

SERMONS
ON THE
DIFFERENT STATES OF LIFE.

ADAPTED TO ALL THE SUNDAYS AND HOLYDAYS OF THE YEAR.

BY THE
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TRANSLATED BY THE
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VOLUME I

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AUTHOR'S DEDICATION.

TO MARY, THE VIRGIN MOTHER OF JESUS CHRIST,
THE QUEEN OF ANGELS.
BLESSED VIRGIN !
CHOSEN MOTHER OF THE LORD !
GREAT QUEEN OF ANGELS !

Behold at thy feet a twofold work of thy hands ; for if thou deignest to look on him who lays this offering before thee, thou wilt see a poor mortal, who must acknowledge, with thy servant St. Bernard, and must confess before the whole world, that whatsoever good is in him, he has received from thy beloved Son, through thy motherly hands. If thou lookest on that which is offered to thee, thou wilt again find thy own work, for it has been accomplished by thy gracious intercession and special help, and if it has hitherto worked any good in souls, that must be attributed to thee, after God.

Both the gift and the giver place themselves under thy powerful protection ; mayest thou in thy mercy graciously accept of both, since they are thine, and make them useful instruments to increase the glory of thy Son, and thine also, in many souls throughout the world.

For the slight trouble that I, insignificant creature, have had, in preparing this offering with thy help, I ask no other reward, during my pilgrimage here below, but to love thee and thy Son constantly with my whole heart, to fulfil His holy will in all things, and to persevere under thy motherly protection, in the grace of thy Son, to the end of my life ; so that I may see thee in the land of eternal joys, and as a living and immortal witness may praise thy special goodness to me, which I cannot now fully understand, and may love and bless our God forever with thee and the holy angels.

Prostrate before the throne of thy Majesty,
Oh Great Queen of Angels !
Mistress of the World !
Thus prays

Thy most unworthy slave and servant,

FRANCIS HUNOLT, S. J.

APPROBATION.

I feel very great pleasure and consolation in commending the translation of Hunolt's Sermons to the Catholic public. I am gratified because I have been instrumental in supplying thoughtful Catholics with the means of meditating profitably on the great truths of their religion, and particularly in supplying good priests with the most valuable help, in discharging the arduous duty of preaching. My consolation arises from the fact that the priest to whom I confided the task of translating the work has accomplished it with remarkable ability. My long experience of twenty-five years on the missions enables me fully to understand how difficult it is for priests, engaged all day, and often far into the night, with the labors of the confessional, and attending the sick, to prepare their sermons with that care and study which so important a function demands. They must often feel, as I have felt, the want of a work in which sound matter is condensed in fitting order, and easily consulted. There are many admirable books of sermons, translations, and original compositions in English; but they are, generally speaking, too elaborate, and the language is often so polished, that attention is taken away from the matter by the attractions of the style. Few priests will care to commit to memory these beautifully rounded periods, and the tropes and figures of speech by which they are adorned: fewer still to adopt a mode of expression which may differ altogether from their own peculiar way of clothing their

thoughts. They want food for thought and texts of Holy Scripture, and from the Saints and Fathers of the Church, which support or illustrate the great truths announced. A priest is often too poor to acquire, even after years of rigid economy and careful saving, anything like a good library; and if he was so fortunate as to have the shelves of his study filled with learned tomes, he has not time to study the subject before his mind, in different treatises. The great desideratum is sound and solid matter plainly and simply put, that will fix itself in the memory, as it is read. This, it appears to me, is admirably supplied in the sermons of Father Hunolt. This learned preacher, it is evident, had no thoughts of self, but constantly kept before his mind the purpose of expressing what he had to say in the plainest and simplest language. The chief excellence, in my judgment, of the translation, is that this highly gifted priest has so caught up the spirit and mode of expression of the learned author, that he seems to have made it quite his own. As paragraph after paragraph is compared with the original, the very quaintness that sometimes exhibits itself, in the plain and simple garb in which Hunolt loves to present his thoughts, seems to manifest itself in the most singular and striking manner. To be able to render in this way, without idiom or peculiarity, the profound thoughts expressed in a language so different in its construction from English, is in itself a rare gift; and I can hardly express the satisfaction with which I regard the work now offered to the public. I wish it heartily the success which I believe it deserves; and earnestly commend it to the priests of all countries, where English is the language of sacred instruction.

✠ J. D. RICARDS, Ep. and Vicar Apostolic
In the Eastern Districts of the Colony of
the Cape of Good Hope.

KING WILLIAMSTOWN,
March 21st, 1884.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

Hunolt's Sermons have been long and favorably known in Europe. They are sound in doctrine, powerful in appealing to every motive that could lead men to virtue, or to repentance, and they display a knowledge of human nature which can be acquired only by long experience united with rare learning. These considerations, coupled with the fact of his knowledge of the toilsome and arduous duties of priests in large missions, have induced the translator to offer the present work, "The Christian State of Life," to his brethren in the Ministry, in the hope that he may thereby lighten their labors in the pulpit. Such is the principal object of the work he has undertaken.

But he hopes that it will be found useful not only to the pastors, but to the people also, and that many of the latter will be glad to have "The Christian State of Life" in their houses, as a book of spiritual reading, and a sort of catechism for grown-up people, as it may, in truth, be styled. It may be objected that people do not care for reading sermons, and that they prefer to listen to them. No doubt there is a great deal in the objection worthy of consideration, for what dead letter ever equalled the living power of the human voice? But people cannot always hear sermons, nor can they always remember everything they hear in them, and therefore it seems desirable to the translator that they should have a means of refreshing their memories on

subjects of the most vital importance. If the sermons now presented to the public were uninteresting in style, no matter how instructive they might otherwise be, there would be very little hope of their ever effecting that desirable result, for people will certainly not read dry sermons. But Hunolt's Sermons are entirely free from that defect; they are interesting in the highest degree; they arouse attention and keep it fixed without difficulty, so that there is a constant desire in the reader to know what is coming next. Nor are they without flashes of humor that evidently come from the author's profound knowledge of human nature and its weaknesses. So that if any of them fail to be interesting, the translator must take the blame, as it certainly could not in justice be attributed to the author.

It has been found necessary to modify many forms of expression that suit well enough in the original, but would be out of place in a translation. This modification has been caused as well by idiomatic differences of language, as by the fact that the translation is made from the original edition published at Cologne in 1740, six years before the author's death, at a time when the German language was much less refined than it now is. Otherwise the translation will be found complete and faithful.

That it may help all in whose hands it comes, to work for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, is the earnest prayer of

THE TRANSLATOR.

KING WILLIAMSTOWN.

October 19th, 1884.

CONTENTS OF VOL. I.

| | PAGE |
|---------------------------------|------|
| Translator's Preface, - - - - - | 7 |

ON THE DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS IN GENERAL.

SERMON

| | |
|---|-----|
| I. On the Truth of the Catholic Religion, - - - | 11 |
| II. On the great Benefit of the Divine Vocation to the Catholic Faith, - - - - - | 24 |
| III. On the Dignity of Christians who are Children of God, | 33 |
| IV. On the Life Becoming the Children of God, - - - | 42 |
| V. On the Dignity and Obligation of Men who have Angels as their Guardians, - - - - - | 52 |
| VI. On the Necessary Occupation of Christians, - - - | 63 |
| VII. On the False and True Happiness of Christians, - - - | 74 |
| VIII. On the Sins of Christians, - - - - - | 85 |
| IX. On the Necessity of Hearing the Word of God in Sermons, | 95 |
| X. How One should Go to Sermons, - - - - - | 108 |
| XI. How One should Hear Sermons, - - - - - | 119 |
| XII. How One should Act after Hearing a Sermon, - - - | 132 |

ON THE PARTICULAR DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS IN DIFFERENT STATES OF LIFE.

| | |
|--|-----|
| XIII. On the Duties of the Young to God, - - - - - | 146 |
| XIV. Our After Life Depends on our Conduct during Youth, | 159 |

ON THE DUTIES OF CHILDREN TOWARDS THEIR PARENTS.

| | |
|--|-----|
| XV. On the Respect that Children Owe their Parents, - - - | 172 |
| XVI. On the Obedience that Children Owe their Parents, - - - | 185 |
| XVII. On the Love that Children Owe their Parents, - - - | 199 |

ON THE DUTIES OF THE YOUNG AND OF ALL MEN TOWARDS THEMSELVES.

| | |
|--|-----|
| XVIII. On the Care of One's Precious Soul, - - - - - | 212 |
|--|-----|

| SERMON | PAGE |
|---|------|
| XIX. On the Care of One's Only Soul, - - - - - | 222 |
| XX. On the Course to be Followed by Young People in Selecting a State of Life, - - - - - | 234 |
| XXI. On Reflection in the Actual Selection of a State of Life, | 250 |
| XXII. On the Happiness of the Religious Life, - - - - - | 262 |
| XXIII. On the great Grace of a Vocation to the Religious State, | 274 |
| XXIV. On the Happiness of the Unmarried State, - - - - - | 290 |
| XXV. On the Dangers and Graces of the Unmarried State, - | 300 |

ON THE MARRIED STATE.

| | |
|---|-----|
| XXVI. On the Course to be Adopted by those who Intend Embracing the Married State, - - - - - | 314 |
| XXVII. On the Disposition of those who Receive the Sacrament of Matrimony, - - - - - | 326 |
| XXVIII. On the Necessity of Married People Being in the Friendship of God, that they may not Lose their Souls, | 338 |
| XXIX. On the Necessity of Friendship with God in the Married State, in order to have Temporal Happiness, - | 350 |

THE OBLIGATION OF MARRIED PEOPLE TOWARDS EACH OTHER.

| | |
|--|-----|
| XXX. On the Love of Married People for, and their Unity with Each Other, - - - - - | 364 |
| XXXI. On the Duty of Husbands to their Wives, - - - - - | 375 |
| XXXII. On the Conduct of Wives whose Husbands give them Cause for Disunion, - - - - - | 386 |
| XXXIII. On the duty of Wives to their Husbands, - - - - - | 397 |
| XXXIV. On Jealousy in the Married State, - - - - - | 410 |
| XXXV. On Adultery, - - - - - | 421 |
| XXXVI. On the Unnecessary Troubles of Married People, - - - - - | 431 |
| XXXVII. On the Consolation of Married People, in Trouble, - | 445 |
| XXXVIII. On the Prayer of Married People in their Trouble, - | 456 |

ON THE
DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS IN GENERAL.

FIRST SERMON.

THE TRUTH OF THE CATHOLIC RELIGION.

Subject.

The Christian Church is founded on Peter and established and spread by Peter, Paul, and the other Apostles, and that in such a manner that nothing can overcome her; therefore she must necessarily be founded by God, and cannot be false.—*Preached on the Feast of the Apostles SS. Peter and Paul.*

Text.

Super hanc Petram ædificabo ecclesiam meam et portæ inferi non prævalebunt adversus eam.—Matth. xvi. 18.

“Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

Introduction.

Is Peter, then, he on whom the Church of Christ is built? Are Paul and the other Apostles those who have spread the Church throughout the whole world and established her so firmly that no power, not even the gates of hell, can prevail against her? This is a matter, dear brethren, that deserves our greatest admiration; it is one which, in itself alone, if we had no other proofs, would show the infallible truth of our Christian religion, and would convince any one that this religion can come only from God; it is a matter which is in itself sufficient to convince and to confound all unbelievers, who either do not believe in the Church, or who have separated from her, or who live as if they really had

no faith at all. Since there are, alas! many of the latter class even amongst Catholics, in our days, I shall now try to develop these ideas a little more fully. Therefore we shall take as our

Plan of Discourse.

That, since the Catholic Church is founded on Peter, and established and spread by Peter, Paul, and the other Apostles, in such a way that nothing can overcome her, she must necessarily be founded by God, and cannot be false.

This will form the matter of my sermon of to-day, to the consolation of all true Catholics, and to the shame and fear of all apostates, and of all those who, though still in the Church, are only Christians in name. Do Thou, O Jesus, strengthen us in Thy faith, which, through Thine Apostles, Thou hast so wonderfully begun, perfected and continued: this we ask of Thee through the intercession of Thy blessed Mother Mary and of the holy angel guardians of Thy Church.

The spread of Christianity thro' the whole world is the greatest miracle when we consider all the circumstances.

I begin the discourse of to-day, in which sound reason alone shall be our guide, with what St. Augustine says on this subject; the Christian religion was begun and spread throughout the world by Peter, Paul, and the other Apostles, with real miracles, or no such miracles were necessary. If miracles really helped to found the Church, as is in truth the case, then God must of necessity be their author, for He alone is the Almighty God who has nature in His power, who can set bounds to her and work against and beyond her strength, and perform real miracles; consequently this religion cannot be erroneous or false, for God cannot approve of and confirm falsehood by miracles wrought either by Himself or by others; otherwise He would not be an all-true and perfect God, but one who could and would deceive and betray. Did the Apostles work no miracles in founding the Church? Then that is the greatest miracle of all; for who could imagine that such a work could be accomplished by such men, in such a manner, and with such effect, with such fortunate, permanent and complete success, if a higher, supernatural and heavenly strength had not helped in the work? We shall now consider these circumstances in order.

