faith [Rm 3:27]; the Law of the Spirit of Life in Jesus Christ [Rm 8:2]. And the above-mentioned St. Augustine⁹⁰ says: What else would these Laws of God, written by God Himself in our hearts, be if not the presence of the Holy Spirit? This is the level to which the glory of our state is elevated.

827: Not only was there never a state in this world more worthy than this one - there could not even be one, as I said from the beginning. And this can be proven by comparisons and through evidence. A reality is the more perfect the closer it is to the last end. And there is nothing that can be closer to our final end, as that which immediately introduces one to this last end. But, this is precisely what the New Law does, as the Apostle has said: ... *Having, therefore, brothers, a confidence in the entering into the holies by the blood of Christ...* [Heb 10:19]... a new and living way which He has dedicated for us ... [v. 20]. Therefore, in this present life there could not have been any state of superior dignity, or excellence.

828: Let us see, then, now if this state, so illustrious for its honor, abounds as well for its wealth. Speaking of this to the Ephesians, the Apostle states: ... *that the God of our Lord, Jesus Christ, ... enlighten the eyes of your hearts that you might know what hope is of his calling and what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints...* [Ep 1:1, 17, 17]...and what is the exceeding greatness of his power towards us, who believe... [v. 19].

829: In the Old Law, the Hebrews had temporal promises, earthly abundance, visible opulence. It was a fertile land that ran with milk and honey. There were rich spoils, copious tributes that their already conquered enemies gave them. As far as the precious treasures of gold and gems, and of all that is rare in this world, at one time the royal palaces of their monarchs were endowed with these. And all was well with them, since they were servants, and God promptly each day paid them their wages.

830: We are children, and as such our heavenly Father does not offer us a daily salary, as this was not fitting. Rather, He has prepared for us an inheritance that is indeed most proper. Is it perhaps because the mercenary is able to show some payment in his hands that we would say that he is richer than the son who is waiting for the inheritance, and to whom the Father has said: ...*all that I have is ours...* [Lk 15:31]. Certainly not. And should there be still some among Christians who esteem some part of present blessings present in this life, this would not surprise me. For St.

⁹⁰St. Augustine, *De Spiritu et Lettera*, 21, 36. t. 10/1 104 D.

Augustine has said ⁹¹ that there are very many in the Gospel Law who are Christians in name only. They still live under the Old Law, not under that of grace. They belong to the Old Testament that generated slavery.

831: Those who pertain to the New Testament understand well and enjoy hearing that teaching - one of them the same Holy Doctor ⁹² cries out: You are not called to embrace a land, but to acquire heaven; yours is not a vocation to an earthly felicity, but to a heavenly one. Yours are not to temporal successes, or fleeting prosperity, but to an eternal life with the Angels. They are also happy to hear what St. Paul says: ... *That no man should be moved in these tribulations: for you yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto...* [1 Th 3:3].

832: Even further, it should be pointed out that our wealth is not only in a right to a future heredity. We have here already the possession of many most sublime goods. For who would say that one does not possess grand wealth if one possesses a reality that is beyond price [Jb 28:13]? In the comparison with this gift not even gold and silver can stand [Pr 16:16]. This surpasses in value so many goods that stand so high in the esteem and in the imagination of human beings [Ws 7:8, ff.]. And this exquisite good is wisdom, which, among other things, is proper to all who in this state have received the Spirit. It comes from the infusion of His Gifts, or the unction of the Spirit Himself, as St. John has said of all these: ...*his unction teaches you of all things...* [1 Jn 2:27].

833: What will I say, then, about the charity diffused into our hearts [Rm 5:5]? The Angel of the Apocalypse speaks of it [Apoc 3:17, ff.], the one sent to the Church of Laodicea. He pointed out that the Church was indeed poor, even though it did have an abundance of material wealth. The Angel expressed himself in these terms: ... *Because you say: I am rich, and made wealthy, and have need of nothing: and do not know that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor and blind and naked...* [Apoc 3:17]... *But I counsel you to buy of me gold fire tried, that you may be made rich...* [v. 18]. And in another place, we read: ...*if a man should give all the substance of his house for love, he shall despise it as nothing...* [Ct 8:7].

834: It indeed can be said with the Apostle: ... *that in all things you are made rich in Him, in all utterance and in all knowledge...so that nothing is wanting to you in any grace, waiting for the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ...* [1 Co 1:5 & 7].

835: It still remains now, after having established the felicity of a state that is so honorable and abundant, for me to pass to showing you how sweet and delightful it is. However, I realize that I am already close to reaching the limits prescribed for me by our customary brevity. And so, I do not want to tire your very careful attention that you have shown me in such courtesy up to this moment. I think, then, that after a brief rest, I will be able to ask you to continue your attention just for a little while longer.

⁹¹St. Augustine, *De Hagar et Ismael*, Sermo 3. t. 5/1, 10 C.

⁹²St. Augustine, Sermo 296, 6, 7. t. 5/2, 1200 F.

836: Christ so gently invites us: *...Come to me, all you that labor, and are heavily burdened, and I will refresh you... For My yoke is sweet and My burden is light...* [Mt 11:18 & 30]. This is exactly what St. John has said: *... and His commandments are not heavy...* [1 Jn 5:3]. St. Augustine comments on this ⁹³: They are not burdensome, he says, to the one who loves; but, they are very bothersome to one who does not love. And the reason for this is clear, because as the Philosopher ⁹⁴teaches: to do what the just person accomplishes is easy, but to carry it out the way he does - that is, with promptness and delight - this is most difficult to one who is not endowed with justice. And precisely in justice, in peace and in the joy of the Holy Spirit, is the Kingdom of God, as St. Paul assures us.

837: For one who loves, all is easy, all is sweet, even adversity itself, concludes St. Thomas ⁹⁵. Observers of the Law will experience hardships, even though they do not come from the Law itself. Nonetheless, out of the love in which this Law consists, they are easily tolerated.

838: Furthermore, what is more delightful, more sweet, more joyful than love? What could be more pleasing than to be guided and governed by the Spirit of love? And this is that special characteristic, the mark of those that have in the New Law received the adoption as children [Rm 8:15]: *... For whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God...* [v. 14]. The Psalmist has exclaimed: *...O how good and sweet is Your spirit, o Lord, in all things...!* [Ws 12:1].

839: What can be more delightful than to act in accord with the instinct of interior grace? Is it not true that this inclines one to operate correctly? Does it not move us to carry out our tasks freely, and to accomplish all that is demanded by grace, while avoiding whatever is repugnant to it? Hence, it can truly be said: *...where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty...* [2 Co 3:17]... *[a true liberty, a holy freedom,... wherewith Christ has made us free...* [Ga 4:31]. All is in accord: *... [with] the oath He swore [to our fathers]...* [Lk 1:73]... *that being delivered from the hand of our enemies, we may serve Him without fear...* [v. 74]... *in holiness and justice before Him all our days...* [v. 75].

840: And this is that happy state of anyone who dwells on the Holy Mountain [Ps 14:1]. This is His Church: *... which He has purchased with His own blood...* [Ac 20:28]. It pertains to the New Law of His Gospel. Thus, one is happy because of honors, happy because of riches and happy by delights: *... Blessed are the eyes that see the things you see...* [Lk 10:32].

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⁹³St. Augustine, *De Natura et Gratia*, 69.t. 10/1, 164 C.

⁹⁴Aristotle, *V Ethic.* c. 9, ad finem.

⁹⁵St. Thomas Aquinas, I-II, q. 127, a. 4, ad 2 um.

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Jb 28:13	# 832	Is 30:20	# 819
Ps 14:1	# 840	JEREMIAH 31:31-34	
147:20	# 822	[" <u>New Covenant</u> "]	# 823
Pr 16:16	# 832	3:31	# 823
Ct 8:7	# 833	32	# 823
Ws 7:8, ff.	# 832	33	# 823
12:1	# 838	34	# 823

NT

Mt 11:28	# 836	1 Co 1:15	#834
30	# 836	7	# 834
18:20	# 819	2 Co 3:3	# 823
LK 1:73	# 839	7	# 822
74	# 839	17	# 839
75	# 839	5:16	# 819
10:23	##818; 819; 840	Ga 2:16	# 821
15:31	# 830	4:31	# 839
Jn 14:17	# 825	Ep 1:17	# 828
15:22	# 820	18	## 821; 828
20:29	# 819	19	# 828
Ac 20:28	# 840	1 Th 3:13	# 831
26:18	# 821	Heb 10:19	# 827
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8:2	# 826	1 Jn 2:27	# 832
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15	# 838	Apoc 3:17	# 833
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14:17	# 836		

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841:**SERMON 21****The Divine Benefits**

For the last day of the year, 1803. - Preached on St. Stephen's Day, in the Venerable Church of St. Paul's Campo Marzio, in Verona, on the left bank.

I am unable, most distinguished hearers, I simply cannot easily express the sweet commotion that has come to my spirit this evening by your devoted presence. Indeed, I can think of the most noble and virtuous motive that has brought you here this evening in such numbers, with such alacrity, with hearts so open. I can see that you have come to give thanks to this divine goodness which throughout this whole year, that is now passing, has most generously benefited you in so many ways. Seeing this in you, broadens my spirit, and raises it above its usual thoughts. This moves me to my duty of accompanying the sincere acts of your gratitude, and to approach that sublime, sovereign generous Majesty.

842: This has suffused into me a further sentiment of tender happiness and reverent fear into my breast. For there is indeed happiness, seeing in such a beautiful disposition of your affections. And yet there is at the same time some fear, noting in myself an insufficiency to carry out that high office entrusted to me. Also, I see that your desires that are made evident here commit me to spell out with my tongue the innumerable benefits of the divine liberality received. This must be justly and perpetually recognized by our testimony.

843: But who is there who could ever properly magnify this even for a single divine benefit, let alone the very many most gracious gifts? And who is there who could ever presume simply to remember them all, or even the greater part of them or at least, the most important of them? Is it not true that the greater number of them and in their principal greatness these remain in fact hidden and secret within us, and surpass all the more the power of our natural understanding?

Should we be silent, then? Of course not! For we have the commandment to praise Him with our tongues, to praise Him as much as we can. Indeed, we are clearly advised that all our praise will remain always inferior to what He merits.

844: The foundation of all these gifts is certainly being itself. For indeed, how could we be enjoying all the goods with which this, our human sojourn, has been so abundantly enriched. What if we had not been given being, but remained enshrouded in the obscure darkness of a silent nothingness? However, my listeners, the fact that being can be said to be the principal among all the divine benefits, you should not think that we have received it just once. It is not simply a matter of God having created once your souls and infused them into your bodies that gives existence to your composite. This has been renewed for you every hour by conserving your being. And since even at this very moment God keeps your being in existence that He has given you; at this instant, it is as though He were giving it to you all over again. And since in all the days, in all the hours, and in all the moments of this whole year now over, your existence has been sustained, you have to realize that every day, every

hour and every instant, He has wondrously created you, as though previously you did not exist at all.

845: Does it seem to you that I am saying something new? Just listen to St. Augustine ⁹⁶, and in his other work ⁹⁷: “There is no other way that God conserves them in being other than by always giving them being.” Indeed, there is no other way in which God keeps His creatures in being than by His always creating them. If He did not always confer on them new being, they would fall back into their nothingness that was theirs previously. Indeed were God to withdraw from them His sustaining action, it would be seen how continuously it is necessary for them: were He to withdraw this action, they would all be reduced to nothingness [*ib.*].

846: That omnipotence of which God has made us to draw you from nothing, He has exercised all throughout this year in your behalf. All the days that you have passed, He has conserved you to this very moment that you open your eyes to recognize such a benefit. Because of its continuation and its closeness, this has perhaps remained either unknown, or unnoticed by you. He has carried you to this point with the strength of His infinite power. And you have not even felt these very powerful arms that bore you up.

847: O sublime and supreme benefactor! This is that dependence that our whole being recognizes for Your goodness! These are the depths of that care that your solicitous goodness extends toward us! Now you will understand, my hearers, the power of those words of the Apostle: ... *For in Him... we are...* [Ac 17:28]. We have our being in God as in the One Who conserves us in being, by giving it to us in every instant. And not only are we “in Him...”, but: ...*we live and move...* as He in like manner conserves life for us that in addition to simple being He has also bestowed on us.

848: In this regard, have you ever observed how multiple and hidden are those causes on which the life in our bodies depends? Is it not so that there is no machine that for it to run there could be a more complicated, well-ordered, delicate harmony of its movable parts? Is it not likewise true how beyond number and how unknown are those contrary accidents that can upset this delicate balance? Is it not so that these can impede its efficacy, by practically stopping its vital motion and bring death?

849: Just imagine from the little that it has been granted you to know what assiduous and vigilant assistance there is required of this Sovereign Artificer, to maintain this temporal life of ours. And if you do recognize as having been conserved by Him this life of yours, throughout the whole course of this year, you will then understand more the obligation that presses in on you, for His provident, tireless care of you.

850: Even when you were not noticing it, He was watching over you so that you might inhale and exhale through your mouth the free air. He made sure that your

⁹⁶St. Augustine - as quoted by St. Thomas Aquinas, I, q. 9, a. 2, c.

⁹⁷St. Augustine, 4 Gen., *ad litteram*, 12, 22. t. 3/1, pp. 167, E, ff.

blood might accomplish its ordinary course. He saw to it that your heart would have its necessary movement, and that there might reign the necessary equilibrium and temperament among your humors. By His care, your food was distributed proportionately through your members, and was converted into the substance of the flesh.

851: And what wonder is there, that even without your thinking about it, He operated with such care in your regard. And any time that you wanted to be active with either your interior or exterior faculties, was it not also necessary that each time that He, as the Author of Nature, with His assistance helped you? Without this assistance, your intellect would never have been able to reach the act of thinking about the least matter. Your will would not have been able to desire anything, nor could your eye, or your hearing, or any of the senses, represent anything to you. And so, you would not even have been able to move your foot, raise your arm, direct your hand - if He at the same time, with you, had not moved and guided them

852: Such is that most certain, necessary dependence, that is known also to philosophers, that secondary causes have from the very reason of their being, in producing also their proper and natural operations. So, St. Paul has put it very well: *...For in him we live, and move and are...* [Ac 17:28]. But, would just this have been enough for God, this care of His within us, and around us, in order to maintain our lives just for this year? Surely not; but you have to extend His care even broadly beyond us: over the fields from which we show their abundant harvest, and those green olive trees where their abundant fruit matures. His care extends to those mountains that find their nourishment and then, well-fed, nourish us. Their hair is shorn to dress us. It is quite true as the Apostle has pointed out: *...Therefore, neither he that plants is anything, nor he that waters; but God that gives the increase...* [1 Co 3:7].

853: Therefore, all through this year God was in continuous operation within you, as well as outside. And do you not also think that He was active above you as well? Who is it Who sends down the timely dew? Who gives power to the sun to fecundate our earth? Who is it who gathers the clouds? And as you can also remember, are these not greater when the need is the more, when the fields at first seem to be languishing? Has it not also been so that very inconsiderately this moisture is sometimes absent from the sky, and for many days on end, there was denied that necessary, immediate relief because of the scarce rain?

854: The drought of this past summer lasted unbendingly for many months, scourged our region with fierce force. It seemed to be coming back again, and threatened even more sad and gloomy effects on the season that was not even yet adult and mature, but still tender and in the time of growing. With foreboding the farmers feared with pale face a terrible famine. It seemed to be coming down from the sterile ravines of the mountains. This image was one of a wan, black horse, riding across our plains, having the meager balance in hand, stammering forth severe edicts. It seemed to be already at the gates of this afflicted and unfortunate city, as though to wreak even further his much suffered evils.

855: But then, all of a sudden, as the danger was imminent, recourse was had to our good heavenly Father. He immediately heard these prayers, and repeatedly bathed the land in good time. The earth was then able to enrich us with the abundance of its products.

O supremely admirable, and truly lovable Providence of our most pious Benefactor!

856: Let us stop here, please, my listeners, and consider for a few moments just to whom it is that such grand, continuous benefits are granted. Is it perhaps to obedient children? Is it to friends, truly interested in His honor? Would it be to subjects who fear His laws? If such were the case, it would still be a most extraordinary wonder. Just imagine a kind God, so glorious, so powerful, so sublime, who would lower himself to make any account of creatures that are so poor and vile. But, the fact that He would endow with such graces and gifts children who have already most discourteously distanced themselves from Him, is even more wondrous. For we have been open enemies to His glory, rebellious subjects to His laws, and this exceeds all stupor.

857: And is it not true that this is a just description of us? Would you respond perhaps that at least our heavenly Father is honored by us? But, how can this be? Is it not so that every day, and publicly, in every square, on every street, at every cross-roads of our city, His holy, terrible Name is taken in vain [Ps 110:9]? Are there not hard frequent curses, swearing of the most terrible kind? Deny this, if you dare, a fact that is so manifest! And where is that obedience due to His Laws? It has to be said that indeed we have rebelled against Him, and broken away from every restraint, every vassalage.

858: And what about that manner of conduct, on the part of men, as well as that of women? Is there not a scandalous manner of dressing and life-style? Is it not true that such immorality is borne on high, almost in triumph, against all laws that God has sublimely promulgated in His Scriptures? Is not this manner of life against all the edicts of His Vicars on earth, reprov'd with the most severe Papal Bulls? Has not this immodesty invaded even our churches, against all the canons and decrees, formulated in so many particular and also universal Councils? Is not this lack of taste against the Church? And lastly, is not such ostentation against the repeated statutes, and explicit notification of our Bishops? And, regarding these, is there anyone who could dare to allege ignorance? Is it not true that all this while, preachers very zealously have placed these matters before your minds and kept them in your memories, with their cries, that are more resounding than trumpets? And by what other name, I ask, can this common and public scandal be named if not a declaration of a revolution against God?

859: I can just hear what many will respond in their hearts: I am not this way; I have never dressed as some people do, disciples of an ill-tempered Satan. My actions and my conduct in public have never gone beyond the most modest limits. I have never spoken badly of God, by cursing, nor against His religion. While I might concede all this, and indeed I have been witness to the modesty of so many men and women

among you. Still, go slowly before withdrawing yourselves from the number of rebels against God.

860: Not only those who actually do evil sin, but also those who consent to it. They, too, sin, whose responsibility it is in some way, that they might be able to impede the wrong, and yet do not do so. I think now of you, mothers of families, you personally are not enrolled under the standard of the immodest styles, but why do you allow your daughters to follow them? And you, gentlemen, why do you not prohibit those scandalous styles from you wives, who are also your subjects? And why, you who are fathers of families, do you not correct your children who bear the corruption of the most unrestrained impurities through the public streets? And you who are friends, why do you not admonish one another? And why do not the masters of households correct their servants? And why do not the ladies of the house raise their voices against the most terrible shameful of your serving girls and serving boys? Why is there not observed by all that most severe duty of fraternal correction.

861: And what about those, who even in a worse manner, cooperate in such wrongdoing with their praise, their affectation of acceptance of it - by still sewing such garments of evil, by paying for them, by approving them, and also by ordering them? Whenever a faction, or another flag is raised up against the prince, all subjects become soldiers. Whoever, then, does not take up arms in the defense of the divine honor, is not a faithful subject in times such as these.

862: And yet, if to many there may be lacking the arms of the tongue, there is available to all the weapons of prayer. Really, who is there who with fervent zeal, with the commitment of charity, and with tireless perseverance, prays for the conversion of so many mis-guided brothers and sisters, who are walking, even running along this precipice?

863: This is why St. Augustine ⁹⁸ and, after him, St. Gregory the Great ⁹⁹ have written: that whenever in a city, or in a nation, sins have become public, and evil has spread to universal dimensions, only with great difficulty can there be found a few, or perhaps even one, who is not guilty. The reason is that those united to others also commit the evil: either by consenting to it, or because the required correction is not given, or lastly, because prayer is not offered with the required intensity, so that the evil would cease altogether, or at least, would not spread so.

864: So, in humility, let us all recognize ourselves to be sinners, and very unfaithful subjects of our God. To our great confusion, we know that even though we are rebels, God nonetheless has blessed us. And even though we do merit even greater punishments, God showers even more sublime gifts upon us, as will be shown to you, after I take a brief rest...

⁹⁸St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, 1, 9. t. 7, 8 F, ff.]

⁹⁹St. Gregory the Great, *Epist.* 114. t. 2, 708, 2 A/

865: It is very true, my listeners, that once I resolved to speak to you with greater liberty, that this kind of sin into which public and scandalous styles have fallen, is serious. For this kind of sin, God once unleashed a flood of water on all the inhabitants, even though they were many, over the whole earth. And by another unrestrained fire, He burnt up one of the most fertile and delightful provinces of Palestine.

866: I would never end were I to take up both the sacred and profane histories, both ancient and recent, that would show entire monarchies overthrown, nations and countries made desolate by famine, wars and pestilence. This I could very easily do, just following the comments already made by many and serious writers. As for ourselves, we can see that the possibility is very near and all around us that the vindicating sword of God can lash out. While in past instances, He has spared our lives and only in some way lessened our substance. But, very soon, God lowered His right arm and its scourge, and filled us with even greater gifts, to draw us into His bosom.

And what are these principal gifts if not those that pertain to the spirit, and lead to eternal life? I will just consider two of them so that I will not go on too long. These two are among the most common, leaving it up to you to uncover the others and those particular to each one.

867: The first one is the gift of faith that He, and not without prodigality, still conserves among us. And how can His gratuitous mercy not be considered a prodigy? Is it not so that this is bestowed on us among the overwhelming waves of a sea that is so agitated, among the various blasts of such a powerful wind, under the weight that is so intensified by such iniquity? Would not all of this have led us to a wretched shipwreck? And what about the very intense darkness, and the thick smoke that has come up in these days with so many heresies? Does this divine light still shine despite all this? And in all the mud of such licentiousness, and in the dung-heap of such depraved customs, has this rare heavenly pearl lost something of its beauty, or has something of its splendor been darkened?

Let us read the ecclesiastical annals. The life-style of those nations that have lost the faith should be compared with the customs of our own times. We could meet there and this is all the more reason why we should be deprived of such a grace. At least, there will be recognized the even greater benefit it is for those who have conserved it.

868: The second gift, which is also most important, is the preaching of His divine word. Suffice it to know that this is the ordinary and most efficacious means for the conversion of sinners, and for the sanctification of the just. And yet, how little have we merited this! The ministers of God still preach against all this immodesty, and who abandons them? Preaching continues against such evil practices: and who abstains from them? There are sermons against the modern styles: and who sets them aside? Not only are life-styles not changed but they have become excessively worse. Not only are the admonitions not heard, but they are derided.

869: What a powerful motive God has for castigating us with the most terrible of His punishments - and for taking His word out of the mouths of His ministers! And yet, we could never praise enough His extraordinary benefits! Say it yourselves in your faith, whether or not it does not see that in these times He has redoubled His spirit in His Gospel heralds? Is it not so that you have heard it spoken with more intense constancy, more fervor and freedom?

870: My beloved brothers and sisters, let us not abuse - o, let us not abuse such singular gifts. Let us even fear the gifts themselves, if very soon we do not convert. For, all the more desperate will be our abandonment, as the more we are taken care of overtime and with ever more extended patience. And if we have indeed resolved to be converted entirely to God, let us do all we can to see that still others are converted. By so doing, we can be confident that we will have and receive even greater benefits. For while God showers His benefits on us while we are still His enemies, how much more will He when we will have become reconciled to Him and become His friends? Let us lift up our hearts, and let us in harmony raise our voices to thank and to bless such a sublime, loving, infinite goodness. Let us praise it, and confess it: ... *We praise You, o Lord, and we confess You as Lord...!*

871: From the sublime threshold of Your glory, graciously hear, O Lord, our prayers. "Save Your people, o Lord!" Because if You do not listen, who will save us? Is it possible that one man could save another? This could never be: ... *for vain is the salvation of man...* [Ps 59:13]. Could a person save himself? And the response here is also "no": ... *neither shall he be saved by the abundance of his strength...* [Ps 32:17]... *Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved...* [Ac 4:12].

872: So, save this People Yourself. You, to Whom this people belongs, save it from every evil. Especially, save it from any irreparable future evil, eternal harm: save it from the fury of the wrath of Your judgments. Save it from past evil, that is, from its own iniquity, by helping all to get up and become clean. Save it from present evil, with which its spirit is afflicted and its body tormented. For either the people is liberated from all its tribulation, or in You it might derive the profit of its spiritual gain, and never encounter harm being with You: ... *Behold the hand of the Lord is not shortened that it cannot save...* [Is 59:1]. This is still so in our times. You would want this, I hope, because this people is not estranged from You, or alienated, but it is Yours: "this is your People!". This people was purchased with the great price of Your blood [1 P 1:19]: ...*save Your people, o Lord...!*

873: Do not only save it from evil; but further, shower upon it a large abundance of many gifts. What a powerful motive this people has to wait all blessing from You, since they are Your heirs! "And so, bless Your inheritance!" And this inheritance should be very dear to You, because it is offered to You by the Father, when He said: ... *Ask of Me and I will give you the Gentiles for Your inheritance...* [Ps 2:8]. And who is it whom You do not love, whom You do not conserve, who would not want the inheritance increased?

874: Should the earth of our hearts be deserted, arid, solitary, then this is all the more reason why it is worthy to be inherited by You. Only to You there is not lacking the ability and the knowledge to bring it to cultivation. And then it will be seen that: ... *waters are broken out in the desert, and streams in the wilderness...* [Is 35:6, ff.]. And this will produce in the desert all delights [Is 41:19]: ... *I will plant in the wilderness the cedar...* There will be a garden there, whenever You bathe it with those showers of gratuitous benedictions: ... *You shall set aside for Your inheritance a free reign, O God...* [Ps 67:10]. And all that is weak of itself, all will be perfected by You. All, therefore, will be for Your glory.

875: Save this people of Yours, o Lord. And it will be Your joy to see this people rejoicing in the liberation obtained from all its evils: ... *that we may rejoice in the joy of Your nation...* [Ps 105: 5]. Bless Your inheritance, and our inheritance, enriched by You with so many goods, and will form an eternal object of Your praise: ... *may You be praised with Your inheritance...!* [ib.].

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Sources

OT

Ps 2:8	# 873
32: 17	# 871
59:13	# 871
67:10	# 874
105: 5	# 875
110:9	# 857
Is 35:6, ff.	# 874
41:19	# 874
59:1	# 872

NT

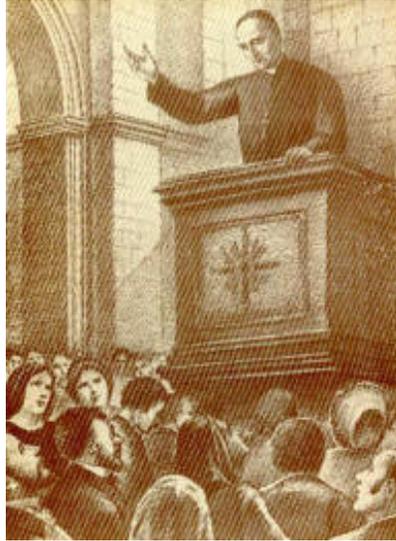
Ac 4:12	# 871
17:28	## 847; 852
1 Co 3:7	# 852
1 P 1:19	# 872

Fathers and Doctors

St. Augustine, <i>4 Gen., ad litt.</i> 12, 22. t. 3/1, pp. 167 E, ff	# 845
<i>De Clv. Dei</i> , 1, 9. t. 2, p. 708, 2 A	# 863
St. Gregory the Great, <i>Epistula 114.</i> t. 2, p. 708, 2 A	# 863
St. Thomas Aquinas, I, q. 9, a. 2, c	# 845

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St. GASPAR BERTONI



An illustration of St. Gaspar Bertoni preaching his sermons.

Early Spiritual Writings

PARISH SERMONS

1804

[Manoscritti Bertoni ## 876 – 991]

**Translation into English
Rev. Joseph Henchey, CSS
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1804

876:**SERMON 22****True Joy**

For the Fourth Sunday of Lent, preached on March 11, 1804, in St. Paul's of Campo Marzio, Verona.

I would believe, my devout hearers, I would think, that I would separate myself in some manner, from the most gentle spirit of our common Mother, the Holy Church, as on this day, she excites her children the most vivid joy. This would be so were I to wish to produce for your fraternal consideration a theme of sadness, or of mourning, no matter how useful this might seem to me, and if you would allow me to do this, even unwillingly. So, this is why I speak with the very words of Isaiah with which all the mouths of the entire Church resound today to exhort you:*Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all you that love her... [Is 66:10 , ff.]. ...that you may suck, and be filled with the breasts of her consolations: that you may milk out and flow with delights, from the abundance of her glory... [v. 11].*

877: This is the purpose and the scope that I think is like my religious duty to direct my words: toward that true and solid joy of heart. This is a purpose and a scope that is dear and sweet to all equally: both for those who already perfectly live in following Christ, as well as for those who even though they are still slaves to vanity, and love the world. With this difference, however, that whereas the former verify this in the prudent election of means, the latter wander basely to their excessive harm. Allow me, then, on this day to speak of this to these alone. This is so that I might draw them away from such a pernicious deception. I would do this by showing them what is the right road to reach authentic joy. My goal will be that they might follow surely that path that up to the present they have only yearned for in vain.

878: First, let us see what way worldly people are following to arrive at that end that they are seeking with such avidity. I think that by the common judgment of the world, every delight, every joy, would be based on those secular benefits, that the Psalmist has already enumerated as by a false prince:.....*Whose mouth has spoken vanity: and their right hand is the right hand of iniquity... [Ps 143:8].*

879: Some would take glory in prosperous youth, and in their florid years, they trust in the vigor of their exultation: ... *Whose sons are like new plants in their youth... [v. 12].* To admire the beauty of the body, and with the useless out-pouring of supreme riches to decorate it, and to embellish it much like a temple, was already noted by the Psalmist: ... *their daughters are decked out, adorned round about after the similitude of a temple... [v. 12]. ... their storehouses are full, flowing out of this into that... [v. 13]. ... their sheep fruitful in young, abounding in their goings forth... [v.13]...their oxen fat... [v. 14].... there is no breach of wall, nor crying out in their streets...*

880: These are the delights of the world: ... *They call the people happy that have these things...* [v. 15]. But the spirit of the prophet knows how false this opinion is of true happiness. So, for the common disabusing of this idea, he immediately adds his own judgment: ... *but happy's the people whose God is the Lord...* [v. 14]. This is where genuine joy is to be found the authentic happiness: in recognizing God as our Master, in serving Him faithfully, that is, in living in accord with God. This statement is found in Scripture.

881: Blessed is that person who never goes in accord with the evil, nor has stopped his feet along the path of vice: ... *blessed is the man who has not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners...* [Ps 1:1]. Blessed rather is that person whom God would instruct to walk in His ways: .. *Blessed is the man whom You shall instruct, o Lord, and You shall teach him out of Your Law...* [Ps 93:12]. And blessed are they who walk with immaculate feet along the way of the divine commandments: ... *Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord...* [Ps 118: 1]. Blessed are those who trust in God: ... *blessed are they who trust in Him...* [Ps 2:13]. And blessed are they who fear the Lord: ... *Blessed is the man who fears the Lord...* [Ps 111:1].

882: And so, there will never be found in the sacred letters anyone called “happy” who abounds in much wealth, or who is outstanding because of the nobility of his birth, or associations, or one surrounded by glory, or one who lives in much comfort and delights. But rather, we will find in the Gospel those declared “happy” who are humble, meek - happy are they who weep, who suffer persecution for justice' sake: ... *Blessed are the poor in spirit..* [Mt 5:3]... *Blessed are the meek...* [v. 4]. .. *Blessed are they that mourn...* [v. 5]. ... *Blessed are those that hunger and thirst after justice...* [v. 6]. This is so true that only that life , well instituted in accord with the divine rule, is truly happy. And only that virtue, no matter how harsh and destitute it is of external delights and honors, but even enveloped still in tribulations, is joyful, content and happy..

883: If you notice well the fruits of these trees, they may be quite remarkable for their lack of color and shape. But, when you taste them, they are most delicious to the palate. And yet, the roots from which then proceed such loveliness and sweetness lies underground, horrible looking and very bitter tasting. So it is, St. John Chrysostom says ¹⁰⁰ that the sadness of one who lives in accord with God, does produce most sweet fruits of rejoicing.

884: All know this by experience who have been afflicted for a time to express their sorrow for faults committed. Such as these have offered their deep sadness in prayer before God, and how much joy later, then, did they gain for their hearts. They have purged their consciences: and who can describe the joy that therefore is derived from this? St. Paul said: ... *For our glory is this, the testimony of our conscience...* [2 Co 1:12]. And, in another text, Scripture compares the joy of a sure conscience to that of a perpetual banquet [Pr 15:15].

¹⁰⁰St. John Chrysostom, *Ad pop. Antioch.*, 18, 3. t. 2, III, 2 B.

885: From a well purged conscience arises good hope. And if those who are hoping to be the heirs of much money, or of rich possessions, or of some principality are so happy in their expectation, how much greater should not the joy of a soul be who awaits with well founded confidence the inheritance of a celestial, eternal realm? If indeed, such a person raises his eyes to heaven, and faith points out the high honors, the supra-human wealth, the most pure delights of that happy homeland, hope immediately then responds in his heart: and these goods are for me, rather, they are indeed mine. What comfort, what jubilation, what exultation!

886: If, then, we have well composed our lives, we, too, will be able to enjoy a sweet, tranquil and perpetual happiness. Not even the external tribulations will ever be able to take it from us, but it will last always even in the midst of the absence of all earthy delight. So, it is not what is outside us, whether prosperous or adverse that consoles us or afflicts us, but much more the internal disposition of our spirit.

887: Much like a person whose body is ailing, or feverish, even if he reposes on soft cushions, or sits on bejeweled thrones, or walks about in pleasant gardens, or sits down to sumptuous banquets, with pleasant music playing, he does not find delight in all this, but only sadness. But when one's body is indeed healthy, even if he sleeps on hard straw, he sleeps joyfully: even if he eats at a poor table, he does so with delight and with appetite. It is this way with regard to the soul, but even more so. Should I want to be happy as though enjoying good health, even if the body is sick, I simply cannot. But, I am able to heal my soul well, should I choose to do so, to the point of finding joy.

888: Come now, give me a person, St. John Chrysostom continues ¹⁰¹, of whom up to now I have followed his interpretations, and **almost his very words** - give me a person who has nothing within him that would condemn him, but is assured by his good conscience. Such a one would aspire fervently to the future realities, in the expectation characteristic of blessed hope. I ask you, will there ever be anything that will be able to sadden him? Does it not seem that death is the most intolerable reality pertaining to this world? But, the expectation of death to such a person does not sadden him, but much more consoles him. The reason is that such a person knows that death is the liberation from present fatigue. It is the course that is to be followed to arrive at the crowns, at those rewards set aside for those who struggle for virtue.

889: Perhaps the premature death of his children would sadden him? He would even courageously sustain even this, and would say with Job: *... the Lord gave, and the lord has taken away... [Jb 1:21]. As it has pleased the Lord, so it is done: blessed be the Name of the Lord...* So it is that neither death, nor the loss of his children, can sadden him, and much less could the loss of riches be able to inflict a blow on this generous spirit. And what if he should become ill? Then, just listen to the words of the wisdom teacher who admonished him saying: *...in your sorrow, and in your*

¹⁰¹St. John Chrysostom, *Ad pop. Antioch.*, 18, 2. t. 2, 110/1 B.

humiliation, keep patience... [Si 2:4].... For gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation... [v. 5.]

890: But, no more speculations and no more hypotheses. Let us come to the fact in which truth alone is grasped. There it is not only seen, but is also felt. St. Gregory comments ¹⁰² and tell us that in his times in Rome, there was a man by the name of Servulus. He also speaks of this another time ¹⁰³. This man was well known to him and to his listeners. He was both poor and sick, and near death because of the length of his malady. It seems that from his earliest years right up to the very end of his life, he was an invalid and in much pain. He was unable to stand up, and he could not even sit up in his bed. He was not even able to turn over from one side to the other. What else? He could not lift his hand to his mouth to take food, but he always had to have his mother, or bother, feed him, whenever they came home again after having received for him a bit of bread, or alms for him.

891: So, in one individual man you see a compendium of the major calamities of this life. Who would ever believe that in such a state there could have been joy, jubilation, even mirth? But, just listen. He did not know how to read, but by putting aside a little money by going hungry, he was able to buy the codices of sacred Scripture. And all the religious men who happened by his house, he begged them all to read uninterruptedly in his presence. And it so happened that as far as his intelligence would allow, he learned sacred scripture.

892: This was, then, his occupation, day and night, in the midst of all his sufferings: he sang psalms, hymns, lauds and thanksgiving to God.

O God! Just imagine that sweetness, that joy that passed from this heart to that tongue, that expressed itself in lauds even on that bed of pain. The sufferings once brought him to complain, but it was converted. What was once the most bitter gall became the most sweet honey of the chants. His sadness became **music**. But, prepare yourselves, after my brief repose, to assist at his death.

893: When the time came that God wanted to remunerate such virtue of that servant of His, and when he himself felt that death was near, he invited some persons who were in his home to get up, and to sign Psalms with him, while awaiting his passing. And while the Psalmody went on, in his dying moments he joined in with them. All of a sudden, shouting aloud he interrupted his chanting, saying: Be silent. DO you not hear how the lauds are resounding in heaven? And he meant by this that he was listening with the ears of his heart to those lauds that he could hear within himself. And with that, his beautiful soul departed, separated from his body.

894: And as he departed such a fragrance permeated that place. It was such that all those present were filled with inestimable sweetness. It seemed to them that they were in a place of high renown, in that as they were signing their praises, this

¹⁰²St. Gregory, *Homil. in Evangel.*, 15. t. 2, 260 2 D.

¹⁰³St. Gregory, *Dialogues*, 4, 14. t. 1, 1040 1 B.

beautiful soul was being received in heaven. And it is certain that he was worthy of being gathered into that beautiful choir of heavenly cantors. For in life he had always emulated their fervor, their joy, their spirit. He sang like an Angel the praises of God without ever giving halt to them.

895: Let us, then, pursue virtue if we desire genuine joy. Let us compose well our lives, and there will never be lacking to us a solid, stable happiness. Even the adversities of this life will never be able to take it from us, nor even diminish it. Let us cleanse well our consciences, and with this good witness we will not only live tranquil days, peaceful, happy days - but, at that very terrible instant of death, we will have nothing to fear. Usually at such a time the vain joys of this world are exchanged into fearsome grieving. But, we would have nothing to fear, our security will be confirmed, and our joy redoubled. And for the few years of happiness that we will have passed in the Fear of the Lord here on earth, there will be added eternal centuries of consummate joy, in rejoicing itself.

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Sources

OT

Jb 1:2	# 889	Ps 143:13	# 879
Ps 1:1	# 881	14	# 879
2:13	# 881	15	# 880
93:12	# 881	Pr 15:15	# 884
111:1	# 881	Si 2:4	# 889
118:11	# 881	5	# 889
143:8	# 878	Is 66:10	# 876
12	# 879	11	# 876

NT

Mt 5:3	# 882	Mt 5:6	# 882
4	# 882	2 Co 1:12	# 884
19	# 882		
20			

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<i>Ad Pop. Antioch.</i>, 18,3. t. 2, pp. 111/2 B	# 883

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896:**SERMON 23****Freedom from Sin and the Devil**

For Easter Monday. Preached in the venerable Church of St. Paul's of Campo Marzio, on April 2, 1804, on the left bank of Verona.

If I look around at you all, most beloved brothers and sisters, on this day, I can sense that the most sincere love that I bear for you almost divides my heart. This is torn with much violence into two feelings that are too contrary between them.

897: On the one hand, an impetuous jubilation transports me. These most joyful days of salvation produce in me the well-founded hope and the sweet idea of your liberty. On the other hand, I experience a troubling fear, that leads me to turn within and to sorrow. For I see, or think I can see some among you still bound by the ignoble chains of their slavery. And I see others who think themselves already freed, in that they are no longer captured by a vain yearning by their adversaries. These nonetheless still surround them and hem them in, even though at a somewhat greater distance.

898: In fact, my brothers and sisters, if truly all of you have been freed by that liberty in which Christ wishes to liberate you in these days, some differences will be noted. There will no longer, then, be seen among you anyone of means, in whom there will still dominate avarice. There will be no noble among you in whom there will be excessive pomp. There will be no artisan in whom there will be baseness or drunkenness. There will be no young man given to obstinacy or impurity. And there will be no woman in whom dominate ambition, shamelessness. There will be no more who will hate his neighbor, none who will calumniate him, nor detract from another's reputation. There will be no more plots against the honor of others, nor attempts at their goods.

899: Charity will be substituted for envy, mercy toward the poor will take over from stinginess, modesty will cover up that bold licentiousness in dress and conduct. Sobriety and moderation will conquer intemperate luxury and gluttony. The shameless theaters will be off-bounds for you, the game-halls will be reduced to silence, the ball-rooms will be left desolate, tongues will be held in check, hands will be restrained. The taverns will be locked up, licentious styles will be put away, eyes more guarded, and the body will be dressed with decency and seriousness.

900: Will this be the way it is for the future? Will it be so for all? What do you say? Will it just be for a few days, until the feasts are over? Perhaps this is true. Will it, then, be always that way? I strongly fear about that possibility; you yourselves doubt it, and even more deem it impossible. And if you are enslaved, how is it that the noble nature of your spirit is not ashamed at this base captivity? How is it that the most sure means, which are at the same time, the easiest, why will they not be accepted? Are these not available to all to re-acquire each one's innate liberty?

901: If you had been of an abject and servile condition, then such shame would not be aroused in you for your miserable slavery. In this, there is no compassionate destiny, but only anger and envy that would keep you from your implacable enemies. Who are you? I ask you this. Have you, perhaps, in the gloom of your enslavement, forgotten the nobility, the excellence of your class?

902: Do not look around you, or outside yourselves. There are some among you who may be dressed in rough clothing, enveloped in a sad poverty, with unwashed bodies, imprisoned by the fog of their own judgment, that they will not recognize themselves in too poor a light. Enter into yourself: enter into that most sublime part of you. Just tell me: what are you? Are you perhaps not a most clear image of the divine countenance? Who are you? Are you not perhaps the master s constituted by God over this earth, where all creatures are to serve you? The heavens themselves with their brilliant light are in your obsequious obeisance.

903: And all this by considering just your nature. By grace, then, have you not been elevated to the very same order of the divine nature in which you have participated? Are you not the children of God? Is not your Brother perhaps Christ Himself? Are you not called God's heirs? Are not your souls **the spouses of the Holy Spirit**? And has He not set aside a very rich dowry of most precious gifts? And have not the most sublime princes of heaven been assigned to pay court to you here on earth? And what is more, has not the very Son of God descended from heaven, vesting Himself in our nature to converse with you? And will I be able to look upon with indifferent eye, with tranquil heart, the masters of this earth, the princes of heaven, the children of God, His heirs, His **Spouses**, wallowing under the base turpitude of their slavery to the most vile choices, having been made their lords and tyrants?

904: And who are these tyrants who have subjugated your natural liberty? Sin, the devils. These are indeed horrible masters whom you serve. What is more horrid than sin, that goes up against the perfections of God Himself? Is it not true that it can be said that as much as God is good, beautiful, lovable - so much is sin deformed, abominable? The most poisonous scorpions, the most revolting sewers would be rather sweet, gracious and lovable, compared to their gloomy countenance of their unthinkable horror.

905: The devil is the eternal enemy of God, confirmed in evil, condemned to burn in perpetual fire, a bandit exile from heaven in which he had been created. He had been granted the most exalted place in the heavenly militia by the divine magnificence. Ungrateful, and proud, he turned against God. He withdraws his subjection due to God and into his camp and unto his ruin. He drew with him a third part of that most noble army of such sublime Spirits. His pride is still not overcome even in that total ignominy of his penalty. He has undertaken a war against God. And even after so many defeats, he remains obstinate, with the impotent forces of his wrath, he is totally committed to contrasting His sovereign dominion and glory on earth.

906: He is also, then, the most implacable enemy of men and women. They have taken over those brilliant places from which the devil had been deposed. So, humanity has become the most angry object of his envy, of his desperation. He tried in the first parents, by a single blow, to cast all of us from our blessed destiny into his damnation. And were it not for the kindness of our Savior, Jesus Christ, we would have lost all future hopes. We would have been deprived of earthly happiness, by his sowing on earth a formidable evil: ... *but by the envy of the devil, death came into the world...* [Ws 2:24].

907: And not any less than this, he has woven around each one of us in particular his webs. At every moment, he renews his assaults, reinforces his sieges. Totally unfeeling regarding his shameful destiny, because of which one day, he will have to submit his forehead to our feet, he makes use of in every artifice, illusions, even violence, to involve us in his own shame, to drag us into his perdition.

908: And will one be able even to look at, I repeat, can one watch without the tears of supreme anguish, such a fearsome monster of malice? Is he not a most unjust enemy of God and of our souls? Has he not been deposed, damned, cursed? Is he not proud, having ascended on a throne, to exercise his tyranny? And where? Where is all this happening? In your hearts! O God, and in what heart? In that very heart where first, as though in a choice temple, God dwelt with His noble accompaniment of His gifts and of holy virtues. Oh, the horrible change that has occurred in you! First, your souls were decorated with the presence of the Lord of the heavens: and now, all is made filthy by the debased dwelling of the most vile slaves of hell. First, your souls were revered, loved by the Angels, as the daughters, **the spouses of their King** - and now, they are abominated, as a confused slave, like a prostitute.

909: But this is still only a slight matter. Just consider, wretched slaves of sin and the devil, the shameful manner in which your uncouth patrons treat you. I have read many times in histories how some cruel and proud conquerors have condemned the kings subjugated by them, to drag like horses the decorated chariots of those who have triumphed over them. But, such as these have never been able to reach - even though they were most haughty, inhuman - that pride, that cruelty of the devil in treating your hearts subjected by him. Not only does he have you serve his splendor, like the most lowly animals in his stable, but - what is unheard of and unbelievable, and has never before been seen - he changes you into beasts, he transforms you. He has so been able to lower your nature, that he puts you even below these.

910: The fact is that your judgment can only with great difficulty reflect upon yourselves. You judge yourselves by that which exists in your companions, who are also unhappy, detained in the same slavery. You look at the avaricious person, that hot-head, if he is not a lion, or she, a tiger.

And even worse: while these beasts eat other animals, they do, however, respect those of their own species, with which they are at peace. But, the avaricious person, the hot-head, are the most vicious precisely with their own kind.

911: Look at the person given way to impurities, and see if he is anything more than a beast of burden. Just look at the impudent young man, to see if his conduct, his manner, does not seem to you much like an unruly dog, an unbroken bull, a lascivious girl, and see - does not their petulant immodesty seem even more monstrous than the Sphinx, more soiled than the Harpies?

912: You blush, and even get angry with me when I talk this way. And you do not blush in recognizing in your own selves the shamefulfulness. You blush at my words, but you do not rather blush at your own actions. You blush when I depict you in this way, and you do not blush when you appear just in these terms en in the Churches. You do not blush, o senseless husbands, to see your wives appear this way. And you do not blush, o mothers, for your daughters.

913: You do not blush, dressing yourself in these styles, these bestial fashions, hat are truly animal like, monstrous, to receive applause. You support these with an excessively affected dissimulation in your subjects. And you do not even blush over what is the height of shame, you do not blush over your unworthy slavery. And where is the noble character of your spirit? And where is that simple love of your natural liberty? And to what point will you remain held down by these kinds of styles? And for how long will you suffer being subservient to such monstrous tyrants? Why are you not thinking of the way to recover your freedom, your own mastery, your own glory?

914: I know all to well that these tyrants of yours are all around you with their thousands of scarecrows. They threaten you, they hem you in, and they lead you to understand that you have no strength to escape from their hands. I know that the chains of bad habits are reinforced, and the difficulties are exaggerated to hold you. I know all this precisely how in this Easter season you could escape from them. But what does that matter? Their artifices are already well known and their malice is manifest. If you will only listen to me for a while more, I will open up to you an easy and most pure path for flight. And I have read the most safe haven in which you can save yourselves for ever from their deceit, from their fury. And thus you will see clearly whether it is indeed a most sincere love that I bear for you that has led me to show you the high folly of your slavery, and almost to fear for the freedom of all of you to insure it the more.

915: Come on now, even before I advance my proposals, recognize just who it is who is speaking to you. In the august character connoted by these insignia, recognize in me a Minster of His Divine Majesty. Unworthy servant though I am, it is in His Name that today I carry out this solemn ambassadorship in your behalf. This is how much His Divine Majesty takes pleasure through me, to promise to all among you who will respond. All who are confused and sorrowing because of the shameful slavery, efficaciously desire the restitution of their dignity, of their glory, of their liberty.

916: I Myself, says the Lord, I Myself will descend to liberate you from the hands of your enemies. I will fight Myself for you against them. I will place them under your feet to be trampled underground. I will make Myself the Custodian of your recovered glory and liberty.

What can be doubted, o my brothers and sisters, why any more delay, why wait anymore? It would be enough for you to say: “I want it”, and the omnipotence of God Himself would come to your aid. Just if each one of you would say this with the efficacy of your hearts, and you will be free.

917: Do not be afraid of your adversaries, if God is on your side. Do not fear your own weakness, if God is with you. Make your resolutions, be determined and make your proposals. This is the point. The glorious Victor, Christ Jesus, has risen after having conquered sin and the devil with His death. Increase the glory of His triumph by bringing it about that He has also conquered sin and the devil also in each one of you in particular. O, what a solemn festival will then be celebrated in heaven! And o what peace your good will could enjoy also here on earth! And O the abundant consolations that your loving Savior has prepared for you! And o! the sweet congratulations that we also will be able to extend to you!

918: Come on now, follow me with your hearts, as I precede you with my words:
- Accursed sin, I detest you. Accursed demon, I renounce you. Damnable chains of immodest styles, of immodest clothing, debauchery, intoxication, lasciviousness, intrigues, infamous love-affairs, avarice, ostentation, ambition, vanity, accursed chains, odious bonds, abominable shackles, I break you all I break you on this day, and I break you for good. **And to You, Jesus, my God, I surrender, I hand myself over, I abandon myself.**

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SOURCES
[only one noted]

OT

Ws 2:24

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919:**SERMON 24****Imminent Death**

For the Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost. Preached in St. Paul's of Campo Marzio, on September 29, 1804, in Verona.

...for many are called, but few are chose... [Mt 22:14]

This is a terrible sentence, ladies and gentlemen, a terrible sentence! Many are called, and few are chosen. How come! Do you not grow pallid, do you not feel shivers, are you not amazed? Do I perceive even a slight reaction on your faces? Are you so solicitous for your salvation? But, recall your thoughts: reflect, consider that your souls are being discussed. This is a matter of eternity that is to mete out either an eternal joy or eternal weeping.

920: Indeed, to an eternal joy that will be above in heaven, many are called; and few are elected. And does this not make you tremble? Are you not frightened? And what confidence is there that could make you so sure of a happy ending but one which is at the same time, so uncertain? Is it the fact that you were born in the Catholic Church, and that promises of eternal life were made to you? All that this means is that you have been called with many others, but not that you are elected with the few. How many baptized are also damned? How many professors of the true religion are not lost? Even in the Gospel that we read this morning, to **the royal nuptials** many have been invited, and even introduced into the court and admitted into the grand hall. And yet the one that was nonetheless excluded from the **banquet** in that very instant that they were all about to sit down with the others at table because he was found to be without **the nuptial garment**.

921: O God, how many have been invited to glory, who already are awaiting it, who are already prepared and ready to take hold of it, in the very last hour of life? As they are about to take perpetual possession of it, they are rather cast outside into the darkness to gnash their teeth and to weep forever. They are like those who were found to be without the proper garment at that heavenly banquet. In other words, they were without God's grace.

Sinners, sinners! If Christ had come to you at this moment, as He will most certainly come in the instant of your deaths, what good would it have been to have been called? What advantage will there be then for having been invited, almost drawn to the very threshold of paradise, and there you are found deprived of grace, and you will have instead an eternal exile?

922: O God, what are you doing, what are you doing? Many are indeed called, and few are chosen. And you still take your time, you still put off the recovering grace, and renewing your lives? You think that you have all the time you need, and much more ahead of you to hold in reserve as you approach the end, and that you can hold off the resolution that could save you? It is all false, false. You do not have any other

time than the present: death is already at the doors, it is near, it is imminent: and I will prove this.

923: I do not speak with those who have already spent the greater part of their lives, who realize that very easily they are to depart from here in but a little while. It is already too evident that such as they do not have time to waste if they wish to think about their souls. I am talking with the young, in the prime of their lives: vivacious women, robust men, with ruddy complexion, vigorous health. I remind you, I solemnly announce to you that death will not only come, it is on the way, it is coming: ... *Behold, I come quickly...* [Apoc 3:11]. And it is coming so close that if you would like to wait for it, you might say, as for one whom you know is coming, and one awaits for him along the street. And when he comes into sight and is recognized, it is said: There he is, there he is: it is he who comes: ...*Behold, he comes...* [Apoc 1:7]. And death might be able to respond, raising its voice to you: you see me, you recognize me: ...*Behold I come, I come - quickly...* [v.11].

924: You should not think of it as having been recognized by the eye as still far away from you, as even though it is on its way toward you, it would still have to pass much time in order to arrive. No, it comes "quickly", soon, because it is coming on horse-back. This is the way it was seen by St. John in the Apocalypse: ...*And behold a pale horse, and he that sat upon it, his name was Death...* [Apoc 6:8]. He runs along with such agility that he passes by the most swift and capable runners. Job attests to this, saying: ... *My days have been swifter than a post...* [Jb 9:25]. He rather does not merely run, but flies with equal pace with those birds that cut through the air with their light feathers: ...*They have passed by... as an eagle flying to the prey...* [v. 26]. They overtake and pass that ship that pierces through the sea, driven on by the wind: ... *they have passed by as ships...* [v. 26]. It comes like a shadow that leaves no sign or mark in its invisible flight: ... *flees like a shadow...* [Jb 14:2].

925: And not further, that death never makes a stop, and never slows down in its flight. It was precisely about this point that the Holy Spirit was solicitous to advise you: ... *Remember that death is not slow...* [Si 14:12]. Remember well that death never interrupts its journey with postponements, or delays. It does not need to rest, or to restore its strength, or to freshen up, since it never tires in its course. And what is even more wondrous, the more the journey that it makes, the more it runs, the stronger it gets.

926: Like a rapid stream, the more it advances along a path, coming on from different sides, more water gathers, and it increases in strength at every step of the way, its impetuosity intensifies in its zest: ... *We all die and like waters that return no more, we fall down into the earth...* [2 K [S] 14:14]. Look, then, if death is already on the way towards you, if it has already arrived within your view, and if it is running along the way, with indescribable swiftness, and never stops, and does not ever slacken its pace - then, how little time it must have in order to reach you, to surprise you.

927: I know what it is in which you still put your confidence: in the hopes of being able to slow it down on its way, so that it will reach you only later. You think of robust

health, vigor in your limbs as the strongest opposition to death. But, how many strong people, with ruddy complexions, healthy of appearance, even more so than you are, die each day? You think of the comforts of life, of that refined living that your state affords you, or that your self-love provides for you. You could even imagine that all these are sufficient defense against the assaults of death. But, how many persons, even endowed with such contentment, in a superabundant fashion, have to surrender to death, immediately as it approaches?

928: You may even trust in the secret and most precious discoveries of art. But how many have there not been who have committed all their substance into procuring these, right when they thought they were more endowed than ever before, found themselves defenseless and disarmed between death's clutches? Ladies and gentlemen, there just is no medication against death. There is no remedy, no obstacle, that might be set up to slow it down at all. If you have convinced yourselves that at this present age, death will not come to you, then you are trying to make the Gospel itself a liar. You would be making a liar out of Christ Himself, for it is He who denies you openly the security of even a single day, or of but a single hour: ... *you know not the day, nor the hour...* [Mt 25:13.] - rather precisely in that hour when you least fear death, in that instant when you are least thinking about it, that will be the one in which most probably it will come: .. *for at what hour you think not, the Son of Man will come...* [Mt 25:13].

929: ...*Watch, therefore...* [Mt 25:13]. Do not lose time thinking of your own affairs. Stay on the alert. Do not trust in your age, have no confidence in your robust health; pay no attention to your complexion, as though you could ever slow down death in its course. It is bearing in its hand decrees already signed by the Omnipotent. Death cannot be slowed down a single day, hour or minute. It is of no help to close oneself in an unassailable fortress. For when it does arrive, it would have to open well locked doors. It can be said that these doors even open of themselves, even if made of the strongest bronze, and the most solid jasper. There is nothing that can resist the immutable decrees of God.

930: You do not have any means of escape to flee from her. Is it not true that in whatever place we might feel safety, she also reigns here with absolute dominion, universal sovereignty. Job [18:14] describes this as a king who tramples under foot his fearful subjects, without their even daring to move at all, or to revolt: ...*let destruction tread upon him like a king...* Death can come upon us on land, on the sea, at home, along the street, in one's room, in the square, in the city, in the country, on the plains, on the mountains, in the garden, in the woods. And not only in any place - but also at any time. It can come by day, or by night, in the morning, in the evening, at first vigil, or the last vigil.

931: And not only in any place, or at any time, but also in any manner. Death may come through an illness, with fever, with catarrh, with pain, with stagnation, with convulsions, with stones, by apoplexy, with cancer, and under an infinite number of causes of sickness, or accidents. It can make use of all kinds of creatures as external agents, to take us away at any instant, and quite unexpectedly. For the earth is every ready with its earthquakes, the sea with its storms, the rivers with their floods, the

heavens with their bolts, the air with its death-bearing breath, fire with its conflagrations.

932: Among the animals, some of them are ferocious and come out of their dens to slash us with their claws, or teeth; others are poisonous and hide among the flowers and the vegetation even in cultivated gardens, or in a flowery meadow, like the viper. Or, they might be brought up in your own homes, as a dog which by a single bite communicates to you the poison of rabies and kills you. Among other human beings some may run you through with weapons, others by betrayals. At times by assassins, or by thieves in the night. Death can come by meeting a rival along the way, an unfaithful servant.

933: It is quite true that death does not need either iron, or fire, or poisons, to take one way from life even in an instant. Even already within us, there are sufficient means to kill us. Like clothing may generate its own moths, similarly our own bodies can give rise to putrefaction from which they could then be consumed: ... *Who am to be consumed as rottenness, and as a garment that is moth eaten...* [Jb 13:28]. And this is a property of the moths: to consume the cloth noiselessly, so much so that before one notices that it is consumed, it is known that it is underway.

934: And who is to know whether within you, unnoticed, your life is slowly wasting away, and might even be nearly consumed? How far this thought is from thinking that death is a long way off! This is quite different from imagining it still on its way! This is even different from thinking that it might be close! It might even have already taken hold of you! It could very well be that for a good period of time it has already been at work within you, leading to an unexpected ending of your life. It could already be imminent that hour in which you will see that your entire body consumed, without your ever having noticed the atrocious teeth that day and night is wearing out your life.

935: And should it be this way, does it seem to you, beloved ladies and gentlemen, that there is any time to lose? What kind of prudence is yours, o sinner, whoever you may be to trust in time to undertake your conversion? Might not immediately be the best time to save your souls, now that you can? Now that you are running such a serious risk of not being able to do it later, and of losing yourself forever? This is all the more pressing when you think that death for you might not come in the common course of events and by the ordinary way, but might be anticipated, and might even be altogether sudden.

936: And so that you might not judge my proposition to be just guess work, I can provide it in all its parts. As for the first point, that you might die before your time, this proposition in express terms is that of God Himself. These are his words in Ecclesiasticus [no citation offered]: ... *Do not act impiously often, so that you might not die out of your time...* And in Job: ...*Before his days are full, [the wicked] shall perish: and his hands wither away...* [Jb 15:32]. And again: ... [the wicked] *were taken away before their time, and a flood has overthrown their foundation...* [Jb 22:16]. And again in Ecclesiasticus: *he that hates chastisement, shall have less life...* [Si 19:5].

And in Proverbs: ... *the years of the wicked shall be shortened...* [P 10:27]. And lastly: ... *now the sting of death is sin...* [1 Co 15:56].

937: Now as for the second point, that you should die unexpectedly, here are some proofs from Scripture:... *The man with a stiff neck... shall suddenly be destroyed...* [Pr 29:1]. In other words, that sinner who obstinately perseveres in his evil way of life before the many who correct him and admonish hi, shall be overtaken by an unexpected death. And St. Paul [1 Th 5:3] speaking also of the wicked, writes: ... *for when they shall say, peace and security, then shall sudden destruction come upon them...* And these are the ones upon whom death suddenly pounces, like a thief in the night, as we have it in the Gospel [Mt 24:43], since they live in the darkness, And in the Psalm, we read: ... *How are they brought to desolation? they have suddenly ceased to be...* [Ps 73:19]. They very unexpectedly died: ... *they have perished because of their iniquity...* [ib.].

938: These are facts. And they are verified even outside of sacred history. We will find that the wicked perish both unexpectedly and horribly. The Pharaoh died unexpectedly with all his army, drowned in the waters [Ex 14:23, ff.]. Those Hebrews dies very suddenly in the desert, those who want to return to Egypt [Ex 32:25, ff.]. Those rebels also died very suddenly who rebelled against the priesthood of Aaron [Nb 16:1, ff.]. Those complainers in the promised land also died suddenly [Nb 14:36, ff.]. And there are so many others, almost without number, who were overtaken without warning for their sins.

939: You would also say that death also touches the just in unexpected fashion I respond first of all that in all of Scripture this happened only to the children of Job. For all the rest, all the other saints died comfortably and after having made provision for it, as we find this in the sacred books I respond in the second place that God does permit this at times, and still does, for the most sublime reasons of His Providence. In the same way, He also allows that the just undergo other pains proper to the wicked in this temporal life. It might very well be that He does this to instill a little terror to the evil, in the case of those who are too sure of themselves. This, however, does not take away the fact that the wicked, who ...*spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to hell...* [Jb 21:13].

940: I respond lastly that when in a nation the sins committed are already common, and the scandals are public, God generally castigates all equally in this life, and involves everyone in the same penalty. Thus, as two of the Fathers of the Church, St. Augustine¹⁰⁴ and St. Gregory the Great¹⁰⁵ and other Saints, all can be said to be morally guilty in some way: either because they actually commit the evil, or because they participate in it, either by consenting or approving, or because they do not impede it with all their power. This is what would be required of many in justice, and of all in charity. It is necessary to oppose the evil of others with fraternal correction, with good example, or at least, with the most fervent prayers raised to God.

¹⁰⁴St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, 1, 9. t. 7, 8 F, ff.

¹⁰⁵St. Gregory the Great, *In Ezech. Hom.*, 11. t. 2, 122?2 B; *Epist.*, 114. t. 2, 708/ 2 A.

941: St. John Chrysostom¹⁰⁶ is of a like opinion. He points out that in a neighborhood where there are many houses close together, whenever one of them catches fire, if all the neighbors do not work together to extinguish it, it will not burn out by itself. But, rather, in one single fire that ignites, all will be consumed. And this is the source of the sudden deaths that occur not infrequently, but ordinarily and are common.

942: My dear ladies and gentlemen, I have come to the point where I should develop the thought and land on it with much force. I ought to conclude by bringing the utmost terror to myself and to you, as there is not much time that remains to us, if we wish to think of our souls. But, because I do not wish at any cost to transcend the limits that have been set for my sermon, and on the other hand, because I do confide in your wise reflections, I will end my consultation here. And I await impatiently, after a brief rest, for your prudent deliberations.

943: You can no longer doubt that you have no more time to waste in order to insure the eternal lot of your souls. The arguments have come to such evidence that I should not insult the docility of your intellects. There is no need for me further to reproduce them here again, or to reconfirm them. This would give the impression that are not yet fully convinced. No one wants to bring any harm to your hearts, by expressing the concern that they are obstinate. This would imply that you do not wish to follow the truth that has already been manifested and already perceived. Therefore, it is necessary that you should begin the undertaking right away.

944: It is necessary to convert immediately to God, to detest sin, to confess it at the feet of the priest, to weep over it, to leave it behind. The occasions must be abandoned, and each must take up those means that will be helpful to keep your resolution constant. And in a special manner, each should ask God by frequent prayer for the light and the strength to resist temptations. It is important to watch over yourselves with the exercise of the Christian virtues. And finally, all ought to be most solicitous to satisfy with voluntary mortifications and penances, for the sins committed up to now. In brief, it is most urgent to reform your way of life, and to institute a new one. You must put on the **nuptial garment** which alone constitutes one in the number of the elect.

945: We are speaking here of the soul, it is a question of eternity. It is necessary to give up love for earthly and base realities. What we are dealing with here is that in a short time, each must appear before a terrible, inexorable judge. It is necessary to surrender the conveniences, the regard of the world: ... *few are chosen*... [Mt 22:14]. That great multitude that follows the world, while it is included among the greater number of the called, it is not for that alone also included among the elect. Indeed, it may even be explicitly excluded, as we have it from the Gospel [Mt 6:24; 12:30].. Whoever wants to be saved with the few, must live with them.

¹⁰⁶St. John Chrysostom, *In Eph.*, 4, 4. Hom. 10, 2. t. 2, 47/ 1 C, ff.

The grace of Jesus Christ that once again has called out to you by my ministry, will assist you to begin, and will comfort you to persevere. Amen.

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Sources

OT

Ex 14:23, ff.	# 938
32:25, ff.	# 938
Nb 14:36, ff.	# 938
16:1, ff.	# 938
2 K [2 S] 14:14	# 926
Jb 9:25	# 925
26	# 924
13:28	# 933
14:2	# 924
15:32	# 936
18:14	# 930
21:13	# 940
22:16	# 936
Ps 72:19	# 937
Pr 10:27	# 936
29:1	# 937
Si [no citation: early death	# 936
14:12	# 926
19:5	# 936

NT

Mt 6:24	# 945
12:30	# 945
22:14	## 919; 945
24:43	# 937
25:13	## 928; 929
1 Co 15:56	# 936
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3:11	# 923 [2 x]
6: 8	# 924

Fathers and Doctors

St. Augustine, <i>De Civ. Dei</i> , l. 9. t. 7, p. 8 F, ff.	# 940
St. Gregory the Great, <i>In Ezech.</i> , Hom. 11. t. 2, p. 122:2 B	# 940
<i>Epist.</i> 114. t. 11, p 47/1 C, ff.	# 941

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946:**SERMON 25****The Advent of Our Lord Jesus Christ****For the Second Sunday of Advent, preached in St. Paul's of Campo Marzio, on December 9, 1804. Verona.**

Christ is coming. The Savior is about to be born. The Holy Church in these days awaits Him, desires Him, yearns for Him. What does it mean, my beloved, that we are all here cold in our affections? We are passing through these days of Advent a season so joyful in its expectation, so sweet in such slothful indifference. There is no solicitude to unite ourselves in Spirit to the Holy Church. We content ourselves at the most with not being in disharmony, at least in externals, through a superficial and languid share in ceremony.