For this religion was quite new, different

First: what sort of a work was it that was about to be commenced? A religion and faith had to be founded and introduced over the whole world into all kingdoms and countries,

according to the command of Our Lord to His disciples. "Go forth into the whole world and preach the Gospel to all creatures." ¹ Not a single nation was to be excluded. "Teach all nations," ² an entirely new religion of which the world had hitherto known nothing. A religion which brooks no rival, and which alone is necessary to salvation: "He who shall not believe, shall be condemned." ³ A religion whose mysteries are completely opposed to all other religions then known in the world; and to introduce those mysteries, it was necessary to overthrow so much idolatry, so many forms of belief, nay, even Judaism itself, to confound all worldly wisdom and convict it of ignorance, gross error, and falsehood, to confront all human power and the rage and anger of kings and emperors and to conquer all by the force of truth, and to root out the ancient manners and customs of all peoples and nations in which they were born, which they had inherited from their forefathers, and to cause them to be abandoned at once and forever. Only think, my dear brethren, what trouble it costs, what disquiet and opposition it occasions, to deprive, I will not say a town, but even a village, of an ancient right or custom, no matter how small the thing is, or how unimportant: so hard is it to depart from an old custom, or to give up what we think we have a right to. And yet, that had to happen amongst all the peoples of the world, who had to be completely changed and converted, as far as their ideas and morals were concerned. And it all really happened. Just as in the beginning, a single word of God created the world. As the Prophet says: "He spoke and it was done;" ⁴ so, also, says St. Augustine, when the world knew nothing of the Christian faith, that faith was announced: "He ordered it to be announced and it was received;" ⁵ the world accepted it and men gave up their old usages to conform to this faith.

from all others, and could alone be true.

A faith which appears to go against all reason and which seemed utterly unintelligible to the worldly wise of the time; a faith which teaches, for instance, that there is one God and that in Him there are three distinct persons. How can that be? who can believe it? If there is only one God, how can there be three to constitute Him? If there are three distinct persons, how can there be only one God? A faith which believes in one who is God and man at the same time, so that it can be said with truth,

This religion seems opposed to all human reason.

¹ Euntes in mundum universum, prædicate Evangelium omni creature.—Mark xvi.

² Docete omnes gentes.

³ Qui vero non crediderit condemnabitur.

⁴ Dixit et facta sunt.

⁵ Jussit, et creditum est.

God is man and man is God; a man is Almighty, Eternal, Immortal; God is born in time, he grew up and died as man; who can understand that? God is immortal, how then can He be a man who died? That man is subject to weakness, change, and the miseries of this life; how can he be God, who is unchangeable, impassible, all-perfect, and happy? Yet people, even the most learned and the wisest, were to be convinced of this seemingly strange truth, and to such an extent as to be ready to give up all they possessed, even their life's blood, for the sake of it. And that really happened: He ordered them to announce the faith and it was received. ¹

Never unbecoming a man of honor.

A faith which appeared opposed, not only to reason, but even to honor (which is so precious in the eyes of the world, that it is valued more than life itself); which was branded with a mark of infamy, inasmuch as its author (as was also necessary to be believed) was publicly seized by the authorities, tried in various tribunals, condemned as a malefactor and crucified. What a stumbling-block for the Gentiles! What an opportunity, and an apparently justifiable reason were thus offered for saying (as was really often said) that christianity was the religion of the wicked and a cesspool of vice, since its teacher and author suffered the shameful death of a thief or murderer! Yet the world has believed. "Behold," says St. John Chrysostom, full of astonishment, "behold a wonderful faith; after the crucifixion of its Author, the world received the faith," ² and adored the crucified man. We wonder at the blindness of the heathens, how they can deify men and pay them divine worship; yet they did that to those who had been great kings, on account of their power, wisdom, and glory; it was a species of flattery not unknown in the political world, in which the creature is often preferred to the Creator, through human respect, self-interest, or blind love; but, to adore a man after having scourged Him and nailed Him to a tree, that is a thing that, naturally speaking, no reasonable man could bring himself to do. Nevertheless, "after the crucifixion the world believed and received the faith." That a crowd of people should run after Christ when He changed water into wine, or multiplied the loaves, or healed the sick, the dumb, and the blind, or raised the dead, there was nothing in that to do violence to sound reason; but that so many people should follow Christ after His mis-

¹ Jussit, et creditum est.

² Post crucem orbis ad fidem accessit.

erable death on the cross, that is what the human mind cannot grasp.

If, at least, this religion had prepared something agreeable and pleasing, something to appeal to human sensuality and to natural desires ; or, if God had created for the purpose a new race of people, free from all bad inclinations, then this wonderful work might have been explained, and would have ceased to be so wonderful ; just as it is not a matter for great astonishment that before Christ heathenism, and after His time, Mahomedanism gained such influence in Asia and Africa, or that, in later times, Luther, Calvin and other heresiarchs had so many followers in Germany, England, France and other places ; there is nothing, I say, wonderful in this : the wonder is, rather, that all the kingdoms of the world did not follow suit. And why? Because some adored gods from whom they had little to fear, and who were favorable to carnal desires and all sorts of vices; others gave free rein to their passions, and others again were satisfied with a general sort of faith and confidence in Christ and His merits, while they looked upon good works as unnecessary; they put aside everything that is disagreeable and difficult, so that what remains does not interfere with our sensual and natural desires, and our own daily experience tells us what a mighty influence these latter have on the human heart. But the real Christian religion, which had to be introduced in those days, was a law severe and strict and opposed to all sensuality ; it inculcated the necessity of temperance, fasting, self-denial, and mortification ; it called upon men to say, " Blessed are the poor." ¹ What does that mean ? Had not poverty been always considered as the greatest evil of life ? It proclaimed, " Blessed are they who suffer persecution." ² How could that be ? Was not freedom always considered the greatest good, and oppression hated everywhere ? It said, " Blessed are they who mourn." ³ What a wretched happiness ! Is it not better to laugh than to weep, to be merry than to be sad ? What sort of a law is that which says to the proud that they must be humble and become like little children ; to the avaricious, that they must detach their hearts from earthly goods, and look upon riches as dust ? What sort of a law is it that tells the sensual man to mortify his flesh with its desires, to take up his cross daily and follow Christ ; that commands a vindictive, injured, and angry man to pardon his enemy

A religion,
difficult and
opposed to
sensuality.

¹ *Beati pauperes.*—Matth. v. ² *Beati, qui persecutionem patiuntur.* ³ *Beati, qui lugent.*

and love him, to do good to those who hate him, to pray for those who persecute him, and so on, as the Christian law prescribes? What think you now, my dear brethren; is that a work which a human, or merely natural strength is capable of accomplishing?

In our own days we can hardly preach those truths to Catholics. And yet they were formerly accepted by Jews and heathens.

Alas! even in our own times, to preach the same truths to a Christian congregation, to teach the young to avoid occasions of sin, to watch over their senses, to be reserved and modest; to exhort the rich to give alms, these to be temperate, those to be humble, and all to be concerned in their salvation, is not that often a fruitless and profitless labor? Yet, those things are preached to people who make profession of the true Christian religion, of its laws and chief doctrines. And what great result could we not hope for in their case, since the same truths had to be preached in the synagogues of the Jews, in the temples of the heathens, in the courts of kings and emperors, who had never before heard anything of that law, and were accustomed to quite the contrary, who were brought up in pride, avarice, lust, vindictiveness, intemperance and other vices? For my part, it seems that this work presents an insuperable difficulty, nay, even an impossibility to be accomplished; or, if a religion that, apparently, opposes all natural reason, honor, and inclination, finds credence amongst men, then, some supernatural Being must have had to do with it, for such a result could never have been brought about, unless by the strong arm of the Almighty God. Therefore, this law was received and spread throughout the world. ¹

It would seem impossible, to all human reason, before its accomplishment.

Let us consider a few other circumstances. What sort of people were they, in God's name, who began and accomplished that work? Imagine, it is again St. Augustine who speaks, that you are back again in the old heathen times, that you have before you a Plato, who was then a miracle of wisdom, or a Socrates, who was then called the master and teacher of moral virtues; tell one of them that the world is about to be improved, a new faith and religious law to be established, which all kingdoms and people must accept, and a new kind of life to be introduced; describe to him the religion and life that we have just been considering; ask him to advise you how to make a good beginning of the work, so that it may succeed. What would he think; what answer would he make to your question? Would he not

¹ *Creditum est.*

say that you had lost your senses, that you were a dreamer, a fool? I—Plato would answer—I have shown how man can live in the greatest possible happiness, I have demonstrated it in the clearest manner; and what have I gained thereby? There is not a single town that I have been able to persuade to live according to my idea. And Socrates would say, I tried to speak of the falsehood of the heathen gods, and the attempt cost me my life; and now you wish to introduce a new religion, and such a religion as you have described, which all people of the world must approve of and believe in? Have you lost your senses? Are you not building castles in the air? Are not these the ravings of a disordered imagination? But if one of those dead came to life again, without knowing anything of what has happened in the world since his time, and if you were to show him how that work prospered with all the circumstances before described, how this religion is spread over the whole world, how there is, at the present moment, no single form of belief that is so general and so respected, as this; how it is received by great and small, without distinction; by the experienced and the inexperienced, by emperors and peasants, by savages and statesmen; could he ever imagine that to be the case, if he did not see it with his own eyes? Would he not be astonished at such a work?

Are they gods, he would say, or men, who have done this? They were men, you would answer, their chief was called Peter, the others were named Paul, Andrew, John, &c., twelve in all. What! twelve men to renew the whole earth? What could twelve men do in a single kingdom; in one country, nay, even in a single town? How could they then suffice for all the peoples and nations of the earth? Nevertheless, they were twelve in number who undertook this work; they separated from each other, one went here, another there; they went north, south, east, and west, from one kingdom to another, from one town to another; they presented themselves almost alone before the people, and preached their doctrine to them: “But they went forth and preached everywhere.”¹ And by the help they received they brought matters so far, that in their own life-time, their religion was planted everywhere in the world.

But, at least, they must have been twelve powerful kings, he would say, who could frighten people with their glory and power, or bribe them with their money and riches, or compel

And this work was accomplished principally by twelve men.

Who had neither authority, money, nor power, nor learning.

¹ Illi autem profecti; prædicaverunt ubique.

and were
hated and
persecuted
everywhere.

them by force of arms, or enchant them by their wonderful wisdom and oratory? Twelve mighty kings indeed! They were twelve poor men, mostly fishermen, as ecclesiastical and profane tradition tells us, who owned not a finger's breadth of land; who travelled about barefoot, without scrip or staff, as their Master told them;¹ who carried all their property on their persons, suffered from hunger sometimes, so that they were glad to have a few ears of corn to eat, lived constantly on alms, and left poverty behind them as their only legacy; whom could they have bribed? Their learning and knowledge, as far as worldly matters were concerned, consisted in knowing how to make nets, and to catch fish; they had learned nothing else. From this you may see that they could have had very little authority, either from their own persons, or from their lowly descent, or from the person of their Master; for He, who sent them forth, was looked upon as a malefactor by the world, and was therefore put to death. And what could these twelve contemptible men do, by force of arms, against the whole world? Peter, indeed, once had a sword, but he, and all the others as well, were forbidden by their Master to make use of it. On the contrary, wherever they came, they found everything against them; as their Master told them, they went like sheep among ravening wolves; they were banished from one town to another and driven away, they were dragged before the tribunals, imprisoned and scourged publicly; he who could deliver them up, living or dead, thought he was doing a service to God. And are these the people who accomplished such a work, in such a manner? Yes, these poor, ignorant, lowly, and weak fishermen have accomplished that work; they have made kings and judges tremble, they have brought the world over to their conviction and faith. But how can that be? They were everywhere hated and persecuted and yet they carried out their design. Yes, that is what excites my astonishment, that is what St. Jerome could not understand. He says, "The Master is crucified, his disciples are in chains, and yet their religion increases daily."² It is this which convinces us all that such a work must come from a supernatural power.

They began
the work in
the most
celebrated
cities of the

One question more, says the worldly-wise philosopher: where did they first begin to preach their doctrine? They must have been simple, stupid people who first believed in them. And you

¹ *Nolite portare sacculum neque peram.*—Luke x.