947: But, unfortunately, love for these earthly visible realities keeps our spirit occupied. The delights of the senses have so held back our hearts by a shameful kind of slavery. They confess externally, within there is no taste for it. What wonder, then if there is no desire, when interest is not taken in these realities? O God, my brothers and sisters, it is indeed time that we should shake off this deep freeze, that we raise up our spirits, as the Prophet invites us to do: to notice the joy that comes to us from our God: ... *Look about you, Jerusalem... and behold the joy that comes to you from God...* [Ba 4:36].

948: And this is the object to which I would like that you apply the attention of your spirit with me. I know that some of you by experience already know how sweet and joyful a reality it is to await the coming of the Savior, as those whose hearts are already warm with divine love. Such as these do not need my words. But I personally, I do need something, because my spirit is cold, as is that of others with me. I need their prayers so that I might succeed in persuading all of us beyond doubt that even the most wretched, desperate sinners can participate with the just and with the Saints to this expectancy of such a pure and sublime delight. what might at first sight seem very strange, I propose now to demonstrate.

949: If we would look at the first appearance of these two terms, that is, to the One Who is awaited, and who expects Him - then, there are indeed more reasons to generate in us a sense of desperate sadness, rather than comforting joy. The One who is awaited, in fact, is God. Those who are awaiting Him, are you and me. We are like most vile worm, who crawl along the ground, like the one most weighed down with vices. And what possible suitability can there be found between sin and holiness, between iniquity and justice, between supreme wretchedness and supreme beatitude?? Hence, it might seem that only the just, the saints, the innocent, are really disposed to experience joy at the coming of Christ. Sinners would seem to be excluded as those who have in themselves excessive deformity and dissimilarity.

950: But, this is not the way it is. I would even be able to say that in some way, sinners should rejoice more than the just. The reason is that the Son of Man has descended from heaven to save what was lost: ...*for the Son of Man is come to save what was lost...* [Mt 18:11]. From His own lips we hear Him say that He has come to

seek sinners, not the just: ...*For I am not come to call the just, but sinners...* [Mt 9:13]. The very Name that is given to Him o becoming man, announced by the angelic ministry ad solemnly explained, is “Jesus”, that is, “Savior” of His People from their sins: ... *For He shall save His people from their sins...* [Mt 1:21].

951: Think of an earthly king, an emperor, who would go out from his royal court, leaving behind his royal apartments - and were he to depart from his capital city and undertake a very long journey, to the most remote and miserable scrap of land of his dominion. Would he not take care to have with him other noble and honored emissaries, and send them as ambassadors to this most poor and wretched area? Would he not send the message on ahead that the sovereign was already along the way to honor this lowly populace with a personal visit? And would not all strive to put their homes in order, so that the royal person might come in and stay there for a while? And would not the one’s home that might be chosen, be considered to be more blessed than all others? Would not such a person have more reason to exult, as the one to whom more directly ad immediately the honor had come?

952: And if this person were still in prison and condemned to death, and the king comes even into the jail to visit him in person and to pardon him, and to take the shackles from his hands, and to change his shame into glory, and his supreme misfortune into sublime benefits! How great would not his joy be in this very sweet expectation! Would you think that any noble, any great person, or any rich person in that city, present for the arrival of the Sovereign would have derived greater joy than that poor man in prison.

953: This is precisely our case at hand. We sinners, oppressed by the misery of our faults, and detained shamefully in the slavery of our vices - to us there has been announced and directed an imminent visit, of great fortune to us, of the supreme King of Heaven. He wishes to liberate us with His grace and enrich us with His precious gifts. Hence, we should feel with greater pleasure the closeness of that most fortunate day, of that moment that is so happy, and one that is above all the happy and festive imaginings that we could ever have.

954: Come on now, let each one of us say, come on, poor heart of mine. Rejoice in the mercy of your Lord, and He will realize all the desires of your hearts: ... *Delight in the Lord, and He will give you the requests of your heart...* [Ps 36:4]. To You, o Lord, I have lifted up my hopes” ... *in You, o Lord, I put my trust; let me not be ashamed ...* [Ps 24:1, 2]. In carrying out all that you wish that I would hope from You: *neither let my enemies laugh at me...* [v. 3]. Do not let them make fun of me, or deride my vows: ...*for none of them that wait on You shall be confounded...* [ib.].

955: I have here touched on the deformity and the dissimilitude that appears more than ever between us and God. On the one hand, this cannot in any way be denied. Yet, on the other hand, the more carefully this discrepancy is considered, I would like to point out that this itself brings about the most intimate suitability to unite two extremes that are so disparate, one form the other. In fact, a supreme good, such as God is, is almost excessively inclined to communicate Himself. For this reason, this Good cannot have a greater proportion to a creature that is needy to the extreme for

all benefits. For an immense mercy, nothing is more appropriate than an immense misery. With a most rich liberality there could be no more pleasing encounter than a most abject and omnipotently desolate poverty.

956: A most perfect holiness orders all its operations to its own glory, as to the end of the most noble existence. Such holiness finds the most manifest suitability in operating in such as these, more than in all others. For the beings that are the most abject having nothing other in themselves than reasons for confusion and disdain. These lowly realities allow themselves, without holding back a point, to give all the glory to the source from which it has proceeded. This is in accord with that biblical phrase: *...all the rivers run into the sea... [Qo 1:7] ...unto the place from whence they come, they return to flow again...* What a sweet thought this is, and what comfort it should be to us! That very misery of ours, that brings such total confusion, that it almost leads us to desperation, now we see it changed into a reason for rich hopes.

957: And it is certain, o Lord, that if You choose graciously to enrich those who are Your favored ones and closer to You, and if you want to raise them up even to this, we would have no reason to glory in our own merits and in our good dispositions. All we would need to do would be to remember our dust and the dunghill of our past iniquities. If we wish to find reason to give glory, we do not, nor would we want to seek for this anywhere but in You. And all those who knew of our previous wretchedness, all will admire Your wisdom and power. Its effects in us would testify that You know how to call all that is not, as well as all that is, and to choose the most abject and disdained of this world to confound the most powerful.

958: And here I would like you to take careful note of one truth. We are accustomed ourselves to love only those things in which we can find some appearance of beauty, and some semblance of good. And so, seeing in ourselves nothing other than that which is evil and unsightly, it seems impossible to us that God could indeed love us. It seems an exaggeration that **the Divine Word, as a passionate Lover of Souls, could descend with the most tender and affectionate invitations, to call the lowliest of creatures to His chaste and spiritual nuptials.** But all difficulty in this regard is dissolved whenever there is recognized the difference that there is between us and that of God.

959: Our love is caused by the good that it finds in the object that it loves. Hence, we love only the good that exists in another. God's love is not caused by the good that there is in us, but rather It causes this in us. This is the reason why God loves even what does not exist, so that they come into being. He loves even brute souls and those all deformed with sin, in order to re-embellish them and decorate them with His grace.

960: But let us come now to the facts, which is an argument against which there is no response. Tell me: who were those great saints who received the initial pledges of the Spirit in the first age of **the nascent Church? Who indeed were those martyrs, so full of courage, those illustrious Confessors, those early fervent Christians - who were all these people? They were gentiles, that is, great sinners, most lowly slaves of infernal powers.** They adored stones, metal and wood: their lives,

their customs were full of confusion. The holy Apostle says of them:... *For you were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord...* [Ep 5:18]. “You were darkness” because of your vices and superstitions, and now you are the light of the Lord.

961: And how did all of these pass from the melancholy abysses of sin to such luminous heights of holiness? The Word of God came and made Himself a man, to make of that blind gentility so filthy in its vices, **a most beautiful spouse, adorned with virtue and without stains.** First being announced to them, and then there appeared the grace and gentleness of our savior, Christ. And then there followed such a prodigious change, worthy of the right hand of the Most High. And who is there among us whose life is so desperate, that he would not take hold of himself in hearing of these great and supreme hopes? Could not anyone rise even higher by the savior’s grace? Would it not also be possible for those who had fallen very low by their faults, as appears from **the fact of those early Christians?** Is it not so that among them abounded iniquity and then grace super-abounded?

962: And look, the acceptable time is approaching: there are the days of salvation that are drawing near. I can already note, beloved brothers and sisters, that a sweet and joyful hope has come to birth in your hearts. And the happy affections of your joy, love, desire are already moving your spirits. And so you make clear to me that I have already spoken sufficiently up to now. The greater part of you seem to approve this, and that you are waiting the joyful coming of the Savior, and that the time has come that I should descend into more specifics. And I will do this most willingly in a few more words. I do this to satisfy you and for your delight, making use of a symbol that sacred history affords me.

963: Abraham wanted to give a wife to his son, Isaac, and with this in mind, sent one of his servants into Mesopotamia. [Gn 24:1, ff.]. The servant noted that the divine good pleasure for this, through certain signs, in a matter that was so interesting for his master. He settled on the person of Rebecca, and immediately made her the gift of some presents. Then, after having ascertained her family, and having handed over the precious gifts of gold and silver, and won the happy permission of all. He led back the new spouse with him, and returned to his masters.

964: It was precisely at sunset that Isaac left the camp to go out to meditate. Raising his eyes, he saw the camels coming on which Rebecca was seated [Gn 24:63, f.]. When she had seen Isaac, she got down off the camel and was informed by the servant that this was her intended spouse. She quickly took her cloak and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all he had done. He brought her into the tent and all was ratified. The marriage was celebrated, and he manifested toward her the most clear signs of his very tender love.

If it is pleasing to you, let us take this fact from the covering of the letter, that He does everything for us. But first, in order not to burden you excessively or protract your attention excessively, let us rest a moment. The unveiling of this mystery will serve also for our conclusion.

965: What then, is signified by Isaac, if not the Only-begotten Son of God, Who is the **Spouse of faithful Souls**. This means that the faithful servant sent to lead **the spouse** back, what were they, if not the preachers? Were they not sent to propose to human minds the preaching of God's Word, and thus they become procurers of these **happy nuptials**? At certain signs, they follow the eternal preordination, they recognize this or that soul, chosen by God and prefigured by Rebecca. To these, they suggest sweet desires to be converted to Christ, and to be joined with him through grace. And they give rich pledges in His Name of Mercy and love. This is done so that they might consent fully, following the preaching, to come to Christ. Then, they lead back with them **the spouse** joyfully to their Lord.

966: And what is meant by Isaac, who had gone out into the field to meditate toward evening, and there met Rebecca, if not the Son of God, who had come into this world? Had He not been spoken of by the Prophet: ... *you went forth for the salvation of your people...* [Hab 3:1]. ... *the lifting up of my hands as evening sacrifice...* [Ps 140:2]. As He was not content with having sent prophets and preachers, He came Himself to encounter those souls who would consent to be **united with Him through Grace**.

967: Now, all of this I hope - rather, I am sure, has today been fulfilled among us. For I do see that your souls are not only desirous, but resolved to follow the invitation of my preaching. I perceive that you are already accompanying me joyfully going toward the encounter with Christ. In these days, He is already on His way toward His encounter with you. All that remains is that there be achieved in you personally also the **ultimate particulars of this allegory**.

968: Just as soon as Rebecca sees Isaac, she slipped down off her camel. And this implies that the soul, with desire, hastens forward to meet Christ. As He approaches, their mutual recognition intensifies. Then, the efficacious act ought to be united to the proposal of abandoning and leaving behind the discomfort of past actions and the proud sense of superiority of wordily thoughts. This is implied in her coming down off the camel. And further, as Rebecca veiled her face in the presence of Isaac, so before the presence of Christ, one ought to feel confusion for past actions. One ought to know shame for the sins of the past, by humbly and sorrowfully confessing them

969: That which our lord Jesus Christ gives is grace to you and to me in these days to carry out this in a perfect manner. Our souls have been introduced by this New Isaac into His home,. He has deigned to join our souls to Himself, and to unite them by grace in this life, and for glory in the net. Both here on earth, and up above in heaven, we can congratulate one another for our happiness. We can praise together His mercy, to Him, with the Father and the Holy Spirit be honor forever!

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SourcesOT

Gn 24:1, ff	## 963; 964
63, ff.	# 964
Ps 24:1	# 954
2	# 954
3	# 956
36:4	# 954
140:2	# 966
Qo 1:7	# 956
Ba 4:36	# 947
Hab 3”13	# 966

NT

Mt 1:21	# 950
9:13	# 950
18:11	# 950
Ep 5:8	# 960

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970:**SERMON 26****A Bad Death -****Inevitable to Sinners who await to be converted on this point**

Preached on St. Stephen's Feast Day, in the year 1804, in St. Paul's of Campo Marzio, on the left side of Verona.

A happy death is the precious death of the just! Stephen dies full of the Holy Spirit. He dies seeing the heavens opened and Jesus standing at God's right hand. Stephen dies, the first fruit of the Martyrs, swept away in a most bitter sea of calamitous persecution. He dies with the most serene joyfulness of spirit: ... *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit...* [Ac 7:58]. And he dies with the most tranquil constancy in his heart: ... *and falling to his knees, he cried out with a loud voice...* [Ac 7:59]. And he dies with the most sweet honey on his lips: ...*Lord, lay not this sin to their charge...* [v. 59]. He dies, or rather, falls asleep, and sleeps in the bosom of his Lord: ...*he fell asleep in the Lord...* [ib.].

971: ... *precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints...* [Ps 115:15]. Who is it who would not desire the death of the just? ... *Let my soul die the death of the just...* [Nb 23:10] - so says the one who died afterwards as a wicked person. And still every day those who want to continue to live their lives as evil people say and incessantly yearn that they might die as the just do. But, this desire of theirs is vain: ...*the desire of the wicked shall perish...* [Ps 111:10]. The one who does not live in a just manner will not die that way: the one who does not live as a saint will not die as a saint. Whoever lives wickedly, died badly: whoever lives in sin, dies in sin.

972: I know, I know all too well that you would like to object to me, o sinners: that you hope to die well even though now you still live badly, because you wish to be converted at death. These are vain hopes, that I would like to see vanish immediately under your very eyes. I would like to throw down to earth that false foundation on which they are focused. At death, you will not be converted. And I will prove this. You could die suddenly as in our times, so many die. But I would want that you would have much time: and nonetheless, I can prove to you that you will not convert. You might even have all the opportunity of expert priests who might help you, you will not be converted. I can prove this, as well.

973: And firstly, you will not convert because you do not want to convert. It will perhaps seem to you that here I will slip away from that beautiful principle, since I have the opportunity to speak with such sinners who wish to be converted at death. I know very well that you would like to be converted at that hour, but I also know that you do not wish to be converted now. And so, I deduce: you do not wish to use time well, even that last period.

974: And who does not know the prodigious power of habits, especially those deeply rooted, nurtured for a very long time. Do they have the power to incline and invincibly drag the will to those acts pleasing to them? Right now, you resist the

invitations of grace that are so frequent, even continuous. You train your hearts to a hardness, that is intensified each day, and is aggravated beyond all measure, by so many years. At death, this hardness will reach an indeed monstrous level. If your hearts are hard right now, at that moment, they will be supremely hardened... How, then, could you hope to break it down? How do you think you could bend it? How will you ever be able to soften it?

975: This is not simple guesswork, when the Holy Spirit has added His own sentence. It is an incontestable truth: ... *a hard heart shall fear evil at the last...* [Si 3:27]. A heart that is hardened, uses time badly now, and so it will use time badly at that hour. It will continue in its obstinacy, in its hardness: it will remain in evil to the last. It will so despair at the news of approaching death, that it will not convert: it will remain in evil. Stricken by so many sorrows, by such anguish, by so many tribulations, it will curse, it will give way to wrath. Rather than being humbled, rather than grieving for sin, and being converted, it will still put it off, not yet: it will remain in evil. It will do evil even to the last.

976: How many, my brothers and sisters, have not died in our times like dogs? This is not just speculation, but facts. These are not realities about which one reads as having taken place only in the past. They are seen each day almost, as taking place in this, so depraved an age. The Scripture says: that sinners are struck, afflicted and overwhelmed by evils [Apoc 16:9]: ... *and they were scorched with a great heat...* And far from doing penance in order to give glory to God, they cursed the Most High, who was scourging them with such power: ... *and they blasphemed the name of God, Who has power over these plagues, neither did they to penance to give Him glory...* [ib.]. In their pain, they bit their tongues "...and they gnawed their tongues for pain..." [Apoc 16:10]. And they continued to curse the God of heaven as they felt so wounded and in sin: ... *and they blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and wounds...* [Apoc 16:11]. And even in these ultimate extremes they are not led to do penance for so much iniquity on their part: ...*and they did not penance for their works...* [ib.].

977: But come on now, because in every way that I can I want to do well by you this evening. You not only have all the time and plenty of opportunity. And even more, you also have all the good will to be converted, as even right now you desire to have it. This will all be in vain at the last hour, because then you will not be able to accomplish these.

- How come? O God, does this mean that there is only despair for us?

- No for I even wish that you might take steps, make provisions now against despairing. You cannot put off to that extreme moment your conversion. You can do immediately what at that time you will be unable to do.

978: In fact, please tell me, when a headache, or a toothache that only gives way after some days, this so wears you down and occupies your mind, you can hardly think of anything else. You are almost unable to do anything other than think of your affliction and to suffer it. If this is so now, what will the pangs and the spasms of death bring to you? With your strength exhausted, with your body crushed, will you not be

unable to exercise even the least actions? And what about those supreme efforts, those that are full of difficulties? Is it not impossible to think of being converted among these difficulties, to seek conversion after a life of evil? What happens when one has become accustomed for so many years to evil, if even those who are good, when sickness torments them, find themselves impeded? And in this situation they are already accustomed to pray, to make acts of contrition, of hope, of love. And nevertheless, at that last hour, they will experience great difficulties. How much the more, then, will not sinners, habituated in evil, and without any practice of good, feel difficulty in an even greater way, and find it unable to be overcome?

979: When the imagination is agitated, troubled and strangely altered, it will present to the intellect only images of terror, confusing thoughts, and fearsome visions of spoiled and distorted objects. The apprehension of the imminent judgment, and the nearness of eternity, will be coupled with the most atrocious feelings of remorse of conscience. All of this will contribute to making sin appear to be quite different from what was held in life. Here, sin is sometimes thought of like a playful puppy to be petted on one's lap. But, at the last moment, it will appear more like a terrible serpent, and like a dragon, with a very powerful poison. The demon who will flutter about with very great wrath, ready to devour whomsoever he will, as St. Peter warns us [1 P 5:8]. He will redouble his temptations, he will press in on all sides with his attacks, he will do all he can to force one to despair. He will bring to the highest mark fear and trepidation, consternation. Fear, when it is moderate, says St. Thomas¹⁰⁷, leads human beings to be solicitous to consult and to work - but, when fear is excessive, it takes totally away not only action, but even the ability to think. Just imagine what fear will do, that which is brought to the most intense level, that is to agony!

980: Listen to the very words of the Great Pontiff, St. Gregory describing a terrible happening. This took place not only in his time, but in Rome, right under his very eyes. It seems that it happened in his own monastery, just a few years before he narrated it, to the Roman people in one of his homilies¹⁰⁸. Then he wanted this fact known to the whole Christian world, by registering it in his Dialogues¹⁰⁹.

This people is not surprised at anything, as they know to what extent the evil spirits can allude people. They can alter not only the external senses, but also those internal senses, that make use of bodily organs. They do this by disturbing one's humors and agitate the imagination. As good philosophy would teach them this much, good theology would taken them further. The people also know that God can give and has given on many occasions, such faculties to the demons. He does this always for other purposes, and very often for the just punishment of the wicked, or the merciful correction of others.

981: The Saint tells his story. There was a certain Theodorus, a very restless young man. More by necessity than by choice, he followed a brother of his into the

¹⁰⁷St. Thomas Aquinas, I-II, q. 44, a. 4.

¹⁰⁸St. Gregory, *In Evang.*, Hom. 15, t. 2, pp. 26/ 2 D, ff.

¹⁰⁹St. Gregory, *Dialogues*, 4, 37. t. 1, p. 1053/ 2 A.

monastery. So that he would never be reduced to actually receive the habit of our community, he gave forth with oaths, angry statements and derision. Now, in the midst of the great pestilence that struck everywhere, it consumed a great part of the population of this city. The young man was also infected, and was on his deathbed. And as he was about to breathe his last, all the brothers congregated to protect his passing with their prayers. The extremities of his body were already dead; but only in his breast did there remain a slight flicker of vital warmth.

982: Then, the brothers intensified their prayers, when they saw that the moment for him to take his leave had arrived. When all of a sudden, he began to cry out to the brothers who were assisting him. His loud cries interrupted their prayers: Get out of here, go away! I have been given over to a dragon to be devoured. And as long as you are present, he cannot finish me off. He already has my head in his mouth, ready to consume it. Go away from here, so that he will not continue to torture me, but that he will finish off what he has begun. If my destiny is to be given over to him, why do you make me suffer such bitter delays?

Then, his confreres responded: But, what is this, brother, what are you saying? Make the sign of the cross.

983: But, he responded with a loud scream I do want to cross myself, but I cannot. The scales of this dragon oppress me. I cannot, I just cannot!

O God, my listeners, ladies and gentlemen, sinners, all of you listening to these events that happened to others. Take care, be careful that they do not also happen to you, and that any of you be forced to cry out in desperation: I cannot, I am not able! And it surely will come to pass that at that time you will not be able to, that whereas right now you could, and have not wanted to do so.

984: But even if it is granted to you to be able to respond at that last crisis, as if you do have all your senses free, then you will be able to make use of that assistance that God might grant in those extremes to be converted. The most terrible of possibilities is that you will not have those helps; or, if you do have these to sufficiency, they will not be efficacious, because God will not make them so: and then, you will not be converted. God Himself makes clear that He does not want to do so. I have called out to you, He says, so many times in this life; and you have not deigned to answer Me. I have sought you out, and I followed after you lovingly with My grace, and you always went further away. All right, the time will come, death will come: *...You shall seek Me, and shall not find Me...* [[Jn 7:34](#)]... *you shall die in your sins...* [[Jn 8:21](#)].

985: There may rise to give you help and to defend you, those friends who want to please you, and who would have no hesitancy to offend Me. Maybe those creatures will come to your protection, those in whom you place all your affection, your hopes, your heart, taking all from me who with such insistence has been asking these of you: *...let them arise and help you...* [[Dt. 32:38](#)]. I will block my ears to your cries; I will not allow Myself to be found on that day. I will fill My Temple with smoke through the

majesty and the power of My justice. It will be such that no saint might enter to make intercession for you, until My vengeance be consumed: *...And the temple was filled with smoke from the majesty of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the ... plagues... were fulfilled...* [Apoc 15:8].

986: But, is not the Lord merciful?

Yes, He is, my brothers and sisters. But He is also just. As merciful, He seeks you, waits for you, promises you pardon right now. But, as just, He will avoid you, He will reject you, and He will vindicate at death for the long-standing abuse that you have heaped on His mercies. As merciful, He exhorts you now, because He does not rejoice in the perdition of the wicked. He does not want the sinner's death, but rather that he be converted and live [Ezk 33:11]. As just, He will then leave you, abandoned to your desperation, or hardened in your blindness. You will go into perdition and die eternally, because He delights in His justice: *...for the Lord is just and has loved His justice...* [Ps 10:8].

987: By His mercy, the Lord has rejoiced over you, and by multiplying over you His graces [Ps 35:8]. In like manner, by His justice, He will rejoice in dispersing you, in destroying you, precisely by taking from you the possession of that happy land of joy and eternal rest. Even though you may be standing on its threshold, you will trust in vain to place your foot inside.

I conclude with St. Augustine¹¹⁰: this is a most just pain, that the one who chose not to do good when he could, will no longer find it possible to do when he might choose to.

988: The yearning to die well is empty for any sinner who does not wish to be converted right away, as long as he is healthy and has the opportune means. It only follows from this, then, that you should not let slip from your hands the favorable occasion of these very fortunate days of grace and reconciliation. This is the time to re-establish your souls in grace with God and to place your salvation in security. And so you will understand why I have chosen to sadden you on such joyful day, by speaking about death: the reason is that I have been more concerned with what is useful, indeed, with the needs of some, than to delight, albeit in a holy manner, of the many, and indeed, of my own personal inclination.

989: What does it serve, my most beloved brothers and sisters, that we say beautiful things to you, and yet many among you remain in mortal sin? What good would such thoughts be if you allow these feasts to pass by without going to confession? What use would all this be if some persevere in their sinful practices, in their loose manner of life, in their iniquities? Sinners may come into the Church, listen to the sermon, and then go out, still sinners. They might come to the holy solemnities with sin on their souls, and they remain with this even afterwards. O God! And then, they expect to have a good death? This is deceit, presumption, and detestable boldness!

¹¹⁰ St. Augustine, *De lib. arb.*, 3, 18, 52. t. 1, p. 631/D.

990: O, my brothers and sisters, “through the bowels of the mercy of God,” in which He from on high has visited us, by being born this day [Lk 1:78]. Accept that light that my words may have given to you, and for which I have prayed with all the insistence of my heart from our Father, Who is in heaven. [Mt 6:9]. Get up out of the darkness. “Rise from sleep. For now your salvation is nearer...” [Rm 13:11]. Do not lose time. Weep, and break open your hardened hearts with contrition leading to salvation. resolve to change your life in a stable manner, but do it now. It is at this very instant that I make this suggestion to you

991: Confess your sins, and as quickly as possible - even tomorrow, as these holy days fly so swiftly away from you. remove from yourselves, keep from your selves, and flee that it has already begun to cover you with its shadow. Do this before it comes up to you, and places its icy fingers upon you. When that happens, you will have no escape, but will perish eternally, together with all your good desires, that have never been effective through your own fault.

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Sources

OT

Nb 23:10	# 971	Ps 111:10	# 971
Dt 32:38	# 985	115:15	# 971
Ps 10:8	# 936	Si 3:27	# 975
35:8	# 987	Ezk 33:11	# 986

NT

Mt 6:9	# 990	Rm 13:11	# 990
Lk 1:78	# 990	1 P 5:8	# 979
Jn 7:34	# 984	Apoc 15:8	# 985
8:21	# 984	16:9	# 976
Ac 7:58	# 970	10	# 976
59	# 970	11	# 976

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St. Gregory the Great, <i>Dialogues</i> 4, 37. t. 1, p. 1053/2 A	# 980
<i>In Ev.</i> Hom. 19. t. 2, pp. 276/ 2 D, ff.	# 980
St. Thomas Aquinas, I-II, q. 44, a. 4	# 979

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St. GASPAR BERTONI



The main altar of Saint Paul of Campo Marzio Church, in Verona, Italy,
Where St. Gaspar Bertoni preached most of the parish sermons.

Early Spiritual Writings

PARISH SERMONS

1805

[Manoscritti Bertoni ## 992 – 1210]

**Translation into English
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1805

992:**SERMON 27****The Desperation for Conversion**

For the Third Sunday after the Epiphany. Preached in St. Paul's of Campo Marzio, on January 27, 1805, Verona, on the left side. It was repeated in St. Paul's, on November 19, 1809, Verona, on the left side.

A leper who prayed, *Lord, if You will, You can make me clean!* [Mt 8:2], and is touched by Christ, is healed immediately. A centurion approaches Him and says: *...only say the word, and my servant shall be healed...* [Mt 8:6, ff.]. As the paralytic, lying ill in his home, and in conformity to the centurion's faith, the servant is healed. And these facts read today in the Gospel, have made me then convinced, therefore, that there is no malady of our spirits so incurable, or desperate. A simple recourse, in faith, to the most kind grace of our Savior, can promptly and prodigiously cure any of them.

993: However, if we do not ever remove the fetid leprosy of our vices from us, and if our hearts never get up out of the morbid bed with its earthly pleasures, on which we remain, healing will not come. If we abandoned our forces to these, and allowed them to be consumed already for so many years, then it will be our own ineptitude, or slothfulness, or diffidence as cause of all this. O, how deplorable it is to see so many sinners, who indeed resent their wretched state, and yet never efficaciously deliberate to leave it behind! It should be this very misery that would move them to seek liberation from it all. Instead, this wretchedness puts desperation into their spirits, and they never change anything, but are always more aggravated.

994: It is too uncomfortable to introduce into these persons who are so down and without any sense of confidence. Yet, I am going to try to do just that. I am moved by the desire of reaching even one, should there be here in this audience by chance, any such person. But, it is more fitting for me to proceed in quite another path than by simple reasoning. With the mind disturbed by harmful prejudices of their grave apprehension, either the strength does not reach them, or they judge their own powers insufficient in the face of their evil. Authority alone in such cases can render the best blow. And if this is lacking to me personally, I will call on it from some other source. I will derive for the weak organ of my own tongue the most serious statements of St. John Chrysostom¹¹¹. There will thus come the authority of such a great Father and Doctor almost in his very person. He will come where my own ineptitude respectfully gives way to him.

And without further ado, I ask of you for the consideration to give more than your usual obsequious attention of your minds to my words. So, I come now full of confidence for the experiment.

¹¹¹St. John Chrysostom, *Ad Theodorum lapsus*. Two Books. t. 1, pp. 1/1 A, ff.

995: And why is it, my brothers and sisters, sinners, why is it that you could despair from rising up from your sins? And I could even ask, why do you give up on ascending even beyond that, to that state from which you have fallen, and to become again perfect Christians, even saints? Do you not realize that nothing is impossible to God [Lk 1:37] - nothing is difficult? Is it not He Who raises up out of the dust the unfortunate, and the poor man from the dunghill? Is it not true that He will place these among the princes, and the most considerable princes of His own heavenly court? [Ps 112:7, ff.]. If the devil has been able to make you fall, and to stumble into such misery, cannot God make you rise up out of it and repair your ruin with the better compensation possible? This is so evident that you ought to pay attention to what you do with such hesitancy. You do greater harm by putting it off, than what you do by sinning.

996: In fact, it is not so much the multitude, or the gravity of sins that casts a person down into desperation, but rather a spirit that is already evil. And for this reason, Solomon, too, says forthrightly: *...The wicked man, when he is come into the depth of sins, contemns...* [Pr 18:3]. Anyone who has fallen into the most base sins, and multiplied these as much as he wished, but still has not reached the level of denying God, there is still a chance. Provided that the sinner has not denied His attributes of omnipotence and mercy, does not ever despair. Rather, such a person should raise his eyes to his merciful Savior, until He is moved in His mercy. The sinner should cry out with David: *...O save me, for Your mercy's sake...* [Ps 6:3]. Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak: heal me, O lord, for my bones are troubled. *I am become miserable, and am bowed down, even to the end...* [Ps 37:7]. *...And in my affliction, I call upon the Lord. And I cried to my God...* [Ps 17:7]. And I will give no end of my prayer, until it comes about that Your goodness will have heard me.

997: And behold, o brothers and sisters, where all the artifices of the demon come to the fore: to take away this blessed hope from your soul. For it is this that can save you, no matter how badly you may have fallen: *... for we are saved by hope...* [Rm 8:24]. This is a statement of the Apostle. The devil, though, puts in you thoughts of your baseness, of diffidence, of despair, so that you would let slip away from your hands such solid hope. Thereafter, you would be cast down by your calamities, and you would drown in the chasm of malice.

998: - You might say: we do believe that God can do all this. But the point remains, we need the light of His countenance to shine on us. [Ps 66:2], which is already full of wrath, and pouring forth vengeance for our faults.

- I get it. You measure the wrath of God by that of human beings. And you thereby make a mistake of very grave proportions, and heap supreme injury on God. If the wrath of God were a passion, as it is in human beings, you would have every reason to despair of being able to extinguish a conflagration of anger that is so vast, having been enkindled by your iniquities. But, since that blessed essence is empty of all perturbation, and even though It does punish at times, It is never dominated by anger. On the contrary, as He maintains a loving care of us, we must take heart and trust in the value of penance. Let us be persuaded that God loves us even when he

shows Himself irate. So, He really wishes to draw all the more to Himself when He threatens all the more those who have departed from Him

999: O, my brothers and sisters, let us think better of God. For, we have already seen that He has not spared His Only-Begotten Son out of love for us, but has delivered Him up for us [Rm 8:32] to the most cruel torments, and also to a most ignominious death, to redeem us from our iniquities. And for thirty-three years, the word of god made man has chased after sinners who were fleeing from Him, and every hour is still following after them, by sending His ambassadors. And has He not seen these to exhort them, to offer mercy in His Name? And how is it that as we turn to Him in desire, no matter how weak it may be, to be converted, how would He reject this? No, it is just not possible.

1000: God never rejects a sincere repentance, even when a person may have fallen to the depths of all evils. But, God always receives such a person, embraces Him, helps him to get up again, and to recover his pristine dignity. Indeed, that which is an indication of greater dignity, even those very first steps that one might make along the way of penance, even though they may be but few, and still imperfect, and even though these are all that have been shown - He does not even refuse these. Rather, he repays them with very rich recompense. and this is how He Himself speaks through the mouth of Isaiah regarding His people : *...For the iniquity of his covetousness, I was angry, and I struck him: I hid My face, from you, and was angry: and he went away wandering in his own heart...* [Is 57:17]... *I saw his ways and I healed him... and restored comforts to him...* [v. 18].

1001: Achab had reached the depths of wickedness [3 K {1 K} c/ 21]. There still smoked up from the earth the blood of the innocent Naboth, when Achab went down to take possession of that vineyard which the king had taken from him with supreme injustice. For this, the just and unfortunate owner was barbarously betrayed. God, who was most intensely angered, sent to the perfidious king His own Prophet, to say to him: *... you have slain, and moreover, you have taken possession and done worse* [3 K {1 K} 21:19]... *thus says the Lord: In this place wherein the dogs have licked the blood of Naboth, they shall lick your blood also... Behold I will bring evil upon you, and I will cut down your posterity...* [v. 21] - since have irritated Me so.

1002: And then the scripture adds: *... Now there was not another as Achab, who was sold to do evil in the sight of the Lord...* [v. 25]... *And he became abominable...* [v. 26]. And yet when this wicked person had heard the Prophet's threats, overcome with terror, he gave some signs of sorrow and humiliation And he walked in sadness, with his head down [v. 27]. God could not content His own heart until he immediately sought out His Prophet once again, saying to him compassionately: *...Have you not seen Achab, humbled before Me? Therefore, because he has humbled himself for My sake, I will not bring evil in his days...* [v. 29] - they would not come as the Lord had threatened him.

1003: What profound depths of mercy! This story alone should more than suffice, o sinners, to move you immediately to penance. You should be already sure of God's kindness in receiving you converted, and of His dominion in being able to restore you

after your having fallen. Rather, He is able even to restore your losses with even greater gifts. also, to bring you to resolve, it is fitting that I should emphasize another point that is no less necessary. Let us change tone.

1004: Time passes, dearly beloved, and soon there will disappear the appearance of this world. So, it will be required to leave behind right away, in every manner, of necessity, those delights that you never give up by your own choice. Have you not seen so many others who had lived their lives in delights, amidst pleasures, and the most gluttonous satisfactions of their appetites, who are now dead? Now where is all their enjoyment? Where are all those friends? Where are those riches? Where are their bodies that were so pampered? Let us dig up a grave: you will find only dust, bones stripped of flesh, worms, horror, stench. And their souls, where are they? Buried in hell, in an unquenchable flame, in eternal darkness, in affliction, in perpetual anguish.

1005: What good is it to take pleasure here, to entertain oneself, to become enriched, only later to be sorry, to weep, to anguish eternally in the other world? Our present life is similar to a beautiful dream which one enjoys while sleeping, imagining many riches, and of finding oneself amidst delights. But, this night passes, and in the morning the dreamer finds himself to his sorrow with empty hands. And would to God that you would find yourselves amidst inexplicable torments, without any hope of every getting out of there.

1006: Now how much more time do you want to enjoy your pleasures? How many more years of life still remain for you? Thirty. Forty, fifty. And how can you promise yourselves these, when you cannot even be sure about arriving to this evening? And even before these years come to a close, your enjoyment could come to an end, because of the great changes that so often occur in human realities. And so the most delightful undertakings and those the most loved, are also the most quick to decline and totally disappear.

1007: But even saying that you could have all these years to enjoy that you now promise yourselves, what are thirty, forty, fifty years when compared to eternity? Here on earth both good and evil end quickly - but in the other life good and evil are eternal. And in this life we enjoy as though in an image and a dream, whereas there we will suffer in fact and in truth. And even if one might for a very short time and with very little effort avoid those pains, that are bitter beyond belief and remedy, and gain a paradise of eternal and authentic delights, the torment on the other side will be even worse than fire.

1008: Just think it over for a bit, sinners, think of that blessed happiness that God holds in readiness for you. As a good and loving Lord, He anxiously awaits that you be converted, to be able to give you this as your perpetual possession. On the other side, there will be no more sorrow, no groaning, nor sadness, no poverty, no maladies. Everything will be peace, joy and rejoicing, all will be tranquil, all serene. It will be perpetual day, and endless life. A sweet conversation with the Angels, a sweet harmony with the whole choir of the saints, a joyous banquet with Christ. A blessed vision and enjoyment of our first Principle and our Last end, which is God.

1009: O, my brothers and sisters, so light did St. Paul consider every tribulation that he suffered in comparison to that immense weight of glory [2 Co 4:17], then how would it not be much easier to calm our passions? We are not exhorting you to undertake those perils [2 Co 11:26], those daily dyings [1 Co 15:31], those beatings [2 Co 11:24], those imprisonments [v. 23], those discomforts [v. 27]. But, we only encourage you to liberate yourselves from the slavery of sin and to return to your former state. Why do you choose to lose heart and confidence?

1010: Those merchants who seek their fortunes beyond the seas, very often suffer shipwreck. and yet, they begin all over again, and set out anew on their dangerous and uncertain voyage. We, certain of a happy ending, why will we not take up again the same course, but rather remain with closed hands, to consider uselessly our losses, without repairing them with every care?

1011: Many saints have fallen, and fallen also gravely. David fell, St. Peter sinned, and so many others. Did they remain disheartened and prostrate because of this? No, but rather they got up again, with greater spirit and became even greater saints afterwards than they were before. In the maladies of the body, we never lose hope. How, then, will we lose it in those sicknesses of the soul that are never beyond remedy, as so often those of the body are? If it were thus, that whoever sinned gravely, would no longer be able to make it up, then I am here to say that no one, if not perhaps very few, would ever put foot in paradise.

1012: But one sees precisely the opposite, that the most illustrious saints were those who first had fallen, as along with others, St. Peter and the Magdalene, and St. Paul. Hence, that ardor that they earlier committed to accomplishing evil, they then turned to achieve good. And for as much as the demon commits every power to impede conversion, he knows that when they begin the undertaking and penance, they can no longer be held back, as with such fervor they indicate themselves to serving Christ. Fully conscious of their debts, they come to surpass even the innocent and the immaculate: ... *so shall the last be first...* [Mt 20:16].

1013: No, my beloved, no - it is not all that uncomfortable to persevere in penance. At the present moment, when anyone is on the verge of undertaking conversion, the devil would like to make you believe how hard it is. The whole difficulty is summed up just in beginning, and in overcoming the enemy the first time, the one who with such ardor and effort opposes you. The reason is because once you start, the devil himself folds up. Firstly, because he has been overcome one time; and then, secondly, because he was beaten precisely in that area where he was the stronger. And you will find the courage to be more bold. You will run along this very glorious field with great alacrity and vigor.

1014: Come on, now, come down onto the course. Do not be afraid of your enemies, do not pay any attention to your weakness, because: ...*the Lord himself...will fight for you...* [Dt 1:29, ff.]. He comes to your defense, drawn by the love He bears you. He is deeply moved by the cause that is so honest and so vital to His interests, that of your virtue and your salvation, and His own glory. He is driven by the hatred that He has essentially for sin and to destroy it. He is necessitated by His own word, through

which He has promised to envelop with the guardianship of His mercy the sinner who turns toward Him in his hopes: *...mercy shall encompass him that hopes in the Lord...* [Ps 31:10].

1015: And if God is fighting with you, and for you, what do you fear? For Him, it is as easy to conquer a few, as it is to overcome many enemies - no matter how old and astute they may be, as well as the new and inexpert hostile forces - whether they are strong or weak. Go, then, energetically, fight with spirit, as you can already be sure of the triumph.

And you see that the trepidation is already dispersed, at the odor of your resolutions, into the vile breasts of your infernal adversaries. They are already afraid not only of losing forever the possession of your souls, which perhaps they had usurped for many years; but, also they dread from you those defeats that they have already endured by other very generous penitents.

1016: Note that heaven is already beginning its festival, and the Angels are striking up their harps of gold, in order to celebrate joyfully the much desired victory of yours. All of us have our eyes turned toward you, to be the spectators of your courage and to congratulate you and to exult at the same time, we have much desired to see you liberated from slavery, to come out full of honors and spoils from the enemy. How we long to see you restored to your place of sublimity and glory! This is but fitting to God's children, to Christ's brothers and sisters, and to citizens of heaven.

1017: Lift up your eyes; just note how beautiful paradise is. This is what you will conquer if only today you resolve, you will recover your lost rights. Look to where Christ shows you the noble crown that He personally wants to place on your heads.

Cast your eyes then, down below yourselves. you will see that hell is opened up beneath our feet. This would not hesitate an instant in swallowing you up into an eternal night. Whatever penance you agree to take on, will always be less, and much inferior to that hell which you have indeed merited. It is there that you will infallibly fall, to remain there for all eternity, if now you do not make the resolution to be converted.

1018: I cast myself at your feet, and embrace them with my affections. And I will not let go, nor cease my tears, nor give up begging you until yourselves have mercy on your own souls. To do this, you must deliberate at any cost, to save them. I will persist until you have pity on the many that you have scandalized with your evil ways, by reforming them immediately for their edification. I will not cease until you have satisfied God's love that yearns for your good as His beloved children. You need to satisfy Christ's glory. He who poured out all His blood to merit for you this victory. And you owe something to our desires that so ardently yearn for consolation.

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SourcesOT

Dt 1:29	# 1014
30	# 1014
3 K {1 K} 21:19	# 1001
21	# 1001
25	# 1002
26	# 1002
27	# 1002
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Ps 6:3	# 996
17:7	# 996
31:10	# 1014
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66:2	# 998
112:7, ff.	# 995
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NT

Mt 8:2	# 992
6, ff.	# 992
20:16	# 1012
Lk 1:37	# 995
Rm 8:24	# 997
32	# 999
1 Co 15:31	# 1009
2 Co 4:17	# 1009
11:23	# 1009
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Fathers & Doctors

St. John Chrysostom, *Ad Theodorum, lapsum*, Two Books.
t. 1, pp. 1/1 A, ff. # 994

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1019:**SERMON 28****The Styles in 1805**

April 22, Feast of St. Zeno. Monday after Low Sunday, in the venerable Church of St. Paul's, Campo Marzio, Verona - It lasted about one hour and ten minutes.

... Preach the word: be instant in season out of season... [2 Tm 4:2].

1020: I am speaking here today against immodest styles. And I am addressing myself to individuals whom I esteem for their most honest way of life, for their most sublime intelligence. I direct myself to those whose principles of life are not only alien in themselves, but also hostile to anything that is unclean, even to their holding all this in abhorrence. And I deliver my sermon in a time in which, after the Lenten Fast and the preaching of God's Word, and the participation in the Paschal Mysteries, there should be renewed the face of our Christianity. Or, as a minimum at least for a while, there should be suspended the scandal and restrained all excessive freedoms. So, I would not like my preaching this evening to be considered temerarious by some, superfluous by others, and as inopportune by all. As a result, I have thought it useful to the point, and even necessary, to overcome absolutely the repugnance that I personally experience from the circumstances of this time, from your expectancy, and from my own personal inclinations.

1021: Believe me, ladies and gentlemen, this is abhorrent to all of you as I am fully convinced. This vice is so common in our days, to our great misfortune, and it is something that bears with it the most harmful consequences. Hence, it is necessary that through our words every day the more, that there might be increased in you the abomination for it. Detestation for these styles must be promoted in you, and your hatred for it must be reconfirmed. From certain threatening floods of water, the fertile meadows cannot be saved any better than by often reinforcing and by building up the embankments and the earthen works around them.

1022: In addition to this, once you were well confirmed, with your own private admonitions, with good example, with domestic authority, respectively you will have the facility and the security to help even more in the salvation of others. Usually, we do not think that we could even desire to do this unless with the most robust and eloquent speech making. But, on the other hand, we simply cannot decline the necessity imposed on us by divine statute [2 Tm 4:2], to preach the word in season and out of season, against the more predominant vices.

1023: Now, coming to the theme that has been proposed, I think I will go right to the root of it. The principal root, surely for this, because of its depth, for its particular extension in the human heart, is vain glory. It is that insane decision to appear in the filth of this flesh, and to have it so praised and admired, to the extent that even these filthy fashions are put on. And I, here in public, will offer as a **portrait** just how deformed these very styles appear - they are loathsome and abominable.

1024: I flatter myself, most illustrious ladies and gentlemen, by relying on that favor that you most graciously extended on other occasions to my insufficiency. So, it is my trust that there will not fail here today any suspicion that I would want to offend by my tongue, or violate, by any pact, the sacred rights that are due to your most delicate modesty. All of these qualities in you are venerated by me. So, by making known the turpitude in others by its contrary, I have the intention to direct my thoughts principally and almost uniquely to you. This is to defend you from the common ruin, and from the universal injury of this world. Furthermore, the wound is never well healed by that doctor who fears excessively to put the iron in the very spot where health demands that the disease might soon break out. This is the view of St. John Chrysostom.¹¹².

1025: I have promised not a demonstration, but a **vivid portrait**. Just novelty in proceeding has never been convincing to me. But, rather before proceeding, **to spread the paint**, I have to **sketch the rough outline** of this horrible figure. And the first sketches might appear to you to be all the more out of order and beyond all proportion, in that they are all the more true, and based on nature. At the end, your affections will be the judged even more than your eyes.

1026: 1. Tell me, then, please, favor me with an inquiry. Who is this person who seems dressed, and yet not dressed, half covered and half uncovered? You can already see who she is: I have nothing to add. Is she another Herodias who will cost the head of some John the Baptist? [Mt 14:6, ff.]. Is she a lascivious ballerina of the theaters? Or, is she one of those who sings dramas on the stage?

- Oh, she is a person of honor, of rank.

1027: - A person of honor and rank! O, I see. The one in the foreign dress, with the scanty gown, with the delicate slippers she has on her feet, she must be a foreigner. Perhaps she came here and disembarked, either from the cages of Persia, or of Constantinople - or, even from further away, from the land of the Amazon women.

- No, no. She is from these parts.

- A person of honor, of rank, from these parts! excuse me, I beg of you. I should have known her.

1028: we have raised our eyes at a bad point. However, I think all the points of the summer are bad. And the summer burns even outside the time and outside the climate.

Here is another. Whose figure is this, with the neck so open, and the arms bare? It must be an obscene person, something from that trash heap of that neighborhood, a sad-looking extra that perhaps accompanied the show.

- Put aside, do away with all such strange judgments. This woman is the wife of an honest citizen, of an accredited merchant.

- What a wonderful honor to you, sir husband!

¹¹²St. John Chrysostom, *In 1 Th*, c. 4. Hom 5., 3. t. 11, p. 282/ 1 D.

1029: This is the nubile daughter of an honored artisan, of a woman of means.

- Your daughter does you great honor, senseless parents!

- This is a young serving girl of a noble matron.

- And what a wonderful decoration this is!

- But, I promise you that she is not even Christian.

- Oh, but she professes even Catholicism.

- Say it better, she practices atheism, the doctrine of those pestiferous lords who are at her side.

1030: - No, she has the faith, receives the sacraments.

- What faith? Certainly not the faith in Christ, as this is the faith of the pure of heart, and of holy customs. It must be the faith of Epicurus. What sacraments? These bold women who have no shame appearing in public with their breast, shoulders and arms scantily covered are incapable of receiving the sacraments, and incapable of absolution. This has been declared by innumerable synods ¹¹³.

1031: One of these Synods, in its disciplinary sections, has been received by the whole Church ¹¹⁴. Such women are incapable of absolution. This is the judgment of two great Bishops who are saints, and who enjoy such a name and authority in the Church. They are St. Francis de Sales ¹¹⁵ and St. Charles Borromeo ¹¹⁶.

1032: They were declared incapable of absolution finally by Innocent XI's Denunciation ¹¹⁷. With the most severe penalties he interdicted their very entrance into the churches. He lashed out against some women with the terrible bolt of excommunication. And what is more, he included in that excommunication, *lata sententia*, even those Confessors who would dare to absolve them in that state. This is found in his Bull, of November 30, 1683¹¹⁸. Almost all the Bishops have echoed these tones. This includes the Bishops even up to times near to our own. This fact can be seen from the statutes and the notifications that have already been printed, repeated and divulged¹¹⁹.

1033: Under such a great cloud of witnesses, what can these evil seers or their false prophets, if they have any, quote in their defense? Do they still excuse themselves,

¹¹³Andegavensis, Year 1607; Bisuntin; tit. xiv, stat. xi; Carduriensis, in the year 1638, chapt. 9. Aginnensis, tit. 30, n. 10 Const. Syn. Card. Grimaldi, Bishop of Aquensis.

¹¹⁴Rituale Biturcense, of the year 1666, c. 4. Found in P. Nat. ab Alex. - Trull. - In Roncalli. Moral Theology.

¹¹⁵St. Francis de Sales, Constitutions and Synodal Instructions; Archantony of Alex. and Bishop of Geneva, Part V, tit. x, n. 4.

¹¹⁶St. Charles Borromeo, Acts of the Church of Milan, Part v, *Instructions to Confessors. De Sacramento Eucharistiae Istructio.* tit. de preparatione corporali. t. 1, pp. 425, ff., in Country, under the entry "Sinus."

¹¹⁷Innocent XI, Bull of November 30, 1683.

¹¹⁸cf. Graveson, *Church History*, t. 8, 17th century, colloquy 2. cf. also P. Cuiliati, a. 4, of the First Precept of the Decalogue, chapter 9. Concerning Scandal, n. 16.

¹¹⁹cf. Andrew, Bishop of Verona - Homobonus Offredi, Bishop of Cremona, August 1, 1804.

or do they still defend these beasts of the stable, these animals of the cattle-shed? This is what the Gospel says: *...Give not that which is holy to dogs; neither cast your pearls before swine...* [Mt 7:6]. Venerable ministers of the Gospel, listen yourselves and make it understood by others. Indeed, you have to make this known with your authoritative voice as the last resort. You should raise your voices loud and clear, to make known this severe prohibition that Christ makes to you in person: do not give what is holy and to not cast your pearls to the swine.

1034: What Sacraments, then, can such a woman receive? The Blood of Christ shed over such unfortunate women would not serve for anything other than their damnation. This same Precious Blood served as the terrible ink that Pope Theodorus¹²⁰ used as a fearsome example to sign the formidable sentence against Pyrhus, who had fallen back into heresy.

1035: What sacraments, then, can such women receive, which sacraments? Not even Baptism!

- How come? Her name is already listed in the Book of the Baptized.
- Surely she was baptized with some other ritual. If you will not allow me this, then you tell me with what ceremonies. I am not mistaken, not at all, in this path. I have never been, nor am I now any further from my goal with this one and very easy argument. You will see this quite soon. And I would like to know of your response.

1036: She was carried in her wrappings to the Church. The priest came to the door to receive her. And what did he say? “What do you seek of the Church of God?”¹²¹ What do you want from the Church of God? And who answered? The God-parent answered for her: “eternal life.” She wanted eternal life? See now whether I said that she did not come for Baptism. For such a person does not want heaven, and does not even think she has been created for it. She prefers hell for herself, and for all those to whose looks she exposes herself.

1037: There was made over her the exorcism to expel the demon. A demon, then, was expelled from her? She has at least seven of them in her body right now, as had that other woman in the Gospel, before she was converted! [Mk 16:19; Lk 8:2]. But, let us go on, what conditions did the priest propose to her giving her the water? “Do you renounce Satan?” Has she renounced Satan, or has she renounced God? Is it the Devil, or Christ that she renounced? And of who is that livery? Of whom are those arms? Of whom are those insignia? Has she indeed renounced Satan? But is she not bearing the standard of his infamous militia? But she is enrolled among his followers, she is part of his troops, she follows him as the guide of his armies!

1038: But, how many souls have been stolen from God by this; how many deaths to grace have been brought about by her scandals! Has she indeed renounced Satan? rather, her body is taken over by his spirit! Rather, she is his first-born! She has even become a “demoness” herself! “And all of his pomps...” She has renounced all his

¹²⁰Pope Theodorus, Sentence against Pyrhus.

¹²¹Roman Ritual for Baptism.

pomps, indeed! She has proposed, made promises, swore to follow them all, and the most diabolic among them, the most infernal. Surely, this, I believe, is what your sentence would have to be.

1039: Now, come on; is such a woman baptized? Those impure members, then, are the members of Christ Himself. Then, it would mean that the very impure body is God's living temple. and that unclean heart is the humble abode of the most august Trinity. Eternal, adored, tremendous Majesty, what contumely is this! She is more bold than a prostitute, she is more blind than a brazen woman of the world - she is the adopted daughter of the Heavenly Father! The heavens themselves are horrified! That very person is the heiress of heaven, a citizen of the homeland of the saints! What a portent this is, what monstrosity!

1040: Pardon, o venerated Word of God made man, lovable Jesus, terrible Name: pardon her: for she is so filthy, unclean, shameless hydra of lasciviousness, a Babylon of turpitude, a cup of prostitution - this is your sister! Is such as this Christ's own sister?

I am chilled by horror. That nest of demons, that throne of uncleanness, that feeding grounds of luxury - this same person is the most beloved delight, sweet friend, **beautiful Spouse of the Holy Spirit!** O God, what blasphemies, what blasphemies against God! You, too, are horrified, devout ladies and gentlemen, you are stunned, you shudder. You wish that I would leave off with this theme so that you would not have to hear any more.

1041: And now I see that the excesses of this deformity have already begun to move you deeply. I will, nonetheless, accede to your wishes and willingly. It was only to my supreme discomfort and great pain that I came today to speak on this matter. I have treated it only because of the demands of my ministry, out of the love of preserving your beloved souls, and because of zeal for God's honor, which has - alas! - been so outraged.

1042: So it is, my devout hearers, so it is. From the evil customs and scandals of our times, infidels learn to curse the Name of God, to deride the Church, and ridicule its members. This, dearly beloved, this is the public school where our young people learn - alas! too bad! - the very first lessons of irreligion, of wickedness, of atheism. I do not have the time to prove this statement that is accidental to the theme, but you may hold on to it as axiomatic.

1043: 2. But, please favor me a bit more: just cast a glance around her. Just look around, and see with such unilateral interest she insists on listening to her own disgrace, as though all were singing her praises. What a bold countenance, what shamelessness in her look, what a petulant countenance! what constancy, what hardness, what boldness! She struts herself around, while she is abominated by all. She laughs alone, where all of us are horrified. Look at her emptiness! She has gone out, I am wrong. The person is, as you yourselves have instructed me earlier, she is a person of honor, of rank, an honest woman, a blushing virgin. what

wonderful modesty, honesty this is! What a high rank, and such glory are hers! Do you want to see the accomplished triumph of her glory?

1044: Make way, allow me to make you all discern, also those fine gentlemen who are like a noble illustrious crown around her. What a lovely appearance does this nymph make, with her fauns, her satyrs, offering her flattery all around. There are even some men in her company getting on in years, and with their white hair. Even the aged Silenus was needed to achieve the victory of immodesty ¹²².

1045: O, how beautiful are these gentlemen! How distinguished, well manicured! But, how well they would be closed in together in a pig sty, or in the confines of our city, kept in the slimy banks of some swampy area, that they might wallow around to their comfort in the muck! To make this Hamadryad the guardian of this clean flock, as the creature is accustomed to pasture it gluttonously in shameless nudity.

1046: You will not suffer hearing anymore; but I would like you to suffer just a bit more, so that you would suffer to look at even less. If there were not parents, husbands, if there were not masters who are suffering... and I am not speaking of you: you would place the blame on their shoulders. So, just put up with this a while longer. Would that there were not an open and genuine, or at least a pretended and simulated nudity among yourselves, then in your daughters, your wives, your subjects. As there is already too much scandal expressed in the color, the distinctness, the shape of the clothing. Much of this runs contrary to the notifications of your Bishop that are well known to you.

1047: You might say that you are not the tailors of the style setters... Yes, I admit, this is true, you are right. While it is so that you do not create these shameless styles, that God Who makes provision for the whole world and super-abundantly, would not have, or choose to have, your care in mind, that of your families, your shops. Follow these styles, and eat the devil's own bread that he serves you: it will do you good. It could very well be that some fine repast that this accursed master now serves you courteously, he will have you digest it in that eternal night that he will have you spend in his home.

1048: You do not want to suffer my words ¹²³. And I would really wish that you did not have to suffer these truths that I so disprove of with my sermon. It is not words, but the actions, the realities, that are unclean. My words are all honest, as is the purpose for which they are presented here to correct a dominating uncleanness. Judge yourselves, as you are an intelligent audience. What words would be better chosen for these statements? What phrases would better suit the proofs? What better proofs for better judgments? and what better judgments could he better prove the theme presented here? and what better argument would be the more directed to the end in view here? what material would be more congruous, more accommodated to those listening?

¹²²Horace, *Art. Poet.*, v. 239.

¹²³St. John Chrysostom, *IN I Th*, Hom. 5, c. 4, n.3. t. 11, p. 282/1 D

1049: Would not perhaps the present harm warrant all this? What should be done when the waste-heap has flesh and bones? Would not the penalties later on merit this? What should be done when they believe that their final end is equal to that of the beasts? What about the seriousness of sin? What to do when they do not recognize either law, or legislator, or any judge over them? Their only law is brute instinct, appetite, passion. They are human beings whose lives are animal-life, as is their basic purpose. This is all that moves them: that even though they are really not living a human life any more, they would like to appear as though they are. If once in a while they do undergo piques of reason, they affectionately manifest wisdom of thought and principles. They assume the imposing airs of philosophers, but are above any prejudices. They claim to be beyond the prejudices imposed on them by religion, or by education.

1050: And this is the only point where they can be taken. Attack them at that point of honor that they will fear. Show them what they are now, and what they perhaps were once, and what they have become. They will recognize this, be ashamed: and straighten out. They make reference to the civil society to which they really no longer belong. Let there be assigned to them a room that suits them, a forest, a swamp, a stall.

1051: 3. You get angry with me because I speak this way: your wrath is aroused against me, and I am content. But first be very careful that no one among you should ever come to recognize in that very unclean herd a child of yours who perhaps has ever been corrected - or, perhaps a daughter who is not well supervised, one of your serving girls, one of your shop boys never fired. Be careful that you do not find some bosom friend never dismissed, but even allowed to come into your home to serve your wife, to speak with your daughters. This would bring very little honor to you, less to your wives, and none at all to your daughters.

1052: Do not stand on any ceremonies, send them away, correct any such as these. For this reason, I am glad to see you angry, and it is with this goal in mind toward which all of my words are directed. And I would know how to go even further, but do not wish to now. O, would that I could trust in your wrath, provided that it would not become excessive, and go beyond the limits of what should be. It would be fitting to bring me now to the ears of some who are listening to me. And I would say to them in secret, as I would like: between you and me, to that fine mother of a family, but who is really unfortunate. I would say: Wretched woman, I know and I weep for your suffering. You are sad for some time now, and drench your bed with your tears. You lock within your breast a great upsetment, because you already note the lack of love and the infidelity of your beloved by unperceiving husband. And this presents great harm to the children of the entire household. And your zeal in your suspicions, unfortunately, has too good a foundation - even if you do not know the reason for them. I will tell you the reason: it is the accursed modern styles. These styles have raised the boundaries of modesty, and have gone over to the other side. They do not hinder the careless and unjust possessor from entering. they allow one to make off with furtive thefts indeed, but these are offered spontaneously by the impure styles.

1053: Were I to say this, and I would have also much more to say that should not be said in public, I know that I would arouse in the heart of the unfortunate and betrayed woman, far more than a Mount Etna aflame. I know what would flow from her mouth, then enflamed by anger. There would be a raging fire, that would reduce to dust and cinders not only all these damnable styles, but also all those evil women who wear them. All of these would fall into a just suspicion of her agitated jealousy.

1054: If only I could, and if it were the decent thing to do, would whisper into the ear of some of you here listening to me. I would point out all their individual circumstances of the most bleak effects of this accursed style. I would narrate one by one the turpitude that comes to your children. I would make known how, and by whom and where your beloved children were shamed. And even more, I would make known how and when, and on what occasion, by whom, and by what means the trust due to you was tempted. I would show how the peace of your marital beds was disturbed, your honor undermined, and how your sacred rights were violated, dishonored, and trampled underfoot! Indeed I would more than arouse your ire, this would appear on your faces, and escape through your words. I would have to struggle in abundance, in order to keep you from taking up arms immediately. I would have to hold you back from running here and there in your fury, with irons in hand. For you would certainly seek vengeance through the blood and vitals, that would be shed, of these infamous people.

1055: For me, it would suffice for you to be more vigilant at all times, in all places, at the least hint of something awry. Correct this without any dissimulation, send people away without reservation, speak out about it fearlessly. And this would suffice.

Let this be enough. Yea, I say, let this suffice. What are those disturbing thoughts? What are those bitter suspicions, undulating desires that mix up your minds do? What do they want, what do they pretend? to jolt your indignation blindly, even beyond the confines signed by me? Wait! hold on, do not let your affections become too furious. Stop! Come now: this point is not to be exceeded. I will present to you two very strong considerations that should at any rate, besetting for you.

1056: As far as the past is concerned, you should be at peace, because you do have to say: it was my fault. You must direct your ire against yourselves: ... *you are the man...* [[2 K {2 S} 12:7]. You have given cause, the origin, and the increase of your suspicions, to all your torments, to all your dishonors. Why do you abandon your children without any custody, without any admonition, allowing them to go along with whomsoever they please? What do you tolerate with so much dissimulation your women go about dressed in clothes with those sleeves so cut back, and with those dresses with the open neck? You have either introduced into your own homes, or should one have come dressed this way, you have not said anything, as you should have, right away. You have allowed your friend in, much like that dandy, Ganymede, as your companion, or perhaps some relative of yours. Or, it may be someone all powdered and perfumed, truly to be ridiculed. Some allowed to enter have been all affectation in speech, bubbling forth in all kinds of facades, full of jewelry, hair-pins, bracelets. These persons are rather low by staring about rudely, petulant in their

conduct, indecorous in the bearing of their hands. You should be able to recognize these persons for the scum of wickedness that they truly are.

1057: You, yes you - have committed a sin of omission regarding the due vigilance. You have given to those of your own household reason for scandal, that is, an occasion for their spiritual ruin. You are guilty of so many sins, and how many faults have you committed by your unworthy permissiveness of what your domestics have committed. And now you see the evil and humiliating effects redound in just punishment on your own heads. Be sorry for your own conduct; weep over your own grave sins, and make satisfaction for them with this present humiliation. Weep bitterly, and make satisfaction as well for the sins of others, that are perhaps beyond number. Do this, before the time when the severe judge will demand of you an inexorable accounting for this, or for that. All this refers to the past.

1058: As far as the future is concerned, what I have already said, I will repeat again. This is necessary, and will suffice. Correction for your own children. Send away those house servants, dismiss that servant girl. Put these accursed styles to the flames, those transparent veils, those dresses that are excessively cut back, or that are too revealing, or, even worse, that follow the shape too closely. And should the domestic hearth be the happy altar on which you sacrifice in a Christian way the peace of your family, for the honesty of your daughters and for the honor of your wives. Put up a sign over the entrance to your conversations, to your houses, to your shops, and write this: Perpetual prohibition for household members or visitors. There is prohibited here every form dressed in the modern way, badly covered, badly dressed. This is under pain of a contumacious, irresistible lack of any variation whatsoever: of closing the door on the face of anyone so dressed, even of slamming the entrance to such a person to his great embarrassment.

1059: This suffices. Bring peace back to you minds again. Always avoid the more that which you hate to find in others. Be indignant against all offenses against God. Be angry at the turpitude of the modern styles, in order to remove it, to destroy it also in others, in so far as this is possible to you. Up to this point, I agree with you. If your anger would go by these limits, let it out in my regard: I permit this. Do you not remember that from the beginning you had already taken up a position against me? Come on, say what you have to: I will defend myself with modesty. Just say that I have spoken today badly, or too freely. Say that you have come today to hear the word of God, and not to hear about impurities that have upset your stomachs. Say that if I still want to address this subject, I should do so with sacred Scripture, which however, I have not so far done.

Allow me a brief rest, and I will continue....

1060: Whatever your objections could possibly be, all have already been foreseen and been my concern in this sermon. If you would like, recall those evident places and the tacit responses, dispersed here and there in each tract. These do adapt well to each other, and are perfectly in harmony with each other. However, in particular, I say to you that I have brought to my argument ecumenical canons and pontifical

decrees, if you recall well. All of these have been directed against poorly clad women, as these are incapable of absolution, and no priest is authorized to impart it to them.

1061: Or, is it that in the definitions of the Universal Church you do not find the word of God as you do in Sacred Scripture? The authentic judgments of the Church are indeed the infallible word of God, not only in the matter of dogma, but also in the area of morality. St. Gregory ¹²⁴ has stated that they are of faith, just as the Gospel is ¹²⁵. This is so true that should you hear anyone say that for women to go about so poorly clad, that this practice is not evil, or at least, not very grave, you will know they are wrong. Should some say that these unfortunate women are not in the state of mortal sin and of eternal damnation they are in error. Should such as these state that any discreet confessor could absolve those who are without contumacy regarding Church laws, this is incorrect. Should any state that such persons do not commit sacrilegious injury to the Sacrament and to the Blood of Christ, this is erroneous. For such as these would fall into the suspicion not only of a tainted and corrupt principle. But, further such a view is temerarious, erroneous, and proximate to heresy ¹²⁶.