² *Magister suspensus et servi vincti sunt, et quotidie religio crescit.*

will answer, they began in Jerusalem itself, in the very city where Christ, their Master, was crucified, where His name was still in odium in that city in which a number of people, from all nations under the sun, were at the time assembled. ¹ There were Parthians, Medes, Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judæa, Cappadocia, Pontos, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphilia, Ægypt, Lybia, Cyrene, Rome, Crete, and Arabia, as history tells us; and it was in this little world that they began to preach the new Christian law. Let us dwell a little longer, my dear brethren, on this circumstance. I imagine that I see these twelve poor men rushing out into the streets on Pentecost day, from the room in which they had hidden themselves through fear. Where are you going to? I ask them; and they answer, we are going to announce to all the people that He whom they crucified is their God, that they must adore Him, submit to His law, be baptized and give up their ancient faith as well. But, my good people, what idea possesses you? You will have the same reward that your Master received on the cross. And yet, a little while after, hardly has Peter opened his mouth, when I see with astonishment the people throw themselves in crowds at his feet, weeping and doing penance, and that three thousand of them are baptized, on that very day. After that, I see the Apostles going to the greatest city of the world. Peter, I ask, where are you going? I am going to Rome to the Capitol, to the governors and rulers of the world, to the courts of kings and emperors. And what will you do there? I will tell them that they must pull down their false gods, that their religion is a false, devilish, and impious superstition, and that they shall adore the crucified Jesus as the true God. And Paul, where are you going? To the Senate-house at Athens, to the schools of the worldly-wise, to preach the same doctrine. But what a fruitless undertaking that will be! And yet, I learn that their words have produced fruit; a few years later I see the cross glitter on the crowns of emperors and kings, the idols trampled under foot by the common people, the city of Rome, formerly the centre of all kinds of idolatry, become the head of the Christian religion, and all countries of the world full of Christians. They believed, although they were hunted down everywhere, condemned to wheel and sword, crucified, thrown to lions and tigers, cut down in thousands, flayed, and roasted alive, and exposed to every imaginable kind of cruelty; yet “they believed,” ² nevertheless, “the faith

world and carried it out successfully in spite of persecution.

¹ Ex omni natione, quæ sub cælo est.

² Creditum est.

was spread abroad." Tertullian says, reproaching the heathens The Christians were imprisoned and tortured and by that very means their numbers increased. ¹ Ye tyrants may do what ye will! Threaten them, tell them not to embrace the Christian faith, and that faith will be spread all the more quickly. Scorch, burn and butcher as much as you will, in the place of one murdered Christian you will find two thousand ready to die; their blood is nothing but the seed from which they grow up abundantly. Such is the result of the great work which the twelve fishermen began. It is believed in everywhere, believed in constantly, believed in up to the present moment, while other sects cannot last over a century or two. And it is believed in so strongly, that they who do not live up to their faith, are secretly ashamed of themselves, and try to keep their transgressions private, while they esteem and admire those who observe it strictly.

Therefore this work can have no other than God for its Author, and therefore it must be the true religion.

And now I challenge all who have the use of right reason, and I ask them, if any one, after having considered all these circumstances, can ever imagine that the beginning, progress, spread, and duration of such a religion can be a mere natural work, if it can come from any one but the Almighty God Himself? For my part, I can say to God, with Richard of St. Victor: "Lord! if there is an error in what we believe, we are deceived by Thee, because this religion is endowed with wondrous signs that can come only from Thee."² If this religion is founded by Thee, it cannot be false, it must be that Church of which Thou hast said that no power nor the gates of hell shall ever prevail against it, and therefore, it has remained constant to the truth in which it commenced; it could not admit error, for otherwise it would be overthrown in an instant; if it could not admit error, it never required reformation or improvement, so that it is true and must remain true; consequently, all those who have abandoned that religion, or who embrace another form of belief, are not in the true Christian Church, which alone can lead to eternal happiness.

Pious Christians have reason to rejoice.

But, why have I undertaken this unnecessary labor, you will probably think, my dear brethren; what good is it to us, what profit are we to draw from it, why do you speak so to us? Do you think that we have perjured ourselves, or that we are waver-

¹ Incarcerabantur, torquebantur et multiplicantur.

² Domine, si error est, quem credimus, a te decepti sumus! quantum tuis signis prædita est illa religio, quæ non, nisi a te, esse potuerunt.

ing in the Catholic faith, since you make such efforts to convince us of its truth ? You might preach your sermon in Turkey, or in Japan, amongst heathens, or at least amongst heretics ; it would suit them much better. We are all good Christians here, praise be to God ! We believe in the old, Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman faith, and we have never doubted of its truth. It is all true, my dear brethren, and you must forgive me, I have not considered the matter enough ; and it seems to me that I forgot, at first, that I am here in a Christian town, amongst Catholics, and actually in the town of Treves, in which so many countless thousands have given up life and property for the Christian faith, and you are their descendants, therefore let what I have said go for what it is worth, and let us be, at least, more strengthened and encouraged in this true faith of ours ; let us console ourselves, be glad and rejoice in our hearts, and thank God unceasingly for so great a benefit, by which He has made choice of us before so many others, to be born and brought up in this one true religion which alone can bring us to eternal happiness. It seems to me that I hear a countless multitude of reprobate heathens and heretics howling and crying out from the depth of hell : “ Why had we not this grace also ! what would we not have done for our God ! how carefully would we not have worked out our salvation ! ” And meanwhile I think to myself : I have received this grace, and how often have I lived hitherto according to the laws of my Christian faith ?

Yet, what am I thinking about ? On reconsidering the matter, my dear brethren, I must say that my subject is not unsuited, or out of place ; it is perhaps only too well adapted to some. Although all of you are Christians and Catholics, although all are convinced of the truth of our religion, yet all do not, so to say, believe in its truth : for what proof do we give that we live according to the truths of our religion ? How do our works agree with our faith ? We believe and profess one thing, we do and practise another ; we are and profess to be Christians, and yet we often live in vice of all kinds, just as if we were the worst of heathens. What do I say ! if we really were heathens and knew nothing of the Christian law, it would be no great wonder if, carried away by our wicked nature and evil inclinations, we cared for nothing but satisfying the lusts and desires of the flesh. But to profess and acknowledge such a religion, whose laws are so holy, and at the same time, to show nothing of its holiness in our manners and actions ; a holiness which makes humility the foun-

**The impious
must feel a
heartfelt
shame.**

dation of the Christian life, while we do not wish to hear of humiliations ; a holiness which tells us to take up our cross and bear it patiently after Christ, while we fear the cross as we do the foul fiend ; a holiness which commands us to live in meekness, unity, and love with one another, as brethren and children of the one Father, while we live in bitterness, hatred and enmity with each other, and refuse to tolerate the least injury ; a holiness which tells us to keep our bodies pure and holy, while we dishonor them by foul passions ; which tells us to begin and end everything in the name of Jesus, and our mouths and hearts are full of oaths and curses ; that is, indeed, subject for the greatest wonder, for instead of living according to the truths of our faith, we rather trample them under foot like the heathens.

Of whom
the Church
complains.

Let us hear how St. Augustine represents the Christian Church as complaining of those who are Christians in name only : “ Alas ! my children,” says this mother, “ how many persecutions have I not suffered in the first years of my existence ! Yet they have not been able to overcome me ; ¹ I have always been victorious ; tyrants have taken the lives of my children, but they could not take away their hearts from me : their limbs were cut in pieces, their bodies were burnt, yet all that could not induce them to stretch forth their hands and offer incense to false gods. Those were days of combat and repeated victories ; but now, in times of peace, when there are no tyrants, nor executioners, no rack, no torture, what condition am I in, O Christians ! and where are ye, oh, true-hearted Christians ! How many there are who profess to be my children, and who in reality persecute and harass me with their works ? How many there are who require very little threatening or punishment to induce them to give themselves up body and soul to creatures ? Nay, even a slight pleasure or trivial gain can lead them to that act of treachery. How often have I suffered.” I repeat it ; all the persecutions I suffered in my youth, all that heresies have caused me to suffer since, have not prevailed against me ; but the enemies that I now have to contend with I nourish in my own house, and the more they appear to be my friends, the more dangerous they are.

Conclusion
and resolu-
tion of
amend-
ment.

Ah, my dear brethren, my Christian brethren ! let us at all events not give any reason for this complaint to be made against us ; let us not depart from the sublime spirit of our religion. We are ready to believe its truths to the last moment of our lives, but

¹ *Sæpe expugnaverunt me a juventute mea, etenim non potuerunt mihi.*

our lives must harmonize with the laws of our faith ; otherwise, what can we expect from the religion that is given to us, but which we dishonor? Alas! what excuse can I offer, when Thou, O God! reproachest me, because the faith that the idolatry and heathenism of the most cruel monsters could not overcome, has not been able to destroy the false maxims of the vain world in me, or to root up those evil habits that have taken possession of me? How shall I defend myself when Thou wilt prove to me that the faith which overcame the pride of emperors by the humility of the cross, could not free my heart from vanity, pride, impure love, hatred and envy? What answer shall I make when Thou shalt say to me that the faith which renewed and improved the whole world by its holy law, could not reform or sanctify my sinful life? How shall I defend myself when Thou shalt reprove me, because the religion that made the most cruel tortures sweet and pleasant to so many martyrs, could not induce me to bear the least trial with patience? Alas! I shall find no excuse, unless I now begin to lead a Christian life. Let it be so, O Lord! so Thou comfort me by Thy grace, enliven and strengthen my faith that has hitherto been so weak, and that has lost its energy and life through a want of good works; so that I may henceforth live in and by this vigorous, active faith, and thus gain eternal life. Amen.

Another Introduction of the Same Sermon for the Fourth Sunday after Pentecost :

Text.

Ex hoc jam eris homines capiens.—Luke v. 10.

From henceforth thou shalt catch men.

The bark of Peter, into which Jesus entered to teach the people, was, according to the interpretation of the Holy Fathers and other writers, a figure and symbol of the Catholic Church, in which Peter as chief steward of Jesus Christ, and his successors, the Popes of Rome, were to have the chief authority. The miraculous draught in which Peter, having launched his nets at the order of Christ, caught a countless multitude of fish at one haul, is a symbol of the preaching of the Gospel, by which Peter and the other Apostles, sent for the purpose by Christ, spread the Christian religion throughout the world, caught a countless multitude of people of every nation and brought them into the true Church. A circumstance, my dear brethren, which merits our

greatest admiration, &c., &c., *continues as before in the Introduction.*

Subject.

The Christian religion was introduced and spread throughout the world by Peter and the other Apostles, therefore it must necessarily be from God and cannot be false. This is the subject of my sermon to-day, &c.

SECOND SERMON.

ON THE GREAT BENEFIT OF THE DIVINE VOCATION TO THE CATHOLIC FAITH.

Subject.

The exceeding great benefit of our vocation to the Catholic Faith imposes upon us the duty of unceasing gratitude to God, who has given us that vocation.—*Preached on the 6th Sunday after Easter.*

Text.

Ille testimonium perhibebit de me, et vos testimonium perhibebitis.
—John xv. 26.

“He shall give testimony of me, and you shall give testimony.”

Introduction.

The Holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth, shall give testimony of Jesus Christ that He is the Son of God, and the Apostles and Disciples shall also give the same testimony. This happened when the Apostles were filled with the Holy Ghost on Pentecost Sunday, were dispersed throughout the world, announced the Gospel of Christ to all people, and converted numberless souls to the Christian faith. Oh, what a great grace for those souls who were formerly in the darkness of heathenism and infidelity! The same grace has fallen to our lot, my dear brethren, inasmuch as we are descended from Catholic forefathers, and born and brought up in the Catholic faith, in which we still persevere. Do we ever think of the benefit we have received? We are Catholic Christians, and yet perhaps we do not think once, in a whole year, that we are therefore under a special obligation to God; much less do we thank Him for it every day. This sermon is intended to put a stop to such injustice.

Plan of Discourse.

The exceeding great benefit of our vocation to the Catholic faith imposes upon us the duty of unceasing gratitude to God.

Such is the subject of the sermon. The end and object of it is to show how this gratitude may be rendered, in case we have been hitherto wanting therein. For this end, oh, God! we beg of Thee a new grace, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and the holy angels.

The greatness of a benefit is measured, not only by the excellence and costliness of the gift in itself, but much more by its usefulness and necessity for a great end and object. Thus, gold is a precious thing in itself, but if you give a piece of gold to a hungry man, who is not in a position to buy anything with it, you have done very little to help him to attain his end; a piece of bread would be much more acceptable to him, for without it he would die of hunger. Now, we mortals, on this earth, have no higher end and object than that for which we are all created, the attainment of eternal happiness in Heaven; consequently, he who gives me something that is useful and helpful for that end, benefits me greatly, and places me under an obligation; but if that thing is not merely useful, but even necessary, then there is no greater favor that he could do me.

The greatness of a benefit is measured by its use and necessity for eternal life.

Such a favor, my dear brethren, is the vocation to the true Catholic faith; for in this alone can we be certain of being able to work out our salvation, and to gain the kingdom of Heaven. Without it we are certain of not being able to attain eternal happiness, or to perform the least supernaturally good work that will be pleasing to God and deserving of Heaven, according to the words of the Apostle St. Paul: "Without faith it is impossible to please God."¹ Therefore, the true faith is not only useful and helpful to attain Heaven, but it is also an absolutely necessary means, the first foundation of our salvation, the first source of all the other good works that are useful for salvation. Without this we cannot do anything good or gain eternal happiness.

Such is the vocation to the true faith, which is absolutely necessary to eternal life.

Oh, most gracious God, without this, how could all the other benefits, numberless and precious as they are, that Thou hast bestowed upon me hitherto, how could they help or profit me? Thou hast created me instead of so many other creatures who still remain in their nothingness, and to Thine own image; Thou hast given me a reasoning and immortal soul, endowed with memory,

No other benefit would be of any good to us without this.