1062: And in this regard, keep in mind that I quote the Gospel itself [Mt 7:6] that states: ... *Give not that which is holy to dogs; neither cast your pearls before swine...* And note that in this Gospel passage the names given to this kind of people: “dogs”, “swine”. And you will see that the Scriptures speak quite clearly/ And I would have an easy excuse if, having always followed the true, legitimate sense, I may have brought the same, individual words to your very delicate ears.

1063: In fact, in some of this, I have been speaking about the styles introduced through certain vicious men, and through certain undisciplined young people. These scandalous styles are too shameful to bear. Only cautiously I have mentioned the place where they truly merit to be enclosed and confined. Scripture, though, has no hesitancy in calling these infamous individuals one by one, by their true name. No matter what state or level, or condition of life they may have achieved, they do merit the name “swine.” When these animals are dried only to roll about in the swamp: ...*the sow that has washed has returned to her wallowing in the mire...* [2 P 2:22].

1064: St. John Chrysostom ¹²⁷, authenticating this reading, would say that every one of these fine people is really an animal. Each is so filthy and caked with mud, emitting an odor and stench everywhere they pass by, or stop off. These because cast dung into one’s eyes, the nose and into all the senses of anyone who comes close to them. I would not want to see that the conversations, the shops, the homes of our city would soon be changed into so many stalls, unless the exit is sealed on the heels of so many animals.

¹²⁴St. Gregory, Book L, EP. 24. t. 2, p. 463/1 C

¹²⁵St. Robert Bellarmine, l. 2, *De Conc.*, c. 12.

¹²⁶Homobonus Offredi, Bishop of Cremona, cited, # 1032.

¹²⁷St. John Chrysostom, *In 1 Th*, c. 4. Hom. 5, n. 1. t. 11, p. 180 / 1 C.

1065: Scripture itself makes its judgment on bringing out the malice, on declaring the scandal, and by indication the penalty to be paid, and not in any obscure manner: ... *they have proclaimed abroad their sin as Sodom...* [Is 3:9]. Note well: “they have proclaimed” .Public scandal is the teacher of malice, and preaches licentiousness. And note the comparison made: “as” Sodom, like sin, similar penalty: fire,, just fire.

1066: But I have confronted these lovely young ladies, dressed like swamp nymphs, and also these handsome young men, who are like fauns, satyrs, like Silenus: names such as these, you say, are unknown to Scripture. Unknown, I would reply, perhaps in the less loathsome sense in which you would have learned them in the books of your poets. This sense would not be pleasing to me, because it is not clear enough. They are demons who have appeared in a human body, demons in the flesh. This is to cover over some even more malicious obscenity as St. Augustine ¹²⁸ states. St. Thomas ¹²⁹is of the same view.

1067: It is under this most loathsome idea that they are unfortunately known in the Sacred Scriptures, to disgrace those who indeed merit it: ... *and demons and monsters shall meet, and the hairy ones shall cry out one to another...* [Is 34:14]. But, I will not explain this place as St. Gregory ¹³⁰ does. His words will really anger you. All the while I notice that the more I ask pardon, all the more is your indignation aroused.

1068: However, I am content even with this **rough sketch**, even though it is imperfect. This is so that you might not be brought to violence, to giving full sway to your emotions and to the fury of your affections. For this reason, many times in the past, and still now, I have had to lift **my brush from drawing this outline**. By even this, though, you will have come to understand quite well its turpitude, and its deformity, its loathsomeness, the abomination of these accursed new styles. I have presented here just three lines, as it were, **traced on the canvas**, and not even in a pronounced way: that is, from the circumstances of the person, from the fact itself of its manner, and finally, from the point of view of the affections. This is sufficient for you to draw three very powerful motives to confirm you in hatred, detestation, and abhorrence for such styles.

I have demonstrated, summarized and moved as I wanted to do, and anything further is unwarranted. I have no more to say. My panegyric is concluded.

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¹²⁸St. Augustine, *The City of God*, Book 15, c. 23. t. 7, p. 407 A.

¹²⁹St. Thomas Aquinas, I, q. 51, a. 3, ad 9 um.

¹³⁰St. Gregory, *Morals*, Book 7, n. 36. t.1, p. 163/1 C.

SourcesOT

2 K {2 S} 12:7	# 1056	Is 3:9	# 1065
		34:14	# 1067

NT

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1069:**SERMON 29****Mary's Name**

Preached in St. Paul's Church, Campo Marzio, Verona, on the left bank, in the year 1805, on the 15th of September, on the Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost - It lasted one half hour.

In proposing for our veneration today the most Holy Name of Mary, the Holy Church surely intends that we stretch our minds, in so far as we can, to enter into the mysterious senses of its sacred interpretation. But, how can one conveniently reverence that which either is not known at all, or just known in a confused sort of way? So, I think it is necessary, as well as useful to the extreme, to explain with brevity and at the same time, with clarity, the admirable secrets closed within this most august name.

1070: There is no reason to fear boldness, or any danger in this. The Holy Fathers, the sacred Doctors will go ahead of us always as a sure guide.

They have already treated of this eloquently and abundantly. However, their treatises are not in the hands of all. Furthermore, the more simple and those without formal education perhaps would not understand by themselves so great and marvelous a doctrine, so full of wisdom and learning that redounds in their writings. So, I will make of myself like **a small canal**, rather a poor one, it is true, but much in proportion. This is so that there may reach the most humble of minds that these opportune waters to irrigate them. In this way, each one may slake his thirst as needed, without being drowned in it, or being overwhelmed with its weight, or impetus.

1071: I trust that the most learned and wise among you will easily grant me this type of discourse, suitable for the instruction of the less learned, and even of those ignorant of these matters. This will be my style, sine a more sublime manner of speech to embellish and to praise, some might judge would be more fitting to the subject. They will see that this simply exceeds my weak forces.

And without any further introduction, I come now to the proposition.

1072: There are very many interpretations of this most Holy Name, and all are capable of showing how supremely admirable and venerable this name is. According to some learned scholars, "Mary" simply means "exalted". According to St. Jerome¹³¹, "Mary" means "illuminatrix", "Myrrh", or "bitterness of the sea", or "Star of the Sea." However, according to the most popular etymology, "Mary" is interpreted as "Mistress of the Sea."

¹³¹St. Jerome, *De Nominibus Hebraeis - de Exodo.* t. 3, p. 21; *De Matth.* ib, 92 M.

1073: One can consult Fr. Augustine Calmet ¹³² and Fr. Cornelius a Lapide ¹³³ in several places of his Commentaries, as these give a clear demonstration regarding this. **I associate myself with this interpretation**, and also for this reason: this presupposes, or comprehends in its most vast idea, all the others, as will be made known in itself through its explanation.

1074: What, then, does “Mary” mean, “Mistress of the Sea”, *Domina Maris*? O God, what mysteries are included in these words! What a subject for our most profound veneration! Let us take a brief look at this sea of which Mary is the declared mistress even by her name.

It is a very full sea, immense, most deep in wisdom, perfections and graces. In the divine Scripture He is the Only-Begotten Son of God, the Eternal Word, uncreated Wisdom. In Ecclesiasticus {Sirach} [24:39] we read: *...For her thoughts are more vast than the sea, and her counsels are more deep than the great ocean...*

1075L Do not be surprised, dearly beloved, that the Most Blessed Virgin is the Mistress of this Sea, when she is even more, she is His Mother. Yes, with every propriety, Mary may be called the Mother of God. This is a dogma of faith defined by the IInd Council of Constantinople ¹³⁴. From the very first instant of His conception, His human nature was assumed by His Divine Person. Hence, it can very well be said that God is conceived and born of the Virgin Mary. This is what St. Thomas teaches¹³⁵.

1076: It seems that the Holy Spirit had Mary in mind in Proverbs [8:29] when He said that God in the beginning, compassed the sea with its bounds: *...When He compassed the sea with its bounds...* Mary similarly was to conceive in her womb and enclose the Word of God. He is the Sea and the Abyss of Wisdom, of power, of virtue, and of all being and goodness. And should not Mary be said to be Mistress of that Sea, that no matter how immense, she had been able to contain Him in her immaculate womb: “He Whom the heavens could not contain, was born in your womb”? ¹³⁶

1077: The most learned Cornelius a Lapide ¹³⁷ offered a Commentary on these words of St. Matthew [1:16]: *... of whom was born Jesus....* A Lapide writes: The Virgin Mother of God had a right to a maternal authority over Christ, as have all mothers over their children that they have generated. She enjoyed this over her Son even more than other mothers do over their children. In fact, Christ is born solely of His Mother; it therefore follows that the Blessed Virgin had a greater right over Christ

¹³²Fr. Augustine Calmet, in c. 15 of Exodus

¹³³Fr. Cornelius a Lapide, no specific citation

¹³⁴IInd Council of Constantinople. Denz # 218.

¹³⁵St. Thomas Aquinas, III, q. 35, a. 4.

¹³⁶Liturgy, Common Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Respons. to the Last Reading.

¹³⁷Cornelius a Lapide, no specific citation in Commentary on Mt 1:16.

than other mothers have over their children. The love in these others would have to be divided with father and mother. In Christ, however, all was concentrated and united in the Mother.

1078: What difficulty can there be in recognizing in Mary this dominion, that is so sublime? Is it not exercised over the Divine Person of Christ, when even Christ Himself had no difficulty in having Himself called and recognized as her Subject? Does not the Gospel reveal: *...He was subject to them...* [Lk 2:51]?

Thus, the illustrious Bishop and Martyr, Methodius¹³⁸ stated that the Blessed Virgin alone had in her debt the One Who has given credit to all. thus, we all owe everything to God, and to Mary alone, as He owes piety and subjection. “To the God of the universe we owe all - He owes to You, Mary, piety and subjection”

1079: We might choose to say that this debt in Christ was not rigorous. By reason of the divinity Christ would have been totally free by reason of His origin from all subjection. Nonetheless, we must also confess that Christ conducted Himself in His Mother’s regard as though He were always subject to her. Hence, she was always both loved as a Mother and revered as His Mistress of the household. Just listen to St. Bernard¹³⁹ who points out that the God to whom the Angels are subject, Whom the Princes and Powers obey, He was subject to Mary. Admire, then, both of them, and choose which of the two should be admired the more: either the most benign dignity of the Son, or the most excellent dignity of the Mother. Both are stupendous, prodigious: the fact that a God would obey a woman, this is humility beyond example; and that a woman would be responsible for a God, this is sublimity beyond comparison.

1080: O venerable Name of Mary! With what profound **obsequiousness** should she not from now on be named by us, such wretched sinners, and what confidence it invoked! Many consequences flow from the fact that Mary had such dominion over the Person of her Son. We need to reflect that she was able to count on with facility, with security, the heart of her Sovereign, Who was also her Son. How, then, could she not be the Mistress of all His treasures, of that immense sea of graces and mercies? I will leave this thought, as it is so ready to grasp, to your consideration. For the sake of brevity, I hasten to flash before your eyes the admirable amplitude of this mystical name.

1081: Rupert, the Abbot¹⁴⁰ will show us the way. Mary is the Mother of the crowned King, Whom God has constituted over all the works of His hands [Ps 8:7]. She is, therefore, constituted the Queen, and rightfully possesses the Son’s entire Kingdom. And how could she not possess the Son’s Kingdom, she who possesses totally this same Son? And who is it who would not know that the most universal reign of Christ is divided into three great realms: heavenly, terrestrial and below the earth, as St. Paul teaches : *...that in the Name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of those that are*

¹³⁸ Methodius, Bishop and Martyr - no citation.

¹³⁹ St. Bernard, *Sermo super Missus*.

¹⁴⁰ Ruppert, the Abbot. *In Cant.*, 1. 3.

in heaven, on earth and under the earth... [Ph 2:10]? And this is a second way in which Mary is the Mistress of the Sea.

1082: Primarily by the word “Sea”, in the Apocalypse [4:6]. there is signified the immense multitude of those celestial spirits. Over all these, much like a lucid, tranquil sea, there is reflected and shining the beauty of the countenance of Mary: ... *And in the sight of the throne was, as it were, a sea of glass like to crystal...*

The fact that Mary is the “Queen of the Angels” is chanted by the Church. She is the “Queen of the Angels”, not only by her excellence, or principality; and not only by the eminence of her graces and virtues. She is this by her authority and jurisdiction. This is manifested by the reverence that the Angels show to her, declaring themselves subject to her.

1084: Really, in the most common use of Scripture, the “sea” is assumed to denote this present world: ... *So is this great sea, which stretches wide its arms...* [Ps 103:25]. St. Augustine¹⁴¹ has commented on this place in the Psalms. He brings out the similarity quite clearly that this world has with the sea. The comparison lies in the sea’s natural inconstancy, its frequent storms, the bitterness of its waters, and for many other outstanding comparisons. Now, Mary is the Mistress of the world. Her jurisdiction is singularly manifested by acts proper to this, such as commanding, dictating laws, punishing, and other similar functions.

1085: Would you doubt that she commands, when she says of herself: through me, Princes reign, legislators decree justice, as these are precisely the words that the Doctors and the Church appropriates to her? - ... *By Me, kings reign, and lawmakers decree just things...* [Pr 8:15]. Should someone wish to insist on the literal sense of this text taken from Proverbs, and hold that her Uncreated Wisdom should be understood, I would ask: And Who is this Uncreated Wisdom, if not the Son of God, the Son of Mary?

1086: Regarding her domination, Arnold Carnotense¹⁴² concludes for me. Regarding the power of the Son, this cannot be separated in any way from that of the Mother. One is the flesh of Mary and that of Christ, one the spirit and one the charity. From the very instant it was said to her: ... *the Lord is with you...* [*Dominus tecum..*] [Lk 1:28], she inseparably preserved both the promise and the gift. And thus, the matter is resolved: I maintain that the glory of the Son is not just in common with the Mother, it is the very same: ***Et Filii gloriam cum matre non tam communem judico, quam emadem....***

1087: As far as punishing, I would go too long if I were to choose to cite all the authentic fact from history., I will touch upon only two, one that is ancient, and the other that is quite recent, and only in the area of blasphemers. Nestorius in the fifth century was bold enough with his heresy to blaspheme the Name of this great Lady.

¹⁴¹St. Augustine, Commentary on Psalm 103: 25/

¹⁴²Arnalda Carnotense, no citation.

Did he not die with his sacrilegious tongue devoured by worms? And then, just a few years ago, here in Italy, and not very far from here, there was a blasphemer of the most Holy Name of Mary. He was seen by a very large number of people punished precisely in his blaspheming tongue. Did it not happen that as he was vomiting forth sacrilegious words, his tongue fell right out of his mouth, all grossly deformed? This fact is as certain as it is well known. Let us all learn to respect the Name of our Patron and Sovereign Mistress.

1088: Now, though, I will show you still another sense, one that is no less admirable, according to which it is said that she is the Mistress of the Seas of this world. According to the customs in vogue among the Hebrews and the Syrians, “Mistress” means teacher, directress, guide or star of the sea, very well is adapted to Mary. She saves from the sea of this world, and accompanies us to the Promised Land, which is heaven.

1089: In this connection, St. Ambrose¹⁴³ comments. He holds that the Blessed Virgin was well figured by that the Mary, Moses’ sister, of whom the Hebrews relate this tradition¹⁴⁴. When she was born, there began the bitter tyranny of the Pharaoh, who had all the male children of the Hebrews drowned. And thus, the infant girl was called “Mary”, meaning, “the bitterness of the sea”. [*amareza del mare*]. But this name was changed afterwards by greater blessings, and by divine counsel. It was given a much more sublime signification when, having passed over the Red Sea, and the Pharaoh was submerged, she was called “Mary”, meaning “Mistress and Directress of the Sea”. For just as Moses was at the head of the men, so his sister was at the head of the women in the crossing of the sea. Thus, they intone the Canticle of Praises to God.

1090: O, what a beautiful field opens up here before me to point out to you the will, the love of Mary, to save our souls! While the brevity of time does not permit me to go much more with my words, I have the great pleasure of having indicated this for your affectionate reflections. It is not necessary to pave the way for you by means of arguments. The way is clear to all, it is open. While I rest briefly, on your own, enter into this consideration, and discover its amplitude, enjoy its agreeableness, and feed on its precious and salutary fruits.

1091: There remains still to be seen how this Name of Mary, or the Mistress of the Sea, shows the dominion and sovereign power that she has over hell, as I proposed above. St. Hilary¹⁴⁵ offers an explanation of Psalm 64:8:... *who troubles the depths of the sea, the noise of its waves...* By the “Depths of the Sea” Hilary understands the devil. By the tempestuous waves of this sea he understands perverse men who follow the devil, as into malice, thus into damnation. So, one can truly understand the most Holy Name of Mary is the Mistress also of this turbulent and threatening sea. And it can be said that whenever the faithful servants of Mary devoutly invoke this

¹⁴³St. Ambrose, *Exhortatio Virginitati*. 5, 28. t. 2, p. 284 F

¹⁴⁴Cornelius a Lapide, *In Luke*, 1, 22.

¹⁴⁵St. Hilary, *Tractatus in Ps 60: 10*. t. 1, pp. 188 E, ff.

admirable Name, the depths of the sea are troubled, with all the upheaval of the waves: *who troubles the depths of the sea, the noise of its waves...*

1092: The fittingness of the aptness of this exposition increases all the more, as she says of herself, in the interpretation of the Holy Doctors accommodating these words: *...I alone have compassed the circuit of heaven, and have penetrated into the bottom of the deep...* [Si 24:8]. I have penetrated with my power the depths of the abyss, and have crossed over the waves of this sea. This denotes that she dominates with great power and virtue over the darkened kingdom of hell. This is a gloss in one of St. Bernardine of Siena's sermons ¹⁴⁶. Do you wish, then, to frighten all of hell? Then, just mention Mary confidently.

1093: O terrible Name to all demons, o admirable Name to all Angels, o venerable Name to all the servants and children of such a great and most powerful Mistress! Mistress of heaven, Mistress of earth, Mistress of hell. She is, therefore, the Mistress of the Sea, **Domina Maris**. The foundation and the reason for this dominion that she enjoys over the very deep sea is that it is her blessed Son, to Whom be honor for all ages.

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Sources

OT

Ex 15:21	# 1073	Pr :15	# 1085
Ps 8:7	# 1081	29	# 1076
64:8	# 1091	Si 24:8	# 1092
103: 25	# 1084		

NT

Mt 1:16	# 1077	Ph 2:10	# 1081
Lk 1:28	# 1086	Apoc 4:6	# 1082
2:51	# 1078		

Magisterium

IInd Constantinople, in 553. Anathemas on 3 Chapters. Can. 6 # 1075

¹⁴⁶St. Bernardine of Siena, *Op. Omn.*, t. 4. Sermon 31.

Liturgy

Common of the Feast of the BVM [resp. to 1st Reading]	# 1076
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Fathers and Doctors

St. Ambrose, <i>Exhortatio Virginitatis</i>. 5,28. t. 2, p. 284 F	# 1089
St. Augustine, <i>In Ps 103:25</i> [no citation]	# 1084
St. Bernard, <i>Sermo super Missus</i>,	# 1079
St. Bernardine of Siena, <i>Serm. 3. On Si 24:8</i>, t. 4	# 1092
Fulbert Carnotense, <i>Sermo 4. De Nativitate B.V.</i>	# 1083
St. Hilary, <i>Tractatus i Ps 60:10</i>. t. 1, pp. 188 E, ff.	# 1091
St. Jeome, <i>De Nominibus Hebraeis de Exodo</i>. t. 3, p. 21 M	# 1072
<i>De Nominibus Hebraeis in Mt.</i> t. 3, p. 92 M	# 1072
Rupert, Abbot, <i>In Cant.</i> 1. 3	# 1081

Saints

Methodius, Bishop & Martyr [Mary and Jesus]	# 1078
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Other Writers

Calmet, Fr. Augustine, <i>Exodus 15:21</i>	# 1077
Cornelius a Lapide [On Mary's Name]	# 1073
Commentary on Mt 1:16	# 1077
Commentary on Lk 1:27	# 1089

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1094:**SERMON 30****Mary's Purity**

For the Third Sunday of October, on the 21st day, in the year 1805, on the twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost: Solemnity of St. John, in St. Paul's of Campo Marzio, in Verona.

I am to speak on this Feast, so solemn to your piety, most chaste young women -and so I should speak in the presence of all of you, most religious listeners, on Purity, on the Purity of the Most Holy Virgin, of the Queen of the Angels, of the great Mother of God. Under the brilliance of such sovereign excellence, my humiliated , sensual spirit does not even know how to resolve the matter of forming the thoughts on this matter. And even when some thoughts do come, I do not know how to send them along to my tongue, before my tongue and myself have been justified and purified with a sorrowing and public confession of my lack of such justice and of my impurity.

1095: Holy Virgin, just who is this who pretends to discourse to you this evening? A most wretched sinner. And who is it who wants to give praise to the inaccessible candor of your purity? Just the most sordid of poor souls. What a disproportion, what deformity! How is it even possible for me to raise my eyes to focus them in so much light, if fear holds me down, and shame closes them? O, my poor heart! How much better would it be that you remain in your customary sorrow, and that you give the pupils of your eyes over to tears, and that you use that tongue of yours solely for laments.

1095: But, how can I do that, since we should speak, and even embellish our oration with the most solemn garments of joy and rejoicing?

- And who can arrive at this? Who is it that makes us do it? You would not give me an easy pardon, most humane ladies and gentlemen, If I, on this point, would treat of an argument that is more accommodated to the present dispositions of my heart. How much more easily would it succeed in bringing about tears and compunction! And you would take from me in your goodness a heavy burden. As I undertake this now, I feel that it is too disproportioned to my strength, even though earlier, looking at it from some distance, did I not unwisely assume it? And does it not seem to you that my consternation, which increases always the more, is not at the level presently of the crime of my earlier presumption?

1096: And what is this? What does it mean that your faces are disturbed? Does not this withdraw light from me, as earlier your faces seemed so serene? Did not your faces show clearly your much desire condescendence? Do you wish, then, that at any cost, I should carry out my task? Do you not agree, then, that from today on, one should never speak of Mary other than in praise of her purity? All right, I will say something even in my lack of knowledge. But, keep in mind that you forced me to do this: ... *I am become foolish: you compelled me...!* [2 Co 12:11].

1098: Purity, as I draw from the doctrine of the Angelic Doctor ¹⁴⁷, such purity of a reality consists in not having any mixture with substances more base than itself. Thus, water is said to be “pure” when it maintains its natural clarity and splendor, when it is kept separated from every particle of less noble material and which is more obscure and of the earth. A rational creature, such as a human being is, is naturally superior to all temporal and corporal substances. Thus, moral purity consists in this: that the human spirit be not incline toward, and joined with lowly realities by any disordered affection, to the things of this earth, and all more base than itself.

1099: Among these sensual delights, the enjoyment of mud that is most common to beasts and pack animals, is most vile and disgraceful. So, any heart that submits itself to the pleasures of the brutes, *par excellence*, is said to be “impure”. And by contrast to that virtue called “chastity”, from the word “to castigate”, that it does to concupiscence. The virtue restrains this so that it will not surpass and trample reason under foot, and to subject concupiscence to the spirit. There is also attributed to this the beautiful name of “purity.”

1100: The beauty of this virtue is made clear also by its opposite vice, by all that is brute and repugnant. In order to take a closer look at it, it would suffice to follow the definition of the “beautiful” that St. Augustine offers of it ¹⁴⁸. Beauty considers proportion, the harmony in which it constitutes the parts of a human being, that is, the inferior and the superior. These are ordered according to the spiritual clarity of reason. And we must still exclaim: ... *O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory...* [Ws 4:1]. O, what a beautiful virtue, and how beautiful purity is!

1101: It is proper to say that this virtue is perfectly and simply beautiful in itself. The reason is that the “beautiful” is absolutely pleasing to all. So, the purity that is found in anyone and which is noticed, attracts with sweet violence to the love of it. This is true also of these hearts who do not possess it, and are also deformed by vices and made almost unnatural ...*O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory...* [Ws 4:1].

1102: It should not be believed, however, that solely from its genus can Mary’s purity be praised. Right away, to anyone who would understand this, that would be a considerable lowering of its sublimity. This is true of all singular realities whenever they are spoken of as something common. We know that in this, in her purity, the Virgin, this singular Virgin, is all the more excellent, and is even more beautiful, beyond all judgment. She indeed is “the Singular Virgin” [cf. the Hymn, ***Ave Maris Stella***]. It was, nonetheless, necessary to seek a foundation on which to set up a ladder. This is so that our small mind might climb to such heights, or might rise up so that they could express themselves in the best possible manner. It is indeed true, however, that this most blessed goal is inaccessible.

1103: Perhaps those accustomed to flying in spirit, or, better yet, anyone courteously attracted, could draw even closer, could even enter into the mystery, could come to

¹⁴⁷St. Thomas Aquinas, II-II, q. 7, a 2; q. 151, a. 1.

¹⁴⁸St. Augustine, *Confessions*. 4, 20. t. 1, p. 104 C

comprehend aspects of it: ... *the Spirit breathes where He will... [Jn 3:8]... for the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God... [2 Co 2:10]*. We who do not presume such sublime favors, nor can we make use of wings, but only our feet are available to us, and these are infirm. We make our way up the deep ascent by steps, and little steps at that: ... *but, I follow after, if I may be any means apprehend... [Ph 3:12]... stretching forth myself to those that are before... [v. 13]*.

1104: The very first step, common to very many members of the Catholic Church, is indeed the lowest of all. Yet, this grace of purity merits the most sublime praises of the Holy Apostle: this is conjugal purity: ...*marriage honorable in all and the bed undefiled... [Heb 13:4]*. Even the lowest grade of the beauty of this virtue is highly esteemed! These are the ones who possess as though they did not possess, and who enjoy as though they did not enjoy. They use this world as if they were not indeed using it. In other words, this does not constitute their last end: ...*And they that use this world, s if they used it not: for the fashion of this world passes away... [1 Co 7:31]*. And keeping oneself within the confines of what is licit and honest, according to the rules of reason, they abstain even in desire from all that is illicit and dishonest: ...*whatsoever modest, whatsoever just, whatsoever holy: ... think on these things... [Ph 4:8]*.

1105: The continence of the widow forms an even more prominent grace of purity. According to St. Paul, widows merit particular honor and praise, provided they are genuinely widows. This means that they are not only so with their bodies, but also with their hearts, they are far from men: ... *Honor widows that are widows indeed... [1 Tm 5:3]*. These are the women who govern the peace of their families, who remain night and day in prayer. Mistresses of chastity, of prudence, full of good and virtuous works: ... *for this is acceptable before God... [v. 4]*.

1106: The third degree is much more sublime and excellent, and the virgins make this up. In these persons the beauty and the light of purity appears clearly in an outstanding manner: ... *it is good for a man to be so... [1 Co 7:26]*. Many, however, are virgins bodily, but they are not mentally virgins. These can just about be called “virgins” materially, for there is lacking to them that form described for us by the same Master of Virginité and the Doctor of the Gentiles, in these words: ... *that she may be holy both in body and in spirit... [1 Co 7:34]*.

1107: Many are truly virgins, who, however, do not have the perfection of this virtue. They have not made any firm and constant resolution to abstain perpetually from earthly nuptials: ...*being determined to be steadfast in his heart, having no necessity... [v. 37]*/ There are some, however, who are also perfect in this eminent degree of purity, and they merit all the praise of virginité among men, but not with God. While they are content and almost glory in themselves for having disdained earthly nuptials, they aspire very little, or not at all, toward those heavenly **nuptials**. They do not strive for union with God through incessant prayer and with loving contemplation. Precisely according to the mind of St. Paul [v. 32], this is the very purpose toward which virginité is ordered: ...*I would have you without solicitude. He that is without a wife, is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may*

please the Lord....And I speak for your profit... but for that which is decent, and which may give you the power to attend upon the Lord, without impediment... [v. 35].

1108: Others have also offered to God the most sweet fruits, as well as the most beautiful flowers. However, they still hold back for themselves the possession of the plant, and so can always change their minds. These are those virgins who have not consecrated to God their virginity by vow. Some, however, have reached even this: ... *these follow the Lamb whithersoever He goes... [Apoc 14:4]*. It seems that such as these have achieved the ultimate frontier of the perfection of this virtue. In fact, to what even higher level can human beings still living in the flesh, aspire if not to live no longer according to their flesh, but in all according to the spirit? - ... *but you are not in the flesh... [Rm 8:9]*. This surpasses every effort of which nature is capable: it is solely the work of grace : ... *all men take not this word, but only they to whom it is given... [Mt 19:11]... You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them to little ones... [Mt 11:25]*.

1109: We have reached the top of the ladder that we have set up. But, how far we still are from reaching even with our eyes the purity of Mary! She is such a virgin, a holy virgin, bodily and mentally, a perpetual virgin. She is a temple of God by union, by adherence to **her Divine Spouse**. She is the sacred vessel of the Holy Spirit, by the consecration and **the dedication that she has made of her entire self to her divine Majesty**, with such greater excellence are all these accolades extended to the Queen of Virgins! You alone beyond example, o great Virgin, have pleased our Lord, Jesus Christ¹⁴⁹!

1110: And if many daughter souls of the Church have congregated superhuman and heavenly riches of purity, You have surpassed them all by far and gone beyond all of them [Pr 31:29]. These Daughters of Sion have seen the beauty of your virtue, and without any contrast of emulation, all have declared you most happy and most blessed among them: ... *her children rose up and call her blessed... [v. 28]*. These same daughters are all vested in the glory of their Beloved, and like queens that have been sent to the **Marriage Supper** of the **Nuptials with the Lamb**. They all raise in harmony their voices to praise you, to render their encomium. They offer their white lilies in **obsequious obeisance**, and place these at the feet of your throne of greatness.

1111: But, what is it in which this excellence of purity consists? I hardly think that I am competent to respond. Nonetheless, I will try to add some new steps to this ladder.

Commonly the purity of even more holy virgins still has to struggle against the importunate suggestions of the world and the devil, as well as against the insolent rebellions of their own flesh. I know that the Apostle says [2 Co 12:9] that *power is made perfect in infirmity*. I also know that *when I am weak, then am I powerful... [v. 10]*, for *I can do all things in Him who strengthens me... [Ph 4:13]*. In my mind, I

¹⁴⁹Liturgy of the Office of the Holy Mary, for Saturday. Antiphon for the *Benedictus*.

remain unmoved in pleasure of God's Law, as *from the love of God, no creature can separate us...* [Rm 8:39]. But, I also feel in my members another law fighting against the law of my mind [Rm 7:23]. The spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak [Mt 26:41]. And so, I am forced to cry out: ... *Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death...* [Rm 7:24].

1112: This is the state of the just, even the most pure, when still living on earth, and whose spirit is renewed day by day [2 Co 4:16], through the grace of our savior, Jesus. However, the flesh groans out, awaiting the revelation of the children of god [Rm 8:21, f.], when Christ shall appear in His glory [1 Co 3:4]. We will be delivered from corruption [v. 34], and death itself will be wallowed up in victory [v. 54]

1113: There are some, though, among these many that I can discern in whom after long battles and tedious agonies, the grace of Christ has already begun this victory. In an anticipated way, they already enjoy some of the preliminary pledges of that peace, even in the midst of a still very formidable battle-field. The voice of God calls them forth from the multitude and from the confusion, and leads them to a solitary peaceful conversation with wisdom, and has brought a silence to their passions. And behold: ...*and their place is in peace...* [Ps 75:3].

1114: Truthfully, this is a most sublime grade, pertaining to the few. It is indeed extraordinary, and perhaps not entirely stable and permanent, at least in all those who ascend to it. This silence does not let itself be enjoyed always, but only at intervals, and at brief intervals, in accord with this: ... *there was silence in heaven...* [Apoc 8:1]. This refers to the soul of this just person, endowed with the blessings of the sweetness of God: .. *for you have provided him with blessings of sweetness...* [Ps 20:4]. ... *and silence was in heaven, as it were, for half an hour...* [Apoc 8:1]. This means that it would already begin in this life, in some way, but not to reach the heights of perfection and the beatitude of joy except in the other.

1115: What will we say, then, of this most holy Virgin, whose most resplendent and serene glow was never clouded over, ever by the slightest shadow of contrary passion? Her spirit is always raised up to God. Nothing earthly ever impeded her, or attracted her. She is really the only one who could be said to be totally beautiful before the eyes of God and to be without stain: ...*you are all fair... and there is not a spot in you...* [Ct 4:7]. Thus, she not only ever experienced in fact the unregulated motions of disordered nature in her inferior powers, but there had been removed from her perfectly the very disorder of nature. You might question: there was "removed" from her? Sin never reigned in her mortal body, as the grace in her Immaculate Conception prevented her from being affected by the vice common to nature. Who, then, could ever comprehend with the customary measures that are so restricted of our judgments, the excellence of the purity of the great Mother of God?

1116: O God! And this divine maternity, what level of super-human purity was there not required in Mary, even superior to the purity of the Angels? To the extent in fact that Mary's dignity as Mother of God was exalted above all the choirs of the Angels,

to that measure it was only fitting that her purity should exceed also the most sublime level of those most pure spirits.

1117: And here we are, devout ladies and gentlemen, to what height have we arrived, by disposing the steps of our hearts [Ps 83:6], accommodated to the short steps of its timid thoughts. By going from virtue to virtue [v. 8], we have passed by all human perfection. Then, we even were raised up over the very perfection of the Angels. We have arrived at the very peak of these very holy mountains. And this is the point where one should begin to speak of Mary's Purity. And even with all this, we have only reached the point where she has her foundation: ...*The foundations thereof are in the holy mountains...* [Ps 86:1].

1118: But this is where I should also come to a conclusion. Rather, I withdraw into my spirit in **obsequious devotion**. It is already dizzy at such heights, and almost fears its own ruin, to see from such loftiness its own baseness. Pure souls, loving souls, you follow through to the sublime inaccessible goal. Let go in flight as can only be executed with the wings of doves. Here it is no longer a matter of ascending through human virtues, and within the grasp of human beings, as we have made clear so far: ... *they shall go from virtue to virtue...* [Ps 83:8]. Here it is a matter solely of contemplating the divine perfections: ... *the God of gods shall be seen in Sion...* [ib].

1119: Yes, it is necessary to see the divine perfections. This Virgin is the Mother of God. Keep in mind that her bringing forth is fitting to such purity, and this purity is in some proportion to this birth. Come, o chaste virgins, o candid doves, to repose among the lilies, where also your Beloved also feeds: ...*And who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest...?* [Ps 54:7].

1120: Come, o devout lovers of Mary, and faithful imitators of her purity. Sit in the most happy shade of this plant of paradise. And her fruit will be sweet to your palate [Ct 2:3]. And she reaches out broadly and thus lowers her branches of her protection courteously over all her servants, even the most infirm. Whoever you may be, brother or sister, and now matter how arid may be the desert path you follow in this world, she protects you. No matter how beaten down you may be by the burning ardor of your concupiscences, she will cover you confidently. She extends to you the sweet shade of this beneficent plant, and you will find refreshment, repose, salvation. All of you who feel burned out, weary, and discouraged of heart, she will help you.

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SourcesOT

Ps 20:4	# 1114	Pr 31:28	# 1110
54:7	# 1119	29	# 1110
75:3	# 1113	Ct 2:3	# 1120
83:6	# 1117	16	# 1119
8	## 1117; 1118	4:7	# 1115
86:1	# 1117	Ws 4:1	## 1100; 1101

NT

Mt 11:25 [<i>anawim</i>]	# 1108	1 Co 15:52	# 1112
13:11	# 1108	54	# 1112
26:11	# 1111	2 Co 4:16	# 1112
Jn 3:8	# 1103	12:9	# 1111
Rm 7:23	# 1111	10	# 1111
24	# 1111	11	# 1097
8:9	# 1108	Ph 3:12	# 1103
21, ff.	# 1112	13	# 1103
39	# 1111	4:8	# 1104
1 Co 2:10	# 1103	13	# 1111
7:26	# 1106	Col 3:4	# 1112
31 [<i>fugacity</i>]	# 1104	1 Tm 5:3	# 1105
32	# 1107	4	# 1105
34	# 1106	Heb 13:4	# 1104
35	# 1107	Apoc 8:1 [2 x]	# 1114
37	# 1107	14:4	# 1108
15:50	# 1112		

Liturgy

Antiphon for <i>Benedictus</i> , Liturgy of Holy Mary for Saturday	# 1109
Hymn, <i>Ave, Maris Stella</i>	# 1102

Fathers & Doctors

St. Augustine, <i>Confessions</i> , 4, 2. t. 1, p. 104/C	# 1100
St. Thomas Aquinas, II-II, q. 7, a. 2	# 1098
II-II, q. 151, a. 1	# 1098

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1121:

SERMON 31

The Souls in Purgatory

Preached in St. Paul's of Campo Marzio, on November 1, the Solemn Day of All saints, in 1805, Verona. - It lasted about three quarters of an hour. - It was repeated in St. Paul's in the year 1809, on November 1st.

The cause of the Holy Souls in Purgatory, that it is only fitting to treat today, is of itself so recommended to anyone who has faith and heart. As a result, it is hardly necessary to have much eloquence, or art, that the theme might be listened to by you, Christian listeners. For the true faith lives in you, operating and illustrious, and your spirit abounds richly in piety and sweetness.

1122: You are already disposed to come to assist them in their misery. You have come here for this most praiseworthy purpose. As you hear their sufferings narrated, and their needs exposed, there increase equally in you your tender affection and your virtuous compassion. The effect of this will be that there will be spread the more your love in an efficacious and ready manner. As you are moved, though, seek that as the more you are inspired, and loving the more your deceased brothers and sisters, yearn for nothing more than the increase of this most excellent charity.

1123: May the glory of the heavenly Father, who has diffused this fraternal love in such fullness in your hearts [Rm 5:5u], and even more peace be the reward for your good desires. To satisfy these, I will make every effort, according to my ability. I hope that God, with His internal movements of His grace might multiply the fruits of your justice. I propose to you to consider first the excess of the pains of these suffering souls; then, the ease with which you have to liberate them; and lastly, the usefulness that will come to you for this assistance that you offer.

1124: And so, ladies and gentlemen, that torturous prison will be opened to the eyes of your consideration. This is where the souls of our brothers and sisters are, those who have passed through this life, vested so beautifully in the nuptial **garment** of charity and grace. They have not yet, however, been fully purged and disposed to take off for heaven.

1125: O God, what a spectacle of tender compassion! We are deeply moved with sorrow in coming to know that some Christians fall as slaves into the hands of barbarians. It seems that we can almost hear, even though far removed from where they are, the noise of those heavy iron chains in which their hands and feet are locked. We can almost hear that ferocious rain of blows heaped upon them, reaching to their very bones, tearing at their flesh. We can hear those sorrowful cries of woe that the crude torment evokes from their burdened shouts with which they plead for help. They await the redemption from the remote charity of their neighbors and brothers.

1126: Depicting in our imaginations the tragic squalor of those prisons, the bruised members, those faces all cast downward out of sadness, those cheeks sunken in from hunger, all lined by their tears. What a response arises from the very depths of our being! But, what do sufferings such as these unfortunates have to do with the even more harsh penalty and excessively so, of purgatory? Just think of the most horrible prison imaginable, the most darkened, the most confining. But, in the last analysis in this world, there is no fiery prison, as there is for the poor souls in purgatory.

1127: What is there that could ever keep alive for an entire single day a person condemned within a fiery furnace? what suffering could ever be equal to this? What would you say, then, of those souls stoat are confined, not for a day, but for many days, even for many weeks, some even for months, and others even for years? And what about those who are there for a few, or for many centuries, who have been bound by divine justice to those flames?

1128: O divine justice, how little it is feared by human beings! O great God, the reason is because You dissimulate, as it were, in this life, our faults, to afford time for repentance. You are the patient and long-suffering Remunerator. We might presume excessively by increasing daily our debts with Your terrible justice, without even thinking of satisfying those already contracted. We may be content in having obtained in the sacrament the remission of sins and eternal penalties, and then care very little that there remains to be paid still the temporal punishment. In our supreme negligence, we may repeat often: Provided that hell is avoided, and that there is assurance of going to Paradise, even if after death, we will remain in purgatory, as long as God wishes, we will be content with that.

1129: What laziness and insensibility! Should one propose to wash us either with water, or with fire, what would we choose? Certainly, the water. And God, by His mercy, is content that in this life, we could wash ourselves perfectly with water, that of our teas, and of a voluntary penance. With this offer, would we still choose to be washed with the fire of His justice? And if we cannot even have the extreme tip of our finger even for a brief quarter of an hour, directly over a flickering fire that is totally under control, how could we bear it for entire weeks, months, years, lustres? And even more who could endure without most terrible spasms of the purifying fire of the other life? And in this very fire there are found at this instant, while we are thinking on these matters, how many souls that are joined to us by faith, by charity, and even more by blood. And this does not wait for us!

1130: Listen to how the Holy Doctors and very important Fathers of the Church speak of these torments. St. Augustine ¹⁵⁰ says openly that that fire is so severe, that it surpasses all pain that anyone in this world has every suffered, or could suffer. Even the sufferings of all the martyrs and all other persons and creatures, are as nothing in comparison with the penalty of purgatory. And there is also such a

¹⁵⁰St. Augustine, *Ennar. in Ps 37*, 3. t. 4, pp. 295, S, ff.

difference between our natural fire and that fire of purgatory, as there between a **painted fire** and a genuine fire.

1131: St. Cyril ¹⁵¹ adds that if all the penalties that can be imagined in this world, and all the torments and afflictions were to be compared to the least pain that is experienced in Purgatory, they would be seen immediately almost as alleviations. Thus, anyone through personal experience, among the living, knows of suffering such as that, this person would choose to come even to the end of the world without any comfort. A person would choose to be tormented by all the sufferings together that all of humanity has ever suffered from the times of Adam right up to the present moment. All of these would be preferable to a single day being tormented in Purgatory even with the smallest discomfort that might be found there.

1132: St. Gregory also writes ¹⁵²: I judge that the transitory fire to be more intolerable than every tribulation of this life. And the Venerable Bede ¹⁵³ finally concludes, also with great frankness that the correction that will be administered in Purgatory is much more serious than what thieves have suffered from severe human justice. It is worse than what the Holy Martyrs endured from the most barbaric cruelty from tyrants. These pains are all the more bitter and ruthless than human beings could ever imagine.

1133: This is the penalty of sense. And yet, according to what commonly all the Fathers and Doctors hold, the penalty of loss that all these blessed souls suffer in their exile from heaven, surpasses by very much all of the penalties of sense, even the most horrible. What do you say, then, my most dearly beloved? Does it not seem to you that the most unhappy wretchedness of these souls does not merit all of our compassion? You are already well disposed by nature that should you meet along your way a beast of burden that has fallen under its burden, this moves you to seek someone to come to help, if you yourselves are not able to run to assist the animal. Now, when you see your own neighbor who has fallen into the clutches of that fire, and is groaning under the weight of such excessive tribulation, would I have any reason to doubt that you would not make use of any means to deliver him straight away?

1134: O, would that it were in my power to make you hear but a single one of these sighs, a single one of their groans, as they are reaching out to you this very day. These disconsolate souls are begging you for this help, and they have great confidence in you! - They seem to be saying among themselves: it is possible, that so many of our friends that we have left alive in the world, and who always showed such concern, such affection for us - can they now really be forgetting us now that we are in such need? It is possible, that father of a family says that that son of man could be so ungrateful, so insensitive, that he has buried my memory at the same time as he

¹⁵¹St. Cyril, no citation.

¹⁵²St. Gregory, *In 7 Ps. Paenitent.* t. 2, pp. 378, ff.

¹⁵³Venerable Bede, *In Ps 37:1.*

has entered with the bones? Yet, he promised me at that instant of my death that he would not forget me, and that he would pray for me!

1135: Is it possible, a mother of a family would say, that my darling daughter, to whom I recommended myself, has now left me to suffer still more in these flames? And, in a similar vein, the deceased husband might address himself to his widowed wife - or, that deceased woman to her husband; and perhaps in these tones, a brother might appeal, or a deceased sister of another brother, of another sister. And they might be raising their voices, with heart-rending cries, not unlike the voice of Job: ... *have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you, my friends...* [Jb 19:21]. So, have pity, have compassion on our sufferings, as living friends of ours: ... *because the hand of the Lord touched me...* This is the hand of the most just Lord, which has touched me with indescribable torments.

1136: O, you can lose these chains that hold us bound to these torments, and keep us far from our beatitude. You diminish the time at least of this painful dwelling, you will speed up our repose, our glory. While you are still alive on earth, you could merit and satisfy also for us. For us, the time has already fled, the period of meriting has passed with our lives. The night have overtaken us when no one can work anymore [Jn 9:4]. All of our confidence is in you. It is in your hands to alleviate us soon from these sufferings, and to open to us the desired gates of heaven.

1137: O, my beloved, who of you would have a heart that is so hard that it would resist the compassionate prayers of these, our wretched brothers and sisters? Is the reason perhaps that it may be very hard to alleviate their pain? Would their liberation cost all that much?

St. Gregory recounts ¹⁵⁴ about that priest, Santolo by name, who really was a great saint. In order to deliver a friend of his, who was a Deacon, from the cruel death that the Longobards had prepared for him, first found a way to make himself the guarantor for his friend. He then arranged for his friend to escape, and he remained exposed, in his palace, to the torments and to death. However, God intervened with a manifest miracle, and saved him from this at the crucial moment.

1138: This was an act of the most perfect love, as Christ Himself had said [Jn 15:13] that greater love than this no man has, that a man should lay down his life for his friends. Should we not do the same? And o, how much less is asked of us in order to liberate our friends from the most bitter fire of Purgatory.

Let us also read of St. Paulinus of Nola ¹⁵⁵. He ransomed with extreme generosity of almsgiving the Christian slaves from the ferocious chains of the Vandals. Once he had consumed all the patrimony and all that he had in this world, in such excelling mercy, he sold himself into slavery in order lastly to liberate the child of that widow.

¹⁵⁴St. Gregory, *Dialogues* 3, 37. t. 1, pp. 1027/ 4 D, ff.

¹⁵⁵St. Paulinus of Nola, in: Baronius, t. 5, from the year 431.

1139: Would we have to lose our liberty, all our resources, in order to pluck the souls of our brothers and sisters from that tormenting prison? No, not at all. All the works of satisfaction for the deceased can be reduced to these three: sacrifice, alms, prayer.

Judas, the Maccabees [2 M 12:43, ff.] sent ten thousand drachma of silver to Jerusalem to have offered there sacrifices of expiation for the soldiers who died in battle. And the Sacred Scripture praises this action with that famous epiphenomenon:... *it is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead... that they may be loosed from their sins...* [v. 46].

1140: How much money is thrown away in games, in gluttony, in vanity! If only all this would be applied to so many Masses, and so much alms for the relief of the souls of Purgatory, how many more of them would be picked up out of their misery! And how much would their penalties be diminished! St. Gregory¹⁵⁶ narrates how he had ordered thirty continuous days the celebration of a Mass each day for the soul of that Monk, Justus. The Monk had died in his Monastery of St. Andrew's, and then it was revealed to his brother that precisely on the thirtieth day, when the last Mass had been completed, that this soul, with all of its penalty dissolved, flew to heaven.

1141: And St. Bernard¹⁵⁷ refers to the saint, who celebrating these Masses for his sister, each time her pains were diminished, until all debt was paid and she was admitted into glory.

What great amount really is it that the deceased ask of us, other than a few Masses, some alms? Most times, in fact, they do not ask for anything from our own substance: they simply ask for what is rightfully theirs. They are asking for the carrying out of those pious agreements, that have been committed to our faith in wills. They often ask for some small part of that considerable amount that they themselves earned with such sweat, and with such diligence they had set aside for us.

1142: Would some perhaps claim that they are totally poor? But, who is taking anything away from you, my brothers and sisters, that you might be able to offer some prayers for the deceased? Prayer is the key to open those blessed gates of Paradise, not only for yourself, but also for your neighbor, groaning out in Purgatory. Does it cost much effort to pray? And can it not be offered in every place, at all times, and in every circumstance? Would it cost that much to apply to those souls a good deed, a Holy Communion, an indulgence; the recitation of some Psalm, some rosaries, to lift up our spirits to God every now and then for them?

What great usefulness we could draw also for ourselves I will continue after a brief rest...

¹⁵⁶ St. Gregory, *Dialogues*, 4th Book, c. 55. T. 1, pp, 1061/2 C, ff.

¹⁵⁷ St. Bernard, *The Life of Malachy*, 5, 11..

1143: Let us begin with its spiritual usefulness. The very action itself that you accomplish in praying for the deceased, would this not merit for you immediately an increase of grace and a development of glory, if you are just? And would this same action not dispose you for justification and grace, if you are sinners? This indeed is an act of charity and of mercy, and the most excellent form of charity and mercy. Just listen to St. Augustine ¹⁵⁸. He teaches that one of the most holy exercises and one of the most pious cares in which a man can be exercised in this life, is the offering of sacrifices, the giving of alms and the praying for the deceased that are in purgatory. They are all our brothers and sisters.

1144: Let us pass through, if it so pleases you, each and every one of the charitable works of mercy. There is great merit in giving food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, and to dress the naked. And will it not be of even greater merit to give food to those starving and fasting souls that Bread of the Angels? Is it not most fitting to open for them with our prayers the Font of Life of which they have such a thirst? And can we not dress them, and crown them with immortal glory? There is great merit in offering lodging to pilgrims, to visit prisons, to console the infirm. And will it not even be greater merit, and much more so, to conduct these souls, all rejoicing and celebrating in the house of their Lord? Is it not most meritorious to redeem them from a prison of fire, to comfort those afflicted and languishing souls with divine love, by showing to them the much yearned for beautiful face of their Beloved?

1145: And since it is so meritorious to bury the bodies of the deceased, and to place them under the earth, how much more sublime merit will there not be in drawing souls up out of that deep pit of crude torments, and to place them in peace, and to provide repose for them in the bosom of God? I should also say more: the mere thought that forms in our minds to liberate them, after having been moved, or by following a pious will, is of singular merit: ... *It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought* ... - in fact, the Holy Spirit Himself describes it [2 M 12:46].

1146: Judge for yourselves, then, what would be the profit gained by this man, or that woman, who are now well off. Think of what would come to them if, with their payers, with their sacrifices, with their alms, they should arrive at the effect of liberating even a single soul of those noble prisoners. Add to the merit of the action, the reward that those holy souls will render to their benefactor, later on, when they have reached heaven: ... *Do good to the just, and you shall find great recompense...* [Si 12:2] – says the Holy Spirit.

1147: What fervent prayers will they not pour forth to their Most High Lord for the salvation of those who accelerated for them the possession of that glory! From how many dangers will they not be preserved! With what efficacious help and gentle comfort will they not be endowed! At the hour of their deaths, in that great and decisive day of battle, as a defense, in those bitter agonies, how consoled will they not be, and that tremendous judgment, how well patronaged will they be! They will surely not allow that one remain for very long in that fire of purgation, particularly one

¹⁵⁸ St. Augustine, *Sermo 172*, 2, 173. T.5/1, pp. 827, ff.

through whose means they themselves had been drawn out in good time. But, they will all come as in competition, desirous of extending to such a person their friendly right arms, to introduce their helpers and to gather them into the eternal tabernacles.

1148: And where will I even place that supreme recompense that they will receive from God Himself, these merciful liberators of His most dear children? God, in fact, by His infinite justice, torments those souls in order to purify them; and through His infinite charity, He loves them. He seeks to withdraw them, at any rate, to His staff of correction. He desires nothing more than to find Mediators, intercessors, who make satisfaction, who pray, those who beseech in their behalf. One could no better oblige the heart of such a loving Father than by accelerating fort so many of His exiled children, their entrance into His house. And just what eye of predilection, of love, of contentment will He not look upon all those who commit themselves to carry out the most ardent desires of His charity.

1149: Do you wish that I should speak to you now about the usefulness for your temporal welfare? It seems to me superfluous to descend minutely to the most small and insignificant favors, is it not true, that those who are most indebted to His most loving heart, have to wait from the most beneficent hand of the Supreme Master? They can consider it as certain that they will never be abandoned in their needs. They will never be neglected in their supplications, and not be heard in their desires. These pious and merciful men and women, who have manifested such charity to their deceased brothers and sisters, find that their God has made Himself their Debtor *...as long as you did it to one of these=, my least brethren, you did it to Me...* [Mt 25:40].

1150: Come on, now, and let us conclude with the words of St. Bernard ¹⁵⁹: I will arise in their assistance. Yes, I will get up and come to the help of those souls. I will intercede with groans, I will implore with moans, I will entreat with prayers, I will make satisfaction with singular sacrifice, if this is possible for me, as I hope, to move god's heart to regard their affliction, and to judge propitiously in their favor. My prayer will be that their travail be converted into repose, their misery into glory, their scourges into crowns.

With these, then, and similar offerings, one can alleviate their misery, and their travail, and take away their pain.

AMEN!

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¹⁵⁹ St. Bernard, *Sermo de divi*. 42.

SourcesOT

Jb 19:21	# 1135
Si 22:2	# 1147
2 M 12:43, ff.	# 1139
21	## 1139; 1145

NT

Mt 25:40	# 1149
Jn 9:4	# 1136
15:13	# 1138
Rm 5:5	# 1123

Fathers and Doctors

St. Augustine, <i>Ennarr. In Ps 37, 3. T. 4, pp. 295/S, ff.</i>	# 1130
<i>Sermo 172, 2. T. 5/1, pp. 827, ff.</i>	# 1143
<i>Sermo 173. T. 5/1, pp. 827, ff.</i>	# 1143
Venerable Bede, <i>In Ps 37: 1</i> [no citation]	# 1132
St. Bernard, <i>Serm. De Div. 42</i>	# 1150
<i>Vita S. Malach., 5, 11</i> [no citation]	# 1141
St. Cyril [On the Pains of Purgatory] [no citation]	# 1131
St. Gregory, <i>Dialogues, 3, 37. t. 1, pp. 1027/D, ff.</i>	# 1137
<i>Dialogues, Bk 4, c. 55. t. 1, pp. 1061/2 C, ff.</i>	# 1140
<i>In 7 Ps Paenitent. t. 2, pp. 378, ff.</i>	# 1132

Saints

St. Paulinus of Nola [cited by Baronius for the year 431]	# 1138
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Other Writers

Baronius, <i>History. T. 5, Year 431. [about St. Paulinus of Nola]</i>	# 1138
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1151:**SERMON 32****Each One's Terrible Death**

For the First Sunday of Advent, substituted and preached on the Second Sunday, on the 8th of December 1805, in St. Paul's of Campo Marzio. – It lasted three quarters of an hour. – Verona, on the left side of the Adige ¹⁶⁰.

1152: I hope, my most distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I hope for your ready pardon, if I do not accede to your devout expectancy, by speaking to you today about the most solemn feast that occurs today. I have been called upon unexpectedly to perform the duty of someone else. And if the orator, who was already prepared is unable to speak, there was lacking sufficient time for me to prepare myself. So, I thought it better to be silent altogether than to speak of so great a mystery without that dignity that it would require.

1153: However, I will treat of a matter, while not precisely the Feast of this day, it does at least correspond to the circumstances of the time in which we are. This is the preparation for the coming of Christ. So, it is most necessary to prepare our hearts in proper manner, as I was supposed to do last Sunday, but it was suspended. So, I felt that it should not be omitted on this day in any manner whatsoever. And truly, to remember Christ who has come to save the world, to await the coming Christ at the end of the world, to judge it: this is the spirit that beckons to you, ladies and gentlemen...

1154: The Holy Gospel invites us, ladies and gentlemen, at least for a little while, to think this evening on the universal end of this world. This is a thought that ought to bring a shudder to all our passions, and to make us enter seriously into ourselves. There come described for us, by Christ Himself, the awesome signs of His formidable and ultimate judgment. There will be signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars, as well as on earth a great consternation among the peoples. There will be a great confusion for the terrible roar of the sea and its tempestuous waves. Human beings will be withered in their fear, and by the expectation of all that is to happen then to the world. Even the heavenly powers will be moved, engulfed in a most sublime stupor.

1155: O God, what terrible days! O what a fearsome time that will be! Each of us will say: I beg the Lord that He might take me from this life before those terrible moments. And thus, with each one hoping to die beforehand, each endeavors to lower by himself the terrible fear for that tremendous day. But, I would prefer that we reflect on it a little more. Is it not perhaps the death of each individual in particular that ought to be the real universal slaughter? I mean that day when I will die, that

¹⁶⁰ **Translator's Note: NB:** the following two paragraphs, ## 1152 & 1153 were added by Fr. Bertoni, perhaps later on, most likely because the Sermon was given on the Second Sunday of Advent, instead of the First Sunday, as was first intended.

each one of you will die - this is for me, and for each one of you, the end of the world.

1156: How is it that so many fear that last day of the end of the world, and so little in common is the day of each one's own death feared? Is it perhaps that we might be able to avoid it, as though we were not to die? Ors this day to be feared any the less? Neither one of these is correct, but it is just that it is not very much taken into consideration. I would like to prove this here tonight, and to prove it not with abstract reasoning, but through the experience of each one of you. So, I will expose here just three of the terrible qualities of death: the loss of the body, the loss of all temporal goods, the danger of losing one's soul. We will see, then, whether each one's own death is more to be feared than the end of the world. We will look at this from the effect of that fear which is, after having put away all vanity of the mind, and with the heart detached from all earthly affection. This will place each one at the point of taking very seriously his own salvation.

1157: Among the many other sublime gifts with which human nature is endowed, just as soon as coming forth from the hands of the sublime Creator, it is endowed with immortality: *...for God created man incorruptible...* [Ws 2:3]. We were created by God to live forever. And now, if each one of us has to die, this is because of a sentence of penalty that has been handed down: *...And as it is appointed unto men once to die...* [Heb 9:27]. We have been condemned to death. Death did not exist in this world. That first man who introduced sin was also taken away by death: *... Wherefore as by one man, sin entered into this world, and by sin, death....* [Rm 5:12].

1158: That first father of ours believed that he could become like God: *...and you shall be like gods...* [Gn 3:5]. And God condemned him to become dust: *... into dust you shall return...* [v. 19]. This was to make abundantly clear that he was indeed dust, and not God, and that he had to be subjected to God in humiliation. How stupidly he wished to rise up through his pride *... you are dust...* [ib.]. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, we were condemned to death because of the pride of our first parents. And we have been condemned also all of us as their children, so that we might learn to remain humble under such a powerful Lord: *... Be you humbled, therefore, under the mighty hand of God...* [1 P 5:6].

1159: Does it seem to you that someone condemned to death ought to hold his head high in the clouds? Just look at those who are dragged to the gallows – how pale they are, how they tremble, with their heads down. This is our situation. If indeed the way that leads to the gibbet might be by chance a bit longer, one should be no less afraid than that poor unfortunate who is being led there. Only the senseless beasts and irrational brutes that jump around in the meadows and frolic through the street even on their way to the butcher. Human beings, though, fear at the sight of a very grave, irreparable, imminent evil.

1160: I have to die. It is necessary that one day I will leave this body of mine: it will be reduced to a putrid, horrible, nauseating cadaver. I can have no reasons for pride, for I do not know of any. Should I vaunt beauty, vivaciousness, and sprightliness?

Vain woman, young man in the prime of life, look to yourselves: this is one of the idols that are adored by you, then overtaken by death. Look now at the mute cadaver, squalid, emaciated, with disheveled hair, with eye-brows untrimmed, eyes sunken in, and closed unevenly, face all transfigured, with livid color, limbs all rigid, frozen-like, and the entire person, in much disarray. This is a horrible skeleton, a night phantasm, and a fearsome image. This is **the vivid portrait drawn** by Bartoli¹⁶¹.

1161: And now where is the pomp in dress, in ornaments? It is all wrapped up in tatters and is taken out of the home, because the odor is insufferable. And where will it go? Into a hole. This is where one's ample possessions are reduced, their tragic palace now. The sweet-smelling garlands are changed into dirt and filth. One's relationship to nobility is succeeded by a fraternity with the worms and defilement [Jn 17:14]. And what lies under the ground and is stepped only anyone passing by.

1162: "I was led with others to see Caesar's grave." It is Augustine who speaks¹⁶². Let us follow him, as the tomb is opened up also to our sight and for our instruction. "So, I am looking at you, o Caesar, all pale of color, immersed in pus. I see your opened body, and swarms of worms that go in and out of it. Two of these hungry creatures feed on your eyes. Your hair is no longer attached to your head, and your lips are all eaten away, allowing your teeth to show in a horrible manner.

1163: Where is the magnificence of your wealth? Where are your creature comforts? Where is your entourage of princes? Where is your accompaniment of barons? Where are the ranks of your formidable soldiers? Where is your ivory bed? Where is your royal throne? Where is your imperial throne? So many people venerated you, princes feared you, and cities honored you. At your name, all trembled. Where has all your grandeur gone? He lost everything, when breath went out of him. And they left him imprisoned in a sepulchre of three arm's length, full of corruption and putrefaction."

These are St. Augustine's words to this point. Look at the great statue of Nabucco reduced to dust in a sepulcher.

1164: In the grave, and I will conclude this point with the emphatic phrases of Bartoli¹⁶³ - in the womb one sees a human being reduced to his first origins, and having become again dust and mud, all enveloped in a nauseating stench. Here, all human grandeur is degraded, here all the plans of those empty heads are reduced to nothing. Here all the grandiose pretensions, that in some had even been able to render whole cities, provinces, kingdoms, all topsy-turvy, here have become simply a nothing, unable to move, or operate. Here there is only silence, where once there was the teeming tumultuousness of the affairs of this world. Here all the counsels, the commands, the adulation, the fame, are all as quiet as a mouse; you can hear a pin

¹⁶¹ Bartoli, SJ, *Man at the Point of Death. Introduction.*

¹⁶² St. Augustine, *Sermo 66*. T. 6, Append., p. 374 C – spurious.

¹⁶³ Bartoli, SJ – Jesuit author. No citation.

drop. The king is reduced to having nothing more than the slave. This is a monarch, that other one is an emperor, this one is the most awesome commander of armies. Here is the most wise of counselors, and there the most learned scientist, over there the most eloquent speaker. She was the most beautiful woman who flourished on this earth. Come now, men and women, see if there is anything to take pride in, or to puff up over! - ...*Why is earth and ashes proud...?* [Si 10:9].

1165: Come, too, o wretched one, you who have distanced yourself by your pride from your God, your only true good and last end. You place your beatitude, your peace in these much desired goods of this world: ...*O death, how bitter is the remembrance of you to a man who has peace in his possessions...!* [Si 41:1]. *And if the mere thought of death that you have to die, embitters you, in the thoughts of your possessions, then, how bitter will death be for you! For death will take you from everything in equal manner, forever and by force. Just reflect that this loss will be all the more dolorous for you, as it is now for the more loved all that you have to lose.*

1166: It is not true that you love earthly and base realities not only more than your bodies, which would be slight, but also even more than your own soul? You are ready, in fact, to lose your soul many times over rather than these earthly goods. What will happen, then, that when you are lacking nothing, and lose it all? The sorrow over this will increase from the enforced detachment that will be even more than all the fatigue that went in to acquiring these goods and holding on to them. How much thought, how much fatigue, how much sweat, how many dangers, how much exultation, how much loss of sleep, how much time, how much care! And all lost.

1167: And there will be multiplied the bitterness of this separation, in proportion to the greater number of the realities that have been loved, and from which one must be separated. As many divisions as there will be, there will be that many pains. There will be dolor for the riches, dolor for the pleasures, dolor for the honors. There will be pain for the separation from loved ones, friends, and conversations. There will be regret for the palaces, for the country homes, for the powers. There will be sorrow at leaving behind the celebrations, the music, and the loves. There will be pain for all for which once there was affection, delight and rejoicing.

1168: A supreme increase of this sorrow for the losses incurred will take hold all the more when it comes unexpectedly, and when it is unprepared. The thought might have circulated that this world should last forever. The only main concern that the life style had to be maintained with more comforts, more splendor, more joy. One was building up in a kind of foolhardy manner, on a very mobile foundation as though it were solid and stable. Scarcely would the house be built and it would crash, and oppress under its ruins the unwise builder. Such a person would have assembled many riches and would have said to himself: ... *and I say to my soul: Soul, you have much good laid up for many years. Take your rest; eat, drink; make good cheer...* [Lk 12:19]. But, then an inner voice would whisper: ... *you fool, this night do they require your soul of you: and whose shall these things be which you have provided...?* [v. 20].

1169: Others, then, will enjoy that which I had prepared to enjoy myself, and which I have to leave behind. And I do not even know just to whom it will fall to enjoy that which I have to surrender. I lost these fallacious goods I have loved, and for having loved these deceptive goods that I am losing, I lose as well for ever the only authentic reality. He is the One whom I could have loved, and should have loved. If I had indeed loved God in this way, God would never have been lacking to me, and with Him, I would really not have been missing true good. I lose now every good, and now I go out to meet, through the false and delusive goods that I have loved, the authentic, infinite, interminable evils.

1170: O, ladies and gentlemen, the fear of losing one's soul is indeed a formidable step! Anyone facing that imminent, extreme danger should not be weighed down with other concerns, with such distress, and with such troubles. By grace, let us now consider through the wise counsel with our minds that which we will experience truly in just a little while.

1171: Just think of a city under a powerful siege. Battered, in turmoil on every side, giant holes in many places in the wall, a breach is broken open, the furious and conquering army is all arrayed for the assault. What disarray, what upsetment, what despair in that wretched population! Such is the soul, besieged in the body by the ferocious array of evils that militate under the ever victorious banners of death: ...*the sorrows of death have encompassed me...* [Ps 114:3]. And without giving any truce, or ever any pause, this implacable enemy gives battle with such fury, and with such impetus, that all the members are shaken. The soul, then, despairing of being able to defend itself any more, abandons the square, her sweet, her beloved sojourn. This is the booty taken over by the victory, as the proud rights of conquest: ... *let his confidence be rooted out of his tabernacle, and let the destruction tread upon him like a king...* [Jn 18:14].