¹ Sine fide impossibile est placere Deo.—Heb. xi. 6.

understanding, and will. Thou hast given me a living body with its five senses ; and after having thus endowed me, Thou hast preserved me every moment for so many years in health and strength. What do I not owe Thee, oh, God ! for these benefits? If I could give Thee, in return, my life and everything that is in me or outside of me, and if I gave Thee all these things anew at each moment, and sacrificed them to Thee, even then I should only be returning to Thee what belongs to Thee already. That I readily acknowledge. But what would it all help me, if I had not the true faith? I should live, certainly, but as an object of Thy displeasure, who could have no share in Thee for all eternity. Jesus Christ! Thou hast shed Thy blood for me, Thou hast suffered the bitter death of the cross for my sake and thereby freed me from hell. Oh, what a merciful and incomprehensible love! If I could die a hundred thousand million times for Thee, I could not make an adequate return for Thy love! But what could the benefit of such a redemption help me, if I had not the true faith and were thus unable to share in the merits of Thy Passion and Death so as to save my soul? Thou hast given me the value of Thy Blood in holy Baptism, when Thou hast received and adopted me as Thy child and heir, oh, my Sovereign Benefactor ! What return shall I make Thee? But not even this would help me to salvation (if I fell into sin after having attained the use of reason), if I had not the true faith, and therefore could have no supernatural love for Thee, no repentance for my sins, and were incapable of performing a single work that might be pleasing in Thy sight. The same truth holds: “ Without faith it is impossible to please God.”¹ I should be, after all those benefits, in the number of those, “ who will not believe, shall be condemned.”² So that faith is the necessary foundation on which all the other benefits and gifts must be founded, and it must prepare the way so that they may be profitable to my salvation.

God has bestowed this benefit on us Catholics in preference to so many countless unbelievers.

See now, oh, Catholic Christian, and acknowledge the great debt of gratitude you owe your God. The good God has given you and me this great and necessary benefit, when He called us to the Catholic, and only true and saving faith. Do not imagine that this happened by chance, or by good luck, or that it is a general sort of thing to which you and I and all the faithful have a right. No such thing : “ Faith is a gift of God,”³ who

¹ *Sine fide impossibile est placere Deo.*

² *Qui vero non crediderit, condemnabitur.—Mark xvi. 16.*

³ *Fides est donum Dei.*

does not scatter His gifts and graces by chance, but dispenses them according to His own pleasure, when, where, how, and to whom He wills. Look around the world, in thought, for a moment, and after you have considered all the nations therein, you will be compelled to acknowledge the truth of what the Prophet David says: "He hath not done in like manner to every nation, and His judgment He hath not manifested to them."¹ For, in the three parts of the world, Asia, Africa, and America, how many peoples and nations will you not find in the darkness of infidelity, heathenism, Mahomedanism, Judaism and idolatry, who will perhaps never come to the knowledge of the true faith? Think how unfortunate these people are, compared to you. Here and there amongst them you will find one who is naturally good, honest, upright, temperate, and honorable; but since he has not the true faith, the foundation of real virtue and holiness, you might well say to him, "You run well, but you are not on the right way."² Think what merits could you have above all these poor people, that the great gift of true faith was bestowed on you and not on them.

Look around a little more, and consider the fourth part of the world, Europe, in which Christianity has the strongest footing; how many countries, provinces, and kingdoms will you not find groaning under the yoke of the heresies of Luther, Calvin, Jansenius and other teachers of error; and think, too, what have so many lords and ladies, citizens and peasants done, that the Lord God has allowed them to be bred and born in a country infected with error, where they suck in the poison of heresy with their mother's milk, and who are now in such a state that, if they obstinately persevere in it, they will be lost forever; for, as no one was saved in the deluge, says the Holy Martyr, St. Cyprian, so there is no salvation to be hoped for except in the bark of St. Peter, that is, the Holy Roman Catholic Church. "There is no salvation outside the Church,"³ as the Council of Lateran says. Think that you, in preference to all those others, are in that bark of Peter, the only true Church. And why? Ah, my God! you must conclude, what a debt do I not owe Thee? If I do not acknowledge the greatness of this benefit, I am not worthy to enjoy it. And it is that, oh, most merciful God, that, when I think of it as I ought, oftenest excites my astonishment at the mercy Thou hast shown me, and compels me to ac-

In preference to so many heretics.

¹ Non fecit taliter omni nationi et judicia sua non manifestavit eis.—Ps. cxlvii. 20.

² Bene curris, sed extra viam.

³ Extra Ecclesiam non est salus.

knowledge the great debt of love and gratitude that I owe Thee. Why am I called and not the others? Why are the others left out while I am called? I know well, oh, most just God, that Thou hast pity on all whom Thou hast created, that Thou art He "that enlightens every man that cometh into the world."¹ Since, as my faith teaches me, Thou hast an earnest wish and desire that all men should be saved, I am certain that Thou givest to all men, that have ever lived in the world, sufficient light to arrive, if they wish, at the knowledge of the true faith; and I am certain, too, that by some extraordinary ways and means (even if a miracle were necessary), Thou wilt bring to the true faith those who live according to the natural law, and who, though they may be heathens, lead a life free from sin. But how widely different is the manner in which Thy goodness deals with me, from that in which it deals with them!

We are bred
and born in
this faith.

Here, oh, Catholic Christians, I beg of you to give your full attention, in order to understand still clearer the greatness of this benefit. The Apostle St. Peter, writing to Christians who were converted to the true faith from heathenism and Judaism, calls them a people elected by God: "You are a chosen generation, a purchased people, . . . that you may declare His virtues who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light."² Certainly those people had good reason to declare the mercy of God. Now, my dear brethren, we cannot exactly say of ourselves that we have been called out of darkness to this light, for the faith was infused into us with the grace of holy Baptism, and we have more reason to say that we were born, without knowing anything about it, and brought up in the bosom of the true Church, than to say that we have been called to it. Is not that the truth? And what follows therefrom? It follows that we are placed under a far greater obligation to God for the benefit of the faith, than the heathens, Jews, and heretics who are called to it out of darkness. And this is the reason: if we had been born and brought up in America amongst the savage people there, or in Africa amongst the idolatrous heathens, or in Asia amongst the Turks and Jews, or in England, Holland, Sweden, or Denmark, amongst the heretics, what would then be the case? Without doubt, as we have seen already, the all-merciful God, who desires the salvation of all men, would not have failed to send

¹ Qui illuminat omnem hominem, venientem in hunc mundum.

² Vos genus electum. . . . ut virtutes annuntietis ejus; qui vocavit vos de tenebris in admirabile lumen suum.—I. Pet. ii. 9.

us some rays of His light by which we, like converted Christians, might have come to know the truth of the Catholic faith ; but do you think we would have followed this grace and have immediately embraced the faith according to divine inspiration ? Alas ! what a difficulty there would have been in doing so. My opinion is that neither I nor you would have done it, but would have acted as they who are in the darkness of error have hitherto acted and still continue to act, although they are not without sufficient grace from God. How many heathens, Jews, and heretics are there not who acknowledge, and even openly, if they are questioned, that ours is the true faith, and yet they cannot make up their minds to embrace it, being prevented by one cause or another. One is prevented by selfishness, another by human respect, another by fear of his prince ; the greater number are kept back from a clear knowledge of the truth by the love of ease and freedom of life. I have known and questioned Lutherans and Calvinists, and they have acknowledged that they were fully persuaded of the truth of the Catholic religion, yet they remained as they were. “ Why should I become a Catholic ? ” said one ; “ if I did so, I should get nothing from my parents. ” Another said, “ I have a relation who intends making me his heir ; if I changed my religion I should lose that hope. ” A third said : “ If I had turned all my land into money, and had placed it in safety, I should not long hesitate. ” “ What shall I live on, ” said the fourth. “ What will my relatives think, ” says the fifth, and the sixth says, “ I should lose my situation. ” And so on. I know of Calvinistic and Lutheran preachers who offered to become Catholics if they were supported with their wives and children. There is no use in urging on them the loss of Heaven and the eternal pains of hell ; that will not solve their difficulties. In spite of their better knowledge they remain in their false religion and lose their souls. Now, I ask you, once again, my dear brethren, if we were bred and born in such circumstances, should we have less difficulties than they ? Should we have more courage to overcome those difficulties and to embrace the true faith at once ? Alas ! I fear that at the very least, we should have found it hard and very hard, and that only a few of us would have succeeded. Praised and blessed, therefore, be the all-merciful God, who has not only brought us to the right way of salvation in a much gentler and milder manner, but also has forced us into it, without asking our consent, inasmuch as He has caused us to be born and brought up in a Catholic country,

under a Catholic sovereign, by Catholic parents, in the bosom of the true Church, in the only religion that can bring us to salvation ; in which, even if we did not otherwise desire it, we are compelled to live and to die, at least through human respect, by a fortunate necessity. Christians! do you not yet understand how much we owe to the good God for this special benefit ?

We live in this faith, as the Christian religion enjoys peace and tranquillity.

There is still another circumstance which brings out the greatness of this benefit, in a stronger light. We who are Catholics, and who have lived till now in the true faith, in what sort of times do we live ? In times when the Church can make public profession of her faith in peace and tranquillity. Go back in thought to those dangerous times when the Christian faith was persecuted by tyrants and pagan emperors, everywhere, with armed force, of which this city of Treves was witness. In what state were things then ? To profess the Catholic faith meant to be deprived of all one's goods, to be driven out of house and home, to be imprisoned, loaded with chains, derided and mocked, stretched on the rack, torn with iron hooks, burnt with torches, mangled with scourges, flayed alive, roasted, crucified, and put to death with all sorts of terrible tortures. What would you think if those times were to come back again ! Happy times, indeed, I must confess, were those of the early Christians, when hearts were so inflamed with the fire of divine charity, that they gladly and joyfully sacrificed property and life, and gave themselves up to all sorts of torments in defence of their faith. But would that be the case now, when charity has grown cold in most hearts, if each one of us were told, with the sword hanging over our heads, either to give up our faith, or to sacrifice our property and possessions, or our honor and respectability, or to deliver up our bodies to a martyr's death ? I must again say that God would still deserve, on account of His infinite majesty and the love He has shown us, that small token of love from us. To gain the eternal joys of Heaven, it would certainly be worth while to suffer all kinds of torments ; the beautiful crown of martyrdom is surely worth the price paid for it. Oh, would that I were so happy as to suffer martyrdom for the faith ! Thus we often think and speak, but it is a different thing actually to feel and experience. If our words were really put to the test, oh, how many would turn their backs and abandon the faith ! It is a fine thing to say that we could bear courageously the scorn and derision of a whole people, when we can hardly tolerate an angry word from our neighbor, when we seek revenge for the

least affront, when, through fear of ridicule, we cannot resolve to give up some worldly custom that is displeasing to God. It is a fine thing to say that we could give up all we have, when we are actually ready to curse and swear, and swear falsely too, for the sake of a little money, and to keep up feuds among brothers and sisters, year after year, for a bit of land. We may say that we are willing to suffer scourge, rack, wheel, and fire, and yet, the least inconvenience prevents us from coming to church, the least opposition troubles and casts us down. We boast of being ready to shed our blood, and to suffer the most painful death, when we are so easily led away by the least allurements, a flattering word, human respect or some new, worldly custom, to offend against our faith and against the law of God. No, my dear brethren, let us candidly and humbly confess, that God has conferred a great benefit on us by placing us peacefully and tranquilly in His Church, in which, without fear of persecution, we can enjoy the fruits of faith with all desirable security, and can work out our salvation without let or hindrance.

And now, I appeal to your reason, Catholic Christians! God has called us to the true Church and to the one saving faith, and has called us in preference to so many millions, and has called in such a manner. He has hitherto kept us in that faith with such ease and comfort to ourselves, do we not owe Him something for that? Would it be too much, would it be even enough, if we were to thank Him heartily every day, morning and evening, for such a great benefit? Would it be too much, nay, would it be enough, if we fulfilled, out of gratitude, all the commands of our faith with the greatest punctuality, and led a holy life according to the teaching of our holy religion? But how is it, if we do not think of this benefit even once in the week or month; if we abuse it to break the commandments and to offend God and to dishonor such a holy religion by a bad life? What would we deserve to be called then? Seneca tells a story of a soldier of Philip, the king of Macedon, who having suffered shipwreck, was cast on shore half-dead, on the lands of a certain Macedonian. The Macedonian, through pity, took the poor man into his house, laid him on his bed, cared for him for thirty days, until he was fully restored to health, and finally gave him money to go home. The soldier, after having thanked his benefactor, promised to speak a good word for him to the king; but what did he do? In place of speaking the good word, he asked the king to give him the land of that Macedonian, who had treated him with so much courtesy and

We are therefore, obliged to be grateful to God, yet the contrary happens.

kindness, and Philip, who loved the soldier very much, granted his request. The good Macedonian, thus plundered of his goods, bore the injustice in silence, but sent a letter privately to the king, stating what he had done for the shipwrecked soldier; whereupon Philip, justly enraged, restored the property to its lawful owner, and caused the soldier to have the words, "This is an ungrateful guest," branded on his shoulders with a hot iron. Catholic Christians! how many of us deserve to have those shameful words branded, not on the shoulders, but on the forehead, where we make the sign of the cross as a token of our Catholic Christianity! This is an ungrateful guest. This is he who, after the shipwreck of original sin, was thrown, spiritually dead, on the land of the living, who was recalled to life, in preference to so many others who are lost eternally, by a merciful God in the sacrament of Baptism, who was received into His house, into the bosom of the true Church, in which he has been brought up in the true faith and nourished with the Sacraments and the Word of God. And how has he acted with his best benefactor? In place of paying the debt of gratitude he owes Him, he has often risen up against Him, he has stained the purity of the faith by a sinful life, and dishonored the holiness of the Church to which he belongs. This is an ungrateful guest—what a disgraceful name!