1172: O God, where will the wretched soul go, and where can it flee? To the other world, to eternity. Alas! And to this flight, how much space is assigned, and how much time is granted? A simple point only, and but an instant, a single moment. This is that instant on which all eternity depends: .. *have you seen the darksome doors...?* [Jn 38:17]. These are the gates of hell, which at but a single step place the soul from time into eternity. This is that point in which there is decided the lot of a person, in stable manner, immutably, eternally.

1173: A terrible moment, o frightening step! O formidable instant, a tremendous move. And on but a point in time that such most disparate extremes depend: heaven or hell, supreme glory of supreme ignominy; always in rejoicing, or eternally in lamentation. This is perpetual joy, or perpetual suffering, eternal felicity, or eternal misery. O God, what danger, what a supreme danger to be lost!

1174: And add on to all this, ladies and gentlemen, the supreme difficulty of shunning the most grave, imminent evil, that will occupy at that time, the entire apprehension of the soul. And first of all, because of the consciousness of one's own sins. These horrid monsters, vividly present to the mind, not only in some generic

way, but in their various species. They will be there in their number, in their gravity, and also in their corresponding penalty. They will engulf the wretched soul that will be totally demoralized. It will see itself surrounded and weighed down by such malice, of such ugliness, such deformity, that it will be forced to hate itself: ...*They will come with fear at the thought of their sins, and their iniquities shall stand against them to convict them...* [Ws 4:20].

1175: The terror, the bewilderment, the consternation that will cast into the soul such a horrible vision, is described by the Psalmist [Ps 17:5], with the similitude of a torrent rushing on toward ruin: ... *the torrents of iniquity troubled me...* One would like to retreat, but in vain: death already urges one on. He looks about frantically for someone to save him, and there is no one who would free hi. He seeks companions and there is no one there. He searches for advocates and protectors, and there is no one to defend him. All alone, each one must go, followed only by one's own works: ... *for their works follow them...* [Apoc 14:13].

1176: Whoever has to walk in the dark in unfamiliar places, full of danger, and to go along between the horror of silence and darkness all alone, what fear is experienced! But, even how much greater fear will there not be in walking into that other world, where I do not even know to what room my merits will conduct me? And the horrid tribunal that awaits me, and the merciless judge, whom I fear will be indignant because of my many offenses! And the mercy that cedes its place then to justice, and to that most minute scrutiny that will be severe beyond belief! And if the works themselves of even the just will be most carefully and scrupulously weighed: ...*I feared all my works...* [Jb 9:28]. Is this not true? For, do not the saints themselves tremble, as is it not revealed that even the just person is hardly saved: ... *and if the just man scarcely be saved...*? [1 P 4:8].

1177: And these enemies that now combat against me, are more ferocious than ever. They beat me down, they hold me in their clutches, like ferocious hungry lions to devour me: ... *your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour...* [1 P 5:8]. This is true of him at all times. But, in this last moment, knowing that he has no other possibility, calls on all his infernal powers on that day, and gives the ultimate proofs of his cleverness and his fury: ... *the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he has but a short time...* [Apoc 12:12].

1178: O God, in such great danger of being lost, in such difficulty in working out my salvation, among so many rabid enemies who want to cast me to my ruin, O God, what if I do lost myself? I lose heaven, and I will go to hell. I will lose a paradise full of every blessing, I will lose that ultimate and supreme happiness for which I was created. I will lose my God, my genuine beatitude, for a miserable and apparent benefit, that I stupidly loved in life, and which then right away disappeared. I will find a hell full of every evil, I will find an intolerable suffering, without comfort and refreshment. I will find an extreme misery that I so easily could have avoided, at the time that I could have been converted. God Himself was offering me the grace, His mercy.

1179: O how wretched I am! And if I lose myself now, the loss is irreparable. The hatchets are already at work on the tree; and wherever it may fall, it will remain there for all eternity: *...If the tree fall to the south, or to the north, in what place soever it shall fall, there it shall be...* [Qo 11:3]. That inextinguishable fire will burn away any shoots of hope that could every come to change one's eternal place, or fortune: *... for beholds the day shall come kindled as a furnace... it shall not leave them root, nor branch...* [M<l 4:1].

1180: St. Augustine ¹⁶⁴ teaches that there will be opened, there will be opened hell, and it will be like a ditch of burning fire: one can descend down into it, but cannot come up out again." One can descend, but will not return." David prayed in this vein, fearful that that horrible pit might not close its mouth over him, in his great trepidation *...let not the deep swallow me up...* [Ps 68:16]. O, all of you who are now living forgetful of God, put your minds to those realities. If you lost your souls just once, they are lost forever: *...Understand these things, you that forget God; lest he snatch you away, and there be none to deliver you...* [Ps 49:22].

1181: Throughout all this, the fear that I experience within myself, devoted ladies and gentlemen, offers me some explanation of yours. Indeed noting this fear clearly on your faces, I am of the view that I have sufficiently proven how terrible death is for each one. With death, there comes to a close every good of the body, which it insanely sought after in life. There also comes to a close all the benefits of this world, which drew the heart off the right path at times. This leads to the great risk of meeting a supreme and endless evil. And while the universal end of the whole world is generally feared by all, this should be pondered. For anyone who thinks this through should not think that the death of each person should be feared any the less. This was my main theme.

1182: The time for speeches is now past. It is up to you now to deliberate. For me, the consultation is concluded. There is no need for anyone to teach you what you have to do. You have a good flow of reason in order to judge this for yourselves. Furthermore, this was already said to you other times, and is said to you all the time. To say it again would be to waste time. What is required now is solely to make efficacious resolutions, and get to work. All of this is up to you, and your souls are your own. If you do not think of yourselves, who will think of you? If you do not save your souls, who will? "Understand this all of you who forget God, you do not know when one will be taken, nor who will be taken away."

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¹⁶⁴ St. Augustine, *Sermo* 252, 2. T. 5/2, append., p. 414/C.

SourcesOT

Gn 3:5	# 1158	Ps 114:3	# 1171
	# 1158	Qo 11:3	# 1179
Jb 9:28	# 1176	Ws 2:3	# 1157
17:14	# 1161	4:20:	# 1174
38:17	# 1172	Si 10:9	# 1164
Ps 17:	# 1175	41:1	# 1165
49:22	# 1180	MI 4:1	# 1179
68: 16	# 1180		

NT

Lk 12:9	# 1168	Heb 9:27	# 1157
20	# 1168	1 P 4:18	# 1176
Rm 5:12	# 1157	5:6	# 1158
		8	# 1177

Fathers & Doctors

St. Augustine, <i>Sermo 252, 2.</i>	T. 5/2, append. P. 414 C	# 1180
<i>Sermo 66.</i>	T. 6, append. P. 374,C spurious	# 1162

Other Writers

Bartoli, SJ. <i>Man at the Point of death.</i>	Introduction.	## 1160; 1164
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1183:**SERMON 33****The Most Sweet Fruit of Penance**

For the Fourth Sunday of Advent, the 22nd of December, in the year 1805, in St. Paul's. It lasted about one half hour. In Verona, on the left side of the Adige.

The precious fruits of the desired coming of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, on earth are His Redemption, Salvation, Peace, the Kingdom of Heaven. Exhibited and handed over as a gift to human beings. we are approaching, ladies and gentlemen, the most joyful memory of that day among all others, the most fortunate and the most holy. For on this day, come the benignity and humanity of this savior, our God. In accord with His Mercy, He has saved us so that justified in His grace, we are heirs according to the hope of eternal life [Tt 3:4, ff.].

1184: How happy those Christians who, in order to celebrate this most solemn feast for the whole earth, will dispose themselves with that preparation which is required! They are certain to achieve all the salvific effects for which Christ was born among us.

- O precisely, Father, it seems to me that each one of you might speak up in the secret whisperings of your desires. Exactly, we will listen today very willingly to an instruction, both brief and simple, on the manner of carrying out this most useful preparation.

You would limit me to one central point. However, I consent to your most pious will, because I am sure that it will not be taken badly.

1185: A better preparation surely there could not be found than the one pronounced by the one who had been sent by God as a Precursor of Christ, to prepare the peoples: *...prepare the way of the Lord...* [Lk 3:4]. . And who is this? Here is the answer: *... And John came, ... preaching the Baptism of Penance...* [v. 3]. And this is what I propose to you: penance.

1186: What does this mean, ladies and gentlemen? If I am not mistaken, you are convinced of the aptness and the necessity of this preparation. However, you may have supreme repugnance in choosing it and in practicing it. This is because of a prejudiced apprehension of bitterness and sadness that produces in your spirit the sad mien of this very little loved word "penance." I have already stated that you would limit me to one central point. However, if you will be patient with me just for a little while, and suspend for now to precipitate your judgments on only appearances, I am confident I will succeed. However, I do promise you to touch on the truth in a most evident manner. My goal is that you will come to judge and desire as most sweet, that which right now you consider and abhor as bitter.

1187: I am speaking now of internal and external penance, as is commanded to Christians. The internal penance, properly speaking, is the virtue, as is defined by St. Thomas ¹⁶⁵: a sincere conversion, which we hate, including the stable deliberation to emend the evil life and to correct the disorderly practices, and not without the hope of achieving pardon from divine mercy.

1188: External penance, then, has been elevated by Christ to the dignity of a sacrament. As for what pertains to us, it is an exterior confession of one's own faults, accompanied by an intimate and authentic penance, and by the will of at least satisfying for these. This is made to a priest in the relationship of absolution, which he can give in the Power of the Keys, or, of the divine authority communicated by God in order to signify sensibly, and to achieve efficaciously, reconciliation with God, in the souls of those who after Baptism have been marked with sin.

1189: This is that fruit of penance that is so sweet that I would like you to taste today. This is so that then you will resolve why one would abhor as one would a bitter plant, because its roots are somewhat bitter. However, it is capable of producing the most lovable and pleasing fruit.

Reconciliation with God is a complexity of all the most desirable benefits. Primarily, it involves the remission of sin, indeed from all sins.

1190: There is no crime that is so malicious, or so multiplied in number, that penance is not able to cancel it. This does not mean one single time, but over and over, even an infinite number of times.

We have the word of God Himself for this. For He says [Ezk 18:21], that if the wicked do penance for all his sins and puts his life back on the right path of My commandments and virtue, and live the spiritual life of my grace, he will no longer proceed aimlessly in the number of those dead for all eternity: *...But, if the wicked do penance for all his sins which he has committed, and keep all my commandments, and do judgment and justice, he shall live, and shall not die... I will not remember all his iniquities that he has done: in his justice which he has wrought, he shall live... [v. 22]*.

1191: These are the Lord's infallible promises as presented by Ezechiel. And again, in the same Prophet: *...And I shall say to the wicked: you shall surely die: and he shall do penance for his sin, and do judgment and justice... [Ezk 33:14]. ... and do no unjust thing, he shall surely live, and shall not die... [v. 15]*. All the sins that had been imputed to him as already committed will be so no longer. He has done good: then, let him live: *...none of his sins which, he has committed, shall be imputed to him. He has done judgment and justice, he shall sure live... [v. 16]*.

¹⁶⁵ St. Thomas Aquinas, III, q. 85, a. 5.

1192: He assures us also through the words of the Prophet Micah [7:18, ff.]. The Lord is placated by the sight of our penance. This is so as He will put away our iniquities; and He will cast all our sins into the bottom of the seam and they will remain buried there in an eternal forgetfulness:... *He will send His fury no more, because He delights in mercy...He will turn again, and have mercy on us; He will put away our iniquities, and He will cast all our sins into the bottom of the sea... [v. 19]*.

1193: Do we still doubt the divine promises? The truth cannot be lacking here. If we confess, says St. John [1 Jn 1:9]: ... *to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity...*

1194: What do you say, my brothers and sisters, what do you think about this fruit of penance? Is it not indeed precious, and even most dear, and even most to be desired? To remitting an instant all of our faults, as many as we might have been able to pile up in so many years of life that was unruly, lascivious, and scandalous? To be able to obtain an entire, sure pardon, even after we have already abused often and repeatedly, His divine mercies? To have the soul cleansed perfectly so that there would not appear any more such dark stains, that are both very interior to us, and deeply embedded?

1195: And yet, this is the most proper fruit of penance. Without this, the remission of sins cannot not only not be begged, but not even hoped for, in any manner whatsoever. For it is written in the Gospel:...*no, I say to you: but unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish...* [Lk 13:3 & 5].

1196: To come to know even better the rarity, the sweetness of this good, just look for a bit, my brother and sister, to what your sins have reduced you, and to what even lower levels they will still lessen you. They have already despoiled your soul from the authentic supernatural life, and there remains but a cadaver, inert, all disfigured, filthy. Just as the soul is the life of the body, so God, through grace is the life of the soul. We have this from Deuteronomy [30:20]: ... *for He is your life...* And just as the body dies if the soul should abandon it, so the soul dies whenever, through moral sin, God is expelled totally from the soul.

1197: O wretched, unhappy sinner, who may be listening to me now: you are said to be alive, but truthfully, you are dead: ... *you have the name of being alive: and you are dead...* [Apoc 3:1]. Do you wish to see your death manifest? Life is shown more than anything else in motion, activity. Now, tell me, what work do you do that is meritorious in the supernatural order? What movement do you make toward that blessed end, if there has even been taken from you the power to operate and the right to all merit?

1198: All that you do, or even could do, or desire to do, this is, and would be as no movement at all. It is to do nothing toward this end, as what is done without God. In the words of St. Augustine ¹⁶⁶, just as the soul, for as long as it is in the body, gives it

¹⁶⁶ St. Augustine, *In Io*, Tr. 19, 12. T. 3/2, pp. 442 F., ff.

vigor, beauty, motion, and the other offices of its members. In like manner, as long as God is in the soul, He lends it Wisdom, piety, justice, charity, which is the root of merit.

So, the Apostle confesses in like manner [1 Co 13:3]: If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and I should deliver my body to be burned in the flames, and have not charity, it profits me nothing. I am nothing [v. 2]. So, should this not in truth be called a real death, a pitiable death? You are dead.

1199: And yet, reflect well, o brother, o sister, that sin customarily gradually goes toward an even more tragic second death. This means to lose eternal life for which you were created, with burying yourself in a place of torments where the fire is inextinguishable [Mk 9:45], where there is the gnashing of teeth [Mt 8:12]; their worm shall not die [Is 66:24]. O most unfortunate one, whoever you may be, you who lie prostrate in sin, you could say well in all truth: hell is my home: *...If I wait, hell is my house...* [Jb 17:13]. The sentence has already been laid down against me, just as soon as I committed the fault. All there is needed is but a simple gesture on the part of the judge for it to be carried out.

1200: O most unhappy sinner, your soul has died and who can raise it up again? You are even more condemned to eternal life. And you can liberate you from that? Penance can, just do penance. If sin is the death of the soul, penance is its resurrection. Penance, in fact, reconciles you with God, Who is your life, and thus, he bestows life on you. And what is more dear, what is more sweet than life? What is more precious, more estimable, than this life that penance confers on you? For this life is a participation in the very life of God: *... but Christ lives in me...* [Ga 2:20]... *And your life is hid with Christ in God...* [Col 3:3].

1201: The sentence that has already lashed out against you is for eternal death. And you can change this by right, and eternal life will be given back to you. Yes, eternal life is the most sweet fruit of penance, of a genuine conversion. Hear it from the mouth of God Himself *... I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live...* [Ezk 33:11]. In time, Christ through the mouth of His Precursor, promises the kingdom of heaven to penance: *... Do penance, for the Kingdom of God is at hand...* [Mt 3:2].

1202: And surely penance makes a person the heir according to the hope for eternal life [Tit 3:7]. From being a slave to sin, one becomes God's adoptive child. Penance makes one a child, because from sinner, it makes one just; from an enemy of God, penance remits one to His friendship, constitutes one in His Grace.

1202: This is all well represented in the parable of the Prodigal Son, as was noted quite vividly by St. Ambrose¹⁶⁷. In fact, when the sinner returned from his escapades quite repentant to the feet of his father, he said: 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you'. That loving Father received him and he planted on his

¹⁶⁷ St. Ambrose, *In De Poenit.* L. 2, 3, 17, ff. T. 2, pp. 419, ff.

visage that mystical kiss of peace. He ordered nothing more than the **nuptial garment of charity and grace**. Put back on his hand the ring, which is the pledge of faith and the seal of the Holy Spirit. He prepared for him a super substantial banquet: the most pure flesh, the precious Blood of His Only Begotten Son and our Savior, Christ Jesus. With this, he nourishes, reinforces, and recreates him.

1204: Nor was this all. Further, penance often brings it about that a person, getting up from sin, receives greater grace than what he had before the fall. And thus it comes about that one's gains are far greater than one's losses. And it often occurs that where iniquity abounded, there grace also super-abounded. And once can say even ore. By penance, very often the sinner is disposed to receive from God a greater abundance of grace than do the innocent themselves.

1205: And this is presented by the Gospel in these words: ... *so the last shall be first, and the first last...* [Mt 20:16]... *the publicans and the harlots shall go into the kingdom of God before you...* [Mt 21:31]. ... *there shall be more joy in heaven upon one sinner that does penance than upon ninety-nine who need not penance...* [Lk 15:7].

1206: The new acquisitions that are added are often doubly greater than the losses suffered, and this is true of this restoration of what was lost. So many good deeds that we accomplished when we were in the state of grace and of innocence, were then literally mortified by the sin that has come. So many merits that had been built up earlier and then by the mortal sin, were all thrown away. However, by means of penance they all come to life again and are restored; ... *be converted to me with all your heart...*, says God through Joel [2:12]. Convert to me with all your heart, and I will restore to you those years that while your passions reigned in you, you lost: ... *and I will restore to you the ears which the locust, and the bruchus, and the mildew and the palmer-worm have eaten...* [v. 25].

1207: What consolation for a sinner who has been converted to find himself so enriched after such wretchedness! What joy to see himself enveloped in such glory after so much ignominy! And how joyful should salvation seem to him after having experienced the struggles of illness. How dear life should seem after having experienced all the fatigue, the anguish, the agonies of death! There are no more remorse, no more sadness, no more dears. A most gentle peace permeates his heart, an unperturbed serenity in his spirit, an ineffable tranquility in his spirit. All this is the fruit of penance, so sweet to savor, even the thought. How much more will the actual experience add to this enjoyment?

Let us savor it, o sinners, my brothers and sisters. And we will see even better through the experience how sweet it is to be reconciled with God: ... *O taste and see that the Lord is sweet...* [Ps 33:9].

1208: From what has been exposed by me up to the present, even though it is sketchy, I trust, my brothers and sisters, in the docility and discretion of your judgment. I feel that you have well understood how much, considering its genuine

nature, sweetness and pleasantness there is contained there. This regards what at first sight seemed only to have been bitter. And yet, I am sure that without any repugnance, you consider that penance quite worthy of your choice. This is what before you were scarcely resolved to accept out of necessity. We are, however, in agreement from the very beginning that this is the best preparation to celebrate fruitfully the approaching festive memorial of the Savior's birth.

1209: The most pious desire to participate in the salvific effects of Christ's coming on earth has moved you to see from me the necessary preparation. I have, therefore, this evening fully satisfied you: there only remains now for us to practice this. I have also briefly instructed you in what this consists. Let us convert, then, immediately and sincerely, our hearts to God. And looking back on our past errors and lapses, there comes to the fore in us the most vivid sense of displeasure, the most powerful detestation, and the most decisive hatred.

1210: Make the resolution, then, with all stability and constancy, to seriously emend our lives and to show better our good conduct. And with a sweet hope, and even sure confidence, of obtaining pardon, let us confess all our sins, that we have committed, at the feet of the sacred minister. Let us remain ready to make the fitting and due satisfaction to God and to other human beings. Thus, washed in these days, and whitened again our stoles in the Blood of the Lamb, in fact, of that Immaculate Lamb, Jesus Christ, who has come into the world to take away the sins of the world [Jn 1:29], we will be admitted by Him into the happy communication of all those gifts of His that He brings with Him, and of His own inheritance ...*and they will walk with me in white, because they are worthy...* [Apoc 3:4]. ¹⁶⁸.

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¹⁶⁸ **Translator's Note:** This is Fr. Bertoni's last Sermon that has come down to us for the year 1805. The next Sermon we have is Sermon 34, or 35, as it is numbered, for the Epiphany of the Year 1806. There will follow a second booklet as this one, with the translation.

SourcesOT

Dt 30:20	# 1196	Ezk 33:15	# 1191
Jb 17:13	# 1207	16	# 1191
Is 66:24	# 1199	Jl 2:12	# 1206
Ezk 18:21	# 1190	25	# 1206
22	# 1190	Mi 7:18	# 1192
33:1	# 1191	19	# 1192
14	# 1191		

NT

Mt 3:2	# 1201	Lk 15:7	# 1204
8:12	# 1199	Jn 1:29	# 1210
20:16	# 1205	1 Co 13:2	# 1198
21:31	# 1205	3	# 1198
Mk 9:45	# 1199	Ga 2:20	# 1200
Lk 3:3	# 1185	Col 3:3	# 1200
4	# 1185	Tt 3:7	# 1202
13:3	# 1195	1 Jn 1:9	# 1193
5	# 1197	Apoc 3:1	# 1197
		4	# 1210

Fathers & Doctors

St. Ambrose, <i>De Paenit.</i> , l. 2, 3, 17,,f. t. 2, pp. 419, ff.	# 1203
St. Augustine, <i>In Io</i> , tr. 19, 12. T. 3/2, pp. 442, F, ff.	# 1198
St. Thomas Aquinas, III, q. 85, a. 5	# 1187

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St. GASPAR BERTONI



Some paintings at Saint Paul of Campo Marzio Church, in Verona, Italy,
where St. Gaspar Bertoni preached most of the parish sermons.

Early Spiritual Writings

PARISH SERMONS

1806

[Manoscritti Bertoni ## 1211 – 1296]

Translation into English
Rev. Joseph Charles Henchey, CSS
1972

Electronic Edition: Holy Thursday, 2005

1806

1211:**SERMON 35****The Rule for our Thoughts and Actions****For the Feast of the Epiphany, on January 6th, of the Year 1806, in St. Paul's, Verona, on the left bank.**

You have, my brothers and sisters, suffered one intrusion of mine: today, you have to suffer still another, but one that is not just for your best interests, but one that is also necessary. The circumstances of the times in which we live demand this.

1212: The Feast that recurs today offers us both the material and the occasion. The Magi tend toward Christ, they seek Christ in Jerusalem, the seat of Herod, a powerful politician. But, Christ is born outside Jerusalem. The star that surely guides to Christ appears only outside of Jerusalem, far from the court.

What does this mean, my brothers and sisters, if not that we, too, tend toward Christ, i.e., toward the Truth, the Life: ... *I am... the truth and the life...* [cf. Jn 14:6]. But, this Truth, this Life, that is the ultimate end of our desires is beyond, i.e., above every human intellect: ... *the eye has not seen, O God, besides You what things you have prepared for them that wait for You...* [Is 64:4].

1213: It is only fitting, then, to go beyond all the opinions, above the judgments of earthly wisdom, if we wish to find this blessed goal, indeed if we wish to find the star, i.e., an infallible rule that conducts to this blessed goal. This star, in fact, is Christ Himself Who, as the Truth and the Life, He is also the Way in order to reach both the Eternal Truth and the Blessed Life toward which we aspire: ... *I am the way, the truth and the life...* [Jn 14:6]. In another place, this evangelist says [ib 1:9] that Christ is the true Light that illumines every person who comes into this world. He is Uncreated Wisdom, the Word of God, and therefore, He has the words of eternal life: ...*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life...* [Jn 6:69].

1214: However, this word of the Word is hard for human reason: ...*This saying is hard, and who can hear it...?* [Jn 6:61]. This is because it cannot be understood, comprehended. It is necessary to go beyond dallying human reasoning in order to believe it. The star appears only outside of Jerusalem, and far from the courts of worldly, earthly politics. And so it is clear that it is not human reason, nor the opinions of human beings, it is not the maxims of this present world, and it is not the dogmas of modern wisdom - but, it is the Word of God that is the unique and infallible rule of our thinking, of our acting, in order to reach the supernatural and divine end to which we have been called.

1215: No faculty can in its own operations surpass the limits of its own nature. If reason, however, is a directing faculty in human beings, it will be able to direct each one to a natural happiness. This is provided, of course, that it be cleansed of errors

and ignorance, not burdened by vices, not weighed down by passions. And it will never be able, on its own, to serve as the guide to the Christian for a supernatural happiness, to which it is destined by its vocation.

1216: In fact, says St. Thomas ¹⁶⁹, each human being is ordered to God as to an end that surpasses the comprehension of reason. However, this end has to be foreknown by human beings if they are to direct their intentions toward Him and their operations. God alone, however, can instruct a person concerning these truths that surpass and exceed all human reason. Yet, these truths are so necessary that in them, all salvation resides for human beings. Salvation consists in God and in Christ: *...How this is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent..* [cf. Jn 17:3].

1217: Whenever it is a matter of the soul, of the salvation of the soul, Tertullian ¹⁷⁰ wrote in this regard, a human being must turn to God, and be directed according to the rules of God: When anything regarding the soul is to be examined, let each be directed in accord with the rules of God. One could not find a better teacher of salvation than the very Author of salvation: surely no more powerful demonstrator will you ever find than the Author. Who could teach or reveal that which God has held hidden and concealed? The most wise in the world, the most prudent, are precisely those from whom God has held His truth so hidden: *... I confess to You, o Father... because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and You have revealed them to the little ones...* [Mt 11:25].

1218: This is the way it is, my brothers and sisters. The little ones, the poor in spirit, the humble, who only know what God teaches them, Whose Spirit reposes on them. By the voice of God we are taught the knowledge of the truth. This is the view of St. Clement of Alexandria ¹⁷¹ He teaches that if human beings say something without proving it, faith cannot be given to them, for human beings can also tell falsehoods. And if there is need of a proof, we do not await the testimony of human beings as witness, but through the Word of God we prove that which is sought. Since the Word of God is more worthy of faith than any demonstration whatsoever - rather, in this matter, it is the sole demonstration.

1219: Now God has spoken: *...God has spoken once...* [Ps 61:12]. He has also spoken in many ways: in the Prophets to the ancient Patriarchs, and ultimately in His Son, He has spoken to the Apostles [Heb 1:1, ff.]. And to these last, He has spoken even more plainly and more fully, the Holy Spirit instructing them regarding every truth pertaining to salvation: *... I have many things yet to say to you, but you cannot bear them now...* [Jn 16:12]. *...But when He, the Spirit of Truth comes, He will teach you all truth...* [v. 13].

¹⁶⁹ St. Thomas, I, q. 1, a. 1.

¹⁷⁰ Tertullian, *De Anima*, 1, near the end, p. 163/2.

¹⁷¹ St. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 7, 15, p. 757 C.

1220: We have the books of the Prophets, we have the Evangelical books of the Apostles: this is the Word of God revealed in the Scriptures. Furthermore, the Apostles communicated by voice many of these truths revealed to them, and left them to their disciples in Deposit for the Church. These are contained in the common consensus of the Holy Fathers, in the authentic definitions of the sacred General Councils and the Supreme Pontiffs, in the universal sense and custom of the entire Church. This is the Word of God revealed in Tradition.

1221: God has spoken: what more are we looking for? God has taught the truth, salvation from His own mouth: why do we look for other teachers? Why would we ever make ourselves disciples of other human beings, if we have God Himself for our Teacher? Why should we be bothered about the doctrines of earth, if we have the teachings of heaven? We have the eternal truth that directs us, and would we allow ourselves to be swayed by the fallacious opinions of other human beings?

1222: We have the Scriptures in which God speaks: what do the books of this world have to do with us? In the Sacred Scriptures, we have all that is necessary, and not only this - but further, all that is useful to know, to discern what is evil, to correct our habits, and to justify our spirit. What more should we need? In order to make us saints and instructed in every good work: ... *All Scripture inspired of God is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct to justice ...* [2 Tm 3:16]. ...*that the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work...* [cv. 17]. This is what the Apostle teaches.

1223: The Word of God in the Scriptures, my brothers and sisters, ought to be the rule of our thinking, of our acting, if we wish to know the truth, and to arrive at salvation. The foreign systems of thought, which always vary, as they are dispersed through the books of our century, cannot do this. Do not let yourselves be carried away, my brothers and sisters, by various and novel doctrines, as the Apostle himself advises us: ... *Be not led away with various and strange doctrines...* [Heb 13:9].

1224: That God does speak in the Scriptures, He speaks also in Tradition. This is found in the books of the ancient and venerated Fathers, so esteemed for their doctrine and their holiness. These we should follow, much more than the modern wise people. These most Holy Fathers of the Church, who are at the same time most learned, God Himself has given them to us as Pastors and Doctors. They have been given to perfect the elect of the Church. They have been granted to carry on the grand work of salvation to build up the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the Church. This is so that we will not be like children, carried this way and that, and that we be not swept away and blown by every kind of doctrine that might be introduced by the malice of human beings and by their astuteness, to tumble us into error. Paul tells us again: ... *and he gave other some pastors and doctors...* [Ep 4:11] ...*for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of their ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ...* [v. 12]...*that henceforth we be no more children tossed to and fro and carried by the wickedness of men, by cunning craftiness, by which they lie in wait to deceive...* [v. 14].

1225: Whoever is truly wise, or would like to become wise, will seek the wisdom of the all the ancients, says the Holy Spirit ...*The wise man will seek out the wisdom of all the ancients...* [SI 39:1]. Of the ancients, and not of the moderns, is the authentic wisdom. In the ancients and not the moderns is the genuine prudence: ...*In the ancient is wisdom, and in length of days, prudence...* [Jn 12:12]. The speech of the moderns does not penetrate, but rather delights very much those who read them, or hear them. This is not the style of the wise. According to the Holy Spirit, the words of the wise person and pungent: ...*the words of the wise are goads...* [Qo 12:11]. They provoke the sinner to conversion: ...*they are as nails, deeply fastened in, which by the counsel of masters are given from one Shepherd...* [ib.].

1226: They are firm, and deeply piercing, as nails driven in deeply [92]. Such are the doctrines that come from the counsel of the saints, and in the unanimous consensus of all the masters and doctors, they all originate from one single Shepherd, which is Christ, who is God. Thus, no matter how many there may be who teach, the Author, however, of the doctrine is only one, that is, the Lord:*more than these, my son, require not...* [ib. v. 12]. So, my children seek nothing other than these - do not try anything else, do not presume anything. Follow along in the footsteps of your Elders, and do not distance yourself from their authority:.... *of making many books, there is no end...* [ib.]. If you look for many things, there will come into your hands an infinite number of all kinds of books that will lead you into error.

Up to this point, it has been the Holy Spirit speaking to you, along with the Commentary of Jerome ¹⁷².

1227: It is confirmed, then, that God's Word, revealed in the Scriptures and in Tradition, is the sole infallible rule of our believing, hoping and operating, if indeed we wish to find the truth, and achieve salvation.

- What will, then, happen to us, poor ignorant people, who do not know how to read the Scriptures?
- It is not necessary for the ignorant to read the Scriptures.
- Will it suffice for us, then, that the learned read the Scriptures?
- It is not enough for the learned to read the Scriptures. For both the learned as well as for the ignorant there is necessary the *Magisterium* of the Church.

The Church has the authority to propose the Word of God, to explain it, to determine it in its legitimate sense. The ignorant should not despair: he has a visible, universal teacher: the Catholic Church. The learned should not presume: for he has over him a judge that is still alive, infallible, supreme: the Roman Catholic Church.

1228: Would any perhaps believe that he is sufficiently learned, that for him there suffices the acuteness of his own power or reasoning? No says St. Augustine ¹⁷³: we believe in order to know, and not that we believe because we do not know: *We*

¹⁷² St. Jerome, *In Ecclesiasten*, ib., t. 3, pp. 494, B, ff..

¹⁷³ St. Augustine, *In Io. Ev.*, tr. 40, p [t. 3/1, p. 568 f].

believe in order that we might know: we do not know, so that we must believe. And what else is faith than to believe that which one does not see?

1229: Would any think that he is already sufficiently holy, that to him are sufficient only his own private lights? Let us be very careful, says the same Father ¹⁷⁴ : let us guard ourselves from such temptations of such pride, and rather let us think that Paul, the Apostle himself, even though instructed by the voice of God and by the Spirit of God, was sent to someone else to find out what he should do: *...what will you have me to do?... [Ac 9:6]* And let us think that Cornelius, even though he had been assured by the Angel that his prayers had been heard, and had accepted the alms, was nonetheless committed to have instructions from St. Peter. From his mouth he could have learned that he had to believe, to hope and to love.

1270: But no, my brothers and sisters. God's Word is the rule of our believing, hoping and operating: but it is necessary to hear the Word of God from the Church. Whoever does not listen to the Church, is declared by Christ Himself [Mt 18:17] no longer one of the faithful, but a gentile: *...And if he will not hear the Church, let him be to you as the heathen and the publican... [Mt 18:17]*. The Holy Spirit also says in Malachi [2:7] quite clearly: *...the lips of the priest shall keep knowledge...* It is certain that the Church has been made the depositary and guardian by God Himself of His Word:

1231: *...O Timothy, keep what is committed to your trust... [1 Tm 2:20]*. So it is that the lips of the Priest of the Church guard its knowledge: *...they shall seek the law at his mouth... [Ml 2:7]*. Note well, my brothers and sisters: And the people will seek the law, i.e., the rule, not from the law, nor from the rule itself, but from the lips of the priest, from the mouth of the Church that possesses it: *from his mouth*.

1232: In fact, in the controversy between Paul and those of Antioch [Ac 15:1, ff.], regarding the matter of faith, they did not appeal directly to the Scriptures to define the matter. The appeal was made rather to the Apostles and the Elders of Jerusalem. The Apostles did not, neither did the Elders, make the Scriptures the judge, but themselves and the Holy Spirit: *...it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us... [Ac 15:28]*. The Holy Spirit does not dwell in the letter, but in the spirit; not in the syllables, but in hearts. There is a most sublime reflection on the part of that noble theologian, Melchior Cano ¹⁷⁵. The Church is the column and the firmament of the truth: *...the pillar and the ground of the truth... [1 Tm 3:15]*.

1233: And by the word *Church* here, there are not to be understood the lowest members of the Mystical Body of Christ, but the Bishops and the Supreme Shepherds of Christ's flock. In fact, the Bishops in the Church are the sole judges authorized by God. The custom of the Church confirms this. And besides, not all are doctors, according to St. Paul [1 Co 12:29]. Furthermore, to feed with the knowledge and the doctrine is proper to the Shepherds, that is, the Bishops [Ac 20:28]. Finally, a

¹⁷⁴ St. Augustine, *De Doctr. Chris.* in Prol. 6 [t. 3/1, 3 F].

¹⁷⁵ cf. *De locis theol.*, 2, 7 [93].

certain doctrine, contrary to this one, one cannot and should not in these times be ignorant of it. Such has already been condemned with an authentic censure ¹⁷⁶.

1234: From these Shepherds, therefore, that the Holy Spirit has placed to rule the Church of God, that He purchased with His Blood [Ac 20:28] - from these Shepherds, who are legitimate, we must depend. We need to await from them that there be proposed and explained, and in its true sense, declared God's Word revealed in the Scriptures and in Tradition, as the unique and infallible rule of our thinking and operating. And we must follow this faithfully, constantly if we wish to arrive at the knowledge of the truth, and at the possession of supernatural beatitude, eternal happiness, that we hope in God and with God. *...And whosoever shall follow this rule, peace on them...* [Ga 6:16].

1235: This is the rule, this is the star that we must follow. Let us walk, then, let us walk worthily toward the goal to which we have been called. St. Paul tells us: *... I ... beseech you* [by the very chains with which he was held bound in his apostolate] *...I beseech you, a prisoner in the Lord; that you walk worthily of the vocation in which you are called...* [Ep 4:1]. *... with all simplicity and mildness, with patience, supporting one another...* [v. 2].

1236: It is necessary to work worthily in this vocation, submitting our intellects with humble **obsequiousness** to believe the divine Word: *with all simplicity* [ib., v. 2]. We are not to resist with obstinate contradiction the authoritative judgments of those legitimate Shepherds, who have the right from God Himself to propose this and to explain this. *With mildness* [ib.]. this is done by overcoming with invincible patience calumnies, derision, opposition, that come from the enemies of the faith and of peace and of the Church. *With patience* [ib.]. We must support with reciprocal love, to walk together, bearing the burdens of one another, all of us who have the same vocation together: *supporting one another with charity...*

1237: *...careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace...* [Ep 4:3]. By the grace of God, this unity of spirit, or faith, we do possess it. It is enough for us to conserve it: *to keep*. For this, though, there is necessary vigilance, concern, diligence to keep it: *careful* [ib.]. One is kept in the bond of peace, charity, if we are well united and bonded among us with love, and all are thus joined together and united. When this is so, we will have a great attachment to the Shepherds of the Church, whom we must follow. This is especially due to the supreme Shepherd, the Center of unity: *...careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace...* [v. 3].

1238: *One body* [v. 4]. We are one sole Body, of which Christ is the Head, and all of us are its members. Among the members of this Body, some have the office of presiding and guiding, like the eyes and the tongue. Others have only the office to obey, to follow, as the hands and the feet: *One Body and One Spirit* [v. 4]. There should not be among us diversity of sentences, division of parties: but one sole spirit

¹⁷⁶ Pius VI, Errors of the Synod of Pistoia. Errors about the Church, *Auctorem Fidei*, n. 10, August 28, 1794 - Denz. 1510.

of faith should animate all, as we are one sole body. One sole supernatural end to that to which we all tend: ... *as you are called to one hope of your calling...* [ib.].

1239: One sole is the Author of this end and the Director toward this end. If many Shepherds do indeed rule over us, they rule only in His authority, in His Name: *One Lord* [v. 5]. One only is the rule, only one is the star that points out the way: the divine Word, object of our faith: *one faith* [ib.]. Only one is the Orient in which our star appears, and from whom we all equally take our movement, which is our Baptism. This is called the Sacrament of Illumination and of Faith¹⁷⁷: *one Baptism*.

1240: One sole God, object of our Beatitude: *One God* [v. 6] and the Father of all, who invites us to this Beatitude: ... *and Father of all* [v. 6]. He is above all with His truth, to illumine all to come to know it:*who is above all...* [ib.], and He is through all things with His Providence to direct all to find this: ...*and through all...* [ib.]. And finally, He is indwelling all with His Grace, as the Intimate Principle, to move all to seek this: ...*and in us all...* [ib.].

To Whom be glory forever!

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SOURCES

OT

Jb 12:12	## 1225; 1226	Si 39:1	# 1225
Ps 61:12	# 1219	Is 64:4	# 1212
Qo 12:11	# 1225	MI 2:7	## 1230; 1231

NT

Mt 11:25	# 1217	Ep 4:1	# 1235
18:17	# 1210	2	## 1235;1236
Jn 1:9	# 1230	3	# 1237
6:61	# 1214	4	# 1238
69	# 1213	5	# 1239
14:6	##1212;1213	6	# 1240
16:12	# 1219	11	# 1224
13	# 1219	12	# 1224
Ac 9:6	# 1229	14	# 1224
15:1, ff.	# 1232	1 Tm 2:20	# 1231
28	# 1232	3:15	# 1232
20:28 [Bishops]	##1233, 1234	2 Tm 3:16	# 1222
1 Co 12:29	# 1233	17	# 1222
Ga 6:16	# 1234	Heb 1:1, ff.	# 1219
		13:9	# 1223

¹⁷⁷ Translator's Note: cf. # 244, of St. Gaspar Bertoni's Catechetical Instructions on Baptism.

Magisterium

Pius VI, <i>Auctorem Fidei</i> , August 28, 1794 - Denz. 1510	# 1233
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Fathers & Doctors

St. Augustine, <i>De Doctr. Christ.</i> , In Prol. I 6 [t. 3/1, p. 3, f]	# 1229
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<i>In Io. Ev.</i> , tr. 40, 9. [t. 3/2, p. 568 F]	# 1228
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St. Clement of Alexandria, <i>Stromata</i> 7 15 [p, 757 C]	# 1218
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St. Jerome, <i>In Eccles.</i> 12:11, ff. [t. 3, pp. 494 B, ff.]	# 1226
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St. Thomas Aquinas, I, q. 1, a. 1	# 1216
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Other Writers

Melchior Cano, <i>De locis theol.</i> , 2, 7	# 1232
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Tertullian, <i>De Anima</i> 1 [near the end - p. 163.2]	# 1217
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[NB: Translator’s Note: Chronologically there will be added here St. Gaspar Bertoni’s Sermon, entitled, *Special Cult*, dated April 18, 1806, MssB ## 1484-1546]

**1484: PARISH SERMON
The Special Cult**

Which is tended to the Images of Mary and St. Ann, in the Venerable Parish Church of St. Paul’s in Verona, defended from Calumnies

On the Anniversary of the Solemn translation of the above-mentioned Images, April 18, 1806.

Academic Oration - Polemic.

From the Propositions condemned by Pius VI, in the year 1794 ¹⁷⁸.

Likewise, the doctrine and the prescription condemning in general every special cult which the faithful are accustomed to attach specifically to some image, and to have recourse to, rather than to another - rash, dangerous, injurious to the pious custom prevalent throughout the Church, and also to that order of Providence by which ‘God who apportions as He wishes to each one his own proper characteristics, did not want them to be common in every commemoration of the Saints...¹⁷⁹.

1485: The memorial anniversary, solemnly recalled, of the Translation of these sacred images with religious magnificence, we have celebrated on this date now for three years. The fervor in recourse of an adoring people, the outstanding zeal of those who first and uniquely constituted this Feast in honor of Mary and St. Ann. They have now rendered it even more perpetual in their proposal, and they manifest quite well, most devoted and distinguished listeners, not only a cult that is most singular in every way. This is not only a cult of veneration and a recourse of confidence, but it manifests an indeed special recourse.

1486: Even if your piety has no need of being enkindled, it will not be without purpose to confirm it, and it might even be necessary. A devotion that is so distinguished, only with great difficulty will not be an object of evil gossip, in the very act that it is meriting even greater praises.

¹⁷⁸ Denz. 1570.

¹⁷⁹ From St. Augustine, *Epistle* 78 to the Clergy Elders and People of the Church at Hipp. N. 3, in fine. [t. 2, p. 184 C]. - From the Brief, *Auctorem Fidei*.

1487: Cult for sacred images was attacked in the 8th century by the Iconoclasts, and in the 16th century by the Innovators. The singularity, the special nature of this cult, was calumniated by the very ones who professed the most vivid attachment to the Canons of the IInd Council of Nicea ¹⁸⁰, and those of the Council of Trent ¹⁸¹. There must be given, these documents state, to sacred images, a relative cult, but, therefore also a distinct cult, according to the special dignity of their Prototypes [5]. This devotion is distinguished from the species of the Images themselves. All deference of cult to all images themselves is superstitious.

1488: This consequence under which at first sight there is not well clarified the veiled doctrine. It was the view, the understanding of the minds [6] of their centuries. However, this doctrine, the proscription that generally reproves every special cult that to some images especially, the faithful are accustomed to render, and the fact that they tend toward this one object of piety, rather than to some other one [as was noted above ¹⁸²], this doctrine of theirs, I said, introduced by the spirit of novelty, has been condemned with the most solemn censures of the Church.

1489: Already two lustres have passed that the whole Catholic Church venerates obsequiously, and follows constantly, as a living and infallible oracle of faith, the authentic definitions of the Supreme Shepherd of glorious and recent memory, Pius VI [7]. The fact, then, that it is right, fitting, legitimate to render special cult to some images particularly, and to have recourse more to the one than to another, this proposition in its generality is an orthodox dogma. That this should take place in particular with regard to our images right here, this is my present theme.

1490: Rather, I will treat of an individual cause, so that the common maxim might remain illustrated in its certainty for your greater comfort. I propose, then, that the special cult and recourse which is tended by us to our images is an ordered good. The first reason is that this is in conformity to the custom of the entire universal Church. Secondly, because it is in harmony with the purpose for the sacred images by the Church. The third reason is because our practice is in conformity to that order of Providence, with which God Himself in His Church both approves it and confirms it.

The state, the importance, and the necessity of the controversy is manifest. Please give me your attention [8].

1491: Leo Isaurus, much imbibed with the principles of the Musulman religion, contested the Church's right and tried to take possession of the sacred images. He also opposed the Church herself, as did others, the Church's right for these, and for any special devotion to be shown to them. First, though, we might deal with the universal possession, which is the fact on which our first judgment is particularly aimed.

180 Denz. 302, ff.

181 Denz. 986, ff.

182 cf. # 1494.

1492: In the proofs, to remain closer to our case and for the sake of brevity, I limit myself to the images of Our Lady. I will consider only the devotion that has the most fame among individuals, in the great provinces and nations. I will consider only the writers of wider reputation, who have written a particular history or treatise in this regard. Rather, with people of learning, such as you are, very kind brothers and sisters, there is really no need of descriptions. Here just a few indications will suffice.

1493: There is nothing more diffused in our age throughout the entire Catholic Church than images of Mary and devotion to these images. We will see that no matter how many images of Mary that there are, they are all of the same species, or, as some say [143], they are all *Madonnas*. However, to some of these in particular there is rendered a totally distinct veneration over others, and to this one image more than to some other one, recourse is made in every nation of the Catholic Church.

1494: Going all through Italy without stopping, where is there a city, or a castle, or a villa, in which some particular image of Mary is not honored, and invoked with particular devotion? I just make mention of the most celebrated Sanctuary of Loreto. The reputation of the devotion and very special recourse is so widespread that there is no need for me to point out the history of this by Fr. Horace Tursellini [9], that is so well known. This book will afford with more exact testimony and confirm what we know of this.

1495: Let us pass now to Sicily. Where in his *Iconology*, Fr. Samperio describes that image that is so venerated in Messina. And again, flying over the sea, we are now in Spain. From Montserrat, in Catalonia, one of the principal pilgrimages in Europe, we come to Aragon, we will find in Saragossa the famous Temple called St. Mary Major of the Column, or, according to the Spaniards, Our Lady of the Pillar. Concerning this, along-side their supreme devotion in addition to that of Mary [11], Diego Murillo and Juan Antonio Lopez in their theological treatises, printed in Cologne, where they have described this in a number of tomes and fascicles.

1496: I leave Cordova, in Andalusia, and across the peaks of the Pyrenees, I come willingly into Gaul, to that beautiful realm. Louis XIII placed the land under the protection of the Assumed Blessed Virgin. Every year on this Feast one sees in the Cathedral of Paris, dedicated under this same title, processions with the people and important personalities of the state, including the kings themselves, to venerate her. Montpellier in Languedoc, the Diocese of Frejus in Provence, those most celebrated and devout sanctuaries call out to us to visit them. But, above all, the august Basilica of Chartres, one of the most beautiful and most ancient and most frequented of all of France. Sir RUIILLARD, in his *Parthene*, is the author of its history.

1497: I follow the swift route towards the Low Countries and in Brabant, I encounter the faithful escort of the learned Justus Lipsius [15]. This is found not many leagues from Louvain, and from Brussels; this image is much celebrated in Aspicolle. And then from the lower to the upper Germany, passing through, without stopping in Bavaria at the famous chapel of Göttingen, we will come to the devout Sanctuary of the Archdukes of Austria and of the Emperors. We come to the illustrious image of

Cellense. Fr. Gumpemgerg, in his *Marian Atlantis*, has described its devotion, as well as the prodigies worked there. This was printed in Ingolstadt.

1498: We can also see in Poland the most celebrated image of Czestechova. But, now having already passed through the primary Catholic churches of Europe, it is time to fly across for a moment to **America**. A brief, but precise history was printed in Rome in 1792, inviting us to Mexico, to admire the most celebrated sanctuary of Guadalupe. The memory of Juandiego of Cuauhtitlan is there in a monument of perpetual witness of a great prodigy of that image of Mary. This forms the object of much veneration in those peoples.

1499: Let us come back once again over the broad, ponderous waves of the sea of Mezzogiorno [21]. With the agile wings of our thoughts, we soar above that was that shows the rising sun, to see again our own hemisphere. Passing through to Asia, and before setting foot once more in the west, let us stop for a few moments, just to take stock of the most ancient memories. If up until now there has been proven the possession of a special cult within the Catholic Church of such special devotion, there is even greater confirmation that I wish to show you from the antiquity of this possession.

1500: In the first three centuries, when the Church was persecuted by idolatry, there were rather places of prayer than temples. And very rare in these, but not unknown, were the use and the worship of sacred images. But very soon these were used, once peace had been given to her by Constantine. This offered the freedom to build public temples and altars. Thus, the use and veneration given to sacred images, were rendered more free and solemn. It was already diffused and common in every part of Christianity. St. ROBERT BELLARMINE [22] and so many other noble controversialists, have already with solid erudition shown this fact with all evidence.

1501: Having established the extension of the common cult, it is up to me now to prove from the same epoch the existence of a special cult. The first we have firm in this is Phoenicia, where among all the cities, there was one that was outstanding because of a miraculous statue of Christ. It was said to have been erected by the woman with the hemorrhage of the Gospel story. Eusebius [24], author of the fourth century, offers an eye-witness proof of this, as well as of its common and ancient fame.

1502: The wicked Julian, envious perhaps of the honor of that religion in his realm, after having the statue removed, erected one of himself in its place. But, quite soon a fire came down from on high =with terrible violence, struck its chest, and the other parts of the statue. It was thrown to the ground, the head with the neck, and the pieces were thrust to the earth with violence. It is still found this way today. And SOZOMENUS speaks of this in the Fifth Book of his *History* [25]. He adds that the gentiles dragged the statue of Christ through the city and broke it in pieces. However, after the Christians had gathered them together, they reposed it in the Church where even today it is still conserved.

1503: NICEPHORUS [26] narrates a similar story. PHILSTORGIUS [27], who wrote at the beginning of the 5th century, authenticates its cult and veneration. This worship and cult, it seems, that heaven itself wished to render special in those times with so many, and such continuous and such solemn prodigies.

1504: Another point of reference is that of Antioch [28], also known as EPIDAPHNES. In the 5th century, PULCHERIA AUGUSTA, the wife of MARCIAN, the Emperor, founded a temple called *Odegarus*, in honor of an image of the Virgin Mary. This has been sent to her from Jerusalem by EUDOCIA AUGUSTA, the wife of THEODOSIUS, the Young, as NICEPHORUS recounts [29]. This is in agreement with what THEODORUS, the Lector, had written in the first book of his collections [30]. This image was then transferred to Constantinople to the sanctuary of Chora. DuCANGE speaks of this in his *Christian Constantinople*. From the time of the taking of that city by the Turks, He attests that this image was held in the greatest veneration.

1504: In Mesopotamia, the Edessens had great cult and recourse to their famous image of Christ, as EVAGRIUS assures us. He was a noble Greek writer of the 6th century, and he relates about a miracle that occurred. I will not contend with the better modern critics whether this image was sent to King ABGARUS by Christ Himself, as even two famous Protestant writers maintain: ERNEST GAVIO in his *Spicilegio*, and WILLIAM CAVE [34] in his *Literary History*. I will not give much attention to their opinions: it suffices for me the fact of their cult.

1505: And this is undeniable, and it is also special that GREGORY II in his Letter to LEO ISAURUS [35] attests to the fact that continuously there gathered at Edessa a great multitude of people to venerate it. Indeed, throughout the entire East the fact of the cult extended toward this image was so solemn, that the day of its Translation, the Greeks in August, celebrate the anniversary each year with a solemnity. This is evident from their *Monologues*, as found in BARONIUS [132] and SPONDANUS [36]. And since this circumstance touches our present case more closely [37], as well as that other famous image of BERITHUS [38], or which the VIIth Ecumenical Council [39] relates the history, SIGISBERT narrates that DIODATUS, Bishop of that City, wished that a festive memory be made of this each November 9th. This is found in USUARDO and BOLLAND, in the volume of June 7th.

1506: The SOPHISMUS of DALLEO [43], the gossip of PYCENIUS were written against these facts. However, they have been sufficiently refuted by NATALE ALEXANDER in a particular dissertation in his History [44], and by CARDINAL GOOTI in his work against the second of these heretics [45]. And these facts, also in the new point of view which were exposed by me, also stand up to the most critical examination of our times. Every good erudite person can, even without scruple, be convinced of these things even from the proofs brought forward.

1507: Who would dare, then, reprehend the special cult that we offer to our images, if it is shown that this is in conformity with the universal and perpetual custody of the whole Church? Who would dare to rise up in opposition to such an extended,

continuous and ancient possession of hers? We should not, and I draw to my particular arguments the grave sentiments of St. GERMANUS, Patriarch of Constantinople, directed to THOMAS, Bishop of Claudianopoli [46]. We should not take up any novelties. But, especially this is our obligation to avoid those that can be a scandal to the faithful, and those that tend to raise up against a custom of great antiquity already introduced into the Church. In the Ecumenical Synods that have been celebrated in the Church, there have been established a number of Canons on this matter that may be of less importance. It was never considered by the Bishops to whom the divine Master promised His assistance, to prohibit the cult and special recourse to some sacred images. That which surely would not have been omitted by them if indeed it had been true that a superfluity was being brought forward, or a superstition. All the more so that this usage was only limited to some cities of secondary consideration, but almost this cult is in all the lands and in the most illustrious Churches.

1508: Therefore, the possession of the practice has been proven. There remains to explain now its rightness: and **now I am at the second part of my proposal**. In this, it is stated from the beginning that our special cult is in harmony with the end for which sacred images are assumed by the Church. The most learned PETAVIUS, in his *Dogmatics* [47], and with him almost all the Theologians observe that the images are in the number of those realities that do not enter by their very nature, into the substance of the religion. The making use of them depends totally on the judgment of the Church.

1509: This use, however, has to be reasonable: therefore, it must be directed to a fitting scope. So, the manner of using them is ordered by their very purpose. It is, then, in harmony with this end that in the multitude of these means, the more useful are to be preferred over the others, as those more distinct from the others, and so with greater fervor and frequency they are to be employed.

1510: THE COUNCIL OF TRENT, in its 25th Session ¹⁸³, in speaking of the cult to be given to the sacred images, adduces several purposes for them, that are then clearly explained in its *Catechism* ¹⁸⁴. St. ROBERT BELLARMINE also included it in his book, *On the Glory of the saints*, listing it among his ‘controversies.’ We understand them under these two headings: to instruct and to motivate. To instruct the mind on these realities that lead to salvation; and to move the heart to imitation, to devotion, to the Prototypes [5]. Now, some images serve better for this end over many others, even those within the same species.

1511: This is **the first point of my argument**, a knot that is undone by showing the Law of the Church for special cult. But, for the greater usefulness, the matter of the means is found precisely in our images. This is **the other knot of the present question**, from the solution of which immediately depends the proof of my particular

¹⁸³ Cf. Denz. 984, ff.

¹⁸⁴ cf. n. 305.

theme. But it is my duty to go back again to the matter of facts, and then, even more to the way of explanations, and to develop them

1512: As far as instructing goes, St. NILE, the Abbot, was a disciple of St. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM. His Letters were published by LEO ALLAZIO [48]. In one of these, addressed to OLIMPIODORUS, the Prefect - the Saint had sought him out for those paintings with which to decorate a magnificent temple that he had constructed. His answer was that in addition to the image of the Cross, there was going to be depicted the history of both the Old and the New testaments. The idea was that the contemplation of the painting might supply for the defect of those who were unable to read the sacred pages. And this is what was done also elsewhere, and for the same purpose, by St. PAULINUS of Nola. In his Basilica of St. Felix, as he refers to himself in the IXth Christmas of this Saint [50].

1513: Some images, therefore, serve more than others for the erudition of the piety of the faithful. Those are the ones that represent the more useful matters, or better, still, those that are more necessary. And among these besides, those that with greater propriety and character expose these matters, and, at the same time, with precision, with greater abundance they communicate the more necessary ideas.

1514: What is more important, that is even of necessity for salvation, before any other that a believer must accept, and not only to believe, but also to know, and to know clearly, and to commemorate more often: this is Jesus Christ. Do you seek Jesus Christ? Take a look at our images. You see Him, as true man, a small child playing on His Mother's lap. St. Ann who adores Him, sees Him as her God. As a man, He is born of a Virgin, solely by the intervention of the Holy Spirit. This is depicted by that divine symbol of the Dove that is depicted above.

1515: The manner of His divine generation is not shown, because it is indescribable [*Is 53:8; Ac 8:33*]. By not having the Father shown, there is denoted that God is invisible, incircumscribed, incomprehensible, in His nature. This is the key to open up all the treasures of His Divinity. This is how the way is opened up, how every difficulty is made low, and light is introduced to believe, to know the whole most hidden economy of the copious redemption which is Jesus Christ.

1516: As far as moving is concerned, and to move primarily to the imitation of the Prototypes, placing under our eyes their virtues, there is no doubt that some images do not have here anything singular about them. St. GREGORY OF NYSSA, in one of his Orations [51], attests that he was many times moved even to tears, at seeing Abraham's sacrifice depicted. He attributed the cause of this to the particular evidence that a picture brought to him. St. BASIL¹⁸⁵, in describing the heroic virtues of St. Barlaam, confesses that he was not able with his pen alone to arrive at the height to which a gifted brush could reach. He states that he enjoyed seeing his eloquence surpassed.

¹⁸⁵ St. Basil., *Hom 17 in Barlaam, mart.*, near the end [t. 2, p. 141, B, ff.].

1517: Since it is, as the above praised St. Germanus, wrote to the Bishop of Claudianapolis [52], teaching that images serve to excite virtue. They do this in the same way as do the reasoning of persons of piety, if one reason might persuade more than another one. They bring to the faithful more fruit than the preaching of an orator, even though all deal with the word of God. If this is so regarding the spoken word, why cannot it not be the same for the sacred images and for the same reasons? The reason is that some of these images present not only most excellent virtues, but they present them under the greater light. They show them as more attractive, and more necessary, to the capacity, to nature, and to one's dispositions, all the more fitting for people who might be looking for them.

1518: But, who could ever describe the grandeur, the multiplicity, the suitability of the virtues that these images present to us? And what about the mute, but efficacious fecundity with which they persuade, and almost insinuate for the eyes to the heart? Here is the school of every kind of virtue, for all ages, for all conditions, for every state, in every need, in every circumstance, for every time. There is no lovable quality that virtue does not give vent to there. Here all that is useful appears, here what is upright is explained, here what is delightful is proposed. There is no grace, nourishment or comfort that one might desire to follow virtue, and that in art it would not be found.

1519: I appeal to the eyes of anyone who would look at these images. I appeal to the common sense of both the learned, as well as the uncultured. I appeal to the hearts, not only to those that are upright, as among the just and innocent, but even to sinners themselves, who might feel the most robust and gentle stimuli to repudiate their faults, to restrain their passions, to love virtue. I will say only that just as there are not, perhaps, at least among us, images that are drawn from what is more natural. These are also the most vivid, that present the Prototypes in such a way that there are no images more lively, more close to life. This is how they present their virtues and persuade with greater efficacy. And this is also the reason why our images move to such singular devotion.

1520: In this matter of moving to devotion, very few images indeed can be distinguished from the great number of all the others. Let us examine this fact more closely and its reason. The holy Bishop of Nyssa, cited above [53], St. GREGORY, after having, with supreme gracefulness, gathered in one of his Orations, the flowers and the graces the chisel of the artist and the brush of the learned painters had used on certain images, that in his Church in Cappadocia, were venerated, describes these. He states that as the effect of these, there came the greatest fruit of devotion that the people had every gathered on seeing them.

1521: Similarly, St. ASTERIUS, as we have in the addition to the Library of the Fathers of Combefis [54], confesses that he was much moved by the beautiful image of St. Euphemia. He describes with supreme delicacy the very fine labor in this work of art. In it, the painter who was both learned as well as pious, was able to mix the colors and the customs, tempering in the most vivid and gracious impression and the affections with the colors on the canvas.

1522: To move on, then, to devotion, there are required beauty and expression, sweetness of affection. Indeed certain images are so awkwardly depicted and with such harshness that in the place of devotion, they provoke laughter or disdain. With good reason, MARCANZIO, St. JOHN OF THE CROSS, and GERSON rail out against the lack of talent of these artists and the deformity of these works. Indeed, in a century, like our own is, in which there are many learned talents, the good taste that flourishes is very easily noticed, and it escapes from the more minor errors. This is no acquiescence unless in the authentic absolute perfection of the work.

1523: For the beauty, though, in the sacred images it is very necessary that it be joined to the majesty and the sweetness of expression, also a certain gravity. PRUDENTIUS [58] points out these contrasts that are quite distinct in the image of St. Cassian, that he saw in Rome. There was impressed on his heart such a devout veneration that he has left a description of it in his *Peri-Stefanon*.

1524: The sacred images should inspire devout horror and divine majesty, as precisely do those works of art that have come down to us from antiquity, and which we ponder with admiration. Thus, the erudite MACRI [59], in his *Notices about Words*, comes to the word, *ICON*. He states that all is to be condemned regarding certain images that have a too worldly comeliness. Some are depicted with excessive license, if not to say shameful nudity. Such works are depicted and sculptured in our times. Such works are far from moving one to devotion. They excite rather than distraction, foment vanity, and also often produce authentic scandal in the Christian churches, even on their altars.

1526: And in this manner, there are profaned so many images that by now surely cannot be adored, and not even be admired with the eye of the faithful.

Surely, the COUNCIL OF TRENT [60] prohibits all lasciviousness and all bold beauty, or vain ornamentation in sacred images ¹⁸⁶. And God Himself has shown how much He detests the sacrilegious abuse, castigating even by public example, the impudent artist.

1526: So it is that GENNADIUS, Prelate of Constantinople [61] had to heal the hand of a painter, that had become paralyzed, for having painted the image of Christ under a profane manner.

The Greeks, though, should make us blush. In the matter of paintings, as the above praised author has noted, they observe a rigorous modesty and extraordinary devotion, that inspire veneration and superhuman majesty.

1527: I have said all these truths in a roundabout way. I have done this to bring out how rarely do these qualities come together in modern images. At the same time, these do accentuate how singularly they are present in our images. They do possess

¹⁸⁶ Denz. 988.

these qualities in such an eminent manner, as common judgment attests, and so much so that the proof of it would be superfluous. And thus I wanted to demonstrate the cause of the fact, also undeniable and evident to daily experience, and also known to all, of the singular devotion to which their venerated and most lovable aspect inspires.

1528: Furthermore, for such a most special fruit, I have in mind **still another cause**. But, this is supernatural, and opens to me the path that our worship and special recourse to these images is not only in harmony with the custom of the whole Church. For it is for this purpose that the Church does assume sacred images, as has been shown up until now. However, additionally from the very order of Providence with which God in His Church both approves this and confirms it, this is the **third point** that I have in mind.

1529: This is the order, my most worthy brothers and sisters of Divine Providence. This often operates by means of a particular image and favors which it does not bring about by all the images of this same species. Let us restrict ourselves in this fact solely to that venerated antiquity of which I have already given some indications in **the first part of my talk**. Thus, I could once again cite for you the witness of PENEADE¹⁸⁷, that of EDESSA¹⁸⁸, that of BERITHUS¹⁸⁹.

1530: But, in order that I may not repeat for your hearing the same names, and to let you see how the proofs of this are simply superabundant, I call you to Constantinople. There you would see the solemn prodigy of a complete victory that the Roman army obtained through that image that PHILIPPICUS, MAURIZIUS' brother-in-law, carried occasionally around the camp. He then sent it with supreme devotion to SIMEON, Bishop of Armida, as THEOPHILACTUS SIMOCATTA relates in the Second Book of his *History*. This was praised also by PHOTIUS in his *Library* [63].

1531: And there is the account of an image that stood in the vestibule of the imperial palace, believed to have been erected by Constantine, as DuCANGE writes in his *Christian Constantinople*. There is the story of many miracles, and among these the most celebrated, acquired the name of ANTIPHONATES. This may be read in the addition to the Book, *The Library of the Fathers*, of Fr. CCOMBEFIS. St. GERMANUS is often praised in this writing: we know, he is quoted as having said, we know for sure that the image of the Virgin which was at SOZOPOLI in Pisidia, from its hand there was spread a sweet-smelling liquid.

1532: Now I ask: are these prodigies not singular, or are they everyday occurrences? Has God Himself worked these prodigies through all the images of the same species? If God, with the gift of His miracles, honors one image more than

¹⁸⁷ Cf. above # 1501.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. above # 1504.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. above # 1505.

another, this is His doing. It is God Himself, in His Church, Who both promotes a distinct cult to some particular image, and confirms this through special recourse.

1533: St. AUGUSTINE will conclude the persuasion In his *Letter 78* to the Clergy¹⁹⁰, he writes also to the Elders and to all the People of the Church of Hippo. He narrates how a certain young man of his family, and BONIFACE, priest, were involved in a serious matter that touched the reputation of both of them. However, it was necessary to clarify the matter without it being possible for them to find any human means to verify their judgment. I have chosen, says the Saint, I chose a given means. And so it was that the both of them had drawn up- a pact jointly, to make a pilgrimage to a holy place. [They decided to go to a Martyr's tomb], where the most terrible works of God might be placed in clear light the more easily. And there, the not clear consciences of the both of them, moved them, as they were inspired to the confession of the truth, either by penalty, or by fear.

1534: God truly is everywhere, and the Creator of all reality is not constrained, nor circumscribed by any place. And He must be adored by true worshippers in spirit and in truth. And He also hears prayers in secret that have been offered in a hidden manner, for which He also justifies and crowns the petitioners. Nevertheless, in these matters that are visibly made manifest to human beings, who can investigate His counsel, because in some places these wonders happen, while in other localities, they do not?

1535: To many, the holiness of the place where the body of the Blessed FELIX of Nola reposes, is very well known. Many choose to go there, and it is indeed very easy for us to do so. The faithful hope to encounter there all that never before had ever been manifest to them by divine operation on any given day. Also in Milan, at the Sepulcher of the saints wondrously and terribly the demons themselves are heard to confess. We know that a certain thief went there to deceive by swearing to what was false, and he was forced to confess his theft and give back what was stolen.