The greater,
therefore,
our condem-
nation.

Woe to him who goes into eternity branded in that shameful manner! We can be quite certain, my dear brethren, that the greater our good fortune in being bred and born in the true faith, the greater will be our misery if we are damned in the same faith. We can hardly refrain from shedding tears of pity, when we think that so many nations of the world are lost through heresy and infidelity; but for a Catholic Christian to go to hell, while still belonging to that faith in which alone salvation can be found, out of which there is no salvation, in which no one is lost who does not wish to be lost, that is, indeed, a terrible thing! And yet it happens, and, alas! in so many cases; for faith is not enough, if we do not lead a holy life according to our faith. "What good is it," asks Peter Damian, "to believe as a Catholic, if one lives as a heathen?"¹ It will be far more tolerable in hell for one who has been a heathen, a Turk, a Jew, or a heretic, than for one who has been brought up a Catholic and yet has lost his soul; for the very fact of having received and enjoyed the light of faith will

¹ Hic ingratus hospes est.—Seneca de benef. l. 4, c. 37.

² Quid prodest, si quisplam catholice credat et gentiliter, *vital*.

make eternal damnation still more terrible; there is no doubt of that. St. Macarius, as Boland writes, once asked a skull that he saw lying on the ground, who he had been and in what state was his soul, and the skull answered: I was a pagan priest and my soul is in hell. The saint asked whether he was in the deepest pit of hell. No, answered the other, but as deep as we heathens who knew not God are under the surface of the earth, so much deeper are Christians below us in hell, and so much more grievously are they tortured. And then he howled out: "Woe to the man who transgresses the commandments of God."¹

Oh, my Lord and my God! how will it be with me, who have so often deliberately transgressed Thy law? As Thy love and goodness to me have been so great, in causing me to be born and brought up in the fold of the true Church, great also, and abominable has my ingratitude hitherto been! I must acknowledge, when I think of my sins that I have committed in the full light of Thy faith, that there is no punishment, amongst the infidels in hell, too severe for my ingratitude. Yet, that very faith that I have contradicted by my life, teaches me that Thou, who art infinite mercy, dost not repel any sinner who returns to Thee. Look, therefore, upon my repentant and contrite heart, with which I now hate and execrate my former sins, and the many times I have dishonored my holy religion, and with which I now firmly resolve to live, for the future, as a worthy child of my dear Mother, the Catholic Church, and to direct my life according to her laws with the greatest exactness; and in this, along with daily acts of thanksgiving, shall consist my gratitude for the great grace of vocation to the true faith. I will believe as a Catholic, I will live and die as a Catholic, so that I may praise and glorify Thee forever, for the benefit Thou hast conferred upon me, with Thy triumph^{ant} Church in Heaven. Amen.

Sorrow and
resolution
of amend-
ment.

THIRD SERMON.

ON THE DIGNITY OF CHRISTIANS, WHO ARE CHILDREN OF GOD.

Subject.

By the sanctifying grace that we Christians receive in Baptism, we are beloved children of God. What a high dignity, what honor and glory for us poor mortals.—*Preached on Pentecost Sunday.*

¹ Væ homini illi, qui mandata Dei transgreditur.

Text.

Si quis diligit me, sermonem meum servabit, et Pater meus diliget eum.—John xiv: 23.

“If any one love Me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him.”

Introduction.

By charity is understood, not merely the real inclination that we have towards God, when we awaken love to Him, but also, and chiefly, a constant love, or the state of sanctifying grace, which we receive in Baptism from the Holy Ghost, in virtue of which He makes His abode in our souls and remains there until He is driven out by mortal sin. Of each one, then, who so loves, that is, of each one who is in the state of grace, Christ says in the Gospel, “My Father will love him.” How will He love him? Here, Christians, I beg of you to give me your attention. It is a happiness, a dignity, the like of which is not on earth; it is an honor and glory of which we think very little, perhaps not at all, although we are raised to it: “My Father will love him,” as His own child. And now, to our consolation and encouragement in the love and service of God, we shall consider this point.

Plan of Discourse.

By the sanctifying grace that we, Christians, receive in Baptism, we are beloved children of God. What a great dignity, honor, and glory for us poor mortals!

That is the whole subject, from which a moral conclusion will be drawn. Come, Holy Ghost! open the eyes of our minds with Thy light, that we may know the dignity of the state to which we are raised by Thy grace; and that we may always labor to keep in that state with the greatest care, and by avoiding every sin. That is the favor we implore of Thee, through thy virginal spouse Mary and our holy angels guardian.

Human ambition has often striven for divine honors.

Men have inherited from nature such a great desire of honor and glory, that many raised their ambitious thoughts up to Heaven, because they found only men like themselves here on earth, and, as it were, tried to take away the eternal crown from the head of the Almighty, and to place it on their own. Adam and Eve, the first human beings, when they heard the deceitful words

¹ Pater meus diliget eum.

of the serpent, "You will be as gods," were so tickled by them and were excited to such a pitch of audacity, that, in spite of all threats, they forgot the command of their Creator, and ate the forbidden fruit in order to become as gods. Although by that sin they placed themselves and all of us in the way of eternal death, yet they have had many imitators who strove for divine honors. Domitian published no edict without the words, "Domitian our Lord and God." Menecrates required no other reward from the man whom he cured than the title, He is the God Jupiter. Phoso taught his parrots to say: "Phoso is a god." So general was this ambition amongst the heathens, that in order to have a new divinity, it was only necessary for vanity to inspire some ruler or other with the fancy.

And what, my dear brethren, should most excite our astonishment, the unreasoning folly and audacity of these stupid people, or the goodness of God and His incomprehensible love for them? Instead of drawing the sword of vengeance, and humbling their pride, He has found a means of satisfying most abundantly their ambition and desire for divine honors. For, what has he done? "God has become man," says St. Cyrillus, "so that He is truly adored in human form." So that man can and must now say with truth, God is man, and man is God; consequently, that man, who is God at the same time, deserves divine honor. But it does not exhaust His love, nor complete our dignity to have only one man of our nature, Jesus Christ, who is truly God; but, "the only Son of God having become man, makes many sons of men to be sons of God." For, in Baptism, in which they are regenerated and receive the sanctifying grace of the Holy Ghost, all faithful Christians become adopted children of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, the co-natural Son of God, to whom, as co-heirs of Christ, the kingdom of the Eternal Father belongs, as a lawful inheritance, if they bring that grace of the Holy Ghost with them into eternity.

"Oh, wonderful goodness of God!" cries out the holy Pope St. Gregory; "we are not worthy to be servants of God, and He calls us His friends!" What! do you wonder, St. Gregory, that we are friends of God? That would certainly be an honor and a happiness for us, the like of which we would never hope for or imagine;

God has abundantly satisfied this ambition, by making men His children in Baptism.

How great is the goodness of God to us.

¹ Eritis sicut dii.—Gen. iii. 5.

² Domitianus Dominus et Deus noster.

³ Phoso est Deus.

⁴ Deus homo factus est, unde in humana figura vere Deus adoratur.

⁵ Factus Filius hominis unicus Filius Deus, multos filios hominum facit filios Dei.—St. Augustine.

⁶ O mira divine bonitatis dignitas.

⁷ Servi digni non sumus, et amici vocamur.

but listen to what the Apostle St. John says: "Open your eyes, open your hearts." And what dost thou desire, what have we to look at? Understand, if you can, the length to which the love of God has gone, who has made us, not merely in name and likeness, but in deed and in reality, children of God. "Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called and should be the sons of God."¹ If He had merely allowed us to take that name and title, it would have been a far greater honor than we merit; if He had said, simply, I will allow you to call Me your Father, although I really am not your Father; just as He allowed the Blessed Virgin to say of Joseph: "Thy father and I have been seeking thee in sorrow;"² even then, this apparent paternity would have been a great honor for us, but He is not content with this. Our heavenly Father wills, not only that we should be called His children, but that we should be so in reality. Dear brothers and sisters, consider well what this means; we are sons and daughters of God.³ "When He shall appear, we shall be like to Him."⁴

What honor
and glory
for us!

Oh, Christians! what nobility, what honor for us! Have we ever thought of it as we ought? What glory and happiness it is for the children of the world to be the friends and favorites of an earthly sovereign? How proud they are if they can show, in their genealogies or escutcheons, the names of illustrious warriors, cardinals, bishops or statesmen, and say: Look, these people belonged to our family. When Christ said to the Pharisees that He was not of this world, as they were, they immediately appealed to the antiquity of their race, descended from Abraham: "We are of the seed of Abraham;" "Abraham is our father."⁵ Whence comes the dignity and nobility of families in our own days? Is it not from their ancestors who, in former times, made their names illustrious, either by valor in war, or by skill in statesmanship, or by other praiseworthy actions, and who were therefore raised to high dignities by kings and emperors? And on this account, all their descendants are separated from the common people and held in greater honor. Yet, if we consider the matter seriously, how can it be to my praise or honor, that some of my ancestors, whose bodies are now crumbling into dust, were great, or skillful, or virtuous people, or were celebrated in

¹ Videte qualem charitatem dedit nobis Pater, ut filii Dei nominemur et simus.

² Pater tuus et ego dolentes querebamus te. ³ Charissimi, nunc filii Dei sumus.—I. John iii. 2

⁴ Cum apparuerit, similes ei erimus.

⁵ Semen Abraham sumus. Pater noster Abraham est.—John. viii. 33-39.

their day, if I have inherited none of their virtues or illustrious deeds? And yet, such things are looked upon as a great honor and glory. How great are we not, then, oh, Christians! in deed and in reality? How much more reason have we not to boast and be proud of that nobility which the Holy Ghost impressed upon us in Baptism; for we are raised above the angels and assumed to a share of the divine nature (as St. Thomas Aquinas says of sanctifying grace) and we become children of the Almighty God. So that we can boast with greater reason and more truth than the Jews did formerly. We are born of God, our father is God,¹ the King of Heaven; we can cry out, as St. Paul says, with the greatest confidence, Oh, my God! thou art my Father!² Can we imagine anything more glorious? Does not that mean, according to St. Cyrillus, that we have attained the highest degree of nobility, since we are reckoned among the children of God?³

St. Augustine, explaining with his usual eloquence the words of St. John, "Dearly beloved, we are now children of God,"⁴ makes a beautiful reflection thereon. Suppose, he says, that a man undertakes a long journey and on that journey he is burdened with all sorts of trouble and labor, sickness and misery, and is also poor and needy, and knows nothing of his noble birth and descent; some one meets him and says to him: Sir, do you not know who you are? You are the son of a great nobleman; your father, who is very rich, has ordered me to tell you this and to conduct you to his house. What do you think, asks St. Augustine, would be the feelings of that man on hearing such unexpected news? If he were not in danger of being deceived, how great would not his joy be? Would he not think, oh, how happy I am! I am the son of a rich lord! I should have known that sooner; hitherto I have not known myself. This really happened to Don John of Austria. He was brought up in his childhood by an ordinary citizen, whom he always looked upon as his father. When he had grown up, Philip II., King of Spain, who alone knew the secret, was out hunting one day, with his courtiers, in a forest, where he met the citizen and his son. As soon as the king saw the latter, he leaped from his horse and embraced the young man, to the great astonishment of all present, and to the still greater astonishment of John himself, who, looking upon himself as only a poor boy, did not know what to think of the affair. The king took him

The great happiness of this proved by a simile.

¹ Pater noster est Deus. ² Clamamus, Abba, Pater.

³ Fastigium nobilitatis est, inter filios Dei computari.

⁴ Charissimi, nunc filii Dei sumus.

respectfully by the hand, and said, "Away with these rags (for the boy was poorly clad), they are not fitting to your dignity. John, you are the son of the great emperor Charles, and I am your brother." Think, my dear brethren, how the young man must have felt, how he must have been overwhelmed with joy; for he was brought with great pomp and magnificence, alongside the king, his brother, to the city and to the royal palace, where he thenceforth received every sign of honor and respect, as the son of such a great father.

What cause
have we not,
then, to re-
joice.

Ah, Christians! what a happiness and cause of joy it is for us to be in the state of grace! Come, says Jesus Christ to each one of us, open thy heart, raise thy mind above the filth of earth to Heaven. Why art thou troubled on the journey of life! Hast thou hitherto known who thou art? Rejoice, for thou art a son, a daughter of a great King; a kingdom is prepared for thee which has neither limit nor end. Come, thou art a child of God, and I am thy brother! Hear, ye poor citizens and workmen, ye lowly servants and handmaidens, ye toiling peasants; the world gives you scornful names, and looks upon you as a wretched people, as the scum of the earth; but the great God calls you His children; Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, calls you His brothers and sisters. Do you but serve your Heavenly Father truly, be careful not to lose the grace of the Holy Ghost by mortal sin, and your nobility and dignity will far excel that of all the heathen kings and emperors of the world. Principalities, kingdoms, empires, no matter how glorious and magnificent they may be, are as nothing compared to the title of child of God.¹ Dear brothers and sisters, exult and rejoice; we are children of God. And when we consider this, can we contain ourselves for wonder and spiritual joy!

The saints
could not
contain
themselves
for joy at
the thought.

St. Margaret of Cortona, as she once knelt before the crucifix in meditation on the bitter sufferings of Christ, heard Him speaking these words to her: "What dost thou want, my poor little one?"² Whereupon she answered: "I want nothing but Thyself, oh, Lord Jesus!" And on another occasion, as she was thinking of the immense love and goodness of God to us mortals, she took courage and spoke thus confidently to her Saviour: "Thou hast lately called me a poor little one, and I am so in reality; for every good thing I have in soul and body is an alms, which I have received from Thee; but, my dear Lord, when shall I have the consolation of hearing Thee call me Thy child?" And then she got

¹ *Charissimi, nunc filii Dei sumus.*

² *Quid vis pauperula?*

this answer, by an inward inspiration : “ When thou hast cleansed thy soul from all stain by a general confession.” For some days Margaret redoubled her penances. She repented of and confessed all the sins and the smallest faults of her life with the greatest sorrow, whereupon she heard after holy Communion the sweet and long desired words : “ My daughter.” At these words she fell into an ecstasy of surpassing joy, and having, as it were, come to life again, after a long time, she cried out aloud, “ Oh, infinite sweetness of God !” “ Oh, happy word—My daughter ! So has the great God called me. Is it possible that I can still live, and that my soul has not left the body at hearing such sweet words ! My daughter ! So has Jesus said to me. What else is there that I can wish for, or desire upon earth ?

My dear Christian brethren, would not each one of us rejoice also, if we now heard the same words from the lips of Christ : my child, my son, my daughter ? But it is not necessary that He should speak to us so clearly, if we only have a conscience free from sin and are in the state of grace, our own conscience will say the same words to us as St. Paul writes : “ For the Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God.”¹ “ But if sons, then heirs also, heirs indeed of God, joint heirs with Christ,”² and that is the only thing that a Christian should boast and be proud of. “ We glory in the hope of children of God,”³ whether we are of high or lowly birth, rich or poor, honored or despised by the world, matters nothing and is not worth troubling ourselves about ; for temporal prosperity cannot cause us real joy, nor can temporal misfortune cause us real misery ; we glory in the hope of children of God. Our highest honor and greatest happiness, our only joy and boast consists in this, that we are children of God. Yes, says St. Cyprian, “ Nothing earthly will ever appear precious, nothing wonderful, to him who says to himself with a lively faith, I am a child of God.”⁴ This dignity and nobility surpasses everything.

But, alas ! amongst all the titles of honor and prosperity that are in use amongst men, there is not one less thought of than that of child of God. With what courage, energy, and frenzy are not all the others sought after ? We ruin ourselves with law-suits to gain possession of a handful of earth ; whole

We can and ought to do the same.

We prize this honor but little.

¹ *Filia mea ! ² O infinita dulcedo Dei !*

³ *Ipsæ enim Spiritus testimonium reddit spiritui nostro, quod sumus filii Dei.—Rom. viii. 16.*

⁴ *Si autem filii et hæredes, hæredes Dei, cohæredes autem Christi.*

⁵ *Gloriamus in spe filiorum Dei.*

⁶ *Nunquam humana opera mirabitur, quisquis se cognoverit filium Dei.*

families dispute about the difference between mine and thine; there is any amount of quarrelling and contention about some ridiculous question of precedence, or rank, as if everything depended upon it; nay, even these disputes are brought into the very churches; it is a grievous sin against the laws and regulations of the world if one man does not give another his proper titles; if he does not make a sufficiently profound bow to a lady. But the title of child of God is willingly given up to any one who thinks it an honorable one. The grace of the Holy Ghost, the divine adoption of us as children, which nothing on earth can equal, is looked upon as of no value; the majority do not think of it, nay, they do not even know what it means, nor have they any idea of the dignity to which it raises them. St. Paul, meeting some disciples of St. John on the way to Ephesus, asked them: "Have you received the Holy Ghost?" Do you believe in Him? No, they answered, "we have not so much as heard whether there be a Holy Ghost."² My dear brethren, must I ask the same question to-day? Have you received the Holy Ghost? Do you fully understand this truth, that sanctifying grace makes you children of God and brethren of Jesus Christ? I fear that you would have to answer: We have not heard whether there be a Holy Ghost. We know nothing about it, it is too high for our understanding, we have hardly heard anything of it. Oh! the blindness and ignorance of men! that they should be so ignorant and so inexperienced in the things of faith, which concern their greatest honor and happiness! you know well where your birth-place is, you know where your room, your cellar, your bed is, and you do not know what you are, nor to what the mercy of God has raised you.

Conclusion,
with differ-
ent moral
deductions.

I must again repeat to you, my dear brothers and sisters, we are now children of God.³ Understand this truth clearly, and keep a firm hold of it; let it never slip from your memory, as long as we are in the state of grace, we are children of God. An infallible faith assures me of this, so that parents may say, I must not look upon my children as mine, but as God's, and I must carefully bring them up for the end and object with which their Heavenly Father has intrusted them to me; that is, to the praise and love of God. I must be very careful not to lead them to evil by word, or work, or example. I must keep a watchful eye upon all their actions and omissions, instruct them in good, chastise them, as a parent should, when they commit a fault, so that they may

¹ Si Spiritum Sanctum accepistis.—Act. xix. 2.

² Sed neque, si Spiritus Sanctus est, audivimus.

³ Charissimi, nunc filii Dei sumus.

not become vain children of the world, or be led away from the path of the children of God, and be delivered over to the devil as his prey, through my fault. We are children of God. Therefore, the rich and noble may say, I must not look contemptuously on any one, no matter how poor or lowly he may be, not even on my own servant or handmaid, but I must consider all as children of God. I am a child of God, each one may think for himself, and therefore I must act as becomes my high dignity, and behave as a child of God ought. I am a child of God, so that I must not live as the vain children of the world, according to the false maxims and usages of the wicked world, but according to the law of the children of God, according to the eternal and fundamental truths that Christ, our eldest brother, has left us in his Gospel. I am a child of God, therefore I must and will show all honor and love and childlike obedience, as a well-reared child ought, to my Heavenly Father, under all circumstances and in all places. I am a child of God, so that I have no evil to fear but sin. In all dangers and necessities of soul and body I will fly to my Heavenly Father with child-like confidence, for He knows all my wants; He knows how to help me, and He will help me as He has promised. Into His paternal bosom and all-wise providence do I cast myself and all that belongs to me, with full resignation of my will to His, for I am certain that whatever happens to me will be for the best. I am a child of God, so that it does not matter much if I have many crosses and troubles to bear here on earth, for I am not yet where I ought to be. I sojourn in misery, in a valley of tears; my true country is Heaven. I must comfort myself with the hope of the children of God, that the present short and insignificant suffering will be changed into everlasting joy. My thoughts, desires, and sighs shall be directed principally to Heaven: "Our Father who art in Heaven, Thy kingdom come."¹ I am a child of God as long as I am in the sanctifying grace of the Holy Ghost, therefore I will fly all occasions of evil with the greatest care, I will watch over my senses, that I may never lose this grace by a deliberate mortal sin, nor be cast out of the number of the children of God. If I have sinned, then I will not defer my repentance a single hour, but, by a true sorrow and confession, will free my soul from the unhappy state of sin, and will thus be restored to the number of the children of God. I am a child of God by the sanctifying grace of the Holy Ghost, therefore I must spend the

¹ *Pater noster qui est in caelis, adveniat regnum tuum.*

precious time that my heavenly Father has given me in this life, in increasing that grace every moment, not in idleness, nor long sleeping, nor in plays and amusements, nor in gaming and dancing. I must not forget the good intention in all my acts, and must often renew it before all my works, so that sanctifying grace may increase more and more in my soul, and that, consequently, the eternal glory that I shall enjoy in my heavenly country may also be greater, until the day when God calls me out of this vale of tears, and I am placed among the number of His elect children in Heaven, to rejoice eternally with Him as my Father, Jesus Christ as my Brother, and with the Holy Ghost, too, by whose grace I am now raised to that twofold dignity. Amen.

FOURTH SERMON.

ON THE LIFE BECOMING THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

Subject.

1. By the grace of the Holy Ghost received in Baptism, we are children of God and brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ; we must therefore live as becomes children and brethren of God.
 2. We are children of God, brothers and sisters of Christ; what a shame for us if we live as children and relations of the devil!
- Preached on Trinity Sunday.*

Text.

Baptizantes eos in nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti.
—Matth. xxviii. 19.

“Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

Introduction.

All we who are Christians have received this happiness, in preference to so many millions of heathens, that we are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. But all Christians do not acknowledge and profess the greatness of the happiness that falls to their lot in Baptism. I will say nothing of the wretched condition from which we are thereby freed; I will speak only of the high dignity to which we have been raised. We have received a portion of the infinite nature of God, we are in close communion and relationship with the Most

Blessed Trinity; relationship with God the Father, whose children we are; with God the Son, whose brothers and sisters we are; with God the Holy Ghost, by whose grace we are raised to this twofold dignity. Realize, if you can, my dear brethren, the great dignity of this position; children of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ! What an honor and glory for us poor mortals, as I explained in last Sunday's sermon. From that sermon we shall now draw the conclusion.

Plan of Discourse.

1. *By the grace of the Holy Ghost received in Baptism we are children of God and brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, therefore we must live as becomes children and brethren of God. This shall form the 1st part.* 2. *Children of God, brothers and sisters of Christ, what a shame it would be for us to live as children and relations of the devil! This shall form the 2d part.*

Deliver us from this shame, and make us partakers of the honor opposed to it, O Most Blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! This we ask of Thee, through the merits of our Mother Mary and our holy angels guardian.

First Part.

“Honors change manners”¹ is a common proverb. Experience proves it true. If a man of lowly descent is raised to an influential or lucrative position, or is invested with a high dignity, either through good luck, or through his own diligence and industry, or by some great man's favor, then the whole man undergoes a change. If any one who had known him in his former humble state were to see him now, he would wonder whether it was really the same person he beheld, or a complete stranger; so great is the change in his outward manner and behavior, in his clothing, his gait, his speech; for he talks now in a manner suited to his dignity. If it were not so with him, if he remained, as before, lowly, awkward, and simple in his manners, then every one would certainly think that the office or dignity was thrown away on him: a wooden image might as well be ennobled. Even a poor student, who represents the person of a king or a courtier in a play, must and does put on a different demeanor to that usual to him when he goes to school; during the short time he appears on the stage, it seems to him that he really is something

Honors
change
manner.

¹ Honores mutant mores.

great, and he assumes the proud manner and dignified bearing suited to so lofty a personage.

The old heathens deified their heroes, that the latter might behave as gods.

And this is the reason why, in former times, amongst the heathens, brave heroes either proclaimed themselves to be gods, or were deified by the people. This did not always happen through vanity and empty ambition, nor because the people wished to flatter them; it was rather a clever invention of these men, the object of which was, in making such heroes believe that they were descended from the gods, to induce them to behave in a manner worthy of their divine descent and to do great things for the welfare of their country. Therefore Varro, quoted by St. Augustine, writes: "It is useful for states that brave men should think they are descended from the gods."¹ For, thus they will be forced to live, not as ordinary men, but as gods. Caius Valerius was one of the most vicious and desperate men amongst the ancient Romans; he lived a thoroughly sensual life, like a brute animal. Publius Lucinius, in order to induce him to amend his ways, formed a wise plan, and made Valerius a high priest of Jupiter, which was one of the greatest dignities of the time. It is wonderful how a man changes when he is raised to an honorable position! This dignity made such an impression on Valerius that he became another man. He felt ashamed whenever he thought of his former vicious life, and, as he could before find no one to equal him in vice, so he now was unsurpassed in virtue and honorable conduct. "As he before gave an example of sensual indulgence," writes Valerius Maximus, "so he afterwards became a pattern of modesty and virtue."² This change was effected in him by the light of reason alone, assisted by the consideration of the dignity to which he had been raised; so that he saw himself obliged so to live in the sight of honorable men as became the position he occupied.

Christians are children of God; they must live as such.