1536: And is not Africa still full of the bodies of holy martyrs? And yet we know that such prodigies never happen there [!]. Yet, as the Apostle says [*1 Co 12:8, ff.*], not all the Saints have the gift of healing, nor do all have the discretion of spirits. In like manner, nor does it happen that God wills that all their memorials [or, churches, or tombs of the Martyrs], that these wonders should happen. For He divides to everyone according as He will [*v. 11*].

1537: Up to this point, the thoughts of the Holy Doctor. The most illustrious, POUGET, in his *Catholic Illustrations*, is convinced by authority by the evidence of this testimony, to be decided entirely in favor of the cult, or special recourse, that without any trace of superstition, the Christian people can tender their cult in some particular places before some particular images. And indeed, can one not see, as I have said, from these facts, that God Himself promotes this and confirms it with the most solemn prodigies?

¹⁹⁰ Cf. t. 2, pp. 183/G, ff.

1538: It may be questioned whether there might be given some explanation for this order of Providence, to the smallness of our minds. A great saint and Theologian [67] has responded that by such novelties, the sleeping devotion and the affection of the faithful may come to life again. And just as by means of this image, devotion may be enkindled, and prayers are continued, these are two causes that move God to listen. Through these, He comes to grant that which is asked, and so then also and by means of these images and in virtue of the prayer and of the affections, God continues His favors and miracles.

1539: In addition to the individual circumstances of the particular place, the soul can easily be reminded to be grateful to God, for that which has been received. With this memory, the devotion can also be all the more enkindled. Thus, we read in Genesis 12:8 that Abraham built an altar in the very place where God had appeared, and there he invoked His Name. And after much time, returning from Egypt, He passed by the same way, and once again on the same altar that he had built, he called upon the Lord [Gn 13:4]. Also Jacob [Gen 28:18] signed the place where God had appeared to him, and set up the ladder. He erected there a stone, and anointed it with oil. And Hagar, finally, put a name on the place of the apparition of the angel. She held this place in high esteem, by saying:*Verily here I have seen the hinder parts of Him that sees me...* [Gn 16:13].

1540: Coming now to our own images here, there is no doubt that God would not work by means of them most singular graces. This is so precisely in these times in which our eyes have been somewhat slack in looking heavenward. It is just by ever so little that they do not have to lament a heaven closed to their prayers. It is not totally new that the most grand favors of God are often received without recognizing them. St. AUGUSTINE himself in his books of the *City of God* ¹⁹¹, in that curious and erudite century, wrote how much God had worked at the Martyrs' tombs. He says that in the same city of Carthage there took place that which Carthage was ignorant of: *in the City of Carthage, there happened that which Carthage knew not...!*

1541: It is this way in our times. And we give easy pardon to a human piety that is more easily interested and moved with greater force at the sight and in experiencing present goods, that do not exceed the periphery of its natural judgment and desires. Now, so sublime is the height of the knowledge and wisdom of God, that He often permits in the world, some evils so that He might draw from them many and even greater goods. Even the heresies, St. Paul will say, in 1 Co 11:19, as these serve to make the elect manifest.

1542: But it is also something of a prodigy that even in the midst of the most thick darkness, there should shine out so clearly, purely, and in an uncontaminated manner, the light of our faith. And it is also prodigious, indeed it is a very great prodigy that rather than diminishing, our devotion increases and is enkindled all the more. And it is likewise prodigious, a very great prodigy, a prodigy that is totally

¹⁹¹ cf. 22, 8, a. t. 7, p. 663 C.

singular, that God is not only honored by us in our hearts, but also with an external cult, and not only external, but also public. And we not only render a public cult to God, but also to His saints, and also to the prototypes, to their images. And to these images, our cult is not merely common, but it is particular, it is extraordinary, it is most special.

1543: Most distinguished brothers and sisters, there is not needed among you proofs for a fact that your very zeal concurs daily even more, with outstanding examples to give witness. And I would wish to expound on this with some eloquence to your merited praise, in the years past as two outstanding speakers made known to me, there was reserved just to explain the cause. With this accomplished, I do not seek other facts. Let this alone suffice for me to conclude that the cult and special recourse which is given by us to these sacred images to be venerated, is legitimate. It is also fitting, and well ordered, while at the same time, it is in conformity to the custom of the Catholic Church. It is in harmony with the purpose for which images are assumed by the Church. Our devotion is also in accord with the order of Providence, with which God, in His Church, promotes it, arouses it, confirms it: this is what I had to demonstrate.

1544: I only add here but two examples, one modern, and the other ancient, as the most efficacious motive to reconfirm your devotion GREGORY III, in the year 731, after he had excommunicated the Iconoclasts, was not content in striking down this movement only with his writings, and with his words. In addition to removing this new heresy, he wanted to confirm further the peoples in the orthodox faith. Thus, he chose to increase their devotion to the sacred images. The expense that he went to is unbelievable. He wanted to enrich the different Churches of Rome with precious ornaments. Only those that the Library has given some idea of the weight, would amount to seventy-six Libra of gold, and three hundred and eighty of Silver. In addition, there was a great number of precious stones and other oblations, of which the value is not known.

1545: In the Churches of St. Peter, St. Mary Major and St. Andrew, he ordered that there be collected different sacred images, that were beyond price, because of their precious materials. And especially for the Basilica of St. Peter, he made an oratory in which he placed as many relics as he could find. And he further ordered that Masses be celebrated, and even more than there be added into the Canon of the Mass, a special mention of these. This is a beautiful way, in fact, the best way to respond to errors.

1546: In times less remote, that is, about the middle of the 16th century [124], when the Protestants waged war against the sacred images, it seemed one day to Saint Teresa that there was greater mortification and poverty in not having images, other than those of paper, and without ornamentation. And she had from the Lord this revelation that she herself related and in certain memories that serve as additions to her life [70], to this effect: that was not a good mortification, for which is better: poverty or charity? Without doubt, it is charity, and all that will incite me to charity does not allow that it should ever be taken from me. That which the Devil

accomplished with the Lutherans was to take from them all the means that would incite them to love and devotion, and they were thus lost. -

My beloved, faithful children, they have now more than sufficient reason to respond differently from what they are now doing.

I have spoken!

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SOURCES

OT

Gn 12:8	# 1539	Gn 28:18	# 1539
13:4	# 1539	Is 53:8	# 1515
16:13	# 1539		

NT

Ac 8:33	# 1515	1 Co 12:8, ff.	# 1536
1 Co 11:19	# 1541	11	# 1536

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VIIth Ecumenical Council [Image of BERITHUS]	# 1505
PIUSVI, Pope, <i>Auctorem Fidei</i> , Aug. 28, 1794 –	
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St. ROBERT BELLARMINE [22].	
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<i>On the Glory of the Saints</i>	# 1510
St. TERESA of AVILA [on images]	# 1546

SAINTS

St. ASTERIUS [moved by statue of St. Euphemia]	# 1521
St. GERMANUS, Patriarch of Constantinople, Letter to Thomas, Bishop of Claudianopoli [46]	## 1507; 1517
St. NILE, Abbot [disciple of St. John Chrysostom - Letters]	# 1512
St. PAULINUS of Nola [Basilica of St. Felix]	# 1512

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CAVE, William, Protestant Writer - <i>Literary History</i>	# 1504
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DuCANGE, author, <i>Christian Constantinople</i>	## 1503;1531
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GOTTI, Cardinal [against heretic, PYCENIUS]	# 1506

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1241:**SERMON 36****External Cult**

Preached on the First Sunday of October, on the 5th day of this month, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Rosary, in St. Paul's of Campo Marzio, Verona, 1806. - It lasted about one half hour.

If I were to be celebrating on this day, as indeed the Solemn Feast of itself warrants, I would speak to you of the praises of the Most Holy Rosary of Mary. And I notice, most distinguished listeners, what a pleasing reception your humble and tender devotion would extend, on the one hand, to my rather lowly ability to speak. However, on the other hand, I fear the derision and mockery of a knowledge of false pretensions, that might be aroused out of time. By this I mean, these might be aroused before your spirit could be steeled against them, and such reactions might easily destroy all that I would like to offer in instruction, that would be very useful for your edification.

1242: And surely, all these external practices of religion, as seen by certain spirits educated in the darkness of this century, have become like stumbling blocks and scandals. In falling over these, these spirits are the first ones to be crushed by them, in their impotent boldness, to dislodge them from that most solid edifice that Christ founded. But no one can put to the Church of God any other foundation than the one that its Divine Founder placed for it.

1243: These are the most firm foundations on which the true religion is planted: an internal spiritual cult - and an external sensible cult. The worldly spirits would reprove external cult. There can be seen clearly the stupid pretension of their proud minds. I say stupid and proud, because they pretend to overthrow a building against which the gates of hell can never prevail. They deny to us every reason for external cult, they deny what is useful for us. And both of these aspects we now take on to prove to them, with evidence and with brevity.

Religion is a virtue through which one renders a due and supreme cult to God as Sovereign, Master and principle of all things. This cult is a witness of His divine excellence, and is an expression of submission of all of us to God.

1244: We are not pure spirits: we are composed of body and soul. If, therefore, my spirit recognizes its Creator, should not my senses give witness to His greatness? If my soul experiences its dependence on the very first reason for its being, why, then, should not my body bend low to adore its Maker? If my mind is fascinated in discovering so many perfections in that blessed incomprehensible nature, who could hold back my tongue from singing His praises, from recounting His glories, from blessing His Name?

1245: The mind rises on high, the spirit ascends to its God: my eyes are lifted up to those blessed heights from whence my help is to come, and without which I notice

that I find my supplicating hands in prayer. My heart abounds in consolation in offering itself to God, as a sacrifice of sweet odor: my flesh exults in holy pleasure, in showing its members as a living host to serve its God: *...My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God...* [Ps 83:3].

1246: It might be objected: but, God is pure spirit, and therefore, a merely internal cult, one of the spirit is more suitable for Him. This is what the adversaries of external cult sustain, abusing the very words of Christ to the Samaritan woman: God is spirit... and He seeks adorers that will adore Him in spirit and in truth [Jn 4:23, ff.]. But, this does not mean anything else than what is interior has the reason of principle, and it is precisely what should be understood of itself in all cult of religion. An external devotion, abandoned by the heart, is a cadaver of devotion. The soul of devotion is the heart.

1247: This does not mean anything else than that God principally and of itself, seeks from us the **obsequiousness** of our hearts. If this is lacking, he rejects our extrinsic praises and adoration. This people, the Lord says with truly some regret through a Prophet: *...this people... with their lips glorify Me, but their heart is far from Me...* [Is 29:13].

1248: This simply means that God hold hypocrisy in abomination: to feign devotion on the outside, and to love sin internally; to frequent the practices of piety and to keep alive some sinful friendship; to pour out large sums as alms to the poor, and in rich offerings to the temple, without ever sending away from the heart those profane idols that are adored in the place of God; to strike one's breast, to weaken oneself though fasts, to get calluses on one's knees, to keep one's head downcast, and to prostrate oneself even to the ground - without ever making the resolution to combat, and without ever overcoming that passion that predominates - and all the while being scrupulously careful from even the slightest defects in public, and yet to incur without any disgust, the most enormous sins in private.

1249: God loves us even before we rectify and order to Him our hearts. God seeks that the heart correspond to its external actions, and that in all, it be in harmony. This is what Christ understood, and nothing less, when He said: God is spirit and He seeks such adorers that adore Him in spirit and in truth [Jn 4:23, f.].

1250: Let us proceed now to the intrinsic reason behind this matter. If we tender to God reverence and honor, it is not that God actually needs our **obsequiousness**, or that our adoration results in some utility for Himself: *...You are my God, for You have no need of my goods...* [Ps 15:2]. Yes, o my Lord, o my God. You are most perfect in Yourself, You are all good, the supreme good, and you have absolutely no need of my goods, of my virtues, of my homage. You are essentially blessed in Yourself and full of glory, to whom no creature in this world could do anything of itself, nor even take from You.

1251: And we can rejoice in Him forever, for this immutable felicity of the Most High and most lovable Creator of ours. And again, let it be said, that we must rejoice in

this, if we truly love Him. Let us also be happy that if we do honor Him and love Him, then all of this is more for our usefulness and for that need which we have of Him.

1252: Our **obsequiousness**, our adoration, tend toward this: to subject our spirits to God. It is in this subjection that we find our every good, and in which our every perfection consists. Therefore, indeed, every reality is perfected that is subjected to its superior. Thus, the disciple, because he is instructed by his teacher; thus the body, because it is vivified by the soul; thus the air, because it is illumined by the sun. Now, the human mind in order to be untied for this purpose to God, needs the employment of sensible realities. From these, it is led and gradually raised up, as it were, through so many steps, and ascends to being united to God. This is in harmony to what the Apostle has said: *...For this invisible things of him...* [Rm 1:20]. - considered in creatures, lead to Him.

1253: Therefore, it is a necessity that divine cult should make use of external realities, sensible and material expressions. This is so that from these, as from certain signs, the human mind might be excited to spiritual acts that are proper to the soul, with which one is joined to God. And so, these internal and spiritual acts, in the cult of religion, hold the place as principles, and of themselves pertain to divine cult. The external acts, then, are secondary and only means ordered to the interior actions. This kind of reasoning, this conclusion, is that of the Angelic Doctor, St Thomas Aquinas ¹⁹².

1254: This is the reason why God Himself in Christ, coming down on earth, in order to reconcile the world with Himself, chose to appear visible in human flesh. This was to win over, with the favor of the senses, our hearts more easily to Himself. He instituted the sacraments, in which under material and sensible signs, He diffuses grace and charity into our spirits, and what was lost, He regains - what was once possessed. He increases it and confirms it. Having abrogated the ancient sacrifices, He constitutes a new and perpetual sacrifice, and this is evident to the senses through the sacramental species. While these, on the one hand, cover the great mystery, on the other hand this most conveniently adapts to human beings.

1255: This forms a law that is totally of the spirit and of love, which essentially consists in the grace of the Holy Spirit, Nonetheless, this commands that the external **obsequiousness** of the tongue, and even the more solemn actions of the hand, be matched to the internal affections and motions of the heart. In fact, the great herald of the Gospel, the Apostle Paul, cries out: *...For with the heart, we believe unto justice; but, with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation...* [Rm 10:10].

1256: And the legislator says Himself in Person: *...For he that shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He shall come in His majesty...* [Lk 9:26] - *...For every one that shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father, Who is in heaven...* [Mt 10:12]. What could be

¹⁹² II-II, q. 81, a. 7.

more clear than this Law and this mind of the Legislator, in establishing the necessity of uniting the external to the internal in the cult of religion?

1257: I go on now briefly to investigate the usefulness of this. Primarily, it is for the glory of God. Bringing to the exterior and in public my adoration, I manifest to the whole world that only God merits the **obsequiousness** and the homage of our dependence and servitude. This is what is commanded to us in the Gospel with this end in view: ... *So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father in heaven...* [Mt 5:16].

1258: I have been benefited in secret by my God; but I should not cover over this with an ungrateful silence His secret favors. Rather, I will bless in all times the Lord, and His praise shall always be on my lips [Ps 33:2]. And since my praises could never be adequate to His merit, I will at least strive to multiply these for Him, in so far as I am able to do. And I will also invite my neighbors to exalt Him with me and to thank him: ...*O magnify the Lord with me, and let us extol His name together...* [v. 4]. And because I do believe, this is why I also speak [Ps 115:10]. I do not hold truth as a prisoner, as this is known by me in an unjust dissimulation, in a timid and shameful silence, so unworthy of the most High Master Whom I serve [Rm 1:9]. For to serve Him is to reign [cf. Apoc 5:10]. To follow Him is glory [Si 23:28]. This is true glory, great glory: ... *I will pay my vows to the Lord before all His people...* [Ps 115:14].

1259: Secondly, the usefulness to our brothers and sisters is matched to the glory of God. To each one of us, the Lord has committed the care of our neighbor [Si 17:12]. We, then, who have listened to the most gentle voice of Eternal Wisdom, this assures us to seek in her our authentic and perfect beatitude [Pr 4:1, ff.]. How, then, can we keep from crying out in every street [Pr 1:20, ff.], in every square? Can we keep from calling together and congratulating our fellow human beings from their errors, from their fatigue, from the very empty dispersion of their hearts? Must we not call them to the place fortified with peace, joy, life, true life, eternal life?

1260: We have, in fact, a very precise commandment to do just that: ...*And he that hears, let him say: Come...!* [Apoc 22:17]. The weak will find courage in the voice of our example that precedes them, if we wish to say with Paul: ...*my brothers and sisters, be imitators of me as I am also of Christ...* [1 Co 4:16]. They will be sustained, confirmed by our constancy against the ridicule and the contumelies which are leveled against piety by the world. For this purpose, Christ Himself endured villainy and shame.

1261: But the just, the perfect, the saints, find in the exterior expression of our virtues and of our conversations, a sweet spectacle of joy and happiness. This leads them to bless and thank the Lord. We have been made, said St. Paul, first a persecutor, first a blasphemer, and then an Apostle, then a trumpet of the Gospel [1 Co 4:9]. We have been made a spectacle to the world, to the Angels and to men. And David also sang: ...*they that fear You shall see Me, and shall be glad...* [Ps 118:74].

1262: And finally, there should be added to this theme, our own interest, in procuring with eternal life, the glory of God, and the well-being of our neighbors. The Lord says: *...whoever shall glorify Me, him will I glorify...* [1 K(S) 2:10]. - *...he who causes a sinner to be converted from error of his way, shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins...* [Jas 5:20].

1263: If we might have, with our depraved customs of our past life, scandalized another, would it not then be necessary that we, who have been the odor of death, should now become the odor of life [2 Co 2:16]. Should we not be this, in order to draw Christ, behind the fragrance of our examples from which we have unjustly deviated? And should we not likewise make up both for their loss and for our sin?

This is certainly so. And so you see, brothers and sisters, how fitting it is to unite in religion, also the exterior cult to that which is interior.

1264: The external practices of cult, then, are not only suitable for religion, but they are intrinsic to its very nature, and they are commanded by the Gospel itself. If this is so, who would dare any more to criticize them as useless, as vain, as superstitious? Surely no one, who would not at the same time declare himself an enemy to religion, and to the Gospel. And indeed, in these unhappy days, there are not lacking bold people who do declare themselves against them. Does this mean that we should be still timid in declaring ourselves in their favor? St. Paul says [1 Co 11:19] that it is necessary that there be heresies, so that those among you who have been proven, will be made manifest.

1265: Yes, my brothers and sisters, let us manifest our religion, let us confess our faith, let us make our devotion also external. This is the time. The glory of the Lord of us all requires it, the utility of our neighbors demands it, and our own self-interest commits us to it. It is a matter of defending the honor of our Father; it is a question of sustaining the weakness of our brothers and sisters; it implies the increase within us of a great treasure of graces, and of covering with additional merits of glory the stains perhaps of our past mistakes.

1266: Let all vain human respect give way to just duties. Let us not fear other human beings, let us not fear ridicule. Let us fear, rather, that one who could destroy both body and soul in hell [Mt 210:28]. Let us sustain on earth the cause of Him Who from on high in heaven, is to come to judge our cause. Let us serve Him Who for so many reasons is our Master, and Who has well paid the purchase price for our slavery. He Himself, before us, made us of so much fatigue, so many humiliations, so many sufferings. Finally He has promised us to remunerate our slavery by making us sit with Him on the very throne of His glory [Mt 129:28]. The wicked shall be confounded, seeing that under their very eyes religion increases within us. They will be forced to confess, at least in secret, that every machination is important to remove this religion that God Himself has founded.

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SOURCES**OT**

1 K(S) 2:30	# 1262	Ps 118:74	# 1268
Ps 15:2	# 1250	Pr 1:20, f.	# 1259
33:2	# 1258	4:1, ff.	# 1259
4	# 1258	Si 17:12	# 1259
Ps 115:10	# 1258	23:38	# 1258
14	# 12158	Is 29:13	# 1247

NT

Mt 5:17	# 1257	Rm 10:10	# 1255
10:28	# 1266	1 Co 4:9	# 1261
32	# 1256	16	# 1260
19:28	# 1266	11:19	# 1264
Lk 9:26	# 1256	2 Co 2:16	# 1263
Jn 4:23, ff.	## 1246; 1249	Apoc 5:10	# 1258
Rm 1:9	# 1258	22:17	# 1260
20	# 1232		

DOCTORS

St. Thomas Aquinas I II-II, q. 81, a. 7	# 1253
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1267:**SERMON 37****The Beatitudes**

For the Solemn Day of All Saints. Preached in St. Paul's of Campo Marzio, in the year 1806, in Verona

The Feast of All Saints excites the most vivid desires for beatitude in our hearts. The Gospel of this Feast [Mt 5:1-12], teaches us the most certain path and short-cut to arrive there, in but seven or eight very serious verses, from the very lips of Christ.

1268: It is my responsibility today to propose these to you, my beloved brothers and sisters, and for the sincere interest that I take for your better good [94]. Furthermore, for the solicitude that stimulates me to come to the assistance of your most just desires and to satisfy the debt that I have of entering with my reflections into the spirit of the Church, in such a grand festival: all this is what moves me.

1269: If I set myself to the task of explaining these, sublime as they are, and even divine, no one should accuse me of audacity, or temerity. I follow in all this the teachings of the most holy and illustrious teachers. In a special way, I follow the Angel of the Schools, St. THOMAS¹⁹³. I am striving for nothing other than a solid and fitting instruction for each one of you, to make saints of you, and consequently, to make you truly happy. This means only to be blessed through hope here on earth, and blessed perfectly in heaven.

1270: These Gospel sentences, each one of which is divided into two parts, in the first part contains the most excellent works of virtues. More properly, these are gifts of the Holy Spirit, as merits and the proximate causes of genuine beatitude. In the second part of each are the rewards and beatitudes corresponding to these merits and to these causes. It is from these that these sentences are called *beatitudes*.

1271: God Himself opens His mouth to pronounce them. Let the souls of my brothers and sisters, children of God that they are, hear these. May all reflect on them with the most acute vision of your spirits, and may all lend the docile ear of your hearts:

***Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of God* [v. 3].**

***Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land* [v. 4].**

***Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted* [v. 5].**

***Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their full* [v. 6].**

***Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy* [v. 7].**

***Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God* [v. 8].**

***Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God* [v. 9].**

¹⁹³ I-II, q. 69.

Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. [v. 10].

1272: This last one, however, is not so much a new level of perfection, as it is a confirmation, and a sign of the preceding seven. These form a kind of ladder to reach beatitude, the just reward for authentic merits. We will explain now in brief the nature of these rewards, then the order of the merits that are their cause, and finally the correspondence in which there are these rewards with these merits.

1273: As far as the rewards are concerned, St. AUGUSTINE makes it known ¹⁹⁴ that they not only pertain to the future life, where they will constitute the perfect beatitude but they can also pertain to this present life. For here there is begun in some way, by the just, a participation in beatitude.

In fact, *the kingdom of heaven, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven [v. 3]* - this can signify likewise a principle of wisdom, in perfection, in accord with which there begins in the just the reign of the Spirit.

To possess the earth: they will possess the land [v. 4] signifies the good affections of a soul that reposes in desire in the stability of perpetual inheritance, understood by the *land*.

1274: Furthermore, the just are consoled: *they shall be comforted [v. 5]* - this is so also in this life, by participating in the Holy Spirit, who is also called the *Paraclete*, i.e., the *Consoler*.

They shall also be satisfied in this life, *they will have their fill [v. 6]* - with that food of which the Lord speaks: *...My meat is to do the will of Him Who sent Me... [Jn 4:34]*.

In this life, too, they may obtain mercy: *they shall obtain mercy... [v. 7]*. Also in this life, with one's eye purged by the Gift of Understanding, in some way, one can see God: *they shall see God [v. 8]*.

1275: Similarly, in this life, those whose motions pacify their souls, approach the likeness of God all the more. And so, they are called *the children of God [v. 9]*. And this is the genuine, the most solid, the most perfect felicity, or beatitude, to which a rational person might aspire as a Christian on this earth.

If all naturally love to be happy, who will not be content to hear the order of the causes and the merits of genuine beatitude?

1276: First, however, it is necessary to know with St. Thomas, that beatitude has been sought for in three areas principally, by various people: by many, in pleasure; by others, in activity; and lastly, by certain ones, in contemplating. These three

¹⁹⁴ *De Serm. Dom. In Monte*, 1, 4. [t. 3/2, p. 170 A].

beatitudes have a very different relationship to future beatitude, in the hope of which we may be said to be *blessed* even now. The felicity of pleasures, since it is false and contrary to reason, is an impediment to future beatitude, that which is genuine, substantial felicity. The beatitude which is found in activity serves only as a disposition to that future beatitude. The felicity of the contemplative life, if it is perfect, is substantially a future beatitude. If it is imperfect, it is a certain initiation, or principle of that which is yet to come.

1277: And Christ the Lord has placed before hand, some beatitudes that would remove the impediment from false beatitude, that of pleasures. The pleasurable life results from two realities: first, from the affluence of external goods, whether these be riches, or honors. Hence, the first beatitude that is placed by St. Matthew is poverty of spirit, *blessed are the poor in spirit* [v. 3]: what can be understood by this is the disdain of every richness, such as the disdain of honors, which springs from humility.

1288: The pleasurable life consists in the second place in following one's passions, whether those of the irascible appetite, or those of the [95] concupiscible appetite. From following the irascible appetite, Christ wishes to draw us away, through meekness: *blessed are the meek* [v. 4], wishing by this to render a person not only moderate in his irascible appetite according to the rules of reason, but even more, to be according to the divine will, totally tranquil with regard to the passions.

1279: From following, then, the passions of the concupiscible appetite, Christ withdraws all not only by tempering these through virtue, and through rejecting them even through force. He does so also even more, by taking on, whenever this may be necessary a voluntary struggle in order to extinguish entirely their very sweet attraction: *blessed are they that mourn* [v. 5], which is the third beatitude.

1280: The active life stands principally in those realities that under the reason of debt, or spontaneous benefit, we give to our neighbor. Regarding the debt of justice is the concern of the fourth beatitude, which persuades one not only never to refuse giving to one's neighbor what we owe him, but even more with greater affection. The beatitude induces us to do this in this way, that with such desire and fervor we seek to fulfill all the works of justice, as expressed in fervent yearnings that a hungry, or thirsty person would seek food and drink: *blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice* [v. 6].

1281: Regarding, then, the spontaneous benefits of charity, the fifth beatitude instructs us not only to be liberal, which means to give to those to whom reason inclines us to give, as to friends and relatives. This beatitude, though, inspires us to go further, to be merciful. In the sight of God this is to consider the sole necessity in those whom we would benefit. This is in harmony with what St. Luke [14:12, ff.] says: *...when you make a dinner, or supper, call not your friends, nor your brethren... [v. 12]... call the poor... [v. 13]*. This is what is meant by *blessed are the merciful... [v. 8]*.

1282: Those matters, then, that pertain to the contemplative life are either the final beatitude itself, or a beginning of it. However, in the beatitudes that follow, there is no longer place for merits, but for rewards [96]. They are well placed as merits the effects of the active life, with which a human being disposes himself for the contemplative life. These effects, then, as far as the virtues and gifts that perfect human beings in themselves, are cleanliness of heart, so that one would not be made impure by the passions. And this is the sixth beatitude: *blessed are the clean of heart...* [v. 8].

1283: As far as the virtues and gifts that perfect a person in regard to one's neighbor are concerned, the effect of the active life is peace, in accord with that line from Isaiah [32:17]: *...and the work of justice shall be peace...* And so, in the seventh beatitude, there is placed: *blessed are the peacemakers...* [v. 9].

Admirable indeed, is the order of these merits. No less, however, is the correspondence in which the rewards may be found with these merits.

1284: There has been seen how the merits of the first three beatitudes have been placed [97] by Christ in contradiction to that false beatitude, in order to draw human beings from those attractions in which the voluptuous life consists. This is what human beings desire seeking one's natural whims, and look for beatitude where one should not, namely in temporal and corrupt things, rather than in god. And so, the rewards of the first three beatitudes are placed according to what human beings look for in earthly happiness.

1285: They look for delight in exterior realities, as in riches and in honors, seeking a certain excellence and abundance. Now both of these would be what the kingdom of heaven means, for which humans seek out the excellence and abundance of such benefits in God. And thus, the kingdom of heaven is promised to the poor in spirit: *blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God...* [v. 3].

1286: Ferocious, immoderate people seek through ire, through battles and in wars, to acquire security and repose for themselves, by destroying their enemies. Thus, the Lord has promised to the meek a secure and quiet possession of the land of the living, by which is signified the solidity of eternal goods: *... blessed are the meek- for they shall possess the land...* [v. 4].

1287: In addition, human beings seek in concupiscence and in the delights of this world a consolation against the fatigue and the boredom of the present life. However, the Lord promises this consolation to those who weep: *blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be consoled...* [v. 5].

1288: The other two beatitudes pertain to the works of the active life. These are works of virtue, born to orient a person toward his neighbor. By such works, however, some may become disordered out of love for their own personal good. Therefore, the Lord attributes as rewards for these beatitudes those benefits for which human beings draw away from in practice. They stay away from works of justice, by denying

to give what is owed, and even by taking this away from others, for the sake of being surfeited with temporal benefits: *blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill..* [v. 6].

1289: Others leave off the works of mercy to avoid being concerned with the miseries of others. And so the Lord promises mercy precisely to the merciful, so that others might be liberated from all misery: *blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy...* [v. 7].

1290: The last two beatitudes are of the contemplative life. And therefore, according to the suitability of the dispositions that have been placed for the merit, the rewards are also granted. Clarity of the eye enables one to see clearly. And thus, the clean of heart are promised the vision of god: *blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God...* [v. 8].

1291: To constitute peace in oneself, or in others, manifests a person who is an imitator of God, Who is a God of unity and peace. And thus He renders to such an individual the reward of the glory of divine filiation. This consists in the perfect union with God, through consummate wisdom: *blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God...* [v. 9].

So, dearly beloved, this is the beatitude toward which you are aspiring. This is the ladder to ascend to it. All that remains is that we go up.

1292: No, my brothers and sisters. It is not enough to love beatitude in order to possess it. All do love it, and very few arrive to take possession of it. It is unnecessary to climb this ladder that I have shown you, which Christ has promised to you, through which all the saints have ascended. Do not allow yourselves to be frightened by what is hard. The great rewards, the grandiose honors, are not handed out other than for grandiose undertakings, and only to the children of a generous and magnanimous spirit. Once the ladder has been put up against the wall, the courageous soldier climbs up, even under the hail of hostile blows, and all this solely to obtain a crown of honor which soon withers on his head. And for such a reward the soldier confronts intrepidly, even death and all dangers. What should we do, then, for an eternal beatitude?

1293: Onward, soldiers of Christ: with your eyes raised on high. See there on the blessed walls of the happy Jerusalem those triumphant ranks of the saints, with their golden crowns on their heads. They stand out with their whitened, or red stoles, and the brilliant lilies and palms in their hands, is not this so? They are your friends, they are your brothers and sisters, and they will help you, either with the eloquence of their examples, and with the assistance of their prayers, and aid your access to their realm. O how they desire you to be with them! O how they wait for you, o how they call out for you!

1294: Among them is the most glorious Captain, your Jesus. How impatient He is to share with you the spoils of His own triumph and to have you participate in the glory

of His Kingdom. He wants to divide with you the inestimable riches and the most happy possession of His perpetual inheritance! He Himself has set up the ladder for you, and He is exhorting you to climb it. He promises you all the power of His grace, that will comfort you on the ascent. He extends to you His right hand.. Come on, now, what is the delay? One giant step at the beginning of an undertaking, easily decides all.

1295: Let us willingly despoil our hearts from all attachment to this earth: at least, in spirit, let us renounce it. Let us hold back our wrath; let us learn from Him to be meek and humble of heart. Let us abandon the empty joys of this world: our role is to weep for our sins, for the pains of our exile. We are assured that soon our grief will be changed over into a joy that no one could ever take away from us. In the meanwhile, let us thirst only for justice, and let us be inclined only to mercy.

1296: When our spirits are thus purified, He will very shortly make the first rays of His nascent felicity be seen by us. These will shed peace into our hearts. And while the eyes will say: Paradise is indeed beautiful! - the courageous heart will respond: Paradise is mine!

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SOURCES**OT**

Is 32:17	# 1283
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NT

Mt 5:1-12	# 1267
3	## 1271; 1273; 1277; 1285
4	## 1271; 1273; 1278; 1286
5	## 1271; 1274; 1279; 1287
6	## 1271; 1274; 1280; 1288
7	## 1271; 1274; 1281; 1289
8	## 1271; 1274; 1282; 1290
9	## 1271; 1275; 1283; 1291
10	# 1271
Lk 14:12	# 1281
13	# 1281
Jn 4:34	# 1274

DOCTORS

St. Thomas Aquinas - I-II, q. 69	# 1269
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[NB: Translator's Note: With this Sermon 37, we come to the end of Fr. Bertoni's Parish Preaching materials that have come down to us, for the year 1806. The next Sermon we have was delivered on ("Low") Sunday, *in Albis*, the IInd Sunday of Easter, April 5, 1807].

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St. GASPAR BERTONI



Some paintings at Saint Paul of Campo Marzio Church, in Verona, Italy,
where St. Gaspar Bertoni preached most of the parish sermons.

Early Spiritual Writings

PARISH SERMONS

1807

[Manoscritti Bertoni ## 1297 – 1463]

Translation into English
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1972

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1807

1297:**SERMON 38****The Spiritual Life****For Low Sunday, April 5th [98], of the year 1807, Verona, in St. Paul's of Campo Marzio.**

With what desire, most illustrious listeners, and my most gentle brothers and sisters, with what desire always comes over me when I ascend here in this place to speak.. And with what pleasure there is for me to speak to you, God knows. Moreover, today I cannot hide my joy, I do not know how to contain my rejoicing.

Having just completed in these past days, the laments of penance, and your justification being completed, celebrated in these days, as I believe, today, for all of you, is Easter. I see you, then, risen in Christ, walking joyfully in newness of life, solicitous to hurry on with the disciples to see Christ in Galilee.

1298: I am speaking, then, with men and women who from fear and contrition, ascend with sureness to the confidence of divine mercy. You have ascended from the joys of this world and from its consolations, through compunction and sadness that is from God. You have now passed over into a holy devout exaltation, into a vibrant spiritual joy in the Holy Spirit. Hence, it is not so much that past sins remembered give pain, as the memory delights and influences the desire for eternal rewards. You are indeed happy, and I call myself blessed today in that I share in your joy.

1299: However, my tongue is not free except to serve the most bold dispositions of your and my heart. You are running along quite well: I have to feel joy, and I must congratulate you. I cannot hold back from exhorting you to move your bodies along toward heaven, even to touch the blessed goal toward which you tend, without ever going back to retrace one's steps. I exhort you not even to give a glance at this unhappy earth, from which, as a sorrowful bitter place, you have by now much distanced yourselves.

1300: If you have risen with Christ, I have to take on the sonorous expressions of St. Paul and put them on my own lips:*Therefore, if you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above; where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God... [Col 3:1] -mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth... [v. 2]. - ...for you are dead; and your life is hid with Christ in God... [v. 3].*

Here are two very strong reasons for this: I will only try to explain them to you. I promise you on such a day of much joy that my sermon will have much consolation, and as is my custom, it will be brief.

1301: First of all, *you are dead*. There are various kinds of death. Bodily death: according to this, Abraham, being dead, yet was not dead, since God [the Gospel speaks, Mt 22:32] is not a God of the dead, but of the living. Then, there is the death of the soul. Christ alluded to this in His saying: *...let the dead bury their dead...* [Mt 8:22]. Another, very praise-worthy death is that which comes from virtue, of which the Doctor of the Gentiles writes in this same place: *...Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth...* [Col. 3:5]. There is still another death, the cause of the antecedent one. This is achieved in Baptism, or in Penance, which is a laborious Baptism. It is of this that St. Paul wishes to have you understand how it is that you are *dead*.

1302: He explains this quite well himself in the Letter to the Romans: *...For we that are dead to sin, how shall we live any longer therein?* [Rm 6:2]. This is about the subject of this death. And what does it mean to be *dead to sin*? It means not to make any more use of sin. Baptism has accomplished this once, and Penance has renewed it: it has put us to death to sin. It is necessary now to carry this death out with our solicitude, that whatever sin should command us, or evil passion, perverse affection, we are not to be obedient, but to be totally deaf to it all. We will thus be as dead, and let us persevere immobile.

1303: A person who is deceased, said a Saint ¹⁹⁵, never speaks badly of another. The dead do no injury, violence, offer no calumny, oppress no one. They show no envy toward the good, and do not insult the evil. Luxury does not pamper their flesh, nor do they burn with hatred. They do not adulate the powerful and the rich of this world, nor are they attracted by a restless curiosity. They do not seek the applause of the crowds that surround them. They do not chase after gold or silver, or rich, and pompous trappings. They do not cultivate honors, and do not respond to injuries. Pride does not swell them up, ambition does not vex them, and vain glory does not agitate them. The false wealth of this life does not elevate them, the insane fury of wrath does not perturb them. The frail beauty of a face does not fascinate them. This is what it means to be dead, dead to sin: not to be spent on earthy attractions, animal-like affections, the desires of this world and of the flesh.

1304: The Apostle continues: *...Know you not that all we, who are baptized in Christ Jesus, are baptized in his death...?* [cf. Rm 6:3]. [You add to this: or washed in the blood of Christ, or Penance]. This is the manner of such a death: Baptism and Penance are our Cross. This is also our sepulcher. We are, in fact, the Apostle continues: *...for we are buried together with Him by Baptism unto death...* [v. 4]. This is so that each one of us would die as he has died, although not in the same way, he has died in the flesh and was buried; we are meant to be both of these in regard to sin. Both of these are 'death', but not of the same subject. The death of the flesh, that is Christ's death to sin, is ours: and both the former, as well as the latter, are true *death*. However, even though this is true, it is fitting that we should still contribute all that activity that is expected on our part. Thus, the Apostle adds: *... that as Christ is risen*

¹⁹⁵ cf. Cornelius a Lapide, in Col 3:3; Rodriguez [t. 3, tr. 1, 23, 2 (99)].

from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life... [v. 4].

1305: Having thus proposed the future resurrection, St. Paul requires another resurrection of us, a new institution in the present life, for the changing of our ways. When, in fact, a fornicator becomes chaste, or an avaricious person becomes merciful, or a wrathful individual becomes meek, there takes place in these instances a *resurrection* which is the principle of the future, And how is this a resurrection? Because one dies to sin, and resurrects to justice. The former way of life is cancelled, and the new and angelic way almost flourishes anew. Thus, we can say with St. ANSELM ¹⁹⁶: intemperance has died in such a person, and sobriety has risen up; in that young man impurity has died, and purity has risen. In that woman, uncleanness has died, and modesty has arisen. On hearing *new life*, let each one seek out in himself much diversity, and great changes.

1306: However, the thought of how much virtue the Apostle might ask of us makes one weep, especially in seeing how much weakness there is in us. After Baptism, we have gone back and aged in the old vices, and after the Manna from heaven, we have again sought out the vile food of Egypt. Even, we have been rejuvenated so many times and liberated from slavery, and we have fallen right back into that sad old age of sin, and once more put our hands freely within chains. Now, however, in this Easter we have once more risen to grace and died to sin. Do we not now wish no longer to abuse such mercy, and to persevere with every effort?

1307: Would that past sins, I repeat this, and never could sufficiently: would that all past sins were buried, as this is the gift of grace. Would that after penance, we would keep ourselves as dead. This is the challenge for our commitment, although we see that even in this, grace must help us very much. Penance does not only cancel previous sins, but also confirms one against future lapses. As we have employed in the sacrament what is our part, namely contrition, the accusation and the will to make satisfaction - so, we also for the future, commit the care of our dedication not to become contaminated anew.

1308: This is the counsel of our apostle, and he proceeds: ... *For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection...* [Rm 6:5]. With this word *planting*, there is implied also the eventual fruit that is expected in us and from us. Just as the Body of Christ buried in the ground, had for its fruit the salvation of the world - so we, too, planted anew in Penance, we have borne the fruit of justice, of adoption, of sanctification, and of numberless gifts. We will bear also later on the gift of the resurrection.

1309: All this while our lives are hidden with Christ in God [Col 3:3]. As this fruit of blessedness is to be produced, it is necessary to let it come to maturity. We could still say much about this plant of death, but already without even being aware of it, we

¹⁹⁶ Cited by Cornelius a Lapide, Col 3:3.

have touched upon the more joyful motive of the fruit of life. This, too, contains some difficulties at first sight to understand it, so cutting this out of love for brevity, with just the idea dropped, let us move on in haste to the **second thought**.

1310: And let us see right away how there might be explained this hidden aspect of our life with Christ in God. Our brand new life is the life of grace that we possess. It is the life of glory that we await. Both of these are hidden from the eyes of the world. The world has no knowledge of this new kind of life, that is interior, spiritual and holy. In fact, the world thinks of it with abhorrence, and esteems it as melancholic and death. Furthermore, such a life proceeds covered under the humble veil of mortification, of apparent sadness and of corporal tribulations. And grace, the virtues, and the gifts, that are like the soul of this life, remain intimate in the spirit, and enclosed in the mind.

1311: And the good, points out the Holy Father, AUGUSTINE¹⁹⁷, the good remain hidden because their good is concealed. What they love is neither visible, nor corporal. And thus, their merits are held back in secret, as are their rewards.

St. GREGORY THE GREAT also explains to you how these virtuous individuals are hidden in God. Thus, he writes in the Gift Book of his *Moralia*¹⁹⁸: Anyone who loves to mortify himself, rejoices much in the repose afforded in contemplation. Such a person is dead to this world, and is shielded from all the perturbations of human realities in the bosom of the interior life where he remains in obscurity.

1312: To cite still another example, CORNELIUS a LAPIDE¹⁹⁹ relates the story of the Holy Count, Eleazar, immobile in his mountainous solitude, lived there a celibate life with his virgin wife, Delphina. She sent him letters to find out how he was getting along. He responded: I am healthy of body and safe. **If you wish to see me, look for me in the wound of the side of Christ. For it is there that I dwell; and here it will be easy to find me. You will search in vain in any other place.**

Do you see, my hearers, **the just idea of a person risen with Christ?** Could such a person even yearn for the lowly realities of this life? Could such a one seek for anything else in this life, other than the supernatural and heavenly goods, among which he will live eternally?

1313: But, precisely this life of glory, in the hope of which we now glory, is much less known and seen by the world. Similarly, there is not seen the glorious life to which Christ has risen, and of which He lives in God, that is, near His Father. This is why St. Paul states [Col 3:3, ff.] that our life is hidden with Christ in God: ...*When Christ shall appear, who is your life* [i.e., the cause of your life] , *then you shall also appear with*

¹⁹⁷ *Enarr. In Ps 53:3* [t. 4, p. 493 g].

¹⁹⁸ 5. 5 [t. 1, p. 91, 1 B].

¹⁹⁹ Col 3:3.

Him in glory... [v. 4]. This is just like the pearl, says St. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM ²⁰⁰, whose end is hidden as it is in its shell.

1314: Even more fitting is the example that St. AUGUSTINE ²⁰¹ uses to elucidate this passage, that later St. ANSELM [100] would copy. In the bitter **winter** even the green tree seems dry to the sight. As the summer approaches, the living root once again is vested with fruit. This is our life, that is much like that **winter**, when the sun is further away from us and concealed behind the clouds. This sun for us is Christ.

1315: We are much like the plants, dry on the outside, and without foliage, without honor, and without the appearance, or the luster of beauty. However, within we have living roots: charity, planted in God, as in a vital, stable, and living earth. The summer will appear, as the glory of Christ comes. And the plants will be seen to come to life again, rising up, and once more give their fruits and vital foliage. There will be the glorious traits of beatitude, both in the spirit as well as in the flesh. Come on now, exclaims St. AUGUSTINE [104], come now, most sweet Jesus, that this pact with You be a firm one for me: that I might die totally to myself so that You alone might dwell within me. Within, totally in recollection, I will keep silence, so that You alone might speak in me. I will be totally at repose, so that You alone might work in me. The Apostle cries out: ... *And I live now, not I; but Christ lives in me...* [Ga 2:20].

1316: And in another place: ...*But our conversation is in heaven...* [Ph 3:20]. And: ...*But you are not in the flesh..* [Rm 8:9]. And again: ... *having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ ...* [Ph 1:23]. These are some of the sublime affections of a person dead to sin, one who no longer has a taste for the tings of this earth. These **are the sublime feelings of a spirit living hidden together with Christ in God**. Such a person seeks only the **superior realities, those that are of heaven, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God** [Col 3:1]. These are the sweet transports of a heart ravished by the sweet joy of these holy thoughts.

1317: You, though, my hearers, you also prove how true is that which I promised you at the beginning: that my sermon should have been a reason for much joy among you. And so, to keep my word perfectly of abbreviating it as much as possible, I will soon conclude [and I can do this handily, and you are absolutely right, wise that you are!]. At any rate, it is totally fitting for you and with all diligence to persevere in your holy proposal to tend in a lively way, toward heaven, without even turning an eye to this earth. If you have indeed **risen with Christ**, seek those realities that are above you, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God: taste those heavenly goods and not the earthly ones [Col 3:1, ff.].

1318: Heavenward, then, my beloved brothers and sisters, to heaven your thoughts, to heaven direct your affections. Elevate your hearts to heaven, where your treasure is, where your glory is, where your life is. The riches of this earth will flatter you, its

²⁰⁰ *In Epist. Ad Col.* Hom 7, 2 [t. 11, p. 227/2 D].

²⁰¹ cf. *De Script. Vet. et Nov., Test.*, Serm. 36, 4. [t. 5/1, pp. 176 G, ff.].

honors will enchant you, all of which this earth offers you. But, this is not your life. When our life will indeed appear, we will then seek the delights, the leisure, the repose. And then we will find the riches, but without thorns; the pleasures, but without sadness; the honors, but without jealousies. We will be inebriated by the divine delights [Ps 35:9]. And we will be seated in the beauty, in the tranquil order of peace [Is 32:18]. And in the very bosom of God we will have rest from our fatigue, without any necessity to disturb us, without adversities that wear us down, without upsetment that would disturb us.

1319: In the meanwhile, as long as our life remains hidden, let us be content with keeping ourselves, and even being considered to be dead: *...we have been crucified to the world, and the world is a crucifix for us...* [Ga 6:14]... thus, we will mortify ourselves as the apostle goes on to say: *...mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth...* [Col 3:5]. He mans: you are already dead; persevere in this death by mortification.

1320: Mortify in you the members of the old man, the sinner in Adam [Col 3:5, ff.]/ these members are the passions, that even after Penance, they come to life again with their acts which are, as he explains immediately, fornication, uncleanness, lust, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is the service of idols [v. 6]. For all these, there comes, or has come, the wrath of God upon the children of incredulity, revels to the sight of God and to the Gospel: *...in which you also walked some time, when you lived in them...* [v. 7].

1321: *...What fruit, therefore, had you,. Then, in those things of which you are now ashamed...* [Rm 6:21]. Would you like, then, to return to your vomit? Exhume your sin, put yourself back into slavery, throw away the most copious redemption of Jesus Christ? Would you annul the price of so much Blood, call down this Blood upon yourselves, with all the intolerable weight of His wrath? Would you exchange the supreme future goods that have been promised to you, for the abysmal evils from which God has dug you out? Would you choose rather the glory of your state, an eternal shame; the rights for an inheritance, for a sentence of condemnation? Would you swap divine filiation and its honor for infamy, for a brute-like life? Would you prefer the flesh to the spirit, the earth to heaven, paradise for hell?

1322: No, of course not! To heaven, to eternal life, to heaven, you have been called. You are already well along your way, and moving along with giant steps. Follow through to the goal, to your heavenly home. You have been enrolled by God for an eternity to be the citizens of heaven, domestics, heirs of God. Upward, then, with all vigor, with all your strength, hurry onward, hasten your steps. The saints await you, already sure as they are of their happiness and solicitous also for yours. Christ awaits you, and has already prepared a place for you - rather, a throne. Why do you hesitate, why look anymore to earth, to heaven, to heaven! **If you have risen with Christ...**

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SOURCES**OT**

Ps 35:9	# 1318	Is 32:18	# 1318
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NT

Mt 8:32	# 1301	Ph 1:23	# 1316
22:32	# 1301	3:20	# 1316
Rm 6:2	# 1302	Col 3:1, ff.	# 1317
3	# 1304	1	## 1300;1316
4	# 1304	2	# 1300
5	# 1308	3	## 1300; 1309; 1313
21	# 1321	4	# 1313
8:9	# 1316	5	## 1301; 1319; 1320
Ga 2:20	# 1315	6	# 1320
6:14	# 1319	7	# 1320

FATHERS

St. AUGUSTINE, <i>Ennarr. In Ps 53:3.</i> [t.4, p. 493 G]	# 1311
<i>De Script. Vet. et Nov. Test.</i> Sermon 36, 4	
[t.5/1, pp. 176/G ff.]	## 1314;1315
St. GREGORY the GREAT, <i>Moralia</i>, Bk 5, 5 [t. 1, p. 97/ 1 B]	# 1311

DOCTORS

St. ANSELM [Col 3:3 - cited by Cornelius a Lapide]	# 1305
[Uses Augustine's idea of the <u>cold winter</u> in the spiritual life]	# 1314

OTHER AUTHORS

CORNELIUS a LAPIDE, <i>In Col 3:3.</i>	## 1303; 1305; 1312
RODRIGUEZ, <i>Christian Perfection.</i> [t. 2, tr. 1, 23, 2]	# 1303

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[NB: Translator's Note: there follow here several pages of notes, or perhaps a rough outline, that Fr. Bertoni drew up in his composition of Sermon 39, on the Rosary. There are over 16 typed long pages of these notes].

1323: [NOTES FOR SERMON 39: THE ROSARY]

...as the flower of roses in the days of spring... [Si 50:8]as a rose planted in Jericho ... [Si 24:18]: full of grace. *By the odor* ; the King desired your beauty ²⁰². - *We will run after you to the odor of your ointments...* [Ct 1:3].

In Tribulation: in the shadow of the rose bed - joyful the rose ²⁰³.

A devotion common to all. *Come over to me, all you that desire Me* [Si 24:26]. The *Our Father* and the *Hail, Mary* belong to all: the wise, the ignorant, the nobles, the masses, beginners, the proficient. 'All other (prayers) are not for all ages, nor for everyone; this prayer, however, fondles the infant, and does not offend the elderly; it exercises the lazy, and does not impede those who are busy; it attracts the powerful and the rich, it does not exclude the poor and the weak, and does not lead the tepid to boredom..'

1324: (The Rosary) is like a garrison for the Church. 'They surround her with the flowers of the roses ²⁰⁴.' *Stay me up with flowers.* [Ct 2:5].

Its excellence: may be derived) from its origin, nature, authority. Institution (by) Mary. Promulgated by St. Dominic, propagated by a religious Order. Its Purpose: to oppose it to heresies. Occasion: the most terrible heresy. Its result was the most fortuitous.

Its nature, various parts. The most excellent prayer is the *Our Father* , (taught) by Christ; the *Hail, Mary* , (taught) by the Spirit; the Mysteries (which are the) motive of being graciously heard, and the means.

1325: Extension: (the Rosary is a prayer) that is both vocal and mental, (useful) for sinners, for the proficient, for the perfect; for every circumstance of persons, of place, of time, etc.

(It enjoys a) heavenly authority, demonstrated) by miracles: The Tables, the war at Lepanto, in Hungary (and with a) human (authority): the Pontiffs who approved it, who formed societies with it, who enriched it with indulgences, who preached it, who made a feast of it, and who extended it to the whole Church.

Excellent origin. (The Rosary comes from) Mary (through tradition); (St. Dominic) was admonished to preach it, 'as a singular garrison against heresies and vices.' (We know this) through the approved tradition of the Church; (besides),

²⁰² *In Annunt. B.M.V.*, Grad.; cf. Ps 44:2.

²⁰³ Cf. # 6945.

²⁰⁴ In the Feast, Annunt., response. 2.

because Mary was invoked by Dominic, and because he was impeded by those heretics, and because 'she alone has abolished the rest of the heresies', there being no means to destroy it.

Promulgated (by) St. Dominic, great saint of vast doctrine, head of a most glorious Order. Benedict XV ²⁰⁵.

1326: Propagated (by) a religious Order of Preachers, learned men, holy men, the flower of the Church, because of their constant practice: 'illustrious seminary of Saints' ²⁰⁶.

Its purpose: to oppose heresies with this, 'to be against all heresies, vices, etc.' Mary was invoked by St. Dominic for this purpose, with much prayer, fasting, penance.

Occasion: the most terrible heresy: kind of a sewer in which were dumped all the feces of other heresies (which) infected not only the simple crowd, but priests, and bishops and princes ²⁰⁷. The Churches (were) uprooted or destroyed: Baptism was denied, the Eucharist was abominated, penance was annulled, along with all the sacraments: the resurrection was denied, and two principles were admitted.

1327: Christ was cursed impurely; the Blessed Virgin was slandered. In the 13th century, they corrupted the people, in the 14th, at the beginning, assisted by the Count of Toulouse, they began to) wage war against the Churches, (to) despoil the temples, to burn down houses, to violate sacred virgins, to slaughter the innocent, with excruciating tortures and deaths, to kill priests, and to put to the sword and flames many of the most flourishing provinces of France. There was carried about in pomp the armed arrow in furor, satiated with the blood of the citizens. Parents with their children, the rich with all their means, and the ordinary citizens paid with their heads, an army of ten thousand was arrayed...

The result: the armies were conquered, the heresy was soundly destroyed, the temples were restored, and on the Church were heaped advantages that were not of a passing nature, but enduring, and they last until our own times.

1328: (This Devotion) is excellent in itself, because of the perfection of its parts.

It is made up of decades of the *Hail, Mary*, and *Our Father*, and the Mysteries that are meditated. The *Our Father* comes from Christ, and the *Hail, Mary* from the Holy Spirit; the Mysteries of Jesus; life (are) the sublime object of the meditation. The purpose of it is to imitate the content of the Mysteries, to achieve the promises. The Means: are the most efficacious prayer, the most potent meditation, the most powerful motives.

²⁰⁵ *De Festis*, Bk 2, 12, 5, ff.. Rtom. Ed., 1751, t. 10, 523. St. Agatha's, Rome

²⁰⁶ Baronius.

²⁰⁷ Gervas. In Chron.]

Extension: (it is a prayer) that is both vocal and mental: ... *and my tongue shall meditate Your justice...* [Ps 34:28]. (It is adapted) to all Christians, both the vocal, as well as the mental prayer.

1329: (The Rosary, like) the *rose*, brings joy to the just, offers fragrance to the proficient, heals the beginners, it is the hedge of the Church, it is a rose-garden that gives shade to the troubled. The rose is a common flower, (suitable) for the nobles and the rich, to children, etc. *rose* (seems to be from the Latin word) *rujiadosa*, full of grace.

It is so diffused that the Rosary is a sign of Catholicism, (and the source) of so much anger on the part of the Church's enemies, and of the devil ²⁰⁸.

Human authority: (the following give authority to this Devotion): the Catholic Church by practicing it; princes; the Roman Pontiffs, who approve it, and they establish societies to it, they give their names to it, they enrich it with indulgences; they preach it, and they have established its feast and office, and they extend it to the whole Church.

Antiquity: from 1200 up to 1716.

Heavenly (authority): the Victory at Lepanto in Hungary.

Excellence: deduced from its source.

1330: The Origin of the Rosary - Origin of the Feast.

October 7, 1571, the First Sunday of the month. St. PIUS V ordered that the victory at Naupactum should be celebrated every year, by the commemoration of Holy Mary of Victory. GREGORY XIII set up the day of the Feast of the Most Holy rosary.

On the day of St. Mary of the Snows, in the year 1716, Charles VI, at Temisvaria, defeated the Turks in Pannonia. At this time, the Rosary was recited in a solemn procession. In the following days, it was continued by the order of the Roman Pontiff, this devotion of the Rosary. The siege of Corcyra was lifted on the Octave Day of the Assumption.

CLEMENT XI extended the Feast to the whole Church ²⁰⁹.

Common: there are employed both the tongue and the heart: internal and external cult.

A prayer that is common to all.

²⁰⁸ St. Francis Xavier

²⁰⁹ cf. Graveson, t. 5, p. 523.

... and my tongue shall meditate Your justice: they shall praise all the daylong... [Ps 34:27]. ... the mouth of the just shall meditate wisdom... [Ps 36:30]. ...take a harp... [Is 23:16]... sing well - ...the voice I heard was as the voice of harpers, harping on their harps... [Apoc 14:2]. (The harps are the heart, its works). - ... I cried with my whole heart... [Ps 118:145] - ...this people honors Me with their lips: but their heart is far from Me... [Is 29:13; Mt 15:8].

1331: It is an antidote against sin: it brings joy to the just, fragrance to the proficient, heals the beginners. - *... in me is all hope of life and virtue ... [Si 24:25].*

St. BERNARD ²¹⁰: Eve with the thorn inflicted death on all: Mary, with the rose, brought salvation. Pep: Just like a rose, by its own power, brings joy, gives off a fragrance, and heals, so the Virgin Mary, by the most sublime power of her Rosary, brings joy to the perfect, gives off a fragrance for the proficient, heals beginners.

(An Antidote): through the meditation of the mysteries.

St. BONAVENTURE: The contemplation of the life and death of our savior, is the most perfect antidote against the poisons of the flesh and the senses. - Like Moses' serpent [Nb 21:9]: A certain remedy followed upon the accompanying contemplation, because a mystery was hidden in that serpent ²¹¹.

Through prayer: If prayer takes hold of us given over to sins, it renders us quickly purged. (Because) when Lazarus, already dead for four days was raised up, Martha is sent to Mary, because without Mary, death could not be avoided, nor could life be restored ²¹².

1332: Dispositions: Faith. *...Go forth, you daughters of Sion, and see King Solomon in the diadem, wherewith his mother crowned him.. [Ct 3:11].*

CARDINAL UGO: This voice is the voice of the Church inviting all to faith. Of the Nativity: crowned with the lowly spoils; Of the Passion: crowned with thorns; **resurrection: crown of glory.**

Form the facts: St. Dominic converted one hundred thousand heretics, preaching the Rosary. The greatest sinners.(B. ALAN.) from brutes, they were transformed into Angels ²¹³.

1333: Pray the Rosary, and you will be cleansed from the leprosy of your crimes...: *...if the prophet had bid you to do some great thing... surely you should have done it... From Eliseus to Naaman... [4 K (2 K) 5:13].*

²¹⁰ Serm. 1, De B.V.

²¹¹ Caes. Arles, Hom 4 - [143].

²¹² St. Pet. Chrysologus. *Serm 54*, before the middle. PL 52, 380 B.

²¹³ Carthagen.

It is excellent in itself because of the perfection of its parts: vocal and mental; (also for the perfection) in its parts: the *Our Father*, the *Hail, Mary* : the most noble prayers; the Mysteries (of the) Life of Jesus; the most sublime object of meditation; the Meditation of the Virgin: the most powerful. Its purpose: the Imitation of Christ. The most religious. In its totality: for its extension: vocal and mental prayer.

(It is adapted) to the capacity of every one: ...*and the book shall be given to one that knows not letters...* [Is 29:12]. - ...*And I saw a book written within and without, sealed with the seven seals...* [Apoc 5:1], that it might contain in itself all the plenitude of the Mysteries of Christ. They should be opened up in Meditation....

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NB: translator's Note: this is the end of the first fragment of Sermon 39.

1334:

[A rough sketch of the Complete draft]

SERMON 39

[The Holy Rosary]

The humble piety of the faithful, that looks to this practice of cult with devout **obsequiousness**, perhaps awaits from me a panegyric of praise. The sublime wisdom of the world, which in an inseparable air of pride disdains it and makes fun of it. This forces me to a just and necessary defense. The pious custom of many that cultivate this both in themselves and in others, to the great fruit for their own souls and likewise for their families, merits to be approved, sustained and confirmed. On the other hand, the negligence of some who do not take care of this. Either because they have interrupted it, or they make use of it only in a tepid manner, needs to be addressed. This is not without detriment and danger, and needs to be reproved, and encouragement given, and they need to be spurred on.

1335: this variety of circumstances imposes different purposes for my sermon, and leaves me indecisive regarding the various choices of means. Nonetheless, if you will be as courteous as you are, might dispense me from decorating with vague and delicate flowers my preaching style, to which I feel that my ability is unequal anyway - and if you do not ask of me to sharpen my talk with strong and vibrant words of contention. As for this, my nature is not made, nor is it in harmony with it, I can respond. I think that I have already found a way to satisfy the devotion of the former, and to close the mouths of the latter. I think I can comfort those who are already fervent, and to warm up those who might be cold, in a manner that will be no less appealing to your intelligence, and also effective for the various needs. I will do this by demonstrating the excellence of this practice, from the nobility of its origin that illustrates it, and from the intrinsic perfection that distinguishes it. I can also present my thoughts from the authority that proves this devotion and forms it, with the most solemn testimonies that establish the devotion.

1336: I do not know what other Devotion can claim any more noble traits of excellence even from the very instant of its institution. The Queen of Heaven herself, proposes it from her own mouth, she teaches it, she prescribes it. One of the most celebrated heroes of Christianity - no less great and outstanding for the nobility of his background as well as for his sanctity, is the great Patriarch, St. Dominic. The responsibility for preaching this was committed to him. An entire order of the sons of St. Dominic, flower of ecclesiastical erudition, an illustrious seed-bed of saints, I will say with Baronius, received this devotion as their patrimony and their inheritance to promulgate it. Instituted, introduced, promoted by the most interesting object for Christianity, which is to employ it in opposition to heresy and to vice, and in the most urgent needs, as well as in the most powerful struggles of the Catholic Church. Lastly, the result has been so fortunate that has come, the Church has intervened with indescribable promptness, and placed the devotion in security with a valid and perpetual protection from the most powerful enemies. Let us now prove these facts, if that is pleasing to you, in the light of history.

1337: From the XIIth Century, the Albigensians, a terrible descendent of the Waldesians, opened up with their errors in the Church of God something like an impure sewer, in which there came to be deposited all the refuse of heresies. And it was not only the simple crowd that was attracted. But even priests, Bishops and Princes were also seen to have fallen wretchedly into this pit by its subtleties, and everything became filthy by contact with that swamp. Babies were denied Baptism, the Eucharist was abominated in the faithful, penance was derided, the sacraments were annulled, the hope in the Resurrection was taken away. The true faith of the one God was destroyed, He who is Creator of all. And in His place there were admitted two principles, as the old Manichaeans had taught. There went up abundantly everywhere, and arose to high heaven the intolerable stench of the most execrable blasphemies against the Saints, Christ, Mary most Holy, whose purity was defamed in a most villainous and singular way.

1338: In order to extinguish and arrest this plague, in vain was the vigilance of the Pastors brought into the fray. Their vest efforts were left empty, as was the sweat of the illustrious and copious missionaries. All these were promoted by the zeal of the Supreme Vicar of Christ, INNOCENT III. Their numbers increased, they fanned out, they were strengthened, and at the appearance of the new century, there arose even more of them, sustained by the strong right arm of the Count of Toulouse. And the heretics from their fetid base, tore down temples, demolished altars, burned houses, violated sacred virgins, shed the blood of the innocent, and sought the death of priests through terrible tortures. There was thus placed under the iron and fire many of the flourishing provinces. The error was paraded around in pomp. Armed with fury, inebriated with blood, parents were forced to sacrifice their children, nobles had to surrender their riches, and the ordinary people, their heads. And what more? Arrayed against the weak forces of not more than a thousand foot-soldiers, and eight hundred horses which were all that could be assembled in those harsh circumstances by the state in its defense, and that of religion - there was opposed a terrible army. This was made up of one hundred thousand armed men, all arranged according to their ranks, inspired by the same spirit of anger and fanaticism. At their head was the King of Aragon himself, a powerful ally of the count. The enemy was already in sight: and a battle could not be avoided, and there was imminent decisive action.

1339: With circumstances, what danger, what consternation! A torrent that was so impetuous, that it rushed on toward such a meager dyke. It threatened, after having flooded everywhere in the vast land where it flowed. It threatened to overthrow everything on the beautiful terrain, the seat of religion and faith, where there had already been introduced underground and filtering through many troubled waters. They seemed to be waiting for their right moment to all come together, for a universal deluge.

To whom, then, could one turn for help in such need? To Mary, to Mary.

- Precisely, my beloved, to Mary; to her who is the most powerful support and aid for Christianity in its necessities. 'Help of Christians', to the one about whom the

Church chants her singular n praises: *Rejoice, o Mary, all the heresies you alone have conquered in the universal world* ²¹⁴!

1340: Then, in fact, St. Dominic alone, and with an insignificant squad of his sons remained in their fortification to comfort the Catholics. He presented himself to Mary, as a strong soldier in an entrenched camp of his solitude, took up the arms of prayer, of fasting. He awaited with lively confidence, to go out on the fateful day, with help from heaven beyond measure. With his own strength waning, and almost overwhelmed by fear, he administered to this earth. Nor was help at the opportune moment lacking.

1341: The heavens opened, smiling, to the prayers of the Saint, and the Queen of heaven herself descends to receive him in person.

- Go, Dominic, preach my Rosary; and know that this form of praying that I give to you, will be most pleasing to My Son and to me. Furthermore, it will be a powerful and singular defense in the Church to weaken heresies, to extinguish vices and to promote virtues, and to implore divine mercy: 'Like a singular garrison against heresies and vices.' To this effect, I want you and your sons to be forever the promulgators of this heavenly ritual instituted by me, from which will spring extraordinary usefulness in the spirits of the faithful: 'Innumerable fruits from this most salutary institution within the Christian Republic.

1342: Go out, Dominic, from the entrenchment of your retreat, comforted with the heavenly promises, furnished with new support. And what was the outcome of all this? Of this huge army that covered the whole earth, there was but a mountain of cadavers, among whom, the General himself, Peter of Aragon, lay stretched out: the rest of the army was totally broken and in flight, was dispersed and evaporated. The Count of Toulouse shortly thereafter had to capitulate, and to lay down all arms. He had to make restitution for all that the enemies of religion and of Mary had done, under the shadow of his protection. All that had been ravished and destroyed, he had to make up for, and to give back all the treasures that had been taken from the Church. All those that he had previously protected, he was called now to exterminate totally with that same right arm with which he had first unjustly received and defended.