Ah, Christians! to what are we raised when we are baptized in the name of the Most Holy Trinity? Do we think and believe what a high dignity is thereby conferred on us? It is an article of faith; we are children of God,³ and brethren of Jesus Christ. We are admitted to a participation of the Divine Nature; do we then acknowledge that this dignity far surpasses all others in the world, no matter how great they may be? Doubtless we acknowledge that. Now, if a worldly dignity requires that we should

¹ Utile esset civitatibus, ut se viri fortes ex Diis genitos esse credant.

² Quantum prius luxuriæ fuit exemplum, tantum postea modestiæ et sanctitatis specimem evasit.

³ Nunc filii Dei sumus!

live and behave in a proper manner, how are we to live and behave, what sort of a life must we lead as children of God Almighty? Oh, Christian, "ask of thy condition," says St. Maximus; "see how great thou art and see what thou owest." We are children of God. Well could St. John Chrysostom say: "We ought to be better than the angels and purer than the archangels, since we surpass them all in honor and dignity." What would it help us, he asks further on, to be children of God, if our lives were not conformable to our dignity? "Although you have an illustrious Father, yet that will not be any honor or glory for you unless you imitate Him in your life." "If you are children of Abraham," said Christ to the Pharisees, when they were boasting of Abraham their father, "do the works of Abraham," and do not be satisfied with mere words. He says the same to us: "If you are children of God, do the works of God;" live as becomes children of God; let it appear in your manners and behavior that you are children of God.

And, my dear brethren, what sort of a life must that be? See how the children of the vain world act. They consider that life to be suitable and becoming for them which they see and admire in others of a similar condition to themselves, so that we can see how one seeks to imitate the other in everything. It is the fashion, it is the custom, others of my station do the same, they are clothed in such a manner, they send their daughters to foreign countries, they have so many servants, they sleep so long in the morning, they keep such a table, they behave so and so in their visits and conversations, in society and assemblies, &c. I am as much as they and I must do what they do. Equality must be kept up, let it cost what it will; there is no use in trying to persuade them of anything else. See, that is what it means to live properly and according to one's station, in the ideas of the children of the world. "Children of this world," as they are called by Christ. Best "leave them to themselves."

The rule of life for the children of this world, is to do as others like them do.

Christians! we are children of God by the grace of Baptism, in which we renounced the world and its vain works; we must live, then, differently from the world, if we wish to live ac-

Hence the children of God must act as others

¹ Interroga statum tuum. ² Respice, quantum valeas, et perpende quantum debeas.

³ Angelis oportet esse meliores et Archangelis majores, ut qui iis omnibus sumus honore prepositi.

⁴ Etiam si celebrem habeas parentem, ne putes tibi illud ad salutem sufficere, aut ad honorem et gloriam, nisi et moribus illi cognatus sis.

⁵ Si filii Abraham estis, opera Abraham facite.—John viii. 39. ⁶ Si filii Dei estis, opera Dei facite.

⁷ Filii hujus seculi.

⁸ Sinite illos.

of the same noble descent do, and live according to the life of their divine Father.

According to our high position and descent. We must see, too, how others of the same station live. Now God is our Father, Christ is our eldest brother, by Him we are adopted children of God; consequently, from Him we must learn the manners, customs, and usages of our lives. St. Gregory Nyssenus says, "We must carefully examine the attributes of our heavenly Father, that we may reproduce them in ourselves as far as possible, and so be legitimate children of God."¹ St. Peter Chrysologas says, "Let us live according to our descent, not for the world, but for heaven, which is our inheritance, and let us show forth the likeness of our Father in ourselves."² This is the warning of the Son of God Himself: "Be ye therefore perfect, in sanctity of life, as your heavenly Father is perfect."³

That means to imitate Jesus Christ.

But how? you will say, as Philip said: "Lord, show us the Father."⁴ We have never seen Him, we know not what He is like. How, then, can we be like to Him? Hear the answer that was given to Philip and to us: "He who sees Me, sees also my Father."⁵ In Me you have the image of my heavenly Father and yours. From Me you shall take pattern and example, as to how you are to live and to behave according to your high dignity as children of God. "Learn of Me."⁶ What? To be meek and humble of heart, to be temperate and amiable with all who contradict you, to be merciful and patient. He who will come after Me, must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me. Love your enemies, do good to those that hate you, pray for those who persecute and calumniate you, as I have done. Then you will be really children of your Father who is in Heaven.⁷ See, my dear brethren, how much is said in a few words. The life and conduct proper for the children of God is the imitation of the life of Christ.

But that is done by very few Christians.

But, alas! how few Christians there are who really practise those virtues! With what reason has not Christ Himself complained: "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light."⁸ They are much more energetic and diligent in adapting and suiting themselves to the world and to their equals among the children of the world, than the others in harmonizing their lives with that of the Son of God,

¹ *Exacte convenit inspicere Genitoris nostri proprietatis, ut ad similitudinem Patris nosmet formantes, legitimi filii stamus Dei.*

² *Respondeamus generi, vivamos caelo, Patrem similitudine referamus.*

³ *Estote ergo perfecti, sicut Pater vester caelestis perfectus est.*

⁴ *Domine ostende nobis Patrem.* ⁵ *Qui videt me, videt et Patrem meum.*

⁶ *Discite a me.* ⁷ *Ut sitis filii Patris estis, qui in caelis est.*

⁸ *Filii hujus saeculi prudentiores filijs lucis in generatione sua sunt.—Luke xvi. 8.*

and with the lives of those holy children of God who imitated Him. How is it with us, my dear brethren? How are your lives and mine regulated? "All you who are baptized, have put on Christ as a garment."¹ When Joseph's brothers had dipped his coat in the blood of a kid, they showed it to their father Jacob, and said, "See whether it be thy son's coat or not." If we were now to appear before our heavenly Father, to give an account of our lives, and the angels asked: See whether that man has on the garment of Thy Son or not; dost Thou acknowledge his life to be an imitation of the life of Thy Son? what sort of an answer would be given? Ah, what little resemblance there is! How the beautiful robe, that I gave thee in holy Baptism, is soiled and torn! No, I can see nothing like my Son in that man, and, therefore, nothing becoming my children. And how would it be if our heavenly Father were to reproach some of us, on account of our perverse and vicious lives, as the Son of God formerly reproached the Pharisees: I do not acknowledge you as my children, you belong to your father, the devil,³ whose works you do. After I had adopted you as my children, and given you that holy name, not only did you not live according to your dignity, as becomes my children, but you lived as children and slaves of the devil. What a shame that would be for us, Christians! For our admonition we shall consider this in the second part.

Second Part.

In the celebrated city of Athens, a play was once produced, in which the person of the god Bacchus was to be represented. There was no one capable of taking the part but a certain slave, who belonged to a noble named Nicias. The slave, having obtained permission from his master, performed the part of Bacchus so well, and was so sleek and well formed, that the whole audience were mightily pleased, and congratulated Nicias on having such a talented slave. Nicias, who was present, said with an earnest countenance: Henceforth I do not wish to keep him as a slave, and I give him his liberty. The people were very much surprised at this apparently strange conduct, for they thought he would look upon it as an honor and pleasure to possess such a slave, who could please so well by his acting. Certainly, answered Nicias, it is an honor for me, but it would be a shame for

The ancient heathens considered it a shame for a slave to represent a god in a play.

¹ Quicumque baptizati estis, Christum induistis.

² Vide, utrum tunica filii tui sit, an non?—Gen. xxxvii. 22. ³ Vos ex patre diabolo estis.

him to remain my slave, and therefore I give him his liberty; for it is not right that one who has represented the person of a god, should serve a man in slavery. These are the words of Plutarch in his history: "He stood up, and because he thought it a shame that the body consecrated by representing a god should be any longer in slavery, he freed the young man."¹

What a far greater shame it is then for a child of God to be a slave to the devil by mortal sin.

And now I ask you, my dear Christian brethren, is there any comparison between a senseless idol and the true and living God? between a false and a true divinity? Certainly not, as you must acknowledge. I ask you again, is there any comparison between a man who represents the person of a false god, by means of a disguise, for an hour or so, on the stage of a theatre, and one who has received a real participation of the divine nature, a child of the Most High God? Certainly not, you must again acknowledge. I ask you a third time, can any comparison be made between the servitude and slavery in which some poor man serves another man, in order to earn his bread, and that by which a child of God, an heir to the kingdom of Heaven, is held under the yoke of the devil? And you must answer, certainly not. Now, we are the image of the true God, we become His children by adoption in holy Baptism, as our infallible faith teaches us. If, then, an ignorant heathen could see, by the light of reason alone, that it was wrong and shameful for a poor man, who represented the person of an idol only on the stage, to serve another man as his slave, what reason can ever grapple with the enormity of the shame, if a child of God becomes a slave to the wicked spirit of evil? And yet, all those who consent to a mortal sin are in this slavery, and with their own full consent and deliberation. As the Apostle says, speaking of all sinners: "And they may recover themselves from the snares of the devil, by whom they are held captive at his will."² What a shameful dishonoring of one's self and one's own high dignity! The bare idea of the son of a rich man sinking so low, through his own fault, that he is reduced to feed swine and to satisfy his hunger with the husks thrown to them (as the gospel says of the prodigal son), the bare idea of this is enough to make one shed tears of pity and compassion; what a pitiful thing, then, is it not, to think that a child of the true God should, by his evil conduct and vicious life, abandon his

¹ Surrexit, deoque dicatum corpus servire, nefas se putare. Inquiens adolescentem manusit.

² Resipiscant a diaboli laqueis, a quo captivi tenentur ad ipsius voluntatem.—II. Tim. ii. 26.

heavenly Father, lose his eternal inheritance and become a slave to the devil, while his soul is perishing with hunger!

Alas! how many there are who sink to that vile and wretched state for the sake of a momentary pleasure, a little money or a worthless gain. Of such as these may the complaint of the Psalmist with truth be uttered: "When man was in honor he hath not understood;"¹ "he hath lowered himself to the senseless beasts, and is become like unto them."² "Their glory they have changed into the likeness of a calf that eateth hay."³ So he speaks of the godless Israelites, who, after having been so wonderfully led by God Himself in the desert, and after having been protected and fed by Him, adored a golden calf as their god. Could not the same complaint be made of most Christians? St. Paul, wishing to give the baptized Ephesians a true idea of the great grace they had received in Baptism, and to lay down a rule of life for them to follow quite opposed to that they had formerly observed, says to them: "You were dead in your sins, wherein, in time past, you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of this air, of the spirit that now worketh on the children of unbelief, in the desires of the flesh, by nature children of wrath; you being heretofore gentiles in the flesh, having no hope of the promise, adulterers, thieves, avaricious, calumniators, idolaters." Such were you formerly; but rejoice and thank the divine mercy, for now you are justified and cleansed from those sins, and are sanctified in Christ Jesus by the Spirit of God. "You were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord."⁴ You were formerly slaves of the devil, now you are children of God. "Fellow-citizens of the saints and friends of God."⁵ But I, my dear brethren, could invert these words of the Apostle, and say to many Christians: You were formerly justified and enlivened, and sanctified in holy Baptism, but now you are dead in sins of all sorts. You were formerly children of light, but now you are children of anger and darkness, who walk according to the world, the flesh, and the temptations of the devil. You were formerly children of God, fellow-citizens of the saints, friends of God, but what are you now? For your great shame, you are slaves of the devil, adulterers, idolaters, avaricious, thieves, calumniators, drunkards, blasphemers. I say adulterers, for St. Paul calls by that name, not only those who

Very many
Christians
live in this
way.

¹ Homo, cum in honore esset, non intellexit.

² Comparatus est jumentis insipientibus, et similis factus est illis.

³ Mutaverunt gloriam suam in similitudinem vituli comedentis fœnum.

⁴ Eratis aliquando tenebræ; nunc autem lux in Domino. ⁵ Civis Sanctorum, et domestici Dei.

give way to the foul desires of the flesh and violate the sanctity of marriage, but also all sinners who dishonor the grace of Baptism for the sake of a vain and frivolous creature, although they were brothers and members of Jesus Christ. I say idolaters and blasphemers, for, according to St. Jerome, "We adore as many new gods as we have sins and vices."¹ If anger makes me violate the law of God, then anger and desire of revenge have become my god.² If I look at a person with an impure pleasure, lust has become my god.³ Am I proud? Then pride is my god. Do I eat and drink to excess? Then my sensual appetites are my god.⁴ See, I repeat to so many Christians, you have deliberately reduced yourselves to this disgraceful condition, you, who before were children of God.

Conclusion
and warn-
ing to sin-
ners.

Like St. John the Apostle, I cry out to all those who are still in the state of sin and in the slavery of the devil: "Remember, oh, sinner, whence thou art fallen,⁵ think of the honor and dignity to which thou wast formerly raised, and the shame and disgrace in which thou art now, and, after having considered thy wretchedness, resolve with the prodigal son, "How well off are even the servants in my father's house, and I am here among swine!"⁶ In what an honorable position are the children of God, who love my heavenly Father, as good children ought, in whose number I formerly was; can I not return to them again, if I will? Why do I still remain among the slaves of the devil? I will arise at once, I will hesitate no longer; I will arise and return to my Father,⁷ by a sincere repentance! I will say to Him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee; I am not worthy to be called Thy child!⁸ Receive me again into Thy favor, and let me hear, to the great joy of the angels, "I have found again my child who was lost."⁹ Yes, sinners, such will really be the case, if you only return to your heavenly Father with contrite hearts.