1343: But there is still another aspect to be esteemed even more. The one hundred thousand of those most obstinate heretics were ravished to the point of freely bending their necks to the sweet yoke of Christ. They were not so much overcome by the force of arms, or by any authority, but by the gentle power of the Rosary preached by St. Dominic. Along with these armed men, there was even a greater number of sinners, and these were the most corrupt in the very tragic depravation of that unhappy age. They were raised up to grace within the bosom of the Catholic Church.

²¹⁴ Common of the Feast of the BVM, tract.

These results were wondrous, and were like the first-fruits of the Rosary. However, it simply could not have been otherwise, because of its intrinsic excellence, that brings such realities about.

These are authentic prodigies that surpass all the others. These were accomplished in such abundance, with such readiness, and with such stability, that are perpetuated in the Church. They showed in this most fortunate event, the most excellent character of such a devotion, even from its very inception. However, it simply could not have been otherwise, once one grasps its intrinsic excellence. This is the result of the perfection of its parts, as well as from the extension in its practice.

1344: The Rosary is made up of 15 decades of the *Hail, Mary*, the Angelic salutation. These are then distinguished one from the other by the *Our Father*, the Lord's own prayer that intervenes between these. These set aside the same number of mysteries of our reparation, that is commemorated by a pious meditation. Now, I ask: Find me a more excellent prayer than the Lord's Prayer - and after this, one that is more noble than the angelic salutation! Then, as far as the Mysteries of the life, death and glory of Christ, what more sublime object could there be for meditation? Then, the essential scope of all this, which is to imitate that which the Mysteries contain and to achieve that which they promise, what could possibly be more holy, more interesting, more sublime? The Meditation of Mary, is there anything more powerful?

1345: Now, just take care to make use of this prayer, what fullness, what extension! For in this, there are committed in like manner both your tongue to praise, your mind to meditate, your heart to love, and with what happiness! So it is that this is the prayer that is common to all. The Lord's Prayer is for all Christians; for all is the *Hail, Mary*, a prayer of salutary power; for all is extended the possibility of calling to mind the very sacred mysteries of salvation. Sinners find in the Rosary the most efficacious means for their conversion. Mary makes her own the very words of Wisdom"*In me... in me, is all hope of life and virtue...* [Si 24:25]. The just find the rosary a sweet pasturage for their devotion: ... *I am the mother of fair love... and of knowledge and of holy hope...* [v. 24]. All these have in the meditation of the life and death of the savior a powerful antidote against the poisons of the flesh and the senses. They have all this in the Meditation of Christ's glory as well as a gentle invitation to aspire to the eternal sweetness.

1346: Yes, Mary is that Mystical Rose who brings joy to the just, heals sinners, she sends out a sweet fragrance to beginners, adorns the proficient, crowns the perfect, spreads the most sweet shade for those in tribulations. She sets up a powerful hedge against temptations. From this cultivated garden there spring forth equally great souls, and also the poor ones in this little garden. All flourishes equally in the humble valleys, as well as on the proud summits of the hills. She never indignantly withdraws, whether it is a gentle or rough hand that reaches out for her. She attracts the youth, she does not offend the aged, she moves the lazy to acting, she does not get in the way of the already busy, she recreates the fervent, and is not annoying to the tepid.

Finally, the Rosary of the Virgin is a devotion common to all the faithful in the universal Church. By means of it, you are able to know the Christian from the Turk, or from the Hebrew; but also the Catholic from the heretic; the most pious faithful from the incredulous libertine. And thus, one sees the wrath that the devil, their father, inspires in all heretics against the Rosary. There is in this a sign of the great reverses that the Catholic practice heaps n hell.

1347: In this regard, St. Francis Xavier has written the following account. With eight of his companions, he was passing through France, by way of Germany, into Italy. They were dressed in the garb of poor pilgrims, with a staff in their hands, and a pack on their backs, and the Rosary of our Lady around their necks. They were most courteously received by Catholics, and with tender tears, as they saw nine men coldly wearing the Rosary around their necks. This was in public protestation of the Roman faith, in neighborhoods full of heretics. They also had many times to experience the insolence and the wrath of the enemies of the faith, and not without an evident danger to their lives.

1348: One day, when they had passed by Constance, and about a mile distant from a castle, they saw an elderly woman coming forward to meet them. Crossing her arms, and raising her tearful eyes to heaven, she manifested toward them supreme demonstrations of reverence. As then she was close by, she began to kiss the rosaries that they had around their necks. She was saying something in her own language, with vivid expressions of joy and devotion in the Catholic faith. She recognized that they, too, professed this faith at the sign of their rosaries. Then, she begged them to wait for her, ran to the hospital, and returned with a great quantity of rosaries and images of the Crucifix and Mary, that had been broken into pieces by the Lutherans, but which she had collected and saved. She begged the Fathers in tears to look at these sacred things torn to shreds by those heretical dogs, and kneeling down they revered these and tenderly kissed them.

1349: And then, the woman entered into the castle, and the Fathers followed her, and she pointed them out to all whom she met. Strongly crying out, she said: 'Just look and find out for yourselves if it is really as you say it is, that there is no longer any man in this world who follows the Roman faith. It is good for me that I never believed you. You have called me crazy because I never let myself be deceived by you. You are the crazy ones.' Thus, this Catholic woman remained most constant. This is all so true, beloved listeners, that the Rosary is a devotion adopted by the whole Catholic Church, to the point of its becoming a sign of Catholicism, as the glorious standards of the orthodox faith.

1350: And notice here what force of authority forms the consent of the entire universal Church, with which to judge the excellence of this devotion. For the confrontation with this judgment that is both authoritative and infallible in its decisions, I see clearly their weight. I note that the statements are formulated that are still the most famous of the most learned and illuminated authors that I could hear recite. They all exalt the Rosary, and praise it in an unbelievable manner in their writings. The weight of such authority could indeed confirm you in the esteem, the use and the profit

that the many and great saints derived from it. This was for their own personal benefit, as well as for that of others. Throughout all of Christianity, the glorious concern for this devotion was had among princes [168], Bishops, important prelates, all of whom were ascribed in the devout exercise of this practice. You could add to this by listing the long series of Roman Pontiffs, as the Supreme Shepherd, BENEDICT XIV notes. Through an unbroken succession of Pontiffs stretches out of six whole centuries, and they approved it with very serious praise. They promoted this devotion with supreme zeal for all of Christianity the exercise of this devotion. And they enriched it with a profuse liberality of indulgence for the practice of it among its devotees.

1351: But now, from this supreme human authority, as this is by now sufficiently well known, I pass now to the supreme divine authority. In the most solemn and luminous signs this has been made manifest in behalf of the Rosary. I just relate one of these, not because there are only a few of them, or that the others are less outstanding, but simply that because from one you could conjecture the light of the other motives.

Come with me on the agile wings of your thoughts, flying over the sea that separates Italy from Greece, toward Lepanto, to be spectators. Here with your own eyes you might see the prodigious benefit that the immortal preaching of all the centuries since have recalled. You could see that there the sea was groaning under the weight of the formidable Turkish fleet.

1352: Go back in memory to that epoch: in the year 1571, the Turks were threatening with extreme ruin of the Christian name. Proud by nature, they were terrible beyond nature in their power at that time. Then, supremely swollen in their hope and boldness because of their recent conquests, they easily presumed on the total destruction, following infinite losses by Christians, who were exhausted and their forces divided. The Turks were about to send out their fleet with the backing of a slight breeze. They saw open to them all the ports, and the islands and the maritime beaches of the Catholic world. They already had on the sea the best armed armada, the most furnished inhuman memory. There were well provided with food stuffs, convoys, arms, sailors, soldiers, well backed with artillery, weaponry and munitions.

1353: In the year 1571, the Turks were a haughty and proud nation, terrible for their bold war-like undertakings. They were much strengthened by the very rapid subjugation of two empires. To this would be added the recent and infinite losses among the Christians. They were exhausted and their forces hopelessly divided. Thus, the Turks swelled with hope and boldness in that they presumed that their total destruction would now be easy. They believed that they could send out their fleet with but a slight breeze behind them. They saw opened up to them all the ports and the islands and the maritime beaches. They were facing Lepanto, in the strength of three hundred sails, with their fleet well armed. In human memory, this was the most grandiose, well supplied and directed by powerful generals and valiant officials. They were well supplied with good-stuffs, convoys, arms, sailors, soldiers, all furnished with artillery, weaponry, equipment, munitions, that seemed already to bring with them the ultimate desolation, total defeat, fire and the slaughter of all the Christians.

1354: And there, one general commanded all. Insolent in his happiness, almost too sure of victory, with impudent confidence even to offering insults and threats, he presented himself. Italy trembled as did Europe, at seeing the exultant boldness of these barbarians, about to bring the ultimate ruin to the Christian name. Within the bosom of the attacking force, there could be seen the flames, the steel, the slaughter, the plunder. The enemy would wreak their licentiousness on the lives of the faithful, in their homes, with their fortunes, with their bodies. There were threatened sacrilege in the temples, the sacking of the country-side, and the desolation to the fields.

1355: In opposition to this terrible horde were the Christians, in their fleet of Confederates, assembled only with great difficulties. Almost all were gathered together by the extreme efforts of the nations who found themselves offering some resistance behind their defenses. But, all seemed languid, because of the many different individual interests and their own ends. There was not a good grasp of the situation by the generals, who were just about to separate among themselves in the very act of leaving Messina. The troops were very inexperienced, and the greater part of the recent draftees had no training in the use of firearms. There was also dissension among the soldiers themselves, for the reason why they had taken up arms in the first place, and the generals themselves were about to quit the field. For all these reasons, the thought was disseminated by the more cautious that it would be better just to observe the enemy, or make some treaty with him, rather than attack.

But as the battle was about to get underway, there intervened an endeavor by Divine Providence. As the various ships from both sides took up position, in order to have reconnoissance in mutual fashion, they failed. And they did not make contact until the dawn of the new day that both entered into the sight of the other. This happened in such a way that it seemed that now the battle was inevitable. The Turks advanced in good order, all organized in the shape of the crescent. The Christians, as they passed through the shoals had seemed all dismembered and disorganized.

1356: It was a Sunday, the 7th day of October, the sky was placid and serene, and the sea was calm. The scene was a place of destiny, where other times the victory of Octavian Augustus decided the empire of the world, except that the apparatus of the Ottoman forces was more awesome, and it seemed that the sea groaned under the weight of such a formidable armada. The vivid apprehension of the danger kept the deliberations among the Christians paralyzed. The more cautious were still offering their advice against engaging in battle. However, the time for counsels and words had passed, and the hour for deeds and execution had dawned. The flag was raised, and the generals were mounted on the frigates. They went through their armada, and placed the glory under the eyes of the soldiers, and held up the fatherland. They held high the cause of religion, and they gave every assurance that they were fighting for the cause of Christianity.

1357: Meanwhile their armada left the shoals, and it was stretched straight away on high. A general who commanded the left wing, because of the misunderstanding of the one who commanded, and moved more by private interests, delayed in coming out to battle, in order to keep himself disengaged. The Turks chose precisely that point as

one of the most favorable to them, and they gave the sound with the drums, the cymbals, and with fearsome cries. They attacked with all their force the six galleasses that were in the fore, and it all happened in an instant. And it was precisely at that moment [167], on that 7th day of October that in that year fell on a Sunday, that throughout the whole Christian world the Rosary was being recited, with solemn and devout supplications to beg for help from Mary. And she was not lacking evidently in the opportune moment.

1358: In fact, the six galleasses, as they were surrounded by the enemy armada, having abandoned the right wing that was almost totally disjointed, accomplished prodigies of valor. Firing away fore and after, and on the sides, as if they were all alone, vomited forth bolts of canon-shot, a hail of bullets from their muskets, and clouds of smoke from their artificial fire. They caught the Turkish masses in a cross-fire, and truncated limbs, pierced breasts literally piled up, with a slaughter and butchery of human flesh that would remain famous and memorable. At this point, the Turks began to retreat, to become disunited, and then disorder set in. The wind that was needed for them to carry the battle, abandoned the Mussulman armada, and so they could not flee. Smoke was in their eyes, and they were unable to see their own disarray. The wind turned and favored the Christians and moved them, even those unwilling on the right side, to be dashed right into the enemy lines.

1359: Then Ali, finding himself confronted by light galleries, and being pounded from the rear by heavy guns, reinforced the rowers to get out from underneath the cannonade. But the Christian generals bravely took up the attack in harmony, uniting to them all their captains. And they engaged in a truly ferocious combat, with their captains being supplied with select troops, and they were alleviated by receiving refreshments from those nearby. By now, the battle had reached a high pitch, with equal ardor, equal damage being inflicted. While slaughter was inevitable, the outcome was still uncertain. The soldiers on both sides were inflamed with a kind of connatural hatred, and they exposed themselves with all courage to every danger. And those who were not incinerated by the fire, fell into the sea, enveloped by the waters.

1360: The roar of the canon, the whistle of the muskets, the cries of the defeated Turks, the thick clouds of smoke that hid the sun, the screams of the oppressed, the groans of those who were drowning, all together composed a hellish music, between the fire, the smoke, the laments. The outcome was still in doubt, but all the while the furor increased, but finally the scales were tipped and the Turkish leadership was overwhelmed. The Christians then took over. The desperation was redoubled, soldiers slugged it foot to foot on the ships, as if they were on land. And when the galleys of Ali seemed to be right down to the wood, nonetheless, because of their obstinate resistance and successive reinforcements, the battle still hung in the balance. Just then, the Christians who were in the back, with a miracle of valor, they put their strength where the greatest danger was. They met a certain risk head on, and fought back the continuous reinforcements of the enemy. At long last, the flag with the crescent was exchanged for that one with the Cross.

1361: With the center in total rout, the stubborn conflict continued along the flanks. On one flank, the Christians were engaged by the courage of a Turkish general who all recognized as a great commander, without in any way forgetting the great courage of the ordinary foot-soldier. On the other flank, the Christians were surrounded and had reached the extremes. But, the victorious reinforcements that came from the center, the high shouts claiming victory, and finally, the head of Ali was seen, held high on a pike. Then both flanks collapsed, and the day ended with a total rout of the enemy.

The battle lasted for five continuous hours. Such as the obstinacy and the wrath of the nations on both sides, that they battled even all entwined together even in the water. This was by now full of the half dead, cadavers, beheaded bodies, and truncated members. The sea was so cluttered with broken wood, sails, oars, masts and rudders, that the waves could hardly be seen. Only 30 Turkish ships survived and not a single one would have returned had not the poor strategy of one of the generals allowed it. At first, he seemed to dismember and disjoint the entire armada, by spreading the right flank out too thin in the sea. He is the one who left open the passage. On that same side, and because of the same reason, the Christian suffered the greatest damage, with about 5,000 who perished.

1362: 180 were the ships put to the task, 90 were sunk. Many fortifications and convoys were taken, as well as a prodigious train of artillery. 30,000 Turks were killed; 10,000 prisoners entered into those very chains from which were liberated 15,000 Christian slaves. 180 galleys were taken, etc. etc. It took fifteen days to divide the spoils. The advantage of this victory might have been just the conquest of a number of Turkish Provinces. But, even Constantinople itself could be now taken, even without arms, just by presenting oneself in the city. There were ports and places just empty of all ships and garrisons, and the spirits that were struck with terror, already shook the entire empire.

1363: Thus God had matured also the fruit of this victory, that just because of the fault of the delay of human beings brought such harassment. In human memory, no other victory was ever accomplished in which the hand of god was more clearly demonstrated. Selimus himself, the Emperor of the Turks, in his defeat, recognized this, confessing that prayer had hurt him more than the weapons did. The victorious Christians even more clearly recognized this, by ascribing it all to a prodigy. St. PIUS V, to whom there was revealed at the very moment of the victory, all that had happened, and had predicted it, ordered that there be celebrated each year, on the First Sunday of October, the commemoration of St. Mary of Victory. Also, his successor, GREGORY XIII ascribed that victory to the prayers of the Rosary. And he wished that Mary be venerated under this title, and he instituted the Office in all the Churches where there had been an altar of this name. CLEMENT XI, finally, after another victory, by means of the Rosary against the Turks obtained in Hungary, no less great than the earlier one, spread to the whole Church this solemnity in perpetual manner.

1364: This is why, my most distinguished hearers, that in the Rosary there was a devotion that is the most noble in its origin, most perfect in its nature, the most

confirmed by the authority of its witnesses and prodigies. This is the sublime excellence of the Mystical Roses, with which today the veneration of the faithful eaves the trailing and joyful crowns of the Virgin. These are those roses from the heavenly gardens that have been transplanted into the fertile field of the Church: the pious faithful admire their glory. The form, the structure, the fruit of these flowers exceeds the limited ideas and the rules of all art, of all science even that the most elevated among human beings. There is confounded the vain pride of the world, the vain wise people of the world, and the foolish and most vain wisdom of this world, in the splendor of so much perfection.

Just as the use of flowers is so ample, the culture is as universal. As you, devoted cultivators, in your private and domestic garden: diligently guard these from all excessive heat and cold. High is the price that both heaven and earth esteem this; your negligence is condemned, as are you who are tepid, who allow these flowers to dry up and become all arid...

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[NB: Translators' Note: From ## 1323-1333, there is a rough draft characteristic for its citations; and a different draft that runs from ## 1334-1364, that is more historical in content. Now follows the final rendition of this Sermon 39, on the Holy Rosary, for October 1807].

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1365:**SERMON 39****The Holy Rosary****On the 4th day of October, 1807, Verona, in St. Paul's, of Campo Marzio.**

The Feast of this day, the solemn Feast of the Most Holy rosary of Mary, determines, my most distinguished hearers, the object of my sermon. It is only that as far as the manner of this sermon that I have not yet decided.

The humble piety of the faithful that regards this practice of cult with very partial devout **obsequiousness**, expects from me perhaps a panegyric of praise. The haughty wisdom of the world, with disdainful air, insults it and derides it, forces me to a just and necessary defense of it. The pious custom of many who cultivate it, both in themselves and in others, to the great benefit of their own souls, no less than that of their families, merits to be approved, sustained and confirmed. The negligence on the other hand, of some who do not take much care of this, or who only make use of it in a cold manner, or have already discontinued it, but not without detriment and danger, need to be reproved, inspired, encouraged. This coming together of such a variety of circumstances that imposes different purposes to my sermon, leaves me undecided in the different choice of means.

1366: Nonetheless, if you will dispense me, courteous as you are, from embellishing with rare and delicate flowers my ordinary style, to which I feel that my capacity is unequal to the challenge, and from sharpening my presentation with a strong and vivid contention of words, and to this my nature is neither made nor adapted, I think I have found a way. I believe that I can satisfy the sense of religion of the former, and also close the mouths of the latter. I may be able to comfort the fervent, to enkindle those who have grown cold, by proceeding in the demonstration in a manner that is no less easy to grasp, by your intelligence, and no less efficacious for your real needs.

I will establish the excellence of this practice from the nobility of its origin that illustrates it, and from the intrinsic perfection which distinguishes it, and from the solid authority that with the most solemn testimonies distinguish it, promote it, confirm it.

1367: I do not know what other devotion can boast of more noble traits of excellence from its very inception. The Queen of heaven herself proposes this from her own mouth, teaches it, prescribes it. To one of the most celebrated heroes in the history of Christianity, no less outstanding for the nobility of his birth, for his doctrine as for his holiness, the great Patriarch, Dominic, was committed the responsibility of preaching this. An entire Order that was so accomplished, the sons of St. Dominic, the flower of Christian erudition, an illustrious seed bed of Saints, as BARONIUS referred to them, received this as the patrimony an inheritance to promulgate it.

Instituted, introduced, promoted as the most interesting object of Christianity, which is to oppose this to heresy and vice, it proves valid in the most urgent

necessities, and the most trying concerns of the Catholic Church. This devotion had such a fortunate result, that is available to the Church with indescribable promptness. Hence, it has been placed in security with a valid, perpetual, universal protection from the most powerful enemies and from their most formidable attacks. Let us prove, if you are agreeable, these facts in the light of history.

1368: From the 12th century, the Albigensians, a most terrible descendent of the Waldesians, opened with their errors in the Church a kind of unclean sewer in which all come together to through the feces of heresies. This did not affect only the uncultured masses, but priests, Bishops, princes were also seen to fall miserably by the subtleties into that pit, and everything became soiled by that swamp. Baptism was denied to babies, the Eucharist was abominated, Penance was derided, the sacraments were annulled, all hope was removed in any future resurrection. There was destroyed the true faith in the one God, Creator of all, and there were admitted in His place, with the Manichaeans, two principles.

1369: There rose up around and about, and went high into the heavens, the intolerable stench of the most terrible blasphemies against the saints, Christ, Mary most Holy, whose purity was singularly and most villainously defamed.

In vain proved to be the vigilance of the Holy Shepherds to extinguish, or to attest the plague that opposed them. The sweat, the fatigue of illustrious and copious missions, provided by the zeal of the Vicar of Christ, Innocent III.

The hostilities increased, spread, were strengthened, and at the opening of the century, the heresy was renewed. The heretics arose, sustained by the strong right arm of the Count of Toulouse [103], up out of their stench-laden depths.

1370: They violated temples, demolished altars, burnt houses, ravished sacred virgins, shed the blood of the innocent, sought the death of priests with excruciating tortures. They put to the flame and sword many and flourishing provinces. Error preceded ahead in pomp, armed with the fury, inebriated with blood. In some instances, fathers of families sacrificed their own children, nobles were robbed of their wealth, and the lowly people many were forced to sacrifice their own heads.

And what else! Against the weak forces of not more than a thousand foot-soldiers and 800 calvary, which was all that the forces of the state could enlist for its own defense and that of religion - there was arrayed a terrible army. It was comprised of 100,000 armed men, at the head of which was the King of Aragon himself, powerful ally of the Count. The enemy was already in sight: battle could not be avoided, and a decisive action proved imminent.

1371: What a set of circumstances, what danger, what consternation! Such a swollen torrent and impetuous flood that was mounted up against such a weak dyke. After having been able to inundate the broad land that it dominated, it also threatened to overthrow on this beautiful land, the seat of religion and the faith. There had already

been infiltrated underground, as it were, many turbid waters that were gathering in force for the moment of a total deluge.

- To whom could one turn for help, for comfort, in such trying circumstances?

- to Mary, to Mary¹

This is precisely true, my brothers and sisters, to Mary, to the very one who is the most powerful support for Christianity in its necessities; “Help of Christians”. To the one to whom the Church chants her singular praises ²¹⁵: ‘Rejoice, o Mary, all the heresies you alone have conquered for the universal world.’

1372: Thus, indeed, St. Dominic, all alone, with a small squadron of his sons, remained in the ordeal to comfort the Catholics who presented themselves to Mary. And that brave soldier awaited in his entrenched camp of solitude, and armed himself with prayer, with fasting, and with full confidence. He waited for the opportune moment, and for support from heaven that this earth cannot offer, once its own resources have been exhausted and it has been beaten down by fear.

Nor was the help lacking at the opportune time. The heavens were opened smiling on the Saint’s prayers, and the Queen of heaven herself descended to assist him in person And she said to him:

- Go, my son, go and preach my Rosary; and know that his form of praying that I teach you will be most pleasing to my Son and to me. Furthermore, it will be of great and singular assistance to the Church in weakening heresies, in extinguishing vices, in promoting virtues, in imploring divine mercy: ‘A singular protection against heresies and vices.’ For this purpose, I want you and your sons to be forever the promulgators of this heavenly rite instituted by me, from which will spring very great helpfulness in the souls of the faithful: ‘...innumerable fruits from such a salutary institution in the Christian republic.’

1373: Dominic went out from the trenches of his retreat, comforted by the heavenly promises, endowed with additional helps. And what took place? Of that numerous armada, that covered the whole earth, there was nothing left but a mountain of cadavers, on which the King of Aragon himself lay stretched out, all the rest were in full rout, in flight, dispersed and diluted. The besieged Count was reduced to capitulation, and to make restitution by putting all back up that was destroyed. He himself had to make payment for all that the enemies of the faith had destroyed and wasted, under the shadow of his protection. He had to give back to the Church all that was taken and kept under his tutelage. All else, he had to exterminate entirely, with that same powerful arm with which he had first received them and defended them.

1374: But what has to be esteemed even more is that one hundred thousand of those most obstinate heretics, were taken, not so much by power or by arms, or by authority, but by the sweet voice of the power of the Rosary, preached by St. Dominic. These most obstinate enemies had to bend their necks freely to the gentle yoke of Christ. And an even greater number of most corrupt sinners were raised up to grace, and

²¹⁵ Common of the Feast of the BVM, tract.

returned to the very bosom of the Catholic Church, taken from that tragic depravation of that unhappy age.

These are those special prodigies that cover all the others, and which were accomplished in such abundance, with such promptness, with such stability, even to be perpetuated. These were shown in the most fortunate of outcomes, and established the character of a devotion that was so excellent even from its very beginning.

1375: These are the wondrous results and first-fruits of the Rosary. However, it could not have been in any other way, once admitting the intrinsic excellence of the devotion, that results thus from the perfection of its parts, as from its extension and practice.

For the Rosary is made of 15 decades of the Angelic Salutation, distinguished one from the other by the Lord's Prayer. This separates the same number of the Mysteries of our reparation, that for each decade there is recalled to mind for pious meditation.

Now, I ask you: Find me a more excellent prayer than the Lord's own Prayer; and after this, one more noble than the Angelic Salutation. As for the Mysteries of the life, death and resurrection of Christ, what object would be more suitable to meditate? The essential purpose, then, of all this is to imitate what the Mysteries contain and obtain what they promise - could anything be more holy, more sublime? The meditation of Mary, could anything be more fitting, more powerful? In this prayer, there is committed equally your tongue to praise, your mind to meditate, and your heart to love: and with what ease!

1376: Furthermore, this is a prayer common to all. The Lord's Prayer is for all Christians: for all is the Salutation of the Virgin through the *Hail, Mary*. For everyone is intended to recall to mind with affectionate devotion the sacred and holy mysteries of our salvation. Sinners may find in the Rosary the most efficacious means for their conversion: ...*In me is all hope of life and virtue...* [*Si 24:25*]. The just can find in the Rosary the sweet pasturage for their devotion: ... *I am the mother of faith love ...and of knowledge...* [*v. 24*]. Sinners have in the meditation of Christ's life and death a powerful antidote against the poisons of the flesh and of the senses. The just have in the contemplation of the glory of Christ a sweet invitation to aspire to eternal sweetness.

1377: Yes, Mary is that Mystical rose who brings joy to the just, heals sinners, gives fragrance to beginners, adorns the proficient, crowns the perfect. She spreads her sweet joy in tribulations, and she makes valid the defense against temptations. This grows equally in the cultivated gardens of the great as in the simple little gardens of the poor. It flowers equally in the humble valleys, as well as on the proud summits of hills. And she does not disdain or withdraw at all, whether it is a gentle or coarse hand that cultivates her. She attracts the youth, she does not offend the elderly, motivates the lazy, but does not get in the way of the busy, recreates the fervent and does not annoy the tepid.

Thus, finally, the Rosary is a devotion that is common to all the faithful in the Church universal. In this sign you can usually and with security and ease not only distinguish the Christian from the Turk, or from the Hebrew, but also the Catholic from the heretic, and the pious believer from the incredulous libertine. And this also contrasts the wrath of all the heretics which the demon, their father, inspires against the Rosary. All this, then, is a sign that is not equivocal of the great harm that is heaped on hell by this Catholic practice.

1378: In this regard, there comes to mind St. FRANCIS XAVIER. He relates that once with eight other companions he passed through France by way of Germany, into Italy. They were dressed as poor pilgrims, with staff in hand and a pack on their shoulders. They had rosaries around their necks. As such, they were courteously received with tender tears. They were seen as nine men who boldly wore their rosaries on their necks, in a public protestation of the Roman faith, in neighborhoods that were full of heretics. On many occasions they had to experience the insolence and the wrath of the faith, and not without an evident danger to their lives.

1379: One day, the story goes, they had passed through Constance and were about a mile distant from a certain castle, that was given over totally to the heretics. They saw an elderly woman making her way toward them. Crossing her arms, and raising her tearful eyes heavenwards, she made toward them demonstrations of reverence. As she was by then close to them, she began to kiss the rosaries that they had around their necks. She was saying something in her own language, with vivid expressions of joy and devotion for the Catholic faith, which at the sign of the rosaries she saw was professed by them. Then, she beseeched them to wait for her, and she ran and returned with a great quantity of rosaries and images of the Crucifix and of Mary. These had all been broken into pieces by the Lutherans, and had been collected and saved by her. The Fathers wept at seeing these sacred objects torn apart by these heretical dogs, and having knelt down, they revered them and devoutly kissed them.

1350: Just as soon as the woman had entered into the castle, with the fathers following her, she pointed out to all whom she met, crying out with a loud voice: - 'Look again, o wretched ones, if it is indeed as you say, that there are no longer any men in the world who follow the Roman faith. It is good for me that I did not believe you. But you called me crazy, because I did not let myself be deceived: you are the crazy ones.' So spoke the most constant Catholic woman. So it is, my beloved brothers and sisters, that the Rosary is a devotion adopted by the entire Catholic Church. And once adopted and become her own, it has even become a sign of Catholicism, and almost the glorious standard of the orthodox faith.

1351: And here note what force of authority there is rendered in the consent of the entire Church universal, that you might have some idea of the excellence of this devotion. Along with such an authoritative and infallible judgment as has been made regarding it by its judges, I see well that there will appear also the most serious

declarations of the most learned and illumined authors. By these, they exalt the Rosary and praise it above all belief in their writings.

To confirm the weight of this authority, I could well add for you here not so much the glory that many kings and emperors, and Bishops and sublime Prelates seek for their names, in enrolling all in the devout exercises of this practice. Even more the esteem, the use, and the profit that many and great saints made of this, for their own usefulness and the particular help of others. This is no less true for the religious communities they founded, and for all of Christianity, from the examples and from their preaching, that so extended sanctification.

1352: I could here add above all the long series of roman Pontiffs, described already by the great BENEDICT XIV. Through an uninterrupted succession for six entire centuries, they offered their approbation with the most sublime praises in their Briefs. They consistently promoted with supreme zeal its use in Christianity, and they enriched with devotion with a profuse liberality of indulgences, for both the private and public practice of it in its devotees. But, from the supreme human authority, as this is already well known, I pass now to that supreme divine authority. In the most solemn and luminous signs it has sown itself to be in favor of the Rosary. I only relate one of these, not because there are only a few, or that the others are less outstanding. My reason is that from the one example you might conjecture the light of many others.

1383: In the year 1571, the Turks were a haughty and proud nation, terrible for their bold war-like undertakings. They were much strengthened by the rapid subjugation of two empires. To this would be added the recent victories over the Christian forces which were exhausted and divided, and this just increased their authority. It was thus presumed that their total destruction would be an easy matter. Making use of a slight breeze that would dispatch them over the sea, they saw opened to them the ports, islands and beaches.

1384: They were facing Lepanto, a force of three hundred sails. In the memory of human beings, their armada was the greatest ever assembled. It was the most flourishing, and so well directed by capable and valiant captains. They were so well supplied with food-stuffs, convoys, arms, sailors, soldiers, and so furnished with artillery, weaponry, equipment, and munitions that it seemed that they already had brought about the ultimate desolation, total waste, fire and slaughter to all Christians. Ali ' Bascia' was the commander-in-chief. He was insolent in his good fortune, and almost cock-sure of victory, with impudent confidence. With haughty insults, he threatened the extreme ruin to the Christian name.

All Italy trembled and it seemed to her that she could already see exulting the barbaric audacity bringing within her very bosom the flames, the steel, the destruction, the rapes. There could be imagined the licentiousness in the homes, in the streets, in the lives, in the fortunes and on the persons of the land. There was imagined the sacrilege of the temples, the sacking in the squares, the destruction of the fields.

1385: There was opposed to all this a fleet of Confederates. This was assembled only after much difficulty, and was found already behind the Curzolari. All was put together with extreme effort and resistance. The force was languid because of the difference in the interests and the purposes of the nations, and for the lack of good intelligence among the generals, who more than once were on the verge of separating themselves from one another. Added to all this was the lack of experience among the troops, the greater part of whom were new draftees. Much dissension arose among the troops, and frequently weapons were drawn in their ranks, one against the other and much tumult. For all these reasons, from the more cautious the advice was to observe the enemy rather than attack him.

1386: But, as the battle got underway, an intervention of Providence took over. As they were watching one another in their ships, on both sides of the armada, in order to take reconnaissance of the formation of the ships, they fell in upon one another. But they did not actually engage until dawn of the following day that both were in sight. This made it by now inevitable that a conflict would ensue.

The Turkish fleet proceeded in good order, all formed as in the shape of a crescent. The Christian fleet, on the contrary, in passing through the shoals, seemed all dismembered and disorganized.

It was Sunday, that 7th day of October: the sky was placid and serene, and the sea was calm. The scene and location was a place of destiny, in that, on another occasion, the victory of Octavian Augustus had there decided the empire of the world.

The apparatus of the Ottoman forces was the most awesome, and it seemed as though the sea itself groaned under the weight of such a formidable armada. The vivid apprehension of the danger held the Christians still in doubt and uncertain in their deliberations. But, there was no more for counsels or words, but only of deeds and the execution of plans.

1387: The flags were raised, and the general mounted on their frigates, looked across the armada, and placed under the eyes of their soldiers their glory, their fatherland, religion: this was so that each one would be animated to fight well for the defense and the honor of the Christian faith. And it was also so that they could assure all of god's protection, the most powerful Father of His faithful, and the great Remunerator for anyone who would put down his life for the cause of His holy religion. All of the soldiers were deeply moved at these words, and moved to tears out of joy, they responded: Victory! Victory!

1388: Meanwhile, the armada was making its way through the shoals and in a straight formation, extended itself forward. However, the right flank did not advance, held back by the mistaken purposes of the one who led them. His idea was to disengage himself from the battle, and so he remained detached from the rest of the body. Then the Turks stood at attention watching every movement of the Christians, avidly took advantage of this situation. And they gave the sign for the drums to beat,

for the cymbals to clang, and fearsome cries. And they struck with all their force the six galleasses that were in front, all took place in an instant. And that was also the precise moment in which all of Christianity with its solemn and devout supplications recited the rosary of Mary, in order to ask her for her help. And her help came promptly, abundantly, manifestly.

1389: In fact, the six galleasses, although surrounded by the enemy armada, and abandoned on the right wing which had separated itself, showed prodigies of courage. They fired away, fore and aft, on both sides, and it seemed as if they were all ablaze, vomiting out bolts of cannonade, hails [125] of musket fire, and clouds of artificial fire. Taking in the Turkish dreams, they piled up instead truncated members, pierced corpses, with a famous slaughter and memorable butchery of human flesh.

The Turks began to give way, to withdraw, then were in disarray, and finally, total confusion. The wind that was needed for their battle plan, abandoned the Musulman armada. Thus, it could not get away, and brought them rather right into the eye of the smoke. Hence, they were unable to see the dimensions of the havoc wreaked upon them. The wind seemed to pick up in the Christians' favor, and pushed them even unwillingly, those on the right wing, directly into a clash with the enemy.

1390: Then Ali' Basci', finding himself before the lighter ships in front, and being pounded in the back by the larger ships, gave word to begin rowing: at this point, the Christian generals charged him as one person. There ensued a ferocious battle. The captains were furnished with select troops, and received from the nearby ranks, reinforcements. Then, the battle raged with equal ardor on both sides, equal damage with a certain slaughter in the offing, with the outcome still uncertain. The soldiers of both nations, charged up by their connatural hatred, exposed themselves courageously to every danger. And those who were not incinerated by fire, fell into the sea, absorbed by water.

1391: The roar of the canons, the whistle of the muskets, the cries of the beaten Turks, the thick clouds that hid the sun, the screams of the oppressed, the groans of those who were drowning, all together resulted in a tragic, hellish music, between the smoke, the fire and the lamentations. All the while the fury increased. The captains stormed the enemy ships. The Christians leapt on the enemy ships and a hand-to-hand combat ensued. Foot-to-foot, they slugged it out, as though they were on land. The besieged Turks contested the battle with fierce desperation, every step forward the Christians took. And as the imperial galley of Ali' was won over even to the last timber, yet for the successive reinforcements, the battle remained in the balance.

1392: At this point, a few small Christian ships, holding up the rear, with a superhuman effort of courage, pounced upon the spot where there was the greatest danger [105] with their assistance. Others crossed over entire squadrons with sure risk to themselves that were coming to the help of the enemy. Finally, the Turkish leadership surrendered, and the flag with the crescent was exchanged for that with the Cross.

Thus, the center caved in, even though on the flanks the battle went on furiously. As one, the Christians were committed to a very dangerous struggle, due to the valor of the Turkish general, who was the commander of all their forces. And this is said without overlooking the ordinary soldier. They were surrounded on the one side by superior numbers, and were at the extremes. But, with the help of that part of the combatants who were already victorious, the head of Ali' suddenly appeared on a pike, the tide turned. Up went the shout of the conquerors. The wings collapsed and the day was won with a complete rout of the enemy.

1393: The battle lasted over five continuous hours. Such was the mutual obstinacy and wrath of the nations involved that they even fought all entwined with one another, even in the water. This by now was covered over by the half-dead, and was full of cadavers, truncated members and remnants. The sea was so encumbered with broken pieces of wood, sails, oars, masts, and rudders, that the waves would hardly be seen. The Turks had committed one hundred and eight galleys to the encounter, ninety were sunk. Many armaments were taken, and convoys, as well as a prodigious train of artillery. 40,000 Turks perished, then thousands entered into the very chains that were taken from the liberated 15, 000 Christian slaves.

1394: It took 15 days to make inventory and to divide the spoils. The advantage of this victory could be estimated not only in the conquest of various provinces, but included even Constantinople itself. This was now defenseless, and could be taken by just walking in. the ports and the laces were devoid of ships and garrisons, and the spirits shook by fear, and the empire itself wavered. In this way God had matured the fruit of victory which only because of the fault of human delay was decided.

Inhuman memory, no other victory was ever achieved in which the hand of God had been so clearly demonstrated. Selimus himself, the emperor of the Turks, in defeat, recognized this. He confessed that he had been hurt much more by prayer than by force of arms. The victorious Christians saw this more clearly by ascribing the entire prosperous outcome of that action to Mary's powerful intercession.

1395: St. PIUS V, to whom was revealed in that hour that all this had happened, and had predicted it, ordered that every year on the First Sunday of October, there should be celebrated the commemoration of St. Mary of Victory. GREGORY XIII, his successor, testified that that victory had been obtained through the prayers of the Rosary. He wished that under this title Mary be venerated on that day. And he instituted the Office of the Feast in all the Churches where there might be an altar dedicated under this title, Finally, CLEMENT XI, after another victory that was won by means of the Rosary, also by Christians against the Turks in Hungary, that was in no way inferior to the former one, spread to the whole Church and perpetually, this solemnity.

1396: And this is why, most distinguished listeners, that in the Rosary we have a devotion that is most noble because of its origin, most perfect in its nature, the most

confirmed by the authority of its witnesses and prodigies. This is the sublime excellence of the Mystical Roses, of which today the devotion of the faithful still weaves trailing and joyful crowns for the Virgin. These are the roses of the heavenly gardens transplanted in the fertile field of the Church. Let the pious faithful admire its glory. The form, the structure, the fruit of these flowers, exceeds the limited ideas and the rules of every art, of all science, even the most sophisticated among human beings. The foolish and most vain wisdom of this world is confounded in the splendor of such perfection.

1397: As the use of these flowers is so wide-spread, so universal is its cultivation. For you, my devout cultivators of this devotion, it is fitting for you to keep these flowers in your private and home gardens, with the diligence of all ardor, with all yearning. The price in which the both heaven and earth hold this devotion is most exalted. Your negligence is condemned to tepid devotees, that allows these gardens to shrivel by lack of cultivation, and when allowed to dry up. Come, now, all of you, plant these roses, irrigate them, nourish them, propagate them! Let them always smile for you, in a perpetual spring-time. This devotion is in the defense of your piety, the protection of your purity, for your sons, o fathers, for your daughters, o mothers! Let these flowers be in your hands, in your bosoms, on your temples.

May their fragrance permeate both your private rooms, and public offices, your proud halls and your humble hovels. May every station be signed with these variously colored flowers, and may every path be covered with them. May the temple be adorned with this, your prayer-wishes be crowned, and may the tombs of the faithful be sprinkled with this devotion. May the trophies of our heroes be decorated with these, and may the altars of the saints be surrounded by them. May the august throne be garlanded with these, and may the cloud of these roses be placed at the illustrious feet of our Mother and Queen.

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Nb 21:9	# 1331	Si 24:18	# 1323
4 K [2 K] 5:13	# 1333	24	##1345; 1376
Ps 34:28	## 1328; 1330	25	##1331; 1345; 1376
36:30	# 1330	26	# 1323
44:12	# 1323	50: 8	# 1323
118:145	# 1330	Is 23:16	# 1330
Ct 1:3	# 1323	29:12	# 1333
2:5	# 1324	13	# 1330
3:11	# 1332		

NT

Mt 15:8	# 1330	Rv 5:1	# 1333
		14:2	# 1330

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	## 1330; 1363; 1395
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GRAVESON, <i>History: feast of Rosary</i> [t. 5, p. 523]	# 1332
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UGO, Card., Church in CT	# 1332
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1328:**SERMON 40****Against Impure Speech [106]****First Installment**

Preached in the Venerable Church of St. Paul's, of Campo Marzio, in Verona, on the 26th Sunday after Pentecost, Feast of the Patronage of Mary, on the 15th of November, 1807.

As far as I know, most distinguished brothers and sisters, as far as you are concerned, in that you have your salvation at heart, and the glory of the name "Christian". Nonetheless, I will commit myself to treat today in your presence, of something that is indeed new and of supreme importance and most necessary.

Therefore, regarding the patronage of Mary, may no one condemn me, if I do not say anything about it. It is of great good fortune that I speak today on a day in which this is invoked, both on my address and on your deliberations. I So, you are not just simple hearers that I hope to address, or just polite listeners, or those who will kindly put up with my lack of style. I have always experienced these from you, to my great confusion and to your great glory. But, today you must be judges yourselves, and consultors, to form judgments, to believe, even if this should not apply to you in every particular.

1399: In fact, there has been introduced - I will speak freely in order to help you better - there has been introduced, I do not infer that it is among all of you, but certainly it happens among you - a dishonorable custom. This is as unfitting to the religion that you profess, as it is most dangerous to the purpose of the supernatural happiness toward which you tend. This is a certain manner of speaking boldly, unguardedly, incautiously, indelicate jokes, bold double-meanings, inter-mingled with pointed allusions, witticisms, phrases offensive to décor, purity, modesty.

I know where this weed comes from to contaminate the most purged grain in your field. It was too abundant the fruit to leave the envy of our common enemy undisturbed. And in silence, and in the shadows, he has planted his wicked seed [107]. But, I also know all too well that this new style hides itself very well under the appearance of civil and educated treatment. It seems urbane, gallant, spirited, this infernal darnel, as it is so difficult to discern by so many. The fact is that were it to be discerned, your piety would not have allowed it to make such headway, and surely means would have been sought to remedy the situation efficaciously.

1400: I understand well the difficulty in overcoming opinions that are common and customs at the same time. This is particularly true when this practice is sustained by seductive reasoning. This new manner of speech seems to be authorized by the credit of individuals who are not uneducated or of low birth, or disreputable persons by their way of life. This way of speaking is supported, it seems, by a prescription of a long and

peaceful practice, even among Christians, who are the most cultured, and is found in the most select circles. At any rate, as its evil is intrinsic to it, and since it is harmful, I do not refuse the challenge. Even if because of my defects, I do not acquit myself well, at least my spirit will be absolved of the fault after having made the effort to the best of my ability to meet my duty.

I would not want you to condescend, out of your inclination toward my good will for you, that I presume this is unknown to you. I would not want you to agree with me until you had weighed with your subtle minds my reasons. And even when, after your mature judgment, you might come to condemn this evil custom, I would not want to see you in motion to resolve to distance yourself from this, and from society, until first you had seriously consulted on the abundance and the quality of the means that you have at your disposal.

1401: In the last analysis, it is up to you to judge this style, whether it is fitting, or unsuitable; if it is helpful, or harmful. You are free. We are not here to dominate, but only to help your faith with our exhortations. Yours is the right for your own salvation, for you happiness. And all yours is also the harm that comes from this. For what purpose have you received reason from God? - ... *Do not become like the horse and the mule, who have no understanding...* [Ps 31:9]. God Himself cries out. If you do not open your eyes on your own, they will be opened for you, but only to see yourself beyond any help.

The judge is at the door and He will judge to your loss and confusion that which you could have been able to judge for your own benefit and supreme glory. It pertains to you, in the last analysis, to attend to what is helpful for you, to remove all harm from your way: the means God has supplied and placed under your authority.

But, this suffices for the **Introduction**. Now that you see what is going to be presented here, and what is your responsibility in its regard, consider seriously now the points that I will propose to you. And first, the **nature** of this custom, then the **seriousness** of its harm, and lastly, the most expedient **ways to get rid of it**.

1402: The **nature** of this language presently in vogue is always abominable, because it is always mischievous, always deformed, and it is ever accompanied by an evil stain of obscenity. Defenses are invented for it, reasons are discovered to defend it, excuses are manufactured. It is disguised, embellished, and decorated. But, it is like the Ethiopian, always black. Wash those members, dry them, polish them smoothly, scrub them, rub them: they become all the darker. This style seeks ornamentation, dresses in the purest linen, cover it over, down to the fingernails: but, the face shows, all that remains of the filthy body uncovered, there is brought together all its deformity and there is evident the rest of it. If you do not choose to do away with it entirely, and do not choose to bury it totally underground, all that is required is its snout above ground to bring horror. This is so even if it were decorated with flowers, or rich pearls were hung from its ears and they be put around its neck the treasures of the deep indigo.

1403: You will say: we will conceal its head, as though there did not remain underneath all its baseness. And really, there is no way to do this, admit it. One has to cover entirely the malice of speaking, to the point that it would not even be noticed by your listeners. Then, it would be all bottled up in your own hearts, and you would be forced to accept the restraint of modesty between your lips. The other alternative is that there be allowed to appear openly at least its main thread. This is the intention of the one who wants to clown around in the brigade, he just never cases being crude at all times, and this is distressing.

But, come on now, what kind of veil do you think about? Custom? This serves nothing. When is it that any custom could take over from against the divine law? We will see in a little while how nature itself, or natural modesty, intimates this very law. In the meantime, St. Paul cries out on the part of God: *...But, fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, should not even so much as be named among you...* [Ep 5:3]. Have you heard this? It should not even be mentioned. Thus, your veil is dissipated.

1404: - O, but we speak without any malice, really not about filthy matters. There is no danger of scandal among equals, as it is but a way of passing time, or to appear gallant. And we just listen to such conversations out of simple curiosity or to pass time.

Your innocence, and that of others, pertains to your beautiful souls. Indeed, you do not have on a beautiful garment, that is on you now. If it is not, as I might fear, then we will talk about that. But, for the sake of gallantry, or curiosity, this is indeed a very thin veil [108]. And for the head it is too light, too delicate and fine, so that all the ugliness native to this kind of evil speech would not appear right through it.

1405: *...For every idle word...* [Mt 12:36], it is necessary to make an account, even if these words are not base. And when conversation is obscene, just think it over whether the purpose of making your friends laugh can ever make such conversation, good, honest: *...or obscenity, or foolish talking, or scurrility, which is to no purpose...* [Ep 5:4]. The Apostle adds this to tear away also this wretched veil, and he leaves you uncovered, and bereft of all further excuses. *...It is all to no purpose...* It does not pertain, it has nothing to do with what we are, it is entirely impertinent. All of this clearly indicates that there are other upright ways of speaking, other decent manners, even spirited and seasoned conversation, that are not dissolute, or crude, with which a conversation may be spiced without letting it degenerate.

1406: And what else really is gained from these low jokes, if not to lose one's reputation? Is that senseless person who once said to Pythagoras one day in a spirited manner think that his joke was indeed a good one: 'I would prefer to stand in a chorus of beautiful Venuses than in a circle of philosophers.' And the answer he got back was: 'Also pigs prefer to roll around in the swamp over limpid water.'

In such an encounter this is a spirited exchange, and philosophically it might be called *eutrapelia*. But do not scandalize me that Pythagoras would have been able to find in our neighborhoods an animal who could put together such a humiliating comparison. In his time, Italy was a forest, uncultured in spirit, caught in the dark horror of tragic ignorance, hearts were wild under the domination of the passions, in the confusion of vices. He was the one who took away the first rough scales of our barbarity.

1407: It would indeed be very strange, and a great surprise, if in these days, after so much culture of letters, of polishing of customs, refinement of intelligence, in a century in which in broad daylight there are pushed forward all sciences, should this ancient philosopher still be able to find spread throughout our neighborhoods this kind of very unclean speakers. This is a far cry from his metempsychosis. And it is much to be feared that if there should be a race, that is the most fecund of all, be allowed to multiply itself in our cities, that would not expel all men.

I return to Pythagoras. If he should come to Italy in these days, he would be reduced, in order not to run up against these beasts, without ever taking on the air of being closed up in a philosophical assembly, and to treat only with such minded spirits. But, I think it would be fitting to light Diogenes' lamp here at mid-day. Many are stung today with this spirit. For all that the world hears of this, and especially the women, who seem to stand around perhaps to learn it. It almost seems that they do not know how to speak of anything else, nor in any better manner, than would donkeys and horses, if they had tongues.

1408: These are people with an education, fine intelligence. What will I say about the lowly masses, with our formal education? I have spoken about this other times, and so will spare your shame any further proof of it. If the most educated salons have already been transformed into so many stables, then the shops will be little more than pig pens. What infamy, what dishonor, what disgrace! The human tongue, therefore, is so dishonored, degraded, debased, condemned to transform a human being into a filthy animal. This is what is supposed to distinguish men and women from the beasts! What supreme insult this is to the Creator of all reality, and the sovereign Architect of the world. By no other trait has He declared that human beings are separate from the rest of the animals than by the example of the word.

1409: So, as far as the body is concerned, we are humiliated by the size, by the strength, in vigor, in velocity. In all these traits, we are much surpassed by the brute animals. In all these traits, we are much surpassed by the brute animals. They also have much less need of outside help, because they move much more quickly for their food, and they know how to perform many other activities without any teacher, as their nature leads them. In us, truly the distinguishing mark is reason: it is that perfection so sublime that it makes us resemble God. But, how can reason contribute to this characteristic, and how above all, could it be in us that divine trait that is evident, other than those thoughts that we think of that we have in our minds, that we could not yet express with speech? That which most evidently and at first sight is lacking to animals

in every way and is always noticed, is precisely this. They surely do not give any indications of a sign or any semblance of thought, of understanding, of judgment, of estimation [109].

1410: One is not deceived, in fact, in any manner, in seeing the beasts prepare with much caution their little dens, or to see them stitching together with such fine art their nests, to train their parts, to teach them, to make preparation for the winter, to make both wax and honey, works that we cannot imitate. Such phenomena might arouse the slightest suspicion that there is in them some mind or reason. However, since they lack words, these very creatures that manifest such abilities, are said to be mute, and from this one immediately judges that they are irrational, which they are. For which reason if the power of speech is the greatest gift that we have from heaven to communicate with others, then what would be more esteemed as worthy than to make a good and praiseworthy use of this with every solicitude?

Indeed what is more admirable than the very rapid and sure exchange of human thoughts, through the most simple organ of the tongue, and the artful modification of so many sounds? What more joyful, and at the same time, sweeter communication of affections is possible, on which friendship is based. Or, what is more useful and also more powerful than to draw ready assistance in our needs? Is it not this way in which we show the need for medicine for our sufferings, comfort in our afflictions, counsel in doubts, light against the hostile darkness of ignorance?

1410: What is more sublime, more generous, more magnificent, than to inform one about morality, or to give directions toward an upright life, to withdraw one from vice, to give help to those asking for it, to bring salvation, to free from dangers, to conserve the good of others, their reputation, virtue, peace, security ²¹⁶. And what other power has ever been able to gather dispersed human beings into one place, and from a base, savage life, lead them to a civil and human conduct? And once the societies are formed, what better way than to describe the laws, the judgments, and the rights to confirm them?

And to come to the summit, by what other way can there be manifest here on earth to mortal beings the most sublime final end of their superhuman beatitude and the most noble object in store for them? And how else can there be made known the most powerful motives to make them aspire to, and what more simple means to reach there? What better prepares the paths, insures one's steps, measures one's progress, comforts those already tired, spurs on those dragging their feet, or straightens out again those who have wandered off course? To summarize in a few words the innumerable benefits that derive from the moderate and wise use of this gift, it contains the dignity not only of the one who possesses it, but of very many private individuals and human society. It is here that one may find the political and spiritual well being of all.

²¹⁶ Cf. Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Oratore*.

1412: How culpable, then, how detestable, would its sacrilegious use be, my brothers and sisters. This means converting a gift of such honor for you, of such utility for your friends, of such salvation for the civil and Christian republic, into harm not only for society and ruin of your neighbors, but at the same time a loss of reputation for yourselves? Does this wrong use of speech not weigh you down with shame through those very means that God has intended to be employed to assist in your greater dignity? And will there still be among you those who would make excuses for this so unworthy an abuse? Are there those who would protect it, defend it?

And should there be anyone, either friend of yours, or one jealous of your dignity, would you not reprehend him with frankness, or tacitly correct him with the embarrassment that appears on your reddened face? Would there then be found anyone who would deride virtue, who would trample religion under foot, or would attack your modesty with villainous audacity? And will there be anyone who will glory in its infamy, who would rejoice in your confusion, and would be honored by your unhappy feelings?

1413: This is the summit of all evil: just do not recognize it. It is not unlike those who are seriously ill who are frantic because of their sickness, and they rail out against the doctor. I do not mean to insult the wretched; rather I feel even greater compassion for them and their increases my commitment and fervor for their cure. I will never tire of patience, as do those who assume extravagant humors like those children who are incapable of reasoning by their age. So, I cannot call such people either healthy or human who either do not feel their malady, or take no steps to cure it. Nor will I believe that such individuals have recovered, or have achieved good sense, until they do not speak decently and in a rational manner.

I know what some might respond: - We do not speak this way.

But, your children, do, your servant and your friends use this kind of speech. Such language is used in your homes, it may be heard in your shops, people speak to you this way. Whose children are yours? To whom do your servants belong? What kind of friendships do you nurture? What kind of care do you give your families, what zeal do you exercise for your reputation, for a good name, for your own honor? Do you not speak by your expression, would you not frown at hearing such speech? You listen, and then do you laugh at it? Then, you are doubly wretched: if it is that this evil has surprised you, then why do you not remove it, by taking away the listening any more to it.

1414: And do you laugh? Why do you not rather show your indignation? Why do you not at least flame up with embarrassment? Why do you not show your confusion at hearing such talk? Come now, I would rather talk this over with you, rather than treat you with harshness and rigor. For your wretched and deplorable condition of your state merits rather a kind regard. You laugh, o, my dearly beloved, does this seem to you to be the time to laugh? There is still evident the smoke from the slaughter, there dances before your eyes the avenging sword in the hand of God. This is not the season of diffused and immodest joy, but rather this is a time of crying, tears, lament.

What insane glory, what delirium this is, to find reason for laughter in this very filthiness, that to wash away its stain with which life is drenched there would hardly suffice two rivers that would flow continuously from our eyes, until they were to close for good? Is this the way to prepare ourselves to appear before that awesome tribunal to give an account? Could you joke, and laugh, and be amused, at the formidable threshold, being cited there, for eternity? What stupidity this would be, what fraud, what enchantment!

1415: But without stretching our sights too far into the future, would it not suffice to open them and gaze around? Look out for a bold enemy for your life. And what athlete would ever descend into the arena, and would thus forget the arms and the restless care to combat with the adversary, who would be just thinking of nice expressions, witticisms, and jokes ²¹⁷? The devil himself rushes out against you, he prepares the attack, plans the assault, encircles around many times, screaming out savagely against his prey. He is filled with eager longing to devour you, he tries every access, moves everything and directs all to your harm. He increases his wrath and his boldness to cast you from the nest, he grinds his teeth, he unleashes his fangs, distends his claws, beats on his panting breast, he lashes out with his restless tail, his coat is ruffled up and out from his swollen cheeks vibrates his tongue, he roars and trembles, and spits fire against your salvation. And all through this, you would sit around telling stories about romance, impure jokes, and a thousand other stupid impertinent matters?

1446: This is a time of war, and would you treat of those things that are more befitting to those clowns who wander about in a crazy revelry, in festivity and dancing? Do you not see the visages of those on their way to war, how sad and wrinkled they are, their brows all showing evidence of fear and their full horror? You see their severe looks, their hearts that palpitate, vibrate, and jump, their minds concentrated, trembling, worried, restless. There is much discipline in their ranks, moderation in their gait, much silence among the soldiers. Here, one does not hear a single unclean joke, or hardly even a word.

This is the way it is with those who wage war with visible enemies; they do not receive offence from words, as there is much silence. You who must wage war also regarding speech, and use the same energy as in a war, would you leave this side of you unprotected and disarmed? Are you ignorant of the fact that even great traps are being prepared for you? And do you still joke, and amuse yourself with obscene jokes, and strive to make others laugh, and you really do not at all. We all see this [112].

1417: But, tell me something, is it not sufficient to cast away all desire to laugh and to fool around, in a time of war and of battle, of vigils, of being on guard, of taking up weapons, and to draw up the battle lines? There is no position here that would have the time for laughter; for this is the time of the world. Christ Himself tells us this: ...*the*

²¹⁷ St. John Chrysostom, *In Mt*, Hom 6, 7 [t.7, 811/S 3, ff.]

world shall rejoice; and you shall be made sorrowful... [Jn 16:20]. Christ Himself says this, and He is nailed to the Cross for your evils: and you laugh? He received slaps and punches, and suffered even more for the calamities that you did and the storms that you created: and you want to remain among delights and jokes. And how is it that you are not more disturbed? Do you receive the most sacred pledges of His redemption, and then waste them, corrupt them, profane them? St. Paul said regarding this impure talk, and obscene language: *...and grieve not the Holy Spirit of God: whereby you have been sealed...* [Ep 4:30].

This is the height of malice, and I will go on to explain it after a brief rest...[!]

1418: You must not sadden the Holy Spirit with Whom you have been sealed. This sentence of the Apostle is terrible, my brothers and sisters, and of grave horror. And as he said also in another place: *...Therefore, he that despises these things, despises not man, but God...* [1 Th 4:8]. It is not a matter then, of defying and of affronting man, which was the consequence of this above-mentioned statement for myself. In fact, having proven that this bad language is unsuited to the extent that it is proper only for stupid animals, and that it deserves to be relegated to the stables, or to the banks of the swamp. It happens that anyone who uses such talk in conversation, he not only lowers himself, but also seems to think of the persons with whom he speaks to be also on the animal level. Such people imply that even the most civil company in whom they may be little more than a herd of dumb animals.

1419: The affront, however, goes much higher, all the way up to God by grieving His Spirit, *...whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption...* [Ep 4:30]. For He has made of us His Kingdom [Apoc 1:6], indeed princes and kings with Him [Apoc 21:24]. He has taken away those evils and miseries of before, and of the most unhappy number of those who lay under His wrath. And would you embitter Him, you would sadden Him? The totality of His benefits increases the accusation against you, and your shame likewise increases.

You are sealed... [Ep 4:20]” this seal is on your lips; do not violate the seals, then. A mouth sealed by the Holy Spirit would never speak in this way. Will you still say: well, it is not a very serious matter ²¹⁸? It is precisely a serious matter because you take it so lightly, and thus it becomes incurable. Your mouth is sealed with the Holy Spirit, and causes the first word that issues from your lips on the day in which you were re-born in the spiritual and salvific waters, *unto the day of redemption...* [Ep 4:30]. How great, then, is the dignity of your tongue!

1420: *Our Father* [Mt 6:9]. You call God, *Father*, and then you speak in a manner unworthy of a son? And how can you address Him that way? By adoption, in that you share not only by name, but you also participate in the nature of God. And then, in your speech, you would lower yourself to the animals, and equal yourself to the most filthy, and you conduct yourself as one of these? And you call God *Father*, and then render and then heap such shame and contumely on this name. And where do you

²¹⁸ St. John Chrysostom, *In I ad Co.* Hom 12, 78. [t.10, p. 64/2 C]

address Him? In the heavens. You are elevated by this word, and almost put on wings that raise you up to heaven. Why, then, do you turn so low, and fall back into the dust from which you were called?

Think over, think about the august words that you pronounce with your mouth. Think of the table to which you have been made worthy to share. Think of what it is that you touch, and what you taste, of what nourishment you are fed. Think of with whom it is you sit down to that banquet in the time of the mysteries. . With the Angels, with the Seraphim. The Seraphim do not speak of dirty things. For one duty alone is their sacred tongue committed: to praise the supreme God, to glorify Him. The priest, taking their place, and acting in their stead, and with the whole Church exclaims in one voice: ‘Holy, Holy’. You can repeat this, at least hear it, and you will be standing among them. You will open your mouths for that food, and will you then employ that same mouth for lascivious language, for uncleanness ²¹⁹?

1422: Tell me, I beg you, if a royal dish was reserved for the kingly meal, and was set aside precisely for this, and then one of the slaves were to use it for garbage, for feces, would any one dare again to make use of this most noble vessel that had been so debased and used for dung? This is what impure speech is likened to. This is just what unclean talk is. Look there on the altar, those sacred vessels: would you dare use them for anything else ²²⁰? You are more holy, much more holly than those sacred vessels. How, then, can you profane yourself, dirty yourself? You stand in heaven and speak of mud? You approach the king’s throne, and talk about debase things. You converse among the apostles, and talk like an animal? You are admitted to the divine kiss, and then talk about impure realities? God has decorated your mouth with hymns, with praise,; on your tongue Christ places His own Body, and reddens your lips with His Blood, and you should speak of base, obscene, disgusting realities?

No more, my brothers and sisters. Let this suffice, and let the malice of such talk go ahead to instruct you on its innate debaseness, deformity, enable you to judge it for yourselves. See how unfitting it is to every reasonable person, and even more, for a Christian. And when, **in a second installment**, there will be exposed to you the greatness of the harm it brings to you, in a **second harangue**, we will see what you will resolve....

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²¹⁹ St/ John Chrysostom, *Ad illuminandos*, 12, 2 [t. 2, p. 142/D]

²²⁰ St. John Chrysostom, *De Anna. Serm. 3, 2. [t. 4, pp. 422: 2D]*

SOURCES**OT**

Ps 31:9			# 1401
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NT

Mt 6:9	# 1420	Ep 5:3	# 1403
12:36	# 1405	4	# 1405
Jn16:20	# 1417	1 Th 4:8	# 1418
Ep 4:30	## 1417; 1419 [3 x]	Apoc 1:6	# 1418
		21:24	# 1419

FATHERS

St. John Chrysostom, <i>Ad Illuminandos</i> 12, 2 [t.2,p. 142.d]	# 1421
<i>De Anna. Sermo</i> 3, 2 [t. 4, p. 422/ 2D]	# 1422
<i>In Mt. Hom.</i> 6, 3 [t. 7, p. 811, 3/3 F [not clear]	# 1415
<i>In I ad Cor., Hom.</i> 12, 7 [t. 10, p. 64/2 C]	# 1419

OTHER WRITERS

Cicero, Marcus Tullius, <i>De Oratore</i>	# 1411
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1422:**SERMON 41****Against Improper Speech****Second Installment**

Preached in St. Paul's of Campo Marzio, on the IIIrd Sunday of Advent (*Gaudete*), December 13, 1807.

With a great wonder, my brothers and sisters: the spirit of the Church, the spirit of the world, in eternal discord, today they seem to come together. Joyfully, they both seem to cry out in unison: *...Rejoice..>!* [Ph 4::4]. Joyously,, they repeat it and enthusiastically: *... again, I say, rejoice...!* What is this? What harmony, what agreement this is! Really, what a pleasant surprise if this agreement could continue! But, also, all too quickly they are in disagreement, by what follows then: *...Rejoice in the Lord...!* . This is what the Church sings ²²¹. The joyful voices of this world sound with totally different accents than those of God.

1423: And these voices make themselves heard all the more discordantly, even to the most untuned ears. And they sound really flat both in rhythm and in cadence. In fact, the Church announces its theme with that same finale: *... Let your modest be known to all men..* [Ph 4:5]. Precisely in the very area where the world raves more than ever in proving with bold tunes and with lascivious variations of the voice of its own immodesty. And so it is, that that sound that is heard today by the ecclesiastical trumpets gives a clear signal of open war, where at first there seemed to be a peaceful concert.

Yes, the immodesty of this world, manifested singularly in its speech, is a sad consequence of an even worse motive. And this is the senseless joy that is totally carnal. Immodesty in speaking, I reply, is combated then, more than by anything else by the spirit of the Church on this day. This suffices to comfort me, and makes me full of confidence as I take the field against this impure practice. And this is the day also set aside for me, to give a second, even more vibrant resolute attack against it.

1424: I feel the unavoidable commitment of my challenge, but even more, the regard that I owe, most distinguished brothers and sisters, to your expectancy. No more, no more. I put before this unclean practice the spirit of Christian modesty, that the battle might be continued from that part where we began it. In the meantime, I will bring all of my powers to strike out at this even in the back, for those harmful effects that it brings about, and that stand behind this practice.

And this is advantageous position that I chose for my camp to line up my forces, to deploy my arms [196]: *... Evil communications corrupt good manners...* [1 Co 15:33]. This divine text is taken from St. Paul. Thus, malicious conversation are

²²¹ Introit of the Mass for *Gaudet* Sunday.

harmful both to the tongue of the one who speaks, as it is fatal to his soul - and also to the ears of the one who listens, through which scandal passes. It is also hurtful to the body of society, where its good order is upset, thrown into disorder, disturbed.

1425: All right, I will grant you a point: dishonesty is not loved by you: therefore, this means you hate it. But this hatred, how would you prove it? Let us place here an enemy of yours, that some of you do have, would you enjoy seeing him? Would you not turn away your face? Would you not purposefully avoid every encounter with him? If you bumped right into him, would you not make a face, would not your visage register your discomfort? Would not your stride be broken, would you not be speechless, with your tongue trembling? And all this when still a prudent, or cunning dissimulation you would employ to contain the rest of your feelings. May God grant, then, that among the friends of God this be not even mentioned, and even more, that it never be spoken of in praise.

1426: This is clearly evident when it is truly your enemy: but, this is not the case with indecency. When you run into shamelessness, it is met with laughter. There is ready a kind joke that comes forth from your lips, to give signs of your friendship. When friends talk with one another of this, it is not only in praise of it. They offer incense to this ugly divinity, you echo this, you applaud it. And without waiting any further invitation, even an importunate one, in conversations, in select circles, in secret, in public, along the walks, in close quarters, you add your tongue to its beloved name. You do so at the tables of banquets, at the gaming tables, in the coffee shops, on the public benches, at work and in the county seats. It appears under a thousand disguises, and is even written down, as is the custom between delirious lovers, rereading their own notes to one another, they often become tasteless, and one is consumed by it all. Are not the affections made clear enough through speech?

1427: We also have the facts. As the tongue speaks, where do the eyes wander? On what objects, on what images, on what scenes? I will say no more. I will say only that everything in you speaks of it, all is tongue to make it manifest: the eyes, the hand, the head, the feet, your sitting down, your gait, your approaching some, avoiding others.

And where, and with whom and at whose places do your dirty conversations unfold? Perhaps you can admit this without scandal, so that the whole world could see it. However, for this it is necessary that I should say something more.

1428: We still have some other facts that need to be made more clear, as brought forth by you in the darkness. And we have these from your own mouths, not whispered in some one's ear, but made public by trumpet blasts. These are broadcast in the enthusiasm and in the furor of your imprudence, whenever you can reach the level of glorying in the most deform iniquities, in the most filthy malice, in the most nauseating uncleanness. This is done when you list the number of your 'triumphs', when you break down the most powerful walls of marital fidelity. It is noted when you force, or betray the camps of virginal purity, as well as from the slaughter of the most pure simplicity and the most remarkable innocence.

1432: But, enough of this, as I know how my lips pierce you with these stories, that in your own conversations were considered very sweet, even more so than honey. You just cannot deny now your affection for these. I have placed before you a most faithful mirror, the work of your own hands. Now you must take a good, honest look at the face of your own hearts, without any deception. I love to correct you, it is not my intention to confound you. So, I retreat immediately and I leave up to you the care of applying in secret the remedy for the harm of what is within you. I presume that you would like to appear to me as you did before, innocent of all affection for unclean realities about which you speak. However, I do not declare you free from serious sin, even only because of the danger in which your tongue places you in taking enjoyment in that evil in which you joke and laugh, and where you find your amusement.

1433: All human beings know of their fragility and that they stand in some danger from exterior attractions to fall into agreeing to those that are less decent. But, in the ordinary course of events, such danger is remote, whereas in indecent speech, it becomes close, even proximate. So, ordinary circumstances are necessary for life, whereas such conversation is freely chosen. Those in ordinary circumstances will sin only if they give in to it, in such talk, already sin without going any further, by simply putting yourselves into the danger of sinning: *..he that loves changer shall perish in it...* [Si 3:27].

1434: Sensual pleasure runs through the world like a broad torrent, that is quite deep: every person in his life's journey has to cross it, and each passes over with stepping stones that are quite narrow and not firm. The awesome vortex, the impetus of the fall and troubled waters that roar below, the crash of the waters that in a deafening roar along side where they rush downward, breaking upon the precipices, the sparkling of the foamy waters in suspension, the quivering spray and the piercing foam that splashes on high, with a gurgling sound. The continuous roar and the rushing toward the high banks, the cloud that always seems to arise from this and the kind of bow that is seen all around, all this makes the eyes flutter often, distracts the mind, and makes the feet unsteady for that timid wayfarer, and one is often lost.

1435: The more cautious, however, reach out their hand to the divine arm which helps them and escorts them. With their left hands they hold on to the rails of human prudence, and make sure at each step of the way that their foot is solid under them before going on. Acting this way, much of the danger is removed for them. But, for you, it is the total opposite. Your unclean speech, proceeding from the affections of your hears are like your steps. You are distanced from the divine assistance, there is removed from you the supports of human caution and you put yourselves on the narrow and slippery path. Who can hold you up there, and who can sustain you? This is your danger, not just proximate, but voluntary.

1436: First of all, you distance yourself from God. And like the stench of putrid and corrupt waters from the stagnant swamp, and the heavy odor of the mud, the busy bees are put to flight. [And thus, we see that the cloud is spread by the wind, and the

industrious villain with the pleasing flavor of crushed clover, of wild thyme and of aromatic herbs which call them to new trees]. In similar manner, the odor of an unclean tongue chases one far from the Spirit of God and His gifts. And although in everything and always human beings need sovereign assistance, this is more true than ever in knowing how to contain oneself. Purity is a gift from there: ...; *who can be continent, except god gave it...* [Ws 8:21].

1437: Not only this, by the intemperate joy and the immoderate laughter and the license of the lascivious tongue takes one beyond all restraint of proper circumspection. As a result, ruin will come most securely, at great speed, and will not delay. And do we not see this in the most strong squares and defenses. They might have the technique to arrest even for a long time the rapid course of the victory to the most happy conquerors. This would be an unexpected festival, where all would crumble, and the most valid ammunition would be rendered useless. And would not there be opened to the enemy that passage way that the reinforced batteries would try in vain, and all previous assaults having been repelled, would then be won over?

1438: Syracuse is an outstanding witness for all ages to see. The towers, the forts, the stockades, the embankments, the weapons, the soldiers, and the famous machines of Archimedes that so frightened Marcellus. The unconquerable boldness of the Roman Legions in their attack on those walls, was inexorable. After a long and useless block, it was thought that nothing more could be done to divert from that part as the only undertaking seemed impossible. And even earlier there was seen before that city the numerous Attic Navy was seen to be sunk, and two powerful armies with their most courageous leaders were defeated. Whoever would have believed it? The brief solace of a festive day, that allowed the citizens just for a little while to put down their arms, so they could put on the crowns of joyous rest. This gave the opportunity to not more than one thousand Romans to burn down everything, and all was reduced to ashes in an instant.

1439: An impure tongue does not remove just the obstacles to an eventual fall, but even makes the path slippery, and places a slide on it. We already have the fire of concupiscence that burns within us, that is, right under our ashes. An impure tongue blows on these and agitates them and shakes them up: and can you imagine that they will not blaze out? The fire of the rebellion burns within our flesh: an impure tongue puts wood on this fire, piles it up, stacks it well: and do you not think that this will become a fire?

1440: And further, do you not see that one who speaks of malicious realities, is meditating on malice? An amusing story is recounted, a joke is made, a novel is talked about. The friend reflects on this, then almost immediately makes a comparison. Thus, then, passes to application, it comes to the individual. The first person just depicted it, a second person sheds light upon it for you. One may just advance all the reasons for pleasure, and another might suggest and prepare the means. And this is just the way, in the words of the Holy Spirit: ...*the mouth of the just shall meditate wisdom...* [Ps 36:30]. In like manner, the mouth of the wicked meditates malice. It is in meditation

that the fire is lit: both in those regarding God's love, as well as in those regarding the love of the flesh.

1441: What more do you need? Would you also have to hear, and even see, the accounts of those enormous beasts of the broiling arenas of Africa - or, from the forests of the frozen north? They are dragged along, weighed down with chains, closed into strong cages of iron, they are brought by ferocious hunters into our lands, in order to make money and offering a spectacle before our eyes. Like the proud lion, the ferocious tiger, the furious panther obey, and hold back their wrath, and forget their anger, at the signals and the blows of the harsh master, in patience.

1441: But, just let them discover but a single passage way of escape, and we will see then that not a person is able to dominate them. Not even the whole theater would be able to restrain their impetuous fury. And the beasts would make their get-away, with the people terrified at this sight, and all hurl themselves against the doors, walking over and pressing against one another. At the beastly roar, there are tumult, running to and fro, the cries of the people - the whole city is full of fear, and even of slaughter. Your passions are like this. If you wish to close them in your hearts where they are born, it is easy to hold them back. But if you incautiously release your hold over them, they escape through the narrow passage way of the tongue, and there ensues a horrible inevitable slaughter. This is why I say to you that where you may not have sinned, yet with your affections, nor by entering into the danger of sin, you have sinned at least by scandal that your unrestrained tongue causes in others.

1442: Those who listen to such talk, are either innocent or they are malicious. Regarding the former, it is simply impossible in our times that tender young men and pure young ladies do not in plenty of time, learn about every evil. The serpentine colloquies cast out from paradise itself all innocence: how much the ore do they not cast it out from our world now. And there, in that happy garden, there was only one snake who spoke: their number here is infinite.

1443: It is not necessary to go look for them among the thorns and the thickets: they crawl along the dust of every street. They make their hiss heard insidiously from every balcony. They stand curled at the entrance of temples, even if they do not enter there themselves. And they whisper in the ready ear of listeners, God knows what. They are at home in the shops, they fool around in the schools, and they enter into the homes, if they are not there already. And who would believe it, but many times the parents themselves are the serpents! All the innocence that ordinarily in the most tender age is esteemed, is reduced, in the final analysis, to a blessed ignorance. Take this way: and the innocence itself soon disappears. It is like an unripe fruit that is picked still green, tucked into the leaves where it is enclosed.

1444: How little it takes to learn malice: and by what master it is taught, and with what lessons? It's all the style now! Just be observing the fact of it, with the experience of the hand: so much like the serpent from that fatal tree, with the death-dealing fruit in its mouth.

Poor innocence! On a youthful spirit, even novelty itself makes a great impression. Then, curiosity follows, which is the first escort, according to St. THOMAS, to the works of malice. There begin then to sprout up in the heart the first desires of sensual delectation, as St. AUGUSTINE relates ²²². He tells us of that friend of his who was overcome not so much by the lust of pleasure, but much more by the charm of trying it out.

1446: There remain still two obstacles to external falls. The first is a religious fear of God, a natural repugnance for sin. But, these individuals of unclean tongues use precisely the tongue of the ancient serpent, and they repeat in the ear of a young man, or of those shy and modest children [127]: What is this rudeness of yours? Why do you have such reserve? Do you want to go without all delights at your age? - ... *Why has God commanded you that you should not eat of every tree...?* [Gn 3:1].

1447: But this is wrong; it is a sin. God punishes these things. And is it not true, that once the pleasure is tasted even briefly, there comes eternal death? - ... *lest perhaps we die...* [v. 3].

- O, these are just scruples, scruples. Why would we then, be in such a delightful meadow of pleasures, if we cannot pluck the most charming flowers, and weave lovely garlands of them before they wither and dry up? be a man, come to know the world! You will then be above all the prejudices of age, sex, the masses: ...*no, you shall not die the death...* [v. 4]... *you shall be as gods...* [v. 5].

1448: There remains only embarrassment and shame, this is the last and strong restraint of not falling into sin. But, listening to the accounts of those who admit serenely their escapades, they make no effort to excuse themselves as a plague on humanity. But, rather, many of them even boast of what they have done. They present as quite normal to trick young people. There is depicted to the imagination this pleasure in such vivid colors, that nothing else is seen that is either more beautiful, or more rewarding: ...*and the woman saw that the tree was good to eat, and fair to the eyes, and delightful to behold: and she took of the fruit thereof...* [v. 6].

1449: And even if one sometimes does not immediately give in, there is planted fixed in the spirit the temptation; and from this there occur later on those ruinous falls, and the habits and the chains that lead to the sepulcher. It is much like the doe in which the hunter has placed the mortal blow in its side. It may still flee, up the mountain, and down into the valley, through the woods and across the meadow, through the fields to the waterfalls. But, it carries always and everywhere the sharp dart that wounds it. And panting the more as it runs along, with the blood gradually emptying out of the veins, its members lose sensation, the heart loses life, and the doe falls to the ground.

Poor innocence! I just cannot bear to go on describing a reality that is too moving for me, too real, and a continual sorrow to my spirit.

²²² *Confessions*, 6, 12, 22 [t. 1, 1129/D, ff.].

1450: I come now to those who, full of malice, listen to evil talk. For this part, if they are not more grave, they are certainly more numbers the scandals that occur. This is because of the great facility with which they are given, and for the even greater ease with which they are received. The use of pleasure in no way slakes the thirst for it, rather it teases it the more. The more easily will one abstain from carnal delectations when it never occurs on one's lips, of those who have experienced it also one time. Furthermore, the passions are made all the more bold as they are pampered.

1451 Habit, custom, practice, only despoil the object of that horror that evil inspires at first sight, by making one more at home with it. The intellect is no longer able to discern it. The imagination can only look upon it from the point of view of its usefulness, or from the aspect of its pleasure. Inclination becomes all the more strengthened, and the will is made the vassal of the appetite.

1452: The innocent soul is something like a strongly walled and well provided square. There, the fear of God is like the soldier, and the sense of shame like a parapet. An unrestrained heart is not like this. In such a heart, the fortifications have already been knocked down, and the fears have all been put to route. What could be easier than to enter where there is no resistance or guard - rather, even where there are signs of welcome, where one is awaited, invited? A word makes it clear, as a sign that an entire army can approach there for carnal discourses. One hastens in, a festival is celebrated, applause given, one draws up a chair to join in the jokes, with double-meanings, that are spicy and suggestive. O what pleasures, delights, and consent! And since all proceed from habit, they thus become all the more voluntary and culpable. Who could even count their number? Only someone who would add up all the words.

1453: Just enter into the circle of these malicious conversationalists through a crack in the wall. And of what else do they speak? From beginning to end the ears of all are fed on this most filthy pasturage. One tells an ingenious little story, another relates what actually happened: then one offers a jibe, followed by a discourse: and all is base, sated and seasoned under diverse forms. It all happens as occurred to that QUINTUS FLAMINIUS, that he himself narrated as having taken place in an assembly for another occasion. He had been invited to a dinner in Calcide of Negroponte, by a friend of his, who was a true gentleman and solicitous for his own well-being and that of his guests. He was overwhelmed by the quantity and the variety of the foods that were prepared. He asked his friend who he had been able in the month of June to kill so much game. The friend broke out in laughter and confessed that the entire 'game' was nothing more than a little pig that had been seasoned and prepared with different sauces.

This offers a good comparison with the base conversations so much in style now: these are conversations that kill the soul of the one who speaks, scandalize the one who listens, and which upset and disturb society.

1454: How often in their play do the children from the shore of a fishing pond pick up a little stone. They carefully cast it out to the middle of the quiet and clear water. It crashes through the clear crystal, and one hears the splash and it falls to the bottom. The spray goes up into the air and then the water closes over it. Afterwards there is seen not only the water nearby that is moved about and agitated for a short time. However, from its movement many and successive little circles form, being brought about in a kind of perpetual motion. These become larger and larger until they reach the extreme sides of the pond. Thus, going out from the center, they keep getting produced and extended, until the whole pond from shore to shore is moved and disturbed with these ripples.

1455: This is something like a lascivious conversation. It not only agitates and disturbs the souls of those few among whom it is first cast, and those who stand around listening to it. But very soon the disciples of the malice become its teachers. From these, it is passed on with ever new twists and eventually involving also the affections, and from this, it finally becomes the practice: *...Evil communications corrupt good manners...* [1 Co 15:33].

1456: A single bird that the hunter allows to fly on high with a small string attached to its foot, draws down a whole flock of birds that might be flying overhead. What should we do about the very many engaged in these conversations, almost endless, one after another, in a long series from morning until late at night? Are not their crudities something like that sticky substance [to catch birds] that is most tenacious of that lasciviousness that comes from hell? What should we do not that the fetid mouths of so many sepulchers are open, full of putrid, decaying flesh - especially since the plague-laden breath of a single man, even still alive, can corrupt an entire city?

1457: In 1630, in Verona the plague was brought by a single soldier. From one single person so much harm came to an entire people? You see, almost expelled from the walls of their own land, many left on foot stumbling along, carried on the arms of others, or in carts. The infected, and even those suspected of being so, were torn from their homes by their relatives, their children, their friends. They formed a long weeping file, making their way as beggars do. And if one would come to the gates of the city, the bridges were raised, or barred. There were weapons and guards and places of examination of great severity as in the climate of a war.

1458: And even were one to get inside, there would be an even more tragic spectacle. There would be two or more bodies in the one coffin, or piled up on the wagons, one after another, the dead were being transported. There was no funeral pomp for these; no sound of the bells, and hardly even a cross to accompany them. And once the tragic convey would pass, the silence, the solitude took over the streets, where there were only the cruel guards, the unrelenting officials. There would pass by only those all wrapped in their black mantles, and mourning clothes, the fat undertakers, a few doctors, and a few priests.

1459: Meanwhile, new bodies would appear at every exit, and from the windows the furniture would be thrown out to burn in the middle of the street. The houses in which its inhabitants were like kidnapped, , seemed to have been changed into so many prisons. These often, then, became sepulchers, where lying one on top of another, from entire families nothing would remain to spread the news of their deaths, except the odor that came from them.

You are horrified even recalling these terrors to mind. And what if I could show you, present to your view, even more horrible evils, that come from impure tongues to the body of society?

1460: I will not show you the infirm as Lazarus. Rather, I would like to take you to the Hospitals to see of whom there are full. I would take you through the ;public streets, and were it possible in many cases, to add up the number of those who still might be sent there, to increase the list considerably. Very worthy fruits of those lessons that from its chair of pestilence, the obscene language in vogue today holds forth. I will show you even more pitiable sick people, not of body, but of heart - not physically, but morally sick, and of wounds full of vices.

1461: OO, how many have been led by their former passions that still blaze up. How many are carried away by their very evil, seductive companions! How many are carried off by custom and by the folly of the examples that they see! How many are led astray by their families, by their spouses, by their own land, all led into voluntary exile! You see, their faces, boldly fixed even joyful, not even crying, nor wept over! You see them delay in the adulterous arms of some foreign woman, or who fall into the clutches of a lover! How they find themselves in a far-off land, either throwing away their patrimony in luxuries, or endangering their honor in adventures!

1462: Impure speech, where it is accepted as in vogue, has broken down all restraint, has corrupted all the custody, it becomes free and easy. It easily moves on them, to exchange, to the contagion of the most fatal iniquities, such as fornication and adultery, prostitute women and effeminate men, perverted boys and lascivious young girls. All of this is full of horror, confusion, disorder, and not only of vices and villainy as much as it is monstrous and portentous. Thus, the real threats to the bridal chamber, then, the jealousies, the wars, the divisions among married couples. The children become more and more independent, who with their friends consume the heritage. The daughters become an eternal weight for the dishonored family.

1463: The youth trained in these evils without restraint, become dissolute, lazy, ready for excesses, bold, audacious. They are feared by society and become like a terrible plague. These are the ways that the slaughter becomes common and the damage irreparable. This is how the bodies become so corrupt that neither white-wash, nor the flames can burn off, nor can the earth itself cover over them.

The truly dead are up walking around and they become confused with the living. The inhabitants of the tombs are up and about, and they are not distinguished from the cadavers: ... *Evil communications corrupt good manners...* [1 Co 15:33].

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SOURCES**OT**

Gn 3:1	# 1446	Gn 3:6	# 1440
3	# 1447	Ps 36:30	# 1440
4	# 1447	Ws 8:21	# 1436
5	# 1447	Si 3:27	# 1432

NT

1 Co 15:33	## 1424; 1455; 1463	Ph 4:4	#1422
		5	# 1423

LITURGY

Illrd Sunday of Advent - Introit	# 1422
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FATHERS

St. AUGUSTINE, <i>Confessions</i> 5, 12, 22 [t. 1, pp. 129 / D, ff.	# 1445
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DOCTORS

St. Thomas Aquinas [no citation: curiosity, first escort of Malice]	# 1465
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OTHER WRITERS

Archimedes [no citation : frightful war machine]	# 1438
FLAMINIUS, Quintius [no citation: relates a June banquet]	# 1453
Marcello [frightened by Archimedes]	# 1438

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[NB: Translator's Note: This is the end of the Regular Parish Sermons, that have been translated and transcribed in chronological order. There follow here fragments of other Sermons found in the MssB, Vol. I].

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St. GASPAR BERTONI



A view of the Church of Saint Fermo from the Church of Saint Paul of Campo Marzio,
at the other side of the bridge over the Adige River.

Early Spiritual Writings

PARISH SERMONS

MISCELLANEOUS

UP TO 1812

Fragments of other Sermons found in the MssB, Vol. I].

[Manoscritti Bertoni ## 1547 – 1708]

**Translation into English
Rev. Joseph Charles Henchey, CSS
1972**

Electronic Edition: Holy Thursday, 2005

[FRAGMENTS OF A YOUTHFUL SERMON ON THE MADONNA]

1547: As I would like to arouse your hearts to devotion to the Virgin, what method would I be able to employ? Should I perhaps use that same method that I am accustomed to employing, to excite and inspire my own hard heart? I know that for gentle hearts not everything is fitting and proper. However, bear with me: because with this sermon I have more in mind to arouse my own heart, rather than yours, which are already affectionate and loving.

5 will use my own method. I plant this principle, all the more one esteems and seeks the protection of one who could help him, in proportion to the need that each one recognizes that he has. Someone condemned to death, because he sees all the horror of the imminent capital punishment, esteems all the more, takes into account of, the protection of the one who might liberate him, and seeks him out with every concern. And have we not all been condemned to eternal death, if we know that we have indeed committed mortal sin during our lives? If, therefore, we do know of the terrible execution to which we have been already sentenced, and since we do not know whether or not this still has to be carried out...

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[A FRAGMENT OF A DISCOURSE ON FAITH]

Illrd Sunday of November 1812

1548: Terrible truths, my hearers, terrible truths that the Apostle and Doctor of the Gentiles has left written for our information. In his 1 Co 1:18, he says: *...For the word of the Cross, to them indeed that perish, is foolishness; but to those that are saved, i.e., to us, it is the power of God...* This is the misery and the fatal blindness where all those arrive who think it an advantage to deride as weakness of spirit the Christian faith. Such as these have the most decisive character of reprobation: *...to them that perish the Cross is foolishness...* There is already formed in heaven the desire of losing the wisdom of the wise: *...For it is written: I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the prudence of the prudent I will reject...* [1 Co 1:19; Is 19:14].

1549: In what a shameful confusion of errors and deceptions is not the human reason cast, through that same path that one wants to extend between the periphery of its own lights *... Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world...?* [1 Co 1:20]. And since God did not choose to use the world of Wisdom, He communicated to human beings understanding, to form a just idea of its Creator and of the relationship with Him. In other words, He has made known the religious duties that bind humanity to Him. Thus, it has pleased God through the stupidity of preaching to bring salvation not so much to the philosophers, but to the faithful; not so much to the sophists, but to believers: *...For seeing in the wisdom of God, the world, by wisdom, knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of our preaching, to save them that believe...* [v.21].

1550: There are those who would seek signs and miracles: *...they require signs...* [v. 22]. There are others who seek for doctrines that are more lofty, more sublime: *...seek after wisdom...* [ib.]. But, we preach Christ crucified: *...But, we preach Christ crucified...* [v. 23]. This, for some, has become a scandal: *... a stumbling-block.* For others, He is an occasion of jokes, derision: *... and unto the Gentiles, foolishness...* [ib.].

1551: but I am not embarrassed by the Gospel: *... for I am not ashamed of the Gospel...* May God take away, remove from me that I may glory in anything other than the Cross of my Lord, Jesus Christ: *...But God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ...* [Ga 6:14]. Therefore, I am ready to render to the truth today with my tongue that testimony to which the ministry binds me: *...for a necessity lies upon me...* [1 Co 9:16]. And all the more willingly on this day that the Church reminds me of the confidence that I ought to have in the patronage of Her, who brought truth into this world. She alone has conquered all the errors in the whole world: 'You have abolished alone all heresies in the entire world'²²³.

1552: I will raise my voice like a trumpet [Is 58:1], and I will make known to the world the reasons why I glory in my faith. And these are common to all of you, indeed to all

²²³ Common of the Feast of the BVM - Tract

who participate in this glory: first, because the faithful, by means of his faith both loves and glorifies his Creator; secondly, the believer by means of this same faith is both loved and honored by his Creator.

1553: The faithful, by means of his faith, both loves and glorifies his Creator. And how is this? Because in the first place, the believer has of Him an esteem that is befitting the divine nature and superior to human nature. That which in fact the nature of visible realities has not dictated learning of Him from the faith in God. This shows his sincere delectation toward Him, and preaches and exalts His most sublime perfection and greatness: *...Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, that which God... [1 Co 2:9; Is 64:4] - ... has hid from the wise and the prudent and has revealed them to the little ones... [Mt 11:25].* The Prophet Isaiah has spoken openly of this: *... eye has not seen, nor ear heard, O God, besides You, what things You have prepared for them that wait for You... [Is 64:4].*

1554: Thus, St. HILARY writes well in this regard ²²⁴: Our lowly intelligence cannot enter into the sublimity of the heavenly science, nor can its incomprehensible power be conceived by any of the senses of our infirmity. To God alone does there pertain the knowing and comprehending of Himself. To us pertains solely the following behind humbly and docilely those lights which He deigns to communicate for our knowledge. In God, it is simply to be believed regarding Him, and to those matters that he attributes to be **obsequiously** received by our knowledge. From God, it is necessary to learn all that we must understand of God, because nothing of Him is known unless He unveils it: '... from God one must learn whatever is to be understood about God, because there is known of Him only that of which he is the Author ²²⁵.

1555: To believe, then, is an **obsequious** acceptance that the intelligent creature renders to his Creator. It is an **obsequious surrender** that is not without reason, or senseless, but is rational. And therefore, it is glorious for anyone who makes of his reason the most beautiful boast and ornament of his nature: *...your reasonable service... [Rm 12:1].* By believing, one renders the human intellect a servant to the faith: *...and bringing into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ... [2 Co 10:5].* But, this servitude does not proceed either from weakness, nor from ignorance. No, says St. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, this is rather a property of spirit that is indeed generous, and of a truly philosophical process of thinking. Faith is found in a mind that is sublime and superior to common realities: 'Faith is of a most generous mind, of an intelligence of a philosophical ability.'

1556: The other virtues that temper a person in himself, and render him just with his peers, are also of ordinary people. In reality, we see that not so much praise is merited for one who contains his wrath, or licentiousness, for one who does not steal or kill. However, to believe in God, and realities superior to the human intelligence, this

²²⁴ St. Hilary, *De Trinitate*, Bk 4, 14 [t. 2, pp. 81 C, ff.].

²²⁵ St. Hilary, *De Trinitate*. Bk 5, c. 20 [t. 2, pp. 116/B, ff.; and c. 21, t. 2, p. 117].

demands much fortitude of soul and for one to have excellent dispositions toward Him. This, in fact, is a sign of a sincere and germane charity.

1557: God thus honors the one who carries out the precepts which God intimates through reason that He has written in nature. But, even more does He honor the one who raises himself up to a sublime philosophy by means of his faith. The former simply obeys God, as the latter has of God a concept, an esteem that is much more in conformity and close to His merit, to His grandeur. And even more such a person both glorifies and admires God for the manifestation of His works. And the former's glory is of the one who works virtuously, while the latter glorifies God and is entirely His.

1558: But, so that our discourse might be rendered clearer and more understandable, let us come to comparisons and facts that are more particular and individual. Virtue increases all the more in proportion to the greater difficulties that are opposed to its execution, and that make the more difficult for the person to find the means, or to maintain it and keep it for a longer time. With this principle posited, should you say to me that whoever observes temperance or some other like virtue, needs much fortitude, in order to repel the desires and the thoughts of luxury, or of some other disordered appetite, I would respond. My answer is that it pertains to a strong spirit, and even more than that, is there necessary for one who believes, to combat and to pout to flight the thoughts and reasons of infidelity. This is not easy, or slight, but it is a harsh combat and a dangerous battle against one's own rationalizations.

1559: Of these truths that God has revealed, and they are both numerous and superior to our capacity, we ought to humbly receive them from God through faith. Thus Ecclesiasticus said: *...for many things are shown to you above the understanding of men...* [Si 3:25]. These truths, however, should not be investigated by human reason. Thus we are prepared by the same Ecclesiasticus: *...seek not the things that are too high for you...* [v. 22]. Curiosity is not to be excluded, nor likewise, is ignorance.

1560: The glory that pertains to faith is that of conducting one happily among all these shoals. These are already famous for their many shipwrecks, and the human spirit must be led to the port of the truth. Faith does repress that arrogance of striving to comprehend the incomprehensible, and hence is not oppressed by its glory: *...he that is a searcher of majesty, shall be overwhelmed by glory...* [Pr 25:27]. Faith makes one attentive and vigilant in studying and meditating the mysteries revealed by god, and hence, does not incur that grave threat: *...But, if anyone know not, he shall not be known...* [1 Co 14:38] [73]. Whoever does not know God, will not be known by God.

1561: These are the contrasts and difficulties that are intrinsic to being human. What, then, if to these interior revolutions the war outside should coincide? The fact is that while within, these vain reasoning must be fought, the innumerable enemies of the faith are preparing horrible blows. In fact, St. Paul cries out: *...for there must also be heresies: that they also, who are approved, may be made manifest among you...* [1 Co 11:19].

1562: If, in this sentence of the Apostle, through the effect of the end, the pious faithful finds some comfort, this still does not remove the fact that one of necessity will be found in the midst of so many, and such stupendous dangers of falling, such a one should not always be frightened, or frozen and shrink back in horror.

Humble faith is under attack from the most brazen wickedness. Not only is fury unleashed, but ordinarily insolence and power combine to oppress the weak. Both wisdom and eloquence seek to confound it, in order to seduce the less cultured. Or, astuteness and fraud combine to subvert the simple, to be upsetting.

1563: These are the great enemies, but, they are still not yet the most terrible, for this very reason that they appear for what they are and allow themselves to be seen. We do not have to combat only with flesh and blood, but against the spirits of wickedness [Ep 6:12], which are all about and occupy this space. I am referring to the demons. From this there are disseminated secretly into the field of the Catholic Church, as a kind of unhappy dandelion [Mt 13; 24, ff.], heresies. From these, various errors proceed, as from a bad fountain. Through this means, illusions are intensified and promoted, and deceptions are reinforced with such unhappy ruinous consequences.

1564: Now, who could, without inflicting injury, attribute the name 'weak' to one who could stand up to such a conflict, and to come out on top victorious after such a harsh war, one that was so horrible, so obstinate? And will not this victory, most honestly, not be attributed to the believer, but that this sublime outcome should be attributed to the Lord, for Whose name one struggles? So it is that the Apostle, wishing to commend Abraham's faith, stated sublimely in his regard: ... *he was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God...* [Rm 4:20].

1565: Thus, we have not come yet to the greatest difficulty that a person would encounter in believing: this is on the part of God Himself. But, since this could seem to many to be a paradox, and also because by this there is realized what faith is. This is the crown of glory that from our faith results in God's behalf. Hence, it is most important that something in this regard still remains to me to be declared by me.

1566: It is necessary, though, to call on a doctrine taught by the ANGELIC DOCTOR²²⁶: that what is most certain according to nature, is less evident because of the weakness of our intellects. The human mind is something like the eye of a bat in the sunlight. This sentence, that is so humiliating for human understanding, will not be very pleasing to the pride of philosophers. But they cannot refute it, because the Angelic Doctor has taken this from a gentile philosopher²²⁷.

1567: this is why in so many there happens the doubting of the articles of the holy faith, while these in themselves are the most certain. This happens not because of the

²²⁶ St. Thomas Aquinas, I, q. 1, a. 5, ad 1 um.

²²⁷ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*.

uncertainty of the truth, but because of the weakness of our understanding. Just like those who might wish to stare too boldly into the sun become blind, not through any defect of the sun, but because of the weakness of the pupils of the eye.

1568: Now God infinitely surpasses in the brilliance of His truth our human minds: ... *Behold God is great, exceeding our knowledge...* [Jb 36:26]. And with His very own light, He is hidden behind it: ... *Who ... inhabits light inaccessible...* [1 Tm 6:16]. What will be that generous eagle with such powerful pupils that it could withstand the impetuous flood of so much light, or that which from within one could penetrate to the depths this inaccessible sea, with its perceptive gaze? - ... *for who has known the Mind of God...?* [1 Co 2:16]. The spirit of faith can: ...*For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God...* [1 Co 2:10].

1569: It is from this that faith takes all its certainty on which it surpasses all the sciences. These, in fact, as St. THOMAS teaches ²²⁸. Have their certainty from the natural light of reason, which, however, can err. But, faith has its certainty from the divine knowledge itself, that can never be deceived.

1570: O, how well St. Paul has put it: ...*And if our Gospel be also hid, it is hid to them that are lost...* [2 Co 4:3]. - ...*In whom, the god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the Image of God, should not shine unto them...* [v. 4]. - ... *for God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Christ Jesus...* [v. 6].

1571: This is why it happens that our faith is clearer than any demonstration that proceeds by way of reasoning, and also is more persuasive. The one who is persuaded by words can later change his opinion. But, whoever is strong in the faith has his ears so well garrisoned against those pestiferous rationalizations. And, therefore, the Apostle very wisely, after having spoken of Abraham [Rm 4:20, ff.] states: ... *he was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God...* [v. 20]. then adds: ... *most fully knowing..* [v. 21]. - He did not say *believing*, but *most fully knowing*....

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²²⁸ St. Thomas Aquinas, I, q. 1, a. 5.

SOURCES**OT**

Jb 36:26	# 1568	Is 29:14	# 1548
Pr 25:27	# 1560	58:1	# 1552
Si 3:22	# 1359	64:4	# 1553
25	# 1359		

NT

Mt 13:24, ff.	# 1563	1 Co 2:10	# 1568
Rm 1:16	# 1551	16	# 1568
4:20	## 1564; 1571	9:16	# 1551
21	# 1571	11:19	# 1561
12:1 [<i>obsequium</i>]	# 1555	14:38 [73]	# 1560
1 Co 1:18	# 1548	2 Co 4:3	# 1570
19	# 1548	4	# 1570
20	# 1549	6	# 1570
21	# 1549	10:5 [<i>obsequium</i>]	# 1555
22	#1550	Ga 6:14	# 1551
23	# 1550	Ep 6:12	# 1563
2:9	# 1553	1 Tm 6:16	# 1568

LITURGY

Common of the Feast of the BVM - Tract. [<i>conquers heresies</i>]	# 1551
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FATHERS

St. Hilary, <i>De Trinitate</i> , Bk 4, 14 [t. 2, pp. 81/C, ff.]	# 1554
5, c. 20 [t. 2, pp. 116/B, ff.]	# 1554
5, c. 21 [t. 2, p. 117]	# 1554

St. John Chrysostom [no citation: intelligence sublime in faith]	# 1555
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DOCTORS

St. Thomas Aquinas, I, q. 1, a. 5	# 1569
I, q. 1, a.. 5 ad 1 um	# 1566

OTHER WRITERS

Aristotle, <i>2 Metaphys.</i> [bats & light]	# 1566
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**[NOTES FOR A PANEGYRIC
in honor of
St. ALOYSIUS GONZAGA]**

1572: PROPOSAL OF THE THEME: the wonderful innocence and penance of St. Aloysius.

DEFINITION: ... *behold for or so many years do I serve you and I have never transgressed your commandment...* [Lk 15:29].

THE INNOCENCE OF CHILDREN...*unless you be converted and become as little children...* [Mt 18:3].

Just as a child does not remain angry, does not keep in mind the spankings received, on seeing a beautiful woman, does not take delight - does not think one thing, but may say something else: thus, unless we have such innocence and purity of spirit, we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven ²²⁹....*Whoever shall humble himself as this little child...* [Mt 18:4].

1573: (INNOCENCE): of human beings in the state of lapsed nature.

'Sheep', 'Lamb; hieroglyph.: We should keep in mind with what word Christ refers to His people, with what title He calls His flock: He calls them *sheep*, that they might follow the sheep in Christian innocence; he calls them *lambs*, that they might imitate, in simplicity of mind, the simple nature of lambs ²³⁰.

(Innocence) of Adam in the state of integral nature. Adam's innocence: [Gen 2:8] - *And the Lord had planted a paradise of pleasure from the beginning: wherein he placed man whom he had formed.* [And St. Aloysius was placed in the Company of Jesus.

Original Justice: The mind was subject to God through inferior appetites: the appetite was subject to reason; the body to the soul; animals were subject to human beings. (In St. Aloysius) his mind was subject to God through the inferior powers; his appetite to his reason; his body and animals: as in Christ.

The Gift of Prophecy: ... *This is now bone of my bone...* [Gn 2:23]. (In St. Aloysius) the prophecy regarding his own death.

The innocence of Adam (was surpassed) through Virginity and Holiness.

(Aloysius) by penance surpassed the innocence of Adam, and achieved that of the Angels: by innocence, he transcended the innocence of corrupt men. And he achieved that of Adam, because he was pure even from depraved passion. Through his penance, he transcended the innocence of Adam, and achieved that of the saints. The reason is because he never lost innocence, and at no time did he bring harm to others, nor to himself. Rather, he was always useful to himself and to others, by work and example.

²²⁹ St. Jerome, *In Mt 18: 4* [t. 7, p. 137/D].

²³⁰ St. Cyprian, regarding III - Will, p. 507 C.

1574: (The Innocence) of the Angels. (St. Aloysius) was an angelic youth because of his angelic purity and spirituality. [Ps 103:4]: ... *who makes the Angels spirits...* (For) St. Aloysius (there is applicable what has been stated in Rm 8:9): ... *But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit...* through the operation of his intellect.

The Angel is always intelligence in act: St. Aloysius was always in contemplation.

(The Angel) is incorruptible: St. Aloysius had an incorruptible purity and he was immutable in his innocence.

(The Angels) are incorporeal: St. Aloysius seemed not to have a body, because the spirit lived in him.

1575: 'The Intellect': the Angels from which they were created, by holy and pious contemplation they rejoice in the very eternity of the word ²³¹. (St. Aloysius was in) perpetual contemplation.

In our heavenly homeland, our thoughts will not be volatile, coming and going from one reality to the next. But, we will see all our knowledge simultaneously under one aspect ²³². (The contemplation of St. Aloysius was) without distractions.

Dennis ²³³, states: The intellectual power of the Angels is resplendent in a perspicacious perception of the divine understandings. = (The contemplation of St. Aloysius was) most simple.

1576: 'The Angel': a most pure and clear mirror. ²³⁴ (And St. Aloysius): his mind was like a mirror.

(The Angel) understands nothing but what is true; because they know things in themselves, or they make no judgment concerning those realities which supernaturally pertain to reality, with all respect for the divine ordination. (Also, St. Aloysius) only understood what was true, and he knew without error, because he saw by considering reality in itself, and because he made no judgment other than in regard to the divine ordination.

1577: INNOCENCE IN THE WORLD AND IN THE CLOISTER: he lived innocence in the world; he was proven in the Court; and perfected in the cloister.

The ministers of mortal kings and conversing earthly emperors, each time they present themselves before the faces of their masters, tried studiously to remove any blemishes either from their clothing, or their faces. They did this so that they would not seem to the eyes of their Princes in any way discomposed, or indecorous, and thus, despicable. For it is indeed most worthy that all who became soiled, should remove all that is unseemly from themselves, whenever they want to draw the eyes of their masters to whom they desire to please.

²³¹ St. Augustine, *On Genesis*, Bk2, ad 1, c. 8, in the middle[t. 3/1, p. 137/E.]

²³² St. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, Bk 15, c. 16, near the end. [t. 8, p. 987 A].

²³³ *On the Divine Names*, 7 [75]

²³⁴ Dennis, *On the Divine Names*, c. 4, 4.

1578: For the mind is drawn often by the decoration and splendor of creatures. All those militating for the eternal King should carefully keep this rule, this custom. It is so proper for them to so compose their exterior dress, the gait of their body, their motions, actions (by religious modesty), as well as the thoughts of their minds and the affections of their spirits [through religious mortification]. This is for which they might reasonably be repelled from the presence of the Redeemer.

1579: The Lord Jesus totally delights in the gravity of life, in purity of heart, and in the perfection of the virtues of His servants who live in the state of religion. For thus, temporal human beings, with so much effort and with such care seek to have about them well formed ministers, who are accommodating, prudent and noble. How much the more, then, would there not be proper for the immortal and invisible King of the centuries to have about him servants in waiting, embellished with all virtues, and the elegance of all good customs, as to Him honor and glory are to be made manifest ^{235?}

1580: 'Innocent', the word, is derived from 'not being nocent, harmful', neither to oneself [this is purity of the spirit], or to others, holding in abhorrence all conferral of injury.

But, what does it mean to be innocent? In two ways as person may bring harm: ... either by making another wretched, or by deserting one who is miserable.'

INNOCENCE BY NOT BEING HARMFUL TO OTHERS: [either making one wretched, or by deserting one who is miserable]. ONE DOES NOT BRING HARM TO HIMSELF: for should anyone do this, such a person also makes other wretched, at least by harmful example; but also by deserting those who are wretched. For whoever is cruel toward himself, how could he ever be merciful toward others?

1581: One is perfectly good, and truly to be said just, when they do nothing against themselves, or others ²³⁶.

'Innocence is that by which we are harmful to no one ²³⁷. 'To be innocent means that one does no harm to anyone else' ²³⁸. Innocence is purity of spirit, abhorring all conferral of injury to others ²³⁹. Or, it means to have the affection of mind which would not harm anyone ²⁴⁰.

In two ways a person may bring harm: either by making one wretched, or by deserting one who is miserable. And who is it who makes others wretched? Anyone who inflicts violence, or makes traps, steals what belongs to others. [The meekness, justice, simplicity of St. Aloysius].

²³⁵ St. Lawrence Justinian, *Concerning Monastic Discipline and Perfection*. C. 17.

²³⁶ St. Augustine - citation not clear.

²³⁷ St. Augustine, *De Mend.*, c. 19, 40 [t. 6, p. 443/C].

²³⁸ St. Augustine, Sermon 228 [78], c. 8 [t. 5/2, p. 1126 C].

²³⁹ Cicero, *De Officiis*, [81].

²⁴⁰ Tertullian, and [... not clear].

1582: Who is it that deserts the wretched? This would be one who sees someone needy, requiring some help, and who would have what it would require, yet contemns, despises and alienates his heart.

(Care love, for the poor, also for the contaminated).

But, who is innocent? This would be one who does not bring harm to others, nor to oneself; anyone who brings harm to himself is not innocent.

If one does corrupt himself, if one overturns a temple of God, for one's own purposes, how would you expect that such a one would extend mercy, and have pity on the wretched? Whoever is cruel to himself, how could such an individual be merciful toward others ²⁴¹?

1583: There are many unjust, as though they were not harmful. They are not ferocious, they are not harsh, they are not persecuting, but nonetheless they are unjust, because in some way, they are given over to luxury, to drunkenness and to pleasures. How is it that one would not be harmful to no one else who does not spare himself? For the innocent person is one who does not harm himself, and not one who does harm himself. For how is it possible not to harm yourself when you do truly harm yourself? But, you respond; In what way do I harm myself...? The harm comes to you at least by example: because one lives, and invites others to do what he does ²⁴².

1584: Innocence inflicts evil on no one, nor on oneself; and it keeps one from sin, or punishes sin, then in oneself through penance, and then in others, by correction.

The degree of innocence is to correct. For just as it is not beneficial by helping to bring about one good and then lose one that is greater. Thus, it is not an aspect of innocence that by holding back, one would allow that another fall into a greater evil. It pertains, then, to the duty of the innocent one, not only to inflict harm on anyone else, but also to keep one back from sin, or to punish sin so that anyone involved in it, would be corrected by the experiment, or be terrified by the example ²⁴³.

1585: DEGREES OF INNOCENCE: external, internal innocence; that of words, of hearts; among the good and among the evil.

External and Internal: I have so lived that I do not fear an external accuser: would that I had always lived that within me I would not have my conscience as my accuser ²⁴⁴. - There is no one found who can absolve himself: and each one claims to be innocent, by regarding witnesses, and not one's own conscience ²⁴⁵.

Of works and heart: ... *The innocent in hands and clean of heart...* [Ps 23:4].

²⁴¹ St. Augustine, *In Ps 4* [100] [t. 4, p. 1084 G].

²⁴² St. Augustine, *In Ps 139, 4*. [t. 4, pp. 1553, ff.].

²⁴³ St. Augustine, *The City of God*, Bk 19, c. 16 [t. 7, pp. 560, C, ff.].

²⁴⁴ St. Gregory *Moral.*, 1, 2 [79].

²⁴⁵ Seneca, *regarding Wrath*, Bk 1

Innocence among the evil: ... *as the lily among the thorns...* [Ct 2:2]. It is no small title of virtue to live well among the depraved, to retain the candor of innocence and the mildness of manners among the wicked ²⁴⁶.

1586: INNOCENCE: to ignore evil, through not committing it and by hating it.

'Innocence' - Ignorance of evil. The innocent believes every word. No facility in reproaching but goodness in praising. This is what it means to be innocent: to be ignorant of all that harms. And if one should be circumscribed by something, nevertheless he still judges well of all, who puts his trust in all ²⁴⁷.

Innocence for not having done evil, and for having done great good: Strong:...*who has not taken in vain his soul...* [Ps 23:4].

1587: INNOCENCE out of fear of penalty and love of justice.

God proves that innocence, by which a person, not through fear of penalty does one become innocent, but out of love for justice ²⁴⁸.

Love of God in St. Aloysius, and at the same time, penance for him.

Therefore, God teaches innocence, that whoever is innocent is not so out of fear of penalty, but out of love for justice: for then the free person is innocent and the true person is innocent. Whoever is innocent out of fear, is not innocent, even though he does not harm those he may feel like hurting: he does not injure another for an injury received, but does himself great damage by cupidity. For just how he might harm himself, just listen to Scripture, Ps 10:6: ...*he that loves iniquity hates his own soul.* ²⁴⁹.

1588: Innocence by not being able to sin, or, having full liberty and facility.

This is not to sin where one could: The triumph of innocence is not to sin where one could ²⁵⁰.

INNOCENCE: is purity of spirit: imperfect (if immune) from errors through faith (and) prayer; perfect (if immune) from all stain, through charity (which is its) form and contemplation.

Definition: Innocence is purity of soul. The impurity of any reality consists in this that mixes in aspects more vile than itself. Silver is not said to be 'impure' by any mixture of gold, by which it would be made every more valuable. It is said to be 'impure' by any mixture of lead, or tin.'

1589: A rational creature is worthier than all other temporal and corporal creatures, and therefore, one is rendered impure by being subjected to temporal goods through love. One is then purified from this impurity through the contrary motion, when then it tends toward that which is above it, namely toward God.

²⁴⁶ St. Bernard, *On the Canticles*. [130]

²⁴⁷ St. Ambrose, *De Off.*, Bk 3, 10, 68 [t.2, p. 125 A]; 14, q. 5, at the word *lastly*. .

²⁴⁸ St. Augustine, *True Innocence*. Book - Sentence, Spurious [t. 10.2, Appendix, pp. 230 G; *Ennarr. In Ps 93, 1*. [t. 4, pp. 998 G, f.].

²⁴⁹ St. Augustine, *In Ps 93, 1* [t. 4, pp. 998, G, ff.].

²⁵⁰ *Sent. In Prov.*

In this motion, moreover, the first principle is the faith: for one ascending toward God it is necessary to believe [Heb 11:6]. And, therefore, the first principle of the purification of the heart is faith:... *Purifying their hearts through faith...* [Ac 15:9]. By it, the impurity of error is purified. That which is purified by formed charity, causes a perfect purification ²⁵¹.

1590: Whoever is pure of spirit, does not harm others by injury or by example; rather such a one is useful by example and by deed. The pure person is one who is tempering himself by receding from all that is inferior. If one is holy, this means that he accedes to the higher realities through religion, faith, hope, charity. Such a one is useful for others and benefits others by work and example, especially if such a person should order all his virtues and holiness.

Whoever is supremely pure in his spirit, and is useful to others by deed and example; this person, then, is supremely innocent.

Wondrous is the innocent person if he imitates the purity and usefulness of the Angels.

1591: The impurity of error (derives from this) that the intellect of a human being inordinately inheres into realities inferior to himself, that is, when one wishes to measure the divine benefits according to the created beings.

When one is formed with charity, then such a person allows no impurity to enter, because charity covers all sins... [Pr 10:12].

1592: INNOCENCE is that purity (achieved) by living according to reason, by temperance. (And even more) it is achieved by being united to God through the theological virtues, or through holiness. (Innocence, i.e., is) cleanliness by temperance, (and further) by holiness.

INNOCENCE = purity = holiness.

Sanctity is that which refers to God the actions of all the virtues.

Sanctity is to be free from all uncleanness, and is both perfect and entirely immaculate cleanliness ²⁵².... *We may serve Him...* [Lk 1:74] - ... *in holiness and justice...* [v. 75].

The word 'holiness' means to imply two realities: first, cleanliness [**AGIOS** : = 'without land']; secondly, firmness. The holy are supported by laws, that ought not to be violated.

1593: Cleanliness is necessary for this purpose, that the mind be applied to God; because the human mind is soiled by that which is joined to inferior realities, just like any thing is soiled by being mixed with what is worse than it is, as silver by the admixture of lead. It is necessary, then, that the mind be withdrawn from what is inferior, so that it might be able to be joined to the supreme reality. And therefore, the mind without cleanliness cannot be applied to God. Thus, Heb 12:14 states: *Follow peace with all men, and holiness: without which no man shall see God...*

²⁵¹ St. Thomas Aquinas, II-II, q. 7, a. 2.

²⁵² Dennis, *The Divine Names*, [85].

1594: Firmness is also required for this purpose that the mind be applied to God: it is applied as to its Last End and as to its First Principle; to achieve such realities there is necessary supreme immobility. Hence, Rm 8:38 states: *...for I am certain that neither death, nor life... will be able to separate us from the love of God... [v. 39]*. So, therefore Holiness is said to be that by which the human mind applies itself and its actions to God ²⁵³..

1595: INNOCENCE is integrity. Genuine innocence is where integrity is without sin, sale without debts, and scourge without merit ²⁵⁴.

It pleases God. Just as in the sight of men a pretty face is pleasing, so, in the eyes of God, a clean conscience is beautiful ²⁵⁵.

It is easily lost. Innocence and integrity violated by a slight aspersion of Satan, and loses the work of grace ²⁵⁶.

1596: Innocence is not recoverable. Amos 5:1, ff. speaks of this: *... The virgin is cast down... [v. 2]*. The Gloss states: he does not deny that she can rise up again. But, the virgin Israel will not arise, because once the flock wanders, even if it is brought back on the shoulders of the shepherd, it does not have as much glory as it would had it never wandered ²⁵⁷.

1597: TEMPERANCE: Its integral parts, (or) its concurrent conditions:

1. Shame: which rejects the contrary turpitude.
2. Honesty which loves the beauty of temperance.

The subjective (parts), (or) species:

1. As far as nourishment is concerned (that which pertains to it) abstinence regarding food; sobriety regarding drink.

2. As for the generative faculty (that which pertains to it) chastity, regarding the principal delectation of coitus; Modesty, regarding the accompanying delectations.

The Potential Parts, or secondary Virtues, in other matters in which there is not such difficult motion. They moderate in some matters and restrain the appetite tending toward something.

In Interior Matters, in addition to the motion, or concupiscence, which temperance restrains, are the following:

1. the motion of will, disturbed by the impetus of passion; continence restrains this;
2. the motion of hope, and boldness; humility restrains this;
3. the motion of anger, tending toward revenge; meekness, or clemency restrains this;

²⁵³ St. Thomas Aquinas, II-II, q. 81, a. 8.

²⁵⁴ St. Augustine, *In Ps 38*. [86]

²⁵⁵ St. John Chrysostom, *In Mt 6*. [t. 6, p. 520/ 2 C].

²⁵⁶ St. Ambrose, *In Exam*.

²⁵⁷ In St. Thomas, III, q. 89, a. 3 - at the beginning.

1599: In exterior matters, i.e., regarding those movements of the body, there is Modesty ²⁵⁸, which is divided into the following virtues:

1. in so far as it strives to learn, and to discern what should be done, or given up, or what, in what order, it should be done, and in what to remain firmly, this is a good ordering of acts;
2. in so far as it studies the decency to be observed in acting, this is ordered;
3. governing human beings in conversations with friends, and with all others, this is AUSTERITY.

1600: So also in exterior matters, moderation is two-fold:

1. That superfluous realities not be required, and this is parsimony: just what is sufficient for oneself.
2. that objects that are too exquisite be not required, and this is moderation, simplicity.

1601: TEMPERANCE: Its quality: it is a cardinal virtue. Cleanliness is had through temperance, or through holiness.

Temperance achieves cleanliness, not in so far as it has of itself the reason of holiness, unless it fears God. Thus, St. AUGUSTINE ²⁵⁹: Not because it is virginity, but because it is dedicated to God, it is honored.

1602: 1. Temperance, or moderation, or ‘tempering’, which reason brings to human operations and passions, withdraws one from those delectations that are against reason. Furthermore, it is contrary to the bestial inclination of nature, not subject to reason on account of the corresponding gift of fear, by which a person is restrained regarding those matters that the more greatly attract. *Pierce you my flesh with Your fear...* [Ps 118:120].

Temperance is the fear of God in St. Aloysius.

1603: Properly temperance restrains the appetite from those matters that most attract it.

INTEGRITY: it pertains to temperance to keep oneself integral and incorrupt for God ²⁶⁰.

The appetite of a human being is much corrupted through those realities by which a person is attracted to withdrawing from the rule of reason and the divine law ²⁶¹.

1604: TRANQUILITY: In temperance, the tranquility of the mind most especially is intended and sought. St. Ambrose ²⁶²: because these matters about which temperance

²⁵⁸ Cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, **Original Constitutions**, Pars VII, Sectio Tertia, cc. 3 & 4, *De Quadruplici MODESTIA*, CF ## 120-137.

²⁵⁹ *De Virginitate*, c. 8 [t. 6, p. 344]:

²⁶⁰ St. Augustine, *De Morib. Eccl.* 15 & 19. [t. 1, pp. 697, B; 700, C, ff.].

²⁶¹ St. Thomas Aquinas, I-II, q. 91, a. 2 [87]

²⁶² *De Officiis*, Bk 1, 43, 219 [t. 2, p. 56 D].

is concerned can the most greatly disturb the spirit, they are essential to human beings.

PULCHRITUDE: Beauty is attributed to temperance, firstly because to it pertains modest and fitting proportion, in which pulchritude consists ²⁶³. Secondly, because it holds back from those realities which are the most base in human beings, pertaining to each in accord with each one's bestial nature. It is from these that one is especially born to be perverted.

HONESTY ²⁶⁴: One is said to be 'honest' when there is no turpitude in him. 'Honesty' seems to be from 'the state of honor', which is especially considered in temperance, which especially repels shameful vices.

1605: 3. **MODERATION** in desires and delights, in sadness and in afflictions, in the hope of earthly goods. Temperance implies moderation, especially regarding the passions that tend to sensible goods, or regarding concupiscence and delectations which arise from the consequence of that sadness that results from the absence of such delectations.

Temperance is the firm and moderate domination of reason in pleasure and also in those other impetus of the spirit that are not always correct ²⁶⁵.

1606: Passions which pertain to the pursuit of good and the irascible passions presuppose the passions of the concupiscible appetite: and so, while temperance directly moderates the passions of the concupiscible appetite tending toward good, consequently, it modifies all other passions. This brings it about that a human being would moderately hope for, and moderately be saddened by, the absent concupiscible delights.

1607: 4. **ABSTINENCE. CHASTITY.** Temperance is concerned with the most natural operations, the greatest delights, by which an individual is served as well as the species. This means the delights of food and drink and venereal pleasures that flow from the sense of touch.

MODESTY ²⁶⁶ of all pleasures, in all the exterior realities., Secondly, temperance is concerned with other delights, and then it is the moderation of exterior realities, as when one tends toward what is commensurate to himself.

1608: **MORTIFICATION** of the senses. Thirdly, temperance is concerned with the delectation of the senses, in so far as these would refer to the delectation of touch. Temperance, as a conscience is concerned with these, namely, in so far as these include those delights according to what is fitting to itself, as in a harmonious sound.

MORTIFICATION of spirit, spiritual delights. Spiritual delectations through those realities that are according to reason, hence, are not to be referred unless by accident,

²⁶³ Dennis, *On the Divine Names*, 4 [88].

²⁶⁴ Isidore, *Fam.* [139].

²⁶⁵ Cicero, Tullius, *De inventione*. Bk 2.

²⁶⁶ Cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni **Original Constitutions**, ## 120, ff.

in so far as a spiritual delectation withdraws from others that are more powerful and more necessary.

1609: 5. TEMPERANCE is more general to taste. In the conservation of human life, either in the species, or in the individual, is considered in the very use of what is necessary, namely, of food, for the conservation of the species - and of food and drink, for the conservation of the individual. The use of what is necessary has essentially adjoined to it, delectations. Hence, it is also concerned regarding both uses, making of something a more delectable use, as beauty in a woman, taste and smell in food.

All use of necessities is in touching, and therefore, temperance is principally concerned with touch. The sensible realities which confer a more delectable use of taste, smell, sight, pertain to temperance secondarily.

However, because taste is [109] closer to touch, temperance is more concerned with taste.

1610: 6. ORDER. The good of virtue is in the order of reason: the order of reason respects the good of the end. The end orders those realities which pertain to the end.

The necessity of life is the purpose of all that is delectable.

The end of temperance: if there is respected the purpose of the one operating, the final end of temperance is beatitude.

The end of the act itself is the purpose of the reality that is used, the necessity of life.

The temperate person has in all these matters a rule signed in both testaments: that one love nothing of these realities, that one think nothing to be desired of itself, but everything that is sufficient for the necessity of this life, and its duties, be employed. So, it must be regulated by the Modesty of the one using these benefits, rather than by the affections of the love ²⁶⁷.

1611: The temperate person attends to the necessities of life, that is to all that without which he cannot be, and all that without which he cannot be in a suitable manner [51]. Some aspects are impediments to health and good habits, and these are in no way used. If they are not impediments, then one uses them moderately regarding place, time and the competence of those with whom he lives. What is fitting can pertain to the body, to external realities, as wealth, and duties, and also honesty.

1612: 7. Moderation principally is praiseworthy in the delights of touch, which are the more natural, because it is the more difficult to refrain from them and to hold back their concupiscence, and because their objects are necessary for life.

The drive of concupiscence, etc., from the natural cause, is a longer lasting and more common than is the drive of anger from some accident, or from an upsetting injury. This passes quickly, even though it may be greater.

8. Every virtue is concerned with what is difficult and good.

²⁶⁷ St. Augustine, *De Moribus. Eccl.* 21, 39 [t. 1, pp. 702, b, ff.].

Temperance exceeds in the area of what is difficult, rather than according to the aspect of good, in which the dignity of virtue is more to be sought.

1613: THE INTEGRAL PARTS OF TEMPERANCE: A SENSE OF SHAME - DECENCY.

A SENSE OF SHAME: this is the fear of something that is unclean, which is reproachable.

Properly speaking, it is not a virtue, because it is repugnant to perfection. The perfect human being does not consider something reproachable and unclean as something to be done, as 'possible', and as 'difficult', i.e., difficult to avoid. Nor does such a one do anything that is unclean, and hence, fears disgrace.

1614: Commonly, nevertheless, the sense of shame is said to be a virtue, because it is good and laudable inhuman acts and passions.

St. AMBROSE writes²⁶⁸: The sense of shame is a companion and at home for the placidity of the mind, fleeing wantonness, alien from all luxury, loves sobriety, furthers decency, and requires that décor. It favors decency by removing all that is contrary to it.

1615: Turpitude is vicious in the deformity of the voluntary act. Regarding this evil this is no fear, because it is not difficult, or hard to avoid.

Turpitude is almost penal in reproach, because it is a difficult evil.

Shame, or the fear of turpitude, respects that reproach, or disgrace, that is due to vice. As a consequence, it pertains to vicious turpitude.

If a virtue exercises its influence so that someone would cease from acting in a vicious manner on account of the fear of reproach, it is said to be a sense of shame. If it so influences so that it might avoid the public gaze, it is said to be blushing.

1616: The virtuous person contemns reproachable acts on account of virtue, because these are unworthily assumed by one. *Ac 5:41*: ... *And the Apostles went ... rejoicing...*, etc. The more virtuous a person is, so much the more would he disdain exterior goods, or evils. *Is 5 [90]*: ... *Do not fear the reproach of human beings...*

A sense of shame is a part of temperance, in disposing one for it. The sense of shame lays down the first foundations of temperance ²⁶⁹.

1617: NOTE . Some realities are desired on account of themselves, and never on account of something else, such as happiness, the last end.

Some realities are desired on account of themselves, because they have within themselves a certain aspect of goodness, although through them, nothing else good is derived: and nevertheless, they are desired for some other reason, in so far as they lead toward perfect good. In this manner, the virtues are desired for themselves.

²⁶⁸ *De Offic.*, Bk 1, 43, 219 [t. 1, pp. 56, D, ff.].

²⁶⁹ St. Ambrose, *De Offic.*, Bk 1, 43 220 [t. 2, p. 56 D].

1618: HONESTY. Honest is the state of décor; the word *honest* comes from [worthy of honor'; which is due to excellence. The excellence of a person because of virtue is the disposition of the perfect to what is supreme.

Honesty is properly a virtue.

Honest radically is in the interior selection; significantly, it is in the interior conversation; because the testimony of honor is not given except regarding the well known.

According to reason, honesty moderates all human affairs.

For everyone, beauty is a lovable good ²⁷⁰.

You see the very form and as the face of what is honest. If something is perceived with the eyes, as Plato says, it might excite the wondrous loves of wisdom²⁷¹.

1619: Honest means that which has a certain décor from the order of reason, fitting to a human being.

DLECTABLE: nevertheless, not all that is delectable is honest, because it pertains to the senses, and not to reason.

DÉCOR is a spiritual beauty, well proportioned in the conversation of a person, according to a spiritual clarity of reason.

1620: GLORY is the effect of honor, because the honored, or the one praised is rendered outstanding in the eyes of others.

Among the realities that are honored, God is the most excellent, but less known.

Praise is due to virtue according to what is desirable, on account of something else. Honor is due, in so far as it is acceptable in itself.

All other things are honored in so far as they help in the works of the virtues. [Wealth, nobility, understanding and the like, of St. Aloysius].

Virtue is that which according to reason there is moderated all human matters.

That virtue which is of itself honest is one referred to the end, namely, toward happiness.

USEFULNESS, HONESTY, DELECTABLE, all differ by reason.

1621: THE SUBJECTIVE PARTS OF TEMPERANCE: the touch of delectable pleasures, require two aspects: one as far as nourishment is concerned: and here are Abstinence and Sobriety. Then, as far as the generative power is concerned: and here are Chastity, and a part of this Virginity.

ABSTINENCE: Abstinence is the regulated subtraction of food under right reason. 2 P 1:5: ... *And you, employing all care, minister in your faith, virtue; and in virtue, knowledge... And in knowledge, abstinence... [b. 6].*

It is regulated, for the well being of other human beings among whom one lives, and also for one's own person, and in behalf of the needs of one's health.

Ease and serenity" For it is absolutely no concern how much food one receives, as long as one does this in a fitting manner, etc., when it is out of necessity, etc., but

²⁷⁰ Dennis, *De Divin. Nom*, 4.

²⁷¹ Tullius, *De Offic.*, 1, c. 5.

how easy and serenely these things may be lacking. The aspect of what is needed and what is necessary may be missing.

Patience, tranquility: ²⁷²The minds of those abstaining often are struck with impatience, within the bosom of tranquility.

Humility: The thoughts of those abstaining is sometimes penetrated with the fault of pride ²⁷³.

1622: A moral virtue conserves the good of reason against the onslaught of the passions. The delectations of food of their very nature, can abstract from the good of reason, on account of their magnitude and on account of the necessity of good.

The virtue of abstinence is commended only by the other virtues. St. GREGORY, as above.

Abstinence castigates the body and against the illicit attractions of luxury and gluttony.

1623: FASTING. Fasting is useful for repressing the concupiscence of the flesh. ...*In fasting, and in chastity...* [2 Co 6:L5, 6]. Also so that the mind might be more freely elevated to contemplating sublime realities Daniel 10:3 after fasting for three weeks, he received a revelation from God. Lastly, for making satisfaction for sins. Joel 2:12: ...*Be converted to me with all your heart...* St. Augustine ²⁷⁴: Fasting purges the mind, elevates the senses, subjects the flesh to the spirit, makes the heart contrite and humbled, disperses the clouds of concupiscence, extinguishes the ardor of pleasurable desires, and enkindles the true light of chastity.

1624: Silence, poverty, self-knowledge. St. Augustine [ib.]: Feasting does not care for verbosity, judges riches as superfluities, rejects pride, commends humility: enables a person to acquire self-knowledge, which is the least and is fragile.

Fasting is an act of abstinence.

Fasting is two-fold: the first pertains to the humility of tribulation, and this does not pertain to the perfect children of the Spouse. The second is the joy of the mind engaged in spiritual matters, and this pertains to the perfect ²⁷⁵.

Fasting, therefore, can be for both affliction, or exultation, from the instinct of the Holy Spirit.

1625: Fasting in itself, is praiseworthy at all times. Would that we could fast always! Would that we could fast always ²⁷⁶!

St. GREGORY ²⁷⁷:For the conflict of spiritual agony does not arise if first the enemy has not gained entry within us as through gluttony], and sins there. St Gregory

²⁷² St. Gregory, *In Past.*, p. 3, adm. 30 [91]. [t. 1, p. 932/2 B].

²⁷³ St. Gregory, *In Past.*, p. 3, adm. 30 [91] [t. 1, p. 932/2 C].

²⁷⁴ *Sermo 130*, on time [92], as 73, 1. [t. 5/2, App. 134/B].

²⁷⁵ St. Augustine, *Sermo 219* in Lent. [t. 5/1, pp. 928 G, ff].

²⁷⁶ St. Jerone, *Ad Licinium*, Letter 28 - otherwise, 71. [t. 1, p. 432 E]. dist. 76.

²⁷⁷ *Moral*, 1, 30. C. 26. Sermon 13 [t. 1, pp. 748/ 2 C, ff].

²⁷⁸: By dominating the vice of gluttony, sees to it that all that human beings try with all their strength to accomplish, they lose. And when the belly is not restrained, at the same time, all the other virtues are over-run.

(Defects to be avoided regarding food): Regarding the substance of the food, that it be not exquisite; regarding the quality, that it be not taken with excessive concentration; regarding the quantity, that it be not excessive; regarding the time spent in eating, that it be not hasty; regarding the manner of eating, that it be not ardently that the food is consumed.

1626: SOBRIETY: From the immoderate delectation of food and drink there is generated in the soul as well as in the reason: a certain dullness. *Ecclesiastes [Qo]2:3: ...I thought in my heart to withdraw my flesh from wine, that I might turn my mind to wisdom....*

Regarding the appetite, which is disordered in a multiple manner, as a drowsy guard over the mind: inept joy.

REGARDING THE TONGUE: much talk, inordinate acts, scurrility. In the body: uncleanness.

1627: CHASTITY: The word: that by whose reason concupiscence is castigated, which is to be held back, in the manner of a child.

Material chastity holds back the concupiscence of delectable pleasures in venereal matters. Spiritual chastity consists in this that the mind delights in spiritual union with God and abstains that one might not delightfully be joined to others, against the order of reason: *...For I have espoused you to one husband that I might present you as a chaste virgin to Christ... [2 CO 11:2]*.

1628: VIRGINITY. The name comes from 'strength'. It is immunity from the burn of concupiscence in the consummation of the most intense delight. Virginal chastity is to have no part in any form of contagion ²⁷⁹.

Virginity is the mediation in corruptible flesh of perpetual incorruption ²⁸⁰. Thus, virginity.

(Note): Virginity pertains to chastity: magnificence to liberality.

1629: Formal Virginity. This is the proposal of perpetually abstaining from copula, is rendered praiseworthy by its purpose, namely, to give way to divine realities.

Material Virginity> Is the integrity of the flesh without the experience of venereal delectation, which enjoys the excellence of praise for that which is to keep oneself immune from inordinate venereal delectation.

Material virginity is had at birth, but not formal virginity, which has the nature of a virtue. So, regarding virgins, we not preach that they are virgins, but that they are dedicated to God by pious continence as virgins.

²⁷⁸ *Moral.* 30, c. 16, or 13. Ibid. D].

²⁷⁹ St. Ambrose, *Regarding Virgins.* Bk 1, To Marcellina, 5, 20. [t. 2,p. 151, F].

²⁸⁰ St Augustine, *Concerning Nuptials and Concupiscence.* [94].

1630: In the delectation of the venereal delights there is hard in the body the violation of the seal of virginity, which accidentally pertains to the moral act, which is not even considered of itself, unless in accord with what pertains to the soul.

The outpouring of the seed causing sensible delectation materially pertains to the moral act because the sensible passions are the material of moral acts.

Even in the proposals of coming to such delectation removes virginity that is formally complete, because the reason of moral deeds is completed in that which pertains to reason.

1631: In virginity, which is said by the removal of the above mentioned corruption, the integrity of the member accidentally pertains to virginity. Immunity from delectation in the outpouring of the seed pertains materially. The resolution to abstain perpetually pertains formally and completely.

The outpouring of the seed from a decision of the will, either through concubinage, or without it, takes away virginity, which excludes modesty.

(The malice of the corruption) is found in this that there is joined what pertains to the soul with that which is of the body.

1631: Although God can do all things, he cannot repair a virgin after her ruin ²⁸¹. A person can regain formal holiness through penance; by a miracle, God could restore integrity; but, He cannot repair immunity from the experience of venereal delights.

(THE VOW OF VIRGINITY): Virginity, in accord with its interior aspect, implies the resolution strengthened by vow.

Virginity is a continence by which the integrity of the flesh is vowed to the Creator of the body and soul. One is vowed, consecrated, serves Him in this way [95] ²⁸².

1633: (JUSTIFICATION OF VIRGINITY): reason dictates that those realities used to achieve an end that each do so according to a measure that befits that end. Exterior goods have some respect to the body: and the body is in accord with the soul; action in relationship; to contemplation, according to that measure which is befitting, etc. If anyone should abstain from some possessions for the salvation of the body, or, for the contemplation of truth, he should be praised. If anyone would abstain from corporal delights, that he might the more freely give time for the contemplation of the truth, this pertains to the rectitude of reason: *...And the unmarried woman and the virgin, think on the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit...* [1 Co 7:34].

1634: The precept concerning generation pertains to the entire multitude, for which it is necessary not only that it be multiplied corporally, but that also it be of benefit spiritually. And, therefore, the human multitude is sufficiently provided for when some do perform carnal generation, and when some others abstain from this, and give time to the contemplation of divine realities, **for the pulchritude and salvation of the entire human race.**

²⁸¹ St. Jerome, Letter 22 to Eustochius. [t. 1, p.90 B].

²⁸² St. Augustine.

1635: A virgin does not abstain from all delectation so that she be rustic and insensitive. But, one abstains from venereal delectation, and in accord with regulated right reason.

Virginity is preferred to matrimony on the example of Christ, who chose a virgin mother. It is noted also from the teaching of the Apostle, who has counseled it as the better good [1 Co 7:25, ff.]. It is also noted from reason, because a divine good is greater than a human good; the good of the soul is to be preferred to that of the body; the good of the contemplative life is to be preferred to the good of the active life.

1636: BEAUTY: Virginity is most excellent in the genus of chastity, and is above widowhood and marriage. Therefore, there is attributed to it a most excellent beauty. What could better estimate from the décor of the virgin that beauty which is loved by the King, proved by the Judge, dedicated to the Lord, and consecrated to God?

Simply speaking, however, it is not the most excellent virtue. For always, the end excels, which is to give time for divine matters; therefore, the theological virtues and religion, the acts of which are the concern with divine matters, and so they antecede virginity. Furthermore, the more efficaciously something is ordered to the end, all the better does this perfect the soul. So, martyrdom, in which one's own will and all else which could be had, surpasses virginity.

1637: CROWN - TRAIT

The virgins follow the lamb wherever He goes; this means that they imitate Christ not only in the integrity of His mind, but also in the integrity of His flesh, and therefore, under many aspects they follow the lamb. This does not mean that they follow Him the closest of all, because other virtues bring one to inhere to God by the imitation of the mind.

The New Canticle is the joy of virginity that is kept.

1638: MODESTY ²⁸³: the word derives from *shame*. It comes from that embarrassment which pertains especially to venereal matters, because the acts of the genitals are not subject to reason ²⁸⁴.

Modesty properly is essentially in the soul; materially it is in the flesh.

Modesty properly regards venereal activity, and especially regarding its signs, i.e., unchaste glances, kisses, touches. These are customarily to be restrained.

Since chastity is especially concerned with venereal intercourse, modesty is ordered to chastity as expressing a certain circumstance.

1639: THE POTENTIAL PARTS OF TEMPERANCE: these refrain, or moderate in the interior movements of the will from the impetus of passion. There is derived, then, CONTINENCE, which, in so far as it means abstinence from all venereal delectation is the same as chastity.

²⁸³ cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, Original Constitutions Pars VII, Sectio Tertia, *De Quadruplici Modestia*, ## 120-137

²⁸⁴ This comment needs further explanation.

In so far as it rests the vehement depraved concupiscence, it has the aspect of virtue, because by it, the reason is strengthened against the passions so that it might not be led away by them. It does not, however, have the perfection of virtue, according to which perfection and the sensitive appetite is subjected to reason, so that in it there might not come to bear the vehement passions according to reason.

1640: ‘Continent’ means that one keeps himself, or persists in right reason, abstaining from depraved concupiscence.

The magnitude, or the debility of concupiscence, derives from a corporal cause, or from one’s natural make-up, and moreover, from the opportunity of delectations that inflame concupiscence.

The greater merit of continence. The merit of continence is increased by spiritual causes, i.e., from the vehemence of charity, from the fortitude of reason.

1641: The sign of greater innocence is continence: *Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God.*

Whenever the beauty of visible realities attracts the bodily eye, so also cognition draws to itself also the pure mind of invisible realities ²⁸⁵.

As the sun rising and illuminating the world, when it demonstrates itself as well as the realities illuminated by it, so also the sun of justice, rising in a cleansed soul, manifests itself to be seen, and gives a view of those realities that it has made by it, and finally demonstrates its reasons [*ibid.*].

The contemplation of God in Himself and in creatures. Thus, St. Aloysius saw God in everything.

1642: HUMILITY ²⁸⁶: Continence, in so far as it restrains the movement of hope and audacity. Practically, humility is the whole of Christian discipline ²⁸⁷.

Humility - Magnanimity

Regarding a difficult good, a two-fold virtue is necessary: one tempering and restraining the soul so that it might not immoderately tend toward the sublime, and this is humility. The other strengthens one against despair and impels toward the achievement of great realities to right reason, and this is magnanimity.

External humility - and that of the heart.

The word *humble*, is from that which ‘inclines toward the ground’, one ‘inhering to what is lowly’ ²⁸⁸.

Humility implies a laudable dejection toward what is lowly. If this is done only with what is pertaining to external signs, it is false humility. If it is done according to the interior motion of the soul, it is genuine humility, which principally consists not in exteriors, but in the interior dejection of the mind.

²⁸⁵ Maximus, *On Charity*, Bk 1.

²⁸⁶ St. Gaspar Bertoni treats this in his **Original Constitutions**, under ‘Chastity’ [cf. CF ## 120-121].

²⁸⁷ St. Augustine, *De Virgin.*, I (96) [t. 6, pp. 355 f].

²⁸⁸ Isidore, *Etym.* Bk 10 [140].

1643: the knowledge of oneself. From the extrinsic principles when one is dejected, humility is a penalty. But, whenever from an intrinsic principle it very well makes a person humble, i.e., when one considering his defect, considers himself to be lowly, according to its manner: *....I will speak to my Lord, whereas I am dust and ashes...* [Gn18:27]. Humility, then, is a virtue. Whenever humility is poorly received, whenever a person, not understanding his own dignity, thinks of himself as a beast of burden, etc.

1644: Recognition of one's defect. (Humility) is befitting to every human being: for the perfect, in comparison to God is always found to be deficient. Humility properly is a directive and moderates the motion of the appetite. The recognition of one's own defect, in which a person is deficient in proportion as one exceeds his strength, is a certain directive rule.

Submission and reverence to God. Humility essentially consists in the appetite, in so far as it restrains the impetus of the mind, so that it might not inordinately tend to what is great. But it has a rule in cognition so that it does not allow one to think of himself less than he truly is. The principle and root of both of these is reverence for God.

Out of confidence in the divine assistance to tend toward what is greater, is not against humility, especially when from this, one is the more assisted by God which would subject him the more through humility. It is one matter to raise oneself to God, and something quite different to raise oneself against God. Whoever prostrates himself before Him, is sustained by Him: whoever raises up against Him, is rejected by Him.

1645: The aspect of strengthening one's spirit against despair finally is the achievement of one's own good, by which one takes precautions from despairing, thinking oneself unworthy, contributes to that good which befits one. The aspect of repressing the presumption of hope, is finally divine reverence by which one no longer attributes to himself what pertains to him in accord with the lot that the lord has destined for him.

Humility especially implies the subject of a person to God, respective of the Gift of Fear.

1646: Subjection to one's neighbor: Ph 2:3 (146): *...in humility let each esteem others better than themselves...*

Humility properly respects that reverence by which a human being is subjected to God. The humble person according to what pertains to himself, subjects himself to each and every neighbor, in so far as there is what pertains to God in himself. Nevertheless, such a person might think that there is something good in one's neighbor which in truth the other does not have; or, might think that there is something evil in the other, which really is not there. So, such a person would subject himself to the other out of humility.

The humility of sinners and of Saints ²⁸⁹: concerning the Pharisees and the Publican. If humility is mixed in with crimes; then very easily it flows into that sense of righteousness mixed in with pride. If you should join it, though, to justice, where will it go? It will stand before the very tribunal of God, in the midst of the angels.

1647: With eyes cast down. the pride of heart, when it is extended externally to the body, is first indicated through the eyes ²⁹⁰.

Ps 130:1: ...*Lord, my heart is not exalted: nor are my eyes lofty...* The loftiness of the eyes, a sign of pride, excludes fear and reverence. Those fearing and modesty, very much cast their eyes, down, almost not even daring to compare themselves to others.

TO SEEK THE LOWLY REALITIES, IN CLOTHING, etc. The humble person is one who elects to be abject in the house of the Lord, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners [Ps 83:11] ²⁹¹.

Not to superabound in external trappings and preparations are signs of interior humility. Form the interior disposition proceed the signs in words and in deeds performed.

1648: The twelve degrees of Humility according to St. Benedict ²⁹²:

1. **Always to show humility in one's heart and exterior by keep in one's eyes fixed on the ground.**
2. **To speak with few and reasonable words, not boisterously.**
3. **Not to be easily moved to laughter.**
4. **To be silent until questioned.**
5. **To observe the common rule of the monastery.**
6. **To believe and to declare oneself inferior to all.**
7. **To believe and to declare oneself unworthy, and useless for anything.**
8. **To confess one's sins.**
9. **Through obedience to practice patience in what is hard and contrary.**
10. **To submit oneself to one's Superior with obedience.**
11. **Not to seek to satisfy one's own will.**
12. **To fear God, and ever be mindful of His commands.**

1649: The **logical** order of these same Degrees:

As far as the **root** is concerned:

To fear God and ever be mindful of His commands =

12

²⁸⁹ St. John Chrysostom, *In Lk*, 18 [t. 3, p. 192/1 C].

²⁹⁰ St. Gregory, *Mor.* 34 17 * 18. [t. 1, p. 865/1 D].

²⁹¹ St. Augustine, *De Poenit.* [98].

²⁹² Cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, **Original Constitutions**, *Pars Septima*, Section III, Caput I, *De Humilitate*, CF # 121.

As far as the appetite is concerned:	
Not to seek to satisfy one's will =	<u>11</u>
That one regulate it according to the Superior's judgment =	<u>10</u>
That one not desist from this on account of what may be hard, etc. =	<u>9</u>
As far as the estimation of one's own defects is concerned:	
That one recognize and confess one's own defects =	<u>8</u>
That from the consideration of one's own defect, that he consider Himself unworthy of greater tasks =	<u>7</u>
As far as others are concerned, that they be preferred over oneself =	<u>6</u>
As far as its exterior signs are concerned:	
- in deeds : that one do not recede from the common way =	<u>5</u>
- in words : that one not anticipate the time of speaking =	<u>4</u>
that one not exceed the manner =	<u>2</u>
- in gestures : in repressing the raising of the eyes =	<u>1</u>
in holding back laughter & joy =	<u>3</u>

1650: NOTES regarding the above:

One reaches humility first and principally through grace. In the order of human affairs, the interior precede the exterior. In the practical order, through effort, humility first holds back the exterior manifestations, as it strives to root out its source.

Regarding n. 6: Someone could without artificiality believe and pronounce oneself better than others, according to the defects hidden within and according to the hidden gifts of God in others. This would mean to estimate that some are superior in a hidden way, to whom you are for all external appearances superior.

Regarding n. 7: Similarly, some could hold self as useless for everything and unworthy as far as his own capacity is concerned, so that he might refer his total sufficiency to God. 2 Co 2:[16]: (99): ... For these things, who is sufficient...

1651: The Degrees of Humility according to St. ANSELM ²⁹³:

1. **To recognize oneself as contemptible.**
2. **To be sorry about this.**
3. **To confess this.**
4. **To persuade others to believe this.**
5. **That one patiently accept this being said by others.**
6. **That one suffer himself to be treated with contempt.**
7. **That he love this.**

1652: their logical classification: All are reduced to the opinion and manifestation and will of one's own abnegation.

To the knowledge of one's own defect	<u>1</u>
All love of one's own defect to be excluded [as shameful]	<u>2</u>
To the manifestation of one's own abjection =	<u>3</u>
To the appetite of one's own abjection =	<u>4</u>

²⁹³ *De Simil.* 1,

This appetite does not seek exterior excellence, but
Equal mindedly, accepts exterior abjection:

- in words =

5

- in deeds =

6

(it is not a great state for us to be humble before those
by whom we are honored, because even some
seculars achieve this; but we need to be humble
mostly before those whom we suffer insults,
or also by desire that one embrace exterior abjection =

7

All these grades under 6 & 7 noted above are contained in St. Benedict.

1653: are other computations which hold for only three degrees of humility:

1. To be subjected to one's superior.
2. To be subject to one's equal.
3. To be subjected to one's inferior.

1654²⁹⁴: The Twelve Degrees of Humility according to St. Benedict, in his rule.

The note of St. THOMAS AQUINAS, in the text cited within²⁹⁵: One may come to humility by two ways. The first and principle way is through the gift of grace. And as far as this is concerned, the internal precedes the external. As far as human effort is concerned, a person first restrains the external manifestations and afterwards arrives at uprooting the opposite. And according to this order there are twelve degrees of humility:

1655:

1. **Always to show humility in one's heart and exterior by keeping one's eyes fixed on the ground.**
2. **To speak with a few and reasonable words, not boisterously.**
3. **Not to be easily moved to laughter.**
4. **To be silent until questioned.**
5. **To observe the common rule of the monastery**
6. **To believe and declare oneself inferior to all.**
7. **To believe and declare oneself unworthy and useless for anything.**
8. **To confess one's sins.**
9. **Through obedience to practice patience in what is hard and contrary.**
10. **To submit oneself with obedience to one's superior.**
11. **Not to seek to satisfy one's own will.**
12. **To fear God, and ever be mindful of his commands.**

²⁹⁴ cf. above, # 1650.

²⁹⁵ II-II, q. 161, a. 6.

1656: There is a commentary and demonstration of St. THOMAS AQUINAS²⁹⁶. Humility has essentially to do with the appetite in so far as a man restrains the impetuosity of his soul, from tending inordinately to great things. Yet, its rule is in the cognitive faculty: in that we should not deem ourselves to be above what we are. The principle and the origin of both these things is the reverence we bear to God. Now the inward disposition of humility leads to certain outward signs in words, deeds and gestures.

1657: As far as the **origin** is concerned, this rule is placed:

That a person fear God, and remember all His commands **12**

As far as the **appetite** is concerned:

1. That one not follow his own will **11**

2. That he regulate it according to his superior's judgment **10**

3. That he persist in this even in the face of arduous and harsh circumstances that might arise **9**

1658: As far as **self-knowledge** is concerned:

1. That one know his own defects and confess them **8**

2. That one therefore esteem himself insufficient for greater heights **7**

3. That one prefer others to himself **6**

As far as **external signs** are concerned:

1. In **deeds**: that the person not withdraw from common life **5**

2. In **words**:
a. That one not surpass the time for speaking **4**
b. That one not be excessive either in manner **2**

3. In **gestures**:
a. That one hold back the tendency of raising his eyes **1**
b. That one refrain from laughter and vain joy **3**

1659: (Continenence in so far as it restrains) the motion of wrath in vengeance, is called: MEEKNESS - CLEMENCY (their distinction): By clemency, there are moderated exterior punishments; meekness diminishes the passions of anger, and the vindictive appetite. Out of love, one does not enjoy the penalty of another, but only what pertains to its right order, namely, for justice, for correction.

Meekness orders a passion to the knowledge of God. Jm 1:21: ...with meekness receive the engrafted word... Si 5:13: ... be meek and hear the word of God... It obtains its effect by removing the impediment; this renders a person master of himself through the domination of wrath, and by not contradicting in words of truth from the commotion of wrath.

1660: to be meek means not to contradict the divine Scripture, whether understood, if it should strike at some of our vices - or, not understood, as when it knows us better, and through which we can more truthfully perceive them ²⁹⁷.

Meekness is supremely acceptable to God: *That which is agreeable to Him is faith and meekness...* [Si 1:34, 35]. ... *Learn of me...* [Mt 11:29]. Through the meekness of our mind, Christ dwells in us... ²⁹⁸.

...*It is also most acceptable to other human beings...*[Si 3:19] ...*My son, do your works in meekness, and you shall be loved above the glory of men...*

1661 ²⁹⁹: in the acts of the body is said of their manner:

MODESTY IS IN THE EXTRIOR MOTIONS: to which it pertains to discern and to establish what, and in what order, we are to act.

STUDIOSITY ³⁰⁰: Study is said to be that vehement application of the mind to anything. Firstly, it is applied to cognition; secondly, to those matters in which it is directed through cognition. Therefore, it respects cognition, to whatever matter the study is had.

1662: (There are various senses of the word):

The neglect of the flesh: 1. (Study) is also the care concerning the embellishment and other matters of this nature, regarding the body. Rm13:13: ...*make no provision for the flesh in its concupiscence...* - because concerning those matters by which the flesh is furthered, human beings are mostly effected.

The cognition of a person is geared toward these, so that each one might best, and in what manner, be of service to his flesh.

2. The study of wealth: ... *For from the least to the greatest, all are given to covetousness...* [Jr 6:13]. For this, there is very necessary cleverness regarding earthly matters.

1663: Studiosity ³⁰¹ is the moderation of the appetite of knowing, and of applying the cognoscitive faculty to one area rather than to another, to this matter, rather than to something else.

The appetite of knowing is essential to studiosity.

The labor of learning accidentally pertains to studiosity.

The vehemence of the intention to perceiving the knowledge of matters: it is from this aspect principally that studiosity gets its name. Directly studiosity is not concerned with knowing, but regards the appetite and the study of the knowledge to be acquired.

1664: Austerity in games is called EUTRAPELIA: Modesty is to moderate four matters:

²⁹⁷ St. Augustine, In 2, *De Doctr.*, cf. c. 9, 14. [t. 3/1, p. 24 C].

²⁹⁸ St. Hilary, c. ... (101), *In Mt.*, c. 4, n. 3 [t. 1, p. 680 D].

²⁹⁹ cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, **Original Constitutions**, Pars VIIa, Sectio IIIa, cc. III & IV, CF ## 128-37.

³⁰⁰ ib. c. 2, CF ## 122-127

³⁰¹ cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, **Original Constitutions**, Pars VII, Sectio III, c. 2, CF ## 122-127.

The first, the motion of the soul toward excellence, in which there is humility.

Secondly, the desire of all those matters that can be known, in which is the be found studiosity, contrary to curiosity, about which the discussion has already taken place.

Thirdly, regarding corporal motions that they be decently and honestly, both in seriousness as well as in playing; and this is where *eutrapelia* is to be found.

Fourthly, regarding the exterior apparatus, about which the discourse will take place below.

1665: EUTRAPELIA, or the good conversion, consists in this, that some words and deeds are placed for the delectation and the quiet of the soul, for removing fatigue.

(Concerning this, the following admonitions must be attended to):

1. That there be not sought any relaxation of the soul in deeds or in words that would be impure, or harmful.

2. It should be taken care so that the gravity of the soul be not totally dissipated³⁰². Let us be careful that we do not choose to relax all harmony of the soul, as though the certain concert of good works: Even in play, let there shine the light of some sound judgment³⁰³.

3. Care must be taken so that the corporal motion be worthy regarding time and a human being³⁰⁴. It is against reason that one should show himself to be so burdened when he manifests no delight and even impedes the delights of others. - the vicious are both harsh, closed³⁰⁵.

AUSTERITY: in so far as it is a virtue, excludes delights, but not, however, all of them, but only those that are superfluous and disordered.

1666: (NOTE: regarding the moderation of the external apparatus, about which Par. # 1663/4 treats, there pertains the good ordering and the embellishment).

THE GOOD ORDRING, i.e., of these exterior motions according to the suitability of the person. Its role is to retain decency in actions. This is to sustain beauty in living: to render what is suitable to the sex and to each person³⁰⁶.

The good ordering is known by the experience of separation, or the distinction of actions. Si 19:27: ...*The attire of the body, and the laughter of the teeth, and the gait of the man show what he is...* - The habit of the mind in the state of the body is concerned, and the certain voice of the spirit is the motion of the body³⁰⁷. Thus³⁰⁸, the person hidden in our heart, is considered either lighter, or more boasting, or more unclean, or - on the contrary, one who is more serious, more constant, and more pure

³⁰² St. Ambrose, 1 *Offic.* 20, 85 [t. 2, p. 24/C].

³⁰³ Tullius, *In 1 Offic.* (103).

³⁰⁴ Tullius, *ib.*

³⁰⁵ Aristotle.

³⁰⁶ St. Ambrose, 1 *De Offic.*, c. 19, 84 [t. 2, p. 84 A].

³⁰⁷ St. Ambrose, 1 *De Offic.* 18, n. 71 [t. 2, p. 20 D E].

³⁰⁸ *Idem.*

and more mature ³⁰⁹. Si 19:26: ...*A man is known by his look, and a wise man, when you meet him, is known by his countenance...*

1667: ACCOUTREMENTS: in the conversation with friends, this is the knowledge concerning what is decent in movement and in habits. It manifests respect to exterior persons, business or places and circumstances. St. AMBROSE ³¹⁰ adds: This excellent order of gestures, this ordering of all acting is accommodated.

MODESTY IN EXTERIOR MATTERS: does not admit of superfluities.

The décor of the body is not to be affected, but natural, simple, rather neglected than overly cared for, and not assisted with precious, or showy clothing, but rather that which is common, that nothing be lacking as far as honesty or necessity demands, and nothing that bespeaks splendor ³¹¹.

1668: PARSIMONY: just what is SUFFICIENT OF ITSELF, and not to require that which is exquisite. In the use of exteriors, there can be a vice in the part of a person making use of things immoderately, primarily by the practice of those with whom he lives. It is not clean to have anything out of harmony with one's own world ³¹². - Secondly, from the inordinate affectation, by making use of possessions in a libidinous manner, whether this is in accord with, or contrary to custom.

Whoever makes use of passing goods in a more restricted way than would be the practice of those among whom one lives, is either temperate, or superstitious ³¹³.

Whoever preaches penance by word and example, bears the habit of the penitent ³¹⁴.

1669: MODERATION, or SIMPLICITY regarding superabundance. It is a vice whenever a person from the cultivation of exteriors:

- first seeks glory;
- secondly, seeks delights by favoring the body;
- thirdly, gives too much care to this ³¹⁵.

There are some who do not think that the cultivation of rare and precious garments is not a sin; but if there were no fault in it, then there would never have been any discourse of God that expressed vigilance concerning this. The rich man who was being tortured in hell, was dressed in purple and fine clothes. No one seeks precious garments exceeding his proper state unless he tends toward vainglory.

1670: RECAPITULATION: (the following are part of modesty ³¹⁶ regarding exterior matters):

³⁰⁹ Ibidem.

³¹⁰ *De Offic.*, 1, 19, 84 [t. 2, p. 24 A].

³¹¹ cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, CF ## 133m ff,

³¹² St. Augustine, 3 *Confessions*, 8, 15 [t. 1, p. 93, F].

³¹³ St. Augustine, *De Doctr. Christiana*, 12, 18 [t. 3/1, p. 50 F].

³¹⁴ Glossa, *In Mt*, 3.

³¹⁵ St. Gregory, *Hom 6 in Ev.* [t. 2, p. 236/2 B C].

HUMILITY against vainglory. Humility is a habit, not superabounding in possessions and preparations.

SUFFICIENT OF ITSELF, or PARSIIMONY is against delights. It is the habit of being content with all that one should be, and it determines those matters that are fitted for life. 1 Tm 6:8, last chapter: *...But, having food, and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content...*

SIMPLICITY, or MODERATION against superfluous solicitude. This is a habit of being content with what comes.

1671: WONDROUS PENANCE, equal to innocence and associated with it.

1. (Penance) is a virtue.

To do penance for something requires first that sorrow be had.

Sorrow is a passion of the sensitive appetite and is not a virtue. It is in the will with a certain election, and if the election is right, it is a virtue.

It pertains to right reason that one be sorry for what is to be grieved, and in the manner and the purpose for which it should be grieved.

1672: Penance, in so far as it assumes a moderate sorrow for past sins, with the intention of removing them, is a virtue. It is not a virtue according to which it is a passion having corporal change: it is a virtue in so far as it is of the will, having a right election.

It is against the perfection of virtue that someone should have done in the present an unclean act, about which there is shame; it is not against the perfection of the virtue that someone first may have committed unclean acts, about which then it is necessary that he do penance.

1673: 2. (Penance) is a special virtue.

In penance there is found a special reason of laudable act, i.e., to work for the destruction of past sin, in so far as this is offensive to God, in so far as this can be remitted by divine grace, with the person cooperating.

Penance is a greater level than innocence. It is not sparing of innocence that one fall into a more serious sin. It pertains, therefore, to the office of innocence not only to infer no evil on anyone, but also to hold back from sin, or to punish from sin, so that the one who was first held in hatred, might be corrected by some experience, or that others might be terrified by the example ³¹⁷. (There is not) ... true innocence is where there is integrity without sin, selling is without debt, and scourging without merit ³¹⁸.

1674: St. Augustine ³¹⁹: Penance is a certain vindication of sorrow, always punishing in oneself what one is sorry to have committed.

³¹⁶ cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, CF ## 120, ff.

³¹⁷ St. Augustine, *City of God*, 23,c. 5.

³¹⁸ St. Augustine, *In Ps 38*.

³¹⁹ *De Paenit., De vera et falsa poenitentia*, _8, 22. [t. 6, appendix, p. 236 E - spurious].

Penance is a special virtue which grieves over sin committed, in so far as it is an offence against God, with the proposal of emendation through cessation and compensation. (It is) therefore, a certain commutation. It is not simply justice as though among equals, but secondarily, or between those of which one is under the power of another.

1675: The penitent recurs to God with the proposal of emendation, as the doe seeks the Lord - Ps 42:1. Ps 122:2: ...*Behold, as the eyes of servants are on the hands of their masters, as the eyes of the handmaid are on the hands of her mistress: so, are our eyes unto the Lord, our God, until He have mercy on us...* As children to their father. Lk 15:21: ...*Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you...* **Just as a wife toward her husband.** Jr 3:1: ... *Even though she has fornicated with her many lovers, nevertheless, come back to Me, says the Lord...*

1676: Penance consists in a certain excess, because in some, as perfect equality cannot be constituted, on account of the excellence of the other. Just as between a father and his son, between God and human beings: in these instances, the one who is deficient, must do whatever he can, nor will this be simply sufficient, but only according to the acceptance of the superior: (in which there is) an excess of penance.

1677: Although penance is directly a species of justice, it nonetheless comprehends in some way those matters which pertain to other virtues. For insofar as it is a certain justice of a person in regard to God, it is necessary that it participate in the theological virtues, which have God as their object. It is, therefore, with faith in the Passion of Christ by which we are justified from sins; with the hope of forgiveness, with hatred for vices which pertains to charity. In so far as it is a moral virtue, it participates in some way in prudence, which is the directive of all. By reasons of justice, it has something that pertains to temperance, within the scope of which it is to abstain from delights - and to fortitude, by which it accepts to sustain what is difficult (147).

1678: (Penance) is in the WILL. ...*A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit...* [Ps 50:19]. It is an act of the will: ... *I will freely sacrifice ...* [Ps 53:8]. As a passion, penance is of the species of sadness, and resides in the concupiscible appetite. As a virtue, it pertains to the species of justice, and is in the appetite of reason, i.e., the will.

Its proper act is the proposal of emending before God of that which has been committed against God.

Penance excludes sin from all the powers of the soul, because the will, in which it resides, moves all other potencies.

1679: 5. The PRINCIPLE of Penance is from FEAR.

Is 26:17: ...*As a woman with child, when she draws near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and cries out in her pangs. So are we become in Your presence (through penance) ...* This is the subject of another reading: [v. 18]: ... *In Your fear, o lord (104), we have conceived and have brought forth wind...*, i.e., the spirit of salvation through salutary penance.

1670: Penance in so far as it is a habit is infused immediately by God, without us principally acting, but not without us cooperating with dispositions through certain acts.

As far as the acts are concerned through which we cooperate with God, of which the first act is the operation of God converting the heart, according to the last chapter of Lamentations 5:21: ... *Convert us, o God, to You and we shall be converted...* (Prayer of Jeremiah]. The second principle: is the motion of faith.

- the third, servile fear, by which one is drawn from sins, by the fear of punishments;
- the fourth, is of hope, by which one under the hope of punishment to be undergone assumes the resolution of emending himself;
- the fifth, is of charity, by which sin is displeasing in itself, and not anymore because of punishments;
- the sixth, is of filial fear, by which on account of reverence for God, someone offers to God willingly, his emended heart.

(As far as these acts, therefore), penance proceeds from (servile) fear just as from the affection of the first motion ordered to this; from filial love, as from the proximate and immediate principle.

1681: 6. By the order of nature, the theological virtues precede penance, because it proceeds from them; but, as far as the act of penance, it occurs first in justification. Do penance: the first virtue is to repress the old man through penance and to hate vices³²⁰.

Penance opens up the access to the other virtues, by expelling sin through the virtues of faith, hope and charity, which are naturally prior. And so it opens to them the access, because these enter at the same time with it.

1682: In penance, there is made recompense for the offense according to the will of the one sinning and according to the judgment of God against whom one sins. Because here there is not required just the reintegration of the equality of justice, as in vindictive justice, but even more the reconciliation of friendship, which is accomplished when the one offending makes recompense according to the will of the one whom one offends.

This is required on the part of the one making the penance; first, the will of making recompense, which is accomplished by contrition; secondly, that one be subjected to the judgment of a priest, in the place of God, in confession; thirdly, that one make recompense according to the judgment of the Minister of God, which is done through satisfaction.

1683: (EXCERPTS FROM St. THOMAS)³²¹:

Contrition: The beginning of every sin is pride Si 10:15. - through which a person inheres to his own senses and recedes from the divine mandates. And, therefore, it is necessary that what destroys sin must lead a person to leave off the demands of his own senses. The one who perseveres in the demands of his own

³²⁰ Glossa, *In Mt* 3:2.

³²¹ St. Thomas Aquinas, Suppl. Question 1, a. 1.

senses, hardened, does not give in to touch; therefore, he is said to be broken when torn away from his senses.

To be broken means to be divided into large parts; to grind, to crush, means to be divided into minimal parts, that which had been solid. Contrition is said because it is required for the affection of sin that a man wholly gives up, which he had in his senses through a certain continuity and solidity. Contrition is thus presented by St. Gregory³²²: Humility of spirit annihilating sin is between hope and fear.

1684: The acts of the virtue of penance³²³. Just as the inflation of one's will to doing evil implies what is evil of itself, so the annihilation of the will and crushing of that will implies something that is good of itself. Because this is to detest one's own will by which the sin is committed.

Contrition implies a certain rectitude of will; from this it is an act of that virtue to which it pertains to detest and to destroy past sin, and this is penance.

1685: Response to the first objection of the same article):

Sorrow, in the sensitive part is not essentially contrition, as a virtue, but rather the effect of virtue. For just as penance inflicts exterior penalties on the body, for the recompense of the offense which is committed against God by the exercise of the members, so also it inflicts the penalty of the above noted sorrow into the concupiscible appetite, because this, too, cooperated in the sin.

Sorrow is in the will as the displeasure of evil.

1686: Attrition is access to contrition³²⁴. They are said to be attrite when in some way are said to be diminished, but the sins still are not yet perfectly crushed; they are said to be contrite when all the parts are crushed down at the same time by division into minimal pieces. Attrition is a certain displeasure for sins committed, but not perfect; contrition is perfect displeasure.

1687: The object of contrition³²⁵. Contrition is a certain commutation of what is hard and whole. Now this wholeness and hardness is found in the evil of the fault, since the will, which is the cause thereof in the evildoer sticks to its own ground, and refuses to yield to the precept of the law. Therefore, the displeasure of this evil is said to be contrition.

No one desires eternal life unless he does penance regarding this life, by reason of the sins to which we are reduced from the infirmity of this life³²⁶.

1688: Concerning original sin³²⁷. Contrition is sorrow respecting on how to crush down the hardness of will. And because original sin is not induced by our own will, but

³²² St. Gregory, *Hom 22 in Ezk*, near the middle [t. 2, p. 221 b; *Moral.* 33, 11 [t. 1, p.230/2 D].

³²³ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Suppl.* Q. 1, a. 2.

³²⁴ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Suppl.* q. 1, a. 2, ad 2 um.

³²⁵ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Suppl.*, q. 2, a. 1.

³²⁶ St. Augustine, *3ib. de Poen.* (105).

³²⁷ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Suppl.*, a. 2 of the same question.

is contracted at the origin of our vitiated nature, hence, regarding it there cannot be contrition in the proper sense, but only displeasure, or dolor.

1689: Concerning every actual sin ³²⁸. Penance is medicine against all actual sins.

St. Aloysius used this medicine as a preservative, and it produced innocence in him.

Every actual fault is from this, that our will does not give in to the law of God, either by transgressing it, or omitting it, or acting on account of it.

Something is hard when it has the potency that it not suffer easily. And therefore in every actual sin, there is a certain hardness of the will. And on account of this, if it should cure sin, it is necessary that it be remitted through a crushing contrition.

1690: Regarding future sin ³²⁹.

In every series of things moving and moved, ordained to one another, we find that the inferior mover has its own movement and besides this, it follows in some respect, the movement of the superior mover. Now, in all the moral virtues, the first ever is prudence which is called the 'charioteer' of the virtues. [The caution of St. Aloysius and prudence]. Wherefore the proper motion and principal act of penance is contrition, which according to its species, it considers past sin; and, as a consequence, it is concerned with future sin, according to which it has something of the act of prudence adjoined to it. Whoever is contrite, is sorry for sin committed, and besides avoids the future. But, regarding future sin, it is not said to be contrition, but rather caution, which is a part of prudence added to penance.

1691: The intention of Contrition ³³⁰ in St. Aloysius (107).

Quantity. Every sorrow is based on love. In contrition ³³¹, dolor is two-fold: the first is in the will, which is essentially contrition, or the displeasure for past sin. This exceeds all sorrows, because when something is pleasing, the contrary displeases all the more. And because the last end pleases over all else, since all are desired on account of it, therefore sin, which averts from the last end, ought to displease over all else.

1692: The second dolor is in the sensitive part, which is caused by the first dolor: either from the necessity of nature, according to which the inferior faculties follow the motion of the superiors; or, from the election, according to which the penitent excites this sorrow in himself. In neither manner is it the greatest. It is not the greatest out of the necessity of nature, because the inferior powers are the more vehemently moved by their proper objects than by the redundancy of the superior powers. And it is not the greatest assumed willingly by election, because the inferior affection does not obey the superior at a mere nod, because the passions are assumed in the acts of virtues,

³²⁸ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Suppl.*, a. 3.

³²⁹ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Suppl.* q. 4.

³³⁰ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Suppl.* q. 3, a. 1.

³³¹ St. Augustine, *The City of God*. 14, 7 and 9 [t. 7, pp. 355 G, f.].

according to a certain measure, than when the dolor which is without virtue does not serve, but is excessive.

1693: Sensible dolor pertains to the sense of the injury ³³²: interior is concerned with the knowledge of something harmful. The lesion of sin, although according to the exterior senses it is not perceived, it is perceived to be the supreme according to the interior sense of reason.

From the response ad 2 um: The tears of St. Aloysius.

The tears are corporal mutations, just as lamentation. They immediately follow on the passions of the sensitive part, and by means of them, they pertain to the affections of the superior appetite.

1694: response ad 3 um : The joy that the penitent experiences does not diminish the displeasure, because it is not in contrast with it. But rather, it increases the displeasure, because every operation is increased through its own delectation; but it can be that it tempers the dolor resulting from reason in the sensitive part.

1695: response ad 4 um: The quantity of displeasure concerning a certain manner ought to be in accord with the degree of its malice. The malice in mortal sin is measured from that against whom one sins, in so far as this is unworthy for Him. And it is measured from the one who sins, in so far as it is also harmful to the sinner. And since a person should love God more than himself, he ought to hold in greater hatred in so far as it is an offence against God, in so far as it is harmful to him. It is harmful in so far as it separates from God, etc.

Concerning the degree of contrition and the degree of the fault: ... *According to the measure of the sin, shall the measure of the stripes be...* [Dt 25:2]. JEROME lauds Paula, because she weeps over her smallest sins as though they were great ³³³.

1696: PERPETUAL DOLOR³³⁴ . - Concerning the time of contrition.

The time of contrition is one's entire life, as far as the dolor of the reason and sensitive part is concerned.

Concerning the dolor of reason, as long as anyone is in the state of wayfarer, such a one detests the hindrances by which he is delayed, or impeded from arriving at the end of life, because that time that was set aside cannot be regained from running. So it is necessary that always in the time of this life that the state of contrition remain, as far as the detestation of sin is concerned.

As for the sensible dolor is concerned which is assumed as a penalty by the will: because a person, by sinning, has merited an eternal penalty, and is against the eternal God, or contrary to the eternal precepts of God. Hence, the eternal penalty, changed into temporality [i.e., in the state of this life], should remain in the eternity of

³³² St. Thomas Aquinas, *Suppl.* q. 3, a. 1 ad 1 um.

³³³ Jerome, *Epist.* 45, 3. [t. 1, p. 194 D].

³³⁴ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Suppl.*, q. 4, a. 1.

this person ³³⁵. God by absolving a person from fault and from eternal penalty, binds him by the chain of perpetual detestation of sin.

1697: Although by penance a sinner might return to pristine grace and to the immunity of guilt of penalty, he never, however, returns to the pristine dignity of innocence. And, therefore, something always remains from past sin.

Whether it is required always to feel sorrow for sin: the penitent should always be sorry, and should rejoice in such sorrow ³³⁶. ... *Blessed are they that mourn...* [Mt 5:5]. The joy of the world is imputed by the dolor of contrition; it is not, however, that joy which is of God, because it has sorrow itself as its material.

On the effect of contrition ³³⁷:

1. ...*A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit...* [Ps 50:19]. The contrition of the heart is the sacrifice by which sins are resolved ³³⁸.

1698: On Confession ³³⁹.

It is thus of good minds to recognize sin (148), even where there is no sin. This can be done in two ways ³⁴⁰: to recognize a fault where there is none. The first, regarding the substance of the act; and thus, it is not true. This does not pertain to a good mind, but to one that wanders, that someone would recognize an act to be committed by himself which he had not committed. Secondly, regarding the condition of the act: and then, it is true as Gregory says: because the just person, when in fact concerning what is indeed good, fears so that there might not be something defective on his part. Jb 9:28: ...*I feared all of my works* And therefore, it pertains also to a good mind, that one should accuse by tongue that fear that he holds in his heart.

From this that a person makes satisfaction for a sin that he has not committed, such a person does not commit a lie, as when one confesses a sin which he does not believe that he has committed. If, moreover, one does state a sin he has not committed, while he believes that he has done so, he does not lie. And so he does not sin, if in this way he should state as it is in his heart.

1699: The confession of sins for their remission. The act of penance ³⁴¹.

Question 12: On satisfaction. Even though to satisfy in itself, is a debt, nevertheless in so far as the one making it carries out this task willingly, it assumes the aspect of gratuity on the part of the one making the satisfaction. And so, such a person makes a virtue out of necessity.

In St. Aloysius, there was absolutely no debt, and therefore, he was the more virtuous.

³³⁵ Hugo of St. Victor (108).

³³⁶ St. Augustine, *De vera Poenitentia* 13, 28. Appendix [t. 6, pp. 238/E, ff.] .

³³⁷ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Suppl.* , q. 5.

³³⁸ Gloss.

³³⁹ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Suppl.* q. 6, a. 4.

³⁴⁰ St. Gregory the Great, *Epistle 1*, 12, near the end [t. 2. P. 858 1 C].

³⁴¹ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Suppl.* q. 7.

Justice does not tend to this that it tend solely to take away preceding inequality by punishing, but also has care for equality in the future. Penalties are medicines ³⁴².

1700: Satisfaction is an act of justice, it is medicine, first curing past sins. Satisfaction is the compensation for injuries received according to the equality of justice. To satisfy is to render to God the honor due to Him ³⁴³.

Secondly, it is a medicine preserving from future maladies. Its role is to cut out the causes of sins and not to indulge access to their suggestions. Preservation from corporal illness takes place by the removal of the causes, and the illness takes place by the removal of the causes, and the illness that cannot follow. But, in the spiritual illness, it is not this way, because free will is not forced, from whence one might avoid the preceding causes, although only with difficulty. Once the causes are removed, it can be incurred. And, therefore, so St. AUGUSTINE places two elements in the definition: the exercising of the causes, as for the first; and the retention of free will for sinning, as for the second.

1701: The proximate causes of actual sin: Interior, as desires, from the custom, or act of sin that has remained, or the remission of sin. The exterior causes, as the occasions for sinning, as place, bad company, and others of this type; and such causes in this life are taken away. The remote cause is the spark of sin which is not totally removed, even though it is weakened.

On the possibility of satisfaction ³⁴⁴. ... *Bring forth, therefore, fruits worthy of penance...* [Lk 3:8].

Satisfactory works: 1. Whatever pertains to the affliction of the body: fasting. 2. Whatever is expended in behalf of one's neighbor: alms-giving. 3. Whatever worship is manifested to God: prayer.

1702: (CONSIDERATIONS ON THE SINGULAR INNOCENCE OF St. ALOYSIUS)

The marvelous innocence and penance of St. Aloysius, a new Adam, and more wise.

Now, in him two singular realities: the first, in each one of these virtues; the second, in the reunion of the same in one sole subject.

He has the glory of never having erred, and at the same time, what is more, that he won over the penitent with his fervor ³⁴⁵.

For that holy and singular Majesty desires nothing other from humanity than just innocence; which if someone does obtain this from God, he has sacrificed holily and religiously enough³⁴⁶. A temple holy unto God is the mind of a pious person, and an altar excellent for Him is a clean heart without sin ³⁴⁷.(Penance is its sacrifice, 'in the

³⁴² St. Thomas Aquinas, *ib.*, a. 3; Aristotle, *2 Ethics*.

³⁴³ St. Anselm (no citation).

³⁴⁴ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Suppl.*, q. 13.

³⁴⁵ St. Thomas Aquinas, III, q. 89, a. 3.

³⁴⁶ Lact. Firmian, Bk 6, *Div. Inst.*

³⁴⁷ Xysti Pythagoric., *In Enchiridion*.

odor of sweetness). Cain offered the lesser of the sacrifices [= the penance of sinners, in a certain sense]: Abel offered the better one: the sacrifice of the innocent.

What if the innocence is pleasing only to God, what should be added to the sacrifice of penance? This is the reason why St. Aloysius has greater glory in heaven over many other saints, who achieved great tasks.

1703: Penance is a superior grade of innocence, that gives to the innocent soul a greater similarity with Christ, being able to repeat with Him: ... *then did I pay that which I did not take away...* [Ps 68:5].

Adam stole the apple, Christ paid in His flesh.

1704: Aloysius punishes the flesh with which he had not sinned. A sign of later innocence

How much more does the profaned mind recede from Christ,

He notes his penalties less and groans.

Each shows his own to Christ, and He discerns the crimes.

Having seen them more, He groans more over them.

For as a body labors with a burning fever

With such weakness he washes all the rest;

Thus God penetrating the souls and hearts of the pious

As He makes so well known to these crimes ³⁴⁸.

Even more, the innocent person, rather than accuse himself, is bold in defending himself. Whoever is not delinquent, it is only fitting that he be bold in speaking about himself, and that he speak forwardly ³⁴⁹.

1705: WONDROUS INNOCENCE

He surpassed babes because he was not ignorant, but having injury.

He surpassed adults in the good of innocence: in purity of soul, intemperance, holiness, in the abhorrence of all injury, practicing what was good for his neighbor both in deed, and for the well-being in intention, both in particular as well as in common.

In the difficulty of innocence: in the world, in the courts, in shortness of life. What more good could he not have done had he lived longer?

1706: He paralleled Adam in purity of mind: and was not endowed with passions. He surpassed him in usefulness, by communicating to posterity his innocence.

Recapitulation: St. Aloysius was an angel by the association of a wondrous innocence, and an equal penance. He surpassed the innocence of babies, and others who are just and innocent, and even Adam himself. He reached the innocence of the Angels.

1707: WONDROUS PENANCE: (wondrous) is that innocence where there is no sin. Likewise, it is wondrous in the quantity of penance; in the quantity of penance and the

³⁴⁸ James Billii, *Anthology*.

³⁴⁹ Plaut., *In Amphitrione*.

quantity of fault: supreme penance, slight fault. And finally, from the place, from the person, etc.

In penance alone, St. Aloysius was ahead of all the penitents in the union of innocence with such penance and he surpassed the penance of all the saints. He surpassed the innocence of Adam, and won the innocence of the Angels.

Wondrous penance, because he never committed any unclean deeds, and yet did penance. In this, he surpassed Adam, who even though he again became innocent out of penance, he had unclean deeds about which he did penance. Adam did his penance after having fallen: Aloysius did penance so that he would not fall. St. Aloysius did penance after involuntary falls, even from the shadow of fault, so that he would not fall into voluntary and genuine fault.

As Aloysius did not have any proper sin, as I might say, it seems that he directed his penance to take away natural sin, i.e., the spark of sin, preventing actual sin and inducing into himself original innocence and justice.

Comparison with ADAM: Adam began with pride, and lost his innocence in the state of innocence: Aloysius begins with contrition and conserves innocence in the state of corruption.

1708: (RECAPITULATION): St. Aloysius:

1. In penance alone he surpassed the other usual penitents in the quantity of penance and in the circumstances of place, person, etc.

2. In the union of wondrous penance with equal penance. In deeds he surpassed the penance of the other saints. He performed supreme penance for minimal fault. In him, there was such innocence and such penance!

He surpassed Adam's innocence, because he never lost it; he never injured himself, or others, at any time, and thus to himself and to others, he was useful in deeds and example.

He gained angelic innocence in purity, in assiduous dedication and in contemplation, in usefulness with the protecting custody of the innocence of others ³⁵⁰.

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³⁵⁰ Cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, "St. Aloysius' Purity", 'proposed to be imitated on the Third of his Sunday's, in the year 1803, the 5th of June, at St. Paul's C.M., in Verona'. Cf. MssB ## 794-812.

SOURCES

OT

Gn 2:8	# 1573	Qo 2:3	# 1626
23	# 1573	Ct. 2:2	# 1585
4:1, ff.	# 1702	Si 1:34	# 1660
18:27	# 1643	35	# 1660
Dt 25:2	# 1695	3:19	# 1660
Jb 9:28	# 1698	5:13	# 1659
Ps 10:6	# 1587	10:15	# 1683
23:4	## 1585; 1586	19:26	# 1666
42:1	# 1675	27	# 1666
50:19	## 1678; 1697	21: (no verse)	# 1661
53:8	# 1678	Is 5: (no verse)	# 1616
68:5	# 1703	26:17	# 1679
83:11	# 1647	18	# 1679
103:4	# 1574	Jr 3:1	# 1675
118:120	# 1602	6:13	# 1662
122:2	# 1675	Lm 5:21 [{Prayer of Jr}]	# 1680
130:1	# 1647	Dn 10:3	# 1623
Pr 10:12	# 1551	Jl 2:12	# 1623
27:11	#1662		

NT

Mt 3:2	# 1681	Rm 8:39	# 1594
5:5	# 1697	13:14	# 1662
8	# 1641	1 Co 2:25, ff.	# 1635
18:3 [<i>Anawim</i>]	# 1572	7:34	# 1633
4	# 1572	2 Co 2:16	# 1650
Lk 1:74	# 1592	6:5	# 1623
75	# 1592	6	# 1623
3:8	# 1701	11:2 [Espousals]	# 1627
15:21	# 1675	Ph 2:3 [Fraternal Humility]	# 1646
29	# 1572	Heb 11:16	# 1589
Ac 5:41	# 1616	12:14	# 1593
15:9	# 1589	Jm 1:21	# 1659
Rm 8:38	# 1594	2 P 1:5	# 1621
		6	# 1621

FATHERS

St. AMBROSE, <i>In exam.</i> [Innocence lost easily]	# 1595
1 <i>De Offic.</i> 18, n. 71. [t.2, p. 20 D E].	# 1666
1 <i>De Offici.</i> C. 19, 84 [t. 2,p. 24 A].	## 1666; 1667
1 <i>De Offic.</i> , 20, 85. [t. 2, p. 24/C]	# 1665
1 <i>De Offic.</i> , Bk I, 43, 219 [t. 2, p. 56/D].	# 1604
[<u>ibidem</u>]	# 1614
<i>De Offic.</i> , Bk 3, 10, 68. [t.2,p. 125/A - 14, q. 5, <i>lastly</i>]	# 1586
<i>Regarding Virgins to Marcellina.</i>	
Bk 1, 5, 20 [t. 2, p. 151/F]	# 1628
St. AUGUSTINE, (citation not clear: 'In-nocent'- 'not harmful')	# 1581
<i>Sent. In Prov.</i> [?] [in-nocence= not to sin]	# 1588
<i>De Nuptiis et Concupiscentia</i> (94)	# 1628
<i>Confessions</i> , Bk 3, 8, 15 [t. 1, p. 93, f.]	# 1668
<i>De Moribus Eccl.</i> 15. [t. 1, p. 697/B]	# 1603
[<u>ib.</u>] 17. [t. 1, pp. 700/C FF]	# 1603
[<u>ib</u>] 21, 19 [t.1,pp. 702, B, ff.]	# 1610
<i>In 2 Doctr.</i> , c. 9, 14 [t. 3/1, p. 24 C].	# 1660
3 <i>Doctr. Christ.</i> , 12,8 [t. 3/1, p. 50 F].	# 1668
<i>Super Genesim</i> , Bk 2, ad 1, c. 8, middle.	
[t. 3/1,p. 137 E].	# 1575
<i>In Ps. 4</i> [t. 4, p. 1084/G].	# 1582
<i>In Ps 38</i> (86) [def. Of 'innocence'] [tr. 4]	# 1595
<i>In Ps 38</i> [true innocence] [t. 4]	# 1673
<i>Ennarr., in Ps 93.</i> [t. 4, pp. 998/G, ff.] (2 x)	# 1587
<i>In Ps 139, f.</i> [t. 4, pp. 1553, f.]	# 1583
<i>Sermo 210</i> , in Lent [t. 5/1, pp. 928/G f.]	# 1624
<i>Sermo 130</i> , On Time	
[Otherwise, 73, 1. [t. 5/2,App. 134/B]	## 1623; 1624
<i>Sermo 228</i> (78), c. 8 [t. 5/2, p. 1126/C]	# 1581
<i>Lib. De Poen.</i> (105), no citation –	
repent for eternal life]	# 1687
<i>De Poenit.</i> (98) [abject in God's house' no citation	# 1647
<i>De Poenit. De Vera et Falsa Poenitentia</i> , 8 ,22	
[t. 6 App.p.263 sp]	# 1674
<i>De vera Poenitentia</i> 13, 18.-	
Appendix [t. 6, pp.238/E ff.]	## 1697; 1700
<i>De Virginitate</i> , c. 8 [t. 6, p. 344/E].	# 1601
<i>De Virginitate</i> (96) [t. 6, p. 355/F].	# 1642

<i>De Mend.</i> , c. 19, 20 [t. 6, p. 443/C]	# 1581
<i>The City of God</i> 14, 7 & 9. [t. 7, pp. 355 /G, ff.]	# 1691
<i>The City of God</i> , Bk 19, c. 16 [t.7,pp. 560/C, ff].	# 1584
<i>The City of God</i> , 23, q. 5. [‘There is no...’ [t. 7: no page]	# 1673
<i>The Trinity</i> Bk 15, c. 16, near the end [t. 8, p. 987/A	# 1575
<i>On True Innocence</i> , Bk Sentence 117. Spurious [t. 10/2, App.230]	# 1587
St. BENEDICT , <i>12 Degrees of Humility</i> .	# 1587
[In Latin]	# 1652
[In St. Thomas - Italian]	# 1654
St. CYPRIAN , <i>De Livore</i> , [p.507/C - no volume given]	# 1573
St. GREGORY, the GREAT	
<i>Moral.</i> 1,2 (79)	# 1585
<i>Moral.</i> 33, 11 [tr. 1, p. 230/2 D]	# 1683
<i>Moral.</i> 1, 30, c. 26; <i>Sermo 13</i> [t. 1,pp. 748/ 2 C, ff]	# 1625
<i>Moral.</i> 30, c. 26. Or 13 [t. 1, p. 748/2 D].	# 1625
<i>Moral.</i> 34, 17 & 18 [t. 1, p. 865/1 D]/	# 1647
<i>In Past.</i> , P. 3, adm. 30 [t. 1, p. 932/2 B] (91)	# 1621
<i>In Past.</i> , p. 3. Adm. 30. [t. 1, p. 932/2C]. (91)	## 1621; 1622
<i>Hom 22, in Ezk.</i> Near the middle [t. 2, p. 221/2 B]	# 1683
<i>Hom 6, in Ev.</i> [t. 2, p. 236/2 B c]	# 1669
<i>Epist.</i> 1, 12, near the end. [t. 2, p. 858/ 1 C].	# 1698
St. HILARY , <i>In Mt</i> , c. 4, n. 3 [t. 1,p. 680/D]	# 1660
St. ISIDORE <i>fam.</i> [not clear]	# 1604
<i>Etym.</i> , Bk 10 [not clear]	# 1642
St. JEROME , <i>Letter 22 to Eustochius.</i> [t. 1, p. 90/B]	# 1632
<i>Letter 28 to Lixivium.</i> Otherwise, 71 [t. 1, p. 432/E], dist. 76	# 1625
<i>Epistle 45, 3</i> [t. 1,p. 194/D]	# 1695
<i>In Mt 18:4</i> [t. 7, p. 137/D]	# 1572
St. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM , <i>In Lk 18</i> [t. 3, p. 192/1 C]	# 1646
<i>In Mt 6.</i> [t.6, p. 520/2 C]	# 1595
St. LAWRENCE JUSTINIAN ,	
<i>On Monastic discipline & Perfection</i> , c. 17	# 1579
St. MAXIMUS [Confessor?]. <i>On Charity</i> , Bk 1	[2 x] # 1641

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DENIS, (Pseudo-), The Areopagite, <i>The Divine Names</i> (85)	
no citation	# 1552
<i>The Divine Names,</i> c. 4, p. 4	# 1576
4	# 1604
4	# 1618
7 (75)	# 1575
GLOSS, <i>On Ps 50:19</i>	# 1697
<i>On Mt 3:2</i>	# 1681
LACTANTIUS FFIRMIAN, <i>Div. Instit.</i> Bk 6	# 1702
TERTULLIAN [not clear] <i>In-nocence</i> [not to harm]	# 1581

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St. ANSELM, <i>De Similit.</i> [degrees of humility]	# 1651
[No citation - def. Of <i>satisfaction</i>]	# 1700
St. BERNARD <i>On the Canticles</i> (130)	
[Innocence among evil]	# 1585
St. THOMAS AQUINAS,	
I-II, q. 91, a. 2 (87)	# 1503
li-II, q. 7, a. 2	# 1589
II-II, q. 81, a. 8	# 1594
II-II, q. 161, a. 6 [12degrees of Humility]	## 1654; 1655
III, q. 89, a. 3 [at the beginning]	## 1576; 1702
<i>Supplementum</i> q. 1, a. 1	# 1693
a. 2	# 1684
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q. 2, a. 1	# 1687
a. 2	# 1688
a. 3	# 1689
a. 4	# 1690
q. 3, a. 1	# 1691
ad 1 um	# 1693
ad 2 um	# 1693
ad 3 um	# 1694
ad 4 um	# 1695
q. 1, a. 1	# 1696
q. 6, a. 4	# 1698
q. 7	# 1699
q. 12	# 1699
q. 12,a. 3	# 1699

MIDDLE AGES

HUGO of St. VICTOR (108) [no citation - life-long sorrow]	# 1696
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OTHER WRITERS

ARISTOTLE [no citation - the vicious are harsh]	# 1665
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<i>On Ethics</i> [Penalty as medicinal]	# 1699
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BILLII, Jacob, <i>ANTHOLOGY</i>	# 1704
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CICERO, Marcus Tullius

<i>De Offic.</i> (81) [on innocence]	# 1581
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L, c. 5	# 1618
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(103) [Judgment regarding play] 2 x	# 1665
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<i>De Inventione</i>, Bk 2	# 1605
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SENECA, <i>Regarding Wrath</i>, Bk 1	# 1585
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XYSTI PHYTHAGORICI, <i>Enchiridion</i>	# 1702
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APPENDIX A
[for Mss B, Vol. I]

SOURCES

Used in the composition of

CATECHISM LESSONS TAUGHT AS A SEMINARIAN [1798]

and

CATECHETICAL INSTRUCTIONS TAUGHT AS A PRIEST [1807, *circa*]

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SACRED SCRIPTURE
[Latin Vulgate, Douay English Translation]

The Pentateuch

GENESIS

3: [no verse - regarding the devil]	# 360	19:1	# 315
21	# 316	22:1	# 361
4:4	# 194	1. ff	# 194
6:5	# 242	24:12 (124)	# 203
8:20	# 194	28:12, f.	# 213
21	# 335	14	# 366
12:8	# 194	20	# 299
17:12	# 167	20, f.	# 344
22	# 265	35:5	# 367
18:1, ff.	# 218	41: [no verse-]	# 364

EXODUS

3:1, ff.	# 218	17:7	# 316
4:21	# 362	19:12	# 151
22, f.	# 315	25:37	# 230
5:1, ff.	## 341; 358	32:10	# 294
14:22	# 242	31, ff.	# 354
		33: [no verse]	# 369

NUMBERS

11:33	# 290		
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DEUTERONOMY

13:3 (190)	# 361	30:20	#1196
28:8	# 345	32"6	# 315

Historical Books

Jos 2:18	# 214	Jgs 3:1, ff.	# 170
I K [S] 1:13, ff.	# 309	2 K [S] 11:11 [Uriah]	# 368
		15:16	# 353
3 K [1 K] 18:36, f.	# 288	5:1, f. [Naaman]	## 169; 242
3 K[1 K] 21:27, ff [Achab]	# 304	4 K [2 K] 5:10	# 230
4 K [2 K] 4:35	# 254	14 [Naaman]	# 275
		6:22	# 344
2 Par [Ch] 16:12, ff.	# 366		
Tob 3:25	# 325	Tob 12:9 (177)	# 357
Tob11:17	# 318	13	# 361
Est 13:9	# 350	1 M 2:1, ff.	# 368
		2 M 8:13	# 297

Wisdom Books

Jb 1:6, ff.	# 360	Jb 5:18	# 318
12	# 360	14:1, ff.	# 365
2:6	# 360	21:14	# 347

Psalms

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3	# 143	65:20	# 292
2:6	# 331	67:2	# 143
3:2	# 369	10	# 331
7	# 369	68:5	# 353
5:5	# 369	69:6	# 288
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17:15	# 293	102:21	# 340
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20:4	# 369	110:5	# 181
22:1	## 328; 330	9	# 325
26:8	# 309	118:35 [117?]	# 338
31:1 (151)	# 349	36	# 363
33:18	# 366	37	# 363
37:4	# 352	43	# 363
49: [no verse]	# 365	125 [mis-print]	# 338
49:2 (221)	# 369	133 [mis-print]	# 338
9	# 369	161	# 368
15 (75)	## 289; 295; 302	126:1	# 343
50:3, ff.	# 366	127:2	# 345
5	# 357	138:8	# 322
15	# 366	140:2	# 289
52:4	# 335	4	# 353
53:3	# 369	141:3	# 296
6	# 369	142:6, ff.	# 293
54:23	## 296; 348	10	# 289
61:9	# 296	144:15	# 345
		18, ff.	# 291

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20:9	# 350	30:8	## 299; 344
21:13	# 305		

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7	# 351		

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ECCLESIASTICUS [Sirach]

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19	# 346	35:21	# 304
7:9 (319)	# 369	38:4	# 366
21	# 350		

ΩΩΩ

The ProphetsISAIAH

1:15	# 305	49:14, f.	# 316
4: [no verse - the devil]	# 360	54:2, ff.	# 333
5:8	# 346	55:1, ff.	# 243
20	# 335	56:10	# 352
12:3 [<i>Haurietis Aquas</i>]	# 243	58:9	# 290
26:13	# 351	60:3, ff.	# 333
27:9 (150)	# 349	63:16	# 315
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JEREMIAH

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DANIEL

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AMOS

8:11 # 347

MICAH

7:18 # 316

HABAKKUK

3:2 # 316

ZECHARIAH

7:12 # 352 13:1 # 243

MALACHI

1:11 # 194

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NEW TESTAMENT

MATTHEW

3:2	## 196; 328	16: [no verse: <i>quaerite</i>	# 366
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13, ff.	# 251	23	# 339
16	# 172	24	# 339
4:1, ff.	# 360	17:20	# 288
3	# 361	18:17	# 149
17	## 196; 328	18	# 197
5:3	## 151; 328	22	# 197
16	# 327	26	# 291
44	## 301; 355: 356	19:4	# 167
6:5, ff.	# 312	20:16	# 150
7, ff.	# 311	22	## 298; 342
9, ff.	## 286; 287	21:22	# 306
14 (164)	# 354	22: [no verse: devils] (187)	# 360
15	# 305	22:40	# 140
33	# 328	23:8, ff.	# 319
34	# 365	24:20	# 344
7:6	# 203	25:1, ff.	# 329
7	# 287	34	# 332
21	## 329; 339	40	# 319
10: [no verse]	# 355	56	# 359
10: 7	# 328	25:26	## 186; 228
24	# 368	26, ff.	# 181
11:28	# 297	28	## 187; 188
30	# 202	29	# 184
12:50	# 338	41	## 336; 359
13:11, ff.	# 332	44	# 311
24, ff.	# 361	69, ff.	# 359
25	# 150	75	# 357
44	# 334	28:10	# 319
45, ff.	# 334	18	# 227
14:31	# 146	19 [<i>euntes</i>]	## 165; 246; 253; 255
15:28	# 146	20	## 138 [2 x]; 149

MARK

1:9, ff.	# 251	11:25	## 305; 355
10	# 372	14:22	# 186
7:3, f.	# 238	22, f.	# 181
9:23	# 307	25	# 185
10:14 [<i>anawim</i>]	# 265	16:15	# 146
16	# 265	16	## 147; 171; 270
18	# 238		

LUKE

1:17	# 203		
75	# 337		
3:21, f.	# 251		
22	# 172		
4:43	# 328		
5:18	# 343		
6:12	## 287; 311		

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