To the just.

But for you, my dear brethren, or holy hearers, as I should call the just, for you are, as I hope, children of God in the state of grace, my conclusion must be in the words of St. Leo: "Oh, Christian, recognize thy great dignity, and, since thou art made partaker of the divine nature, be careful not to return to thy former vile-

¹ Quæcunque vitia habemus, tot recentes habemus deos.

² Iratus sum, ira mihi Deus est. ³ Libido mihi Deus est.

⁴ Quorum Deus venter est. ⁵ Memor esto itaque, unde cecidisti, et prima opera fac. —Apo. 11.5.

⁶ Quanti mercenarii in domo patris mei sunt, etc. ⁷ Surgam, et ibo ad patrem.

⁸ Dicam, Pater peccavi: jam non sum dignus vocari filius tuus.

⁹ Filius meus perierat, et inventus est.

ness by an unworthy life.”¹ Such was the warning of the elder Tobias to the friend who was ridiculing his piety: “Speak not so, for we are children of saints.”² Such should also be the daily teaching and warning of parents to their children, of masters and mistresses to their domestics, and of each individual to himself: Do not speak so foolishly, leave off swearing and cursing; away with quarrels, abusive language, back-biting, lies, and impure conversation; for we are children of God, who must speak an angelic, a divine language. Away with impure imaginations and desires, with thoughts of vengeance, or despair, or pusillanimity. For we are children of God, whose hearts must be always in Heaven, with their Father, in childlike confidence and uniformity with His holy will. Let nothing of the pride, impurity, injustice, or drunkenness of the world be seen in your conduct, and, to say all in a word, avoid everything that has the least appearance of sin; for we are children of God, who must lead a holy life. In nearly the same way King Menedemus tried to inculcate good manners on his son. When the son was once invited to a feast, and asked leave of his father to go, “Go,” said the father, “but remember thou art the son of a king.”³ He meant by these words, do not forget who thou art, always behave in a manner becoming the son of a king. Ah, Christians! do not forget who you are. Wherever you be, whether you stand or walk, in whatever you do, remember, you are the son of a King; let each of you remember and think to himself, I am a child of God. If you are alone in your own house: remember, think, I am a child of God, my Father sees me, although no one else does. If you are in company; remember, think, I am a child of God, and behave in such a manner, that every one may see, from your conduct and conversation, from your temperance and modesty, that you are a child of God. As often as the devil with his temptations, the flesh with its unbridled desires, or other men with their evil example, tempt you to sin, forget not what you are. Remember, think, I am a child of God; I will do nothing against God, my heavenly Father, nor against the high dignity I possess as His child. In prosperity, when everything goes on according to your desire, say, I am a child of God;⁴ I value that more than everything else. In adversity, when the sensitiveness of nature prompts to impatience, remember, think, I am

¹ *Agnosce, O Christiane dignitatem tuam et divinæ consors factus naturæ noli in veterem villitatem degeneri conversatione redire.*

² *Nolite itaque loqui, quoniam illi sanctorum sumus.—Tob. ii. 17-18.*

³ *Sed memento, regis filius es.*

⁴ *Dei filius sum.*

a child of God; God is my Father and He will take care of me. It is the will of God, my heavenly Father, that things should be with me now as they are. My inheritance is the kingdom of Heaven; it is there I expect my happiness and unending joy. And that the remembrance of this may be always before you, use these words, for a time, as an aspiration: I am a child of God; I love Thee, my heavenly Father. By this means our thoughts, words, and actions shall be such as are becoming Christians, and we shall insure to ourselves the reward of which St. Paul speaks. If we are children of God and live as such, then we are also heirs of God,² and joint heirs with Christ, our eldest brother, and with the elect children of God, we shall one day possess eternal happiness, in our heavenly Fatherland, with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. Amen.

FIFTH SERMON.

**ON THE DIGNITY AND OBLIGATION OF MEN WHO HAVE
ANGELS AS THEIR GUARDIANS.**

Subject.

Every man has an angel to guard him. 1. How God loves and values man! 2. What great reverence and gratitude each one owes his angel guardian!—*Preached on the Feast of the Holy Angels Guardian.*

Text.

Angeli eorum in cœlis semper vident faciem Patris mei.—Matth. xviii. 10.

“Their angels in Heaven always see the face of my Father who is in Heaven.”

Introduction.

I have read an unusual text for you to-day, my dear brethren, because the Catholic Church celebrates a peculiar feast to-day, to which the usual Sunday's Mass and office must give way, namely, the Feast on which we thank and honor our holy angels guardian. I owe these angels far too much ever to forget them, or to pass by their feast-day in silence. When I consider, on the one hand, what sort of creatures angels are, and on the other what sort we men are, and that each one of us has his own

¹ Dei filius sum.

² Si filii et hæredes.

angel guardian, good God! I say with astonishment, how is it that Thou so lovest man? Holy angels! what do we not owe you? Such is the matter of to-day's sermon, or rather meditation.

Plan of Discourse.

Every man has an angel to guard him : the leading idea. How God loves and values man ! the first consideration and first point. What great reverence and gratitude each one owes his angel guardian : second consideration and point.

The object is to awaken in us a constant devotion and love of God and of the holy angels. All ye heavenly spirits, and you in particular, Queen of Angels! I have hitherto experienced undoubted benefits from your assistance; therefore, on this day, which is one of special honor for you, I do not doubt that you will help and assist me, so I begin with great confidence.

First Part.

All princes, counts, and nobles, of whatever degree they may be, give to their children, especially when they travel in foreign lands, an intelligent, prudent, pious and well-mannered tutor, whose office it is to accompany the young nobles at all times, and in all places, to direct them, to instruct them in good manners, to teach them according to their high position, to protect them from being led astray, and, when necessary, to punish and reprove them. To that end, they give the tutor full power and paternal authority over their children, and the latter must obey them as their own father. The tutors, on their side, must also frequently inform the parents, by writing, how their children are getting on, for it is of great importance to a noble family that its children should be brought up and behave in a becoming manner. Now the tutor need never be of nobler birth than the children. Sometimes we see rich counts who are entrusted with the care of the sons of kings or emperors, and nobles who become tutors to princes; but who ever heard of a count or a prince, not to say a king, undertaking the office of tutor to the son of an ordinary nobleman? The higher in rank will never undertake this duty for one who is lower; for a tutor generally receives a yearly salary for looking after his pupil, and he may also look forward to some other reward to induce him to use all possible diligence and care in the fulfilment of his duty.

When princes travel, a tutor is sent with them.

You see already, my dear brethren, what is the meaning of this simile: we are all children of one Father, to whom all of us, who have the gift of faith, cry out every day, "Our Father, who art

We men, who are children of God, are

travelling in
a foreign
land amidst
innumerable dan-
gers.

in Heaven.”¹ But as long as we are on this earth, we are in a foreign land, we are sent as travelling strangers into this vale of tears, as St. Paul writes to the Corinthians: “My dear brethren, we have to know, that while we are in the body, we are absent from the Lord.”² Oh, my God! who can count, or even imagine all the dangers and snares that threaten both soul and body, to which we are daily, hourly and at every moment exposed in this strange land? We are surrounded by visible and invisible enemies who are plotting our eternal ruin. The greater number of people, in spite of the helps they so frequently receive, allow themselves to be led astray, and are ruined eternally. What would become of us if we were abandoned to our own weakness, without any helper, guardian, or leader to take care of us?

God pro-
tects us
against
them with
different
helpers.

Therefore, our heavenly Father takes care of His own, and looks after His children in a foreign land with a more than fatherly care; for, in the first place, we are all bound to look after each other, according to the Wise Man: “And he gave to every one of them commandment concerning his neighbor.”³ By virtue of this commandment, every one is bound to help his neighbor to good and to the salvation of his soul, however and whenever he can. In the second place, He has so divided the world, and arranged it in order, that each kingdom, province, and district has its king, its prince, its lord, every town and community has its superiors, by whom it is guarded and governed in its temporal interests, as well as bishops, parish-priests, and clergy to instruct it in spiritual things and to lead it to Heaven. Further, every household has the father or mother of the family as its superior and head, to look after the spiritual and temporal interests of the family with parental care, according to the warning of the Apostle: “For they watch as being to render an account for your souls.”⁴ (Take notice of this, parents and fathers of families!) And is not this enough, oh, my good God, for Thy bountiful Providence to do for men? especially, since, in addition, Thou Thyself art always present to help and protect them with Thy continual, unceasing care⁵

God has be-
sides given
each one of
us an angel
as tutor.

No, my dear brethren, we have a great King as our Father, and we have the happiness “to be called and to be children of God.”⁶ All this is not enough for His glory and wealth, and

¹ *Pater noster qui est in cœlis!*

² *Scientes, quoniam dum sumus in corpore, peregrinamur a Domino.*—II. Cor. v. 6.

³ *Mandavit illis unicuique de proximo suo.*—Ecc. xvii. 12.

⁴ *Ipsi enim pervigilant tanquam rationem pro animabus vestris reddituri.*—Heb. xiii. 17.

⁵ *Ut filii Dei nominemur et simus.*—I. John iii. 1.

for the love and esteem that He has for His children. Besides all this, He has given to every one, no matter who it may be, even to the poorest beggar, and to the most wicked sinner, a special tutor and guardian for his journey, who is invisible to mortal eyes and is never absent from the object of his care. And what kind of a tutor is it? Oh, man! "He has given His angels charge over thee, that they should guard thee in all thy ways." Here I could wish to have a more than angelic intelligence, in order to understand properly the nature of these heavenly spirits, and to represent it to your minds. But, since no eye can see, no ear hear, no finger touch them, we cannot represent them to our imagination, and so I must keep silent on this head, lest I should, like the angel that St. Augustine saw, endeavor to pour a fathomless ocean into a little hole with a spoon; a folly I should certainly be guilty of, if I attempted to describe, with my own unassisted reason, the excellence of the angels.

Holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church, you whose minds were so especially enlightened by God, to whom He revealed supernatural things and hidden mysteries, lend me your words and your testimonies, that we may form some idea of the greatness of those heavenly princes, the angels. All acknowledge, with St. Thomas of Aquin, that the lowest and least among the angels surpasses, in nature and excellence, the most perfect of mortals, as much as the brilliant light of the sun exceeds that of the stars. They are called the first-born of God, the first invention of the Divine Wisdom, the first masterpiece of active Omnipotence, the first fruits and flowers of nature; so speaks St. Augustine. Alas! what are we men in comparison with these heavenly hosts? Poor cripples composed of flesh, skin, and bone; while they are pure spirits, not subject to decay and death. Our origin is the slime of the earth, theirs, the beautiful Heaven; we are born in ignorance and weakness, they are created full of wisdom and strength; we are in misery, they in happiness; we in danger, they in security, for they really enjoy the beatific vision of our heavenly Father. ² If it is true, as St. Thomas teaches, that the number of the angels surpasses that of all other created things, in which teaching St. Gregory agrees, we may ask with the Prophet Job, "Is there any numbering of his soldiers?" ³ The stars in the heavens, the different animals on earth, the plants, the leaves on

The dignity and excellence of the angels.

¹ Angelis suis mandavit de te, ut custodiant te in omnibus viis tuis.—Ps. xc. 11.

² Semper vident faciem Patris mei, qui in cœlis est.

³ Numquid est numerus mihi itum elus?—Job xxv. 3.

the trees, the fish in the sea, what a vast number they make, and yet, if they were all taken together, they would not equal the number of the angels. And further, if it is true, according to the opinion of the same Angelic Doctor, that not one of the angels resembles another in excellence, but that one is more beautiful, wise, and powerful than the other, then, I must think, since the lowest of the angels possesses such great excellence, who can understand the glory and greatness of the higher choirs, since one surpasses the other in excellence? Do you wish to know something of the natural strength and power of the angels? Read the 19th Chapter of the 4th Book of Kings, and you will see that a single angel slew, in one night, 185,000 Assyrian soldiers; one angel, even the least powerful, says the learned Suarez, has strength enough to oppose all the powers of hell.¹ One angel, says Cardinal Ægidius, would be enough to protect the whole world. The Holy Ghost calls them in the canticles, “the choirs of armies.”² And therefore the Church sings, “with all the soldiers of the heavenly host.”³

The beauty
of the an-
gels.

St. Bridget, in her Revelations, speaks of the great beauty of the angels; if you only could catch one glimpse, she says, of the beauty of an angel, your body would fall asunder with joy and wonder, like a worm-eaten vessel. St. John the Apostle, that eagle who saw so much of the Godhead that the whole heavens and the Divine Nature were shown to him, yet, when he once saw an angel, was so enraptured with his beauty, that he fell down on his knees to adore him as God, as he himself says: “I fell down at his feet, to adore him.”⁴ What is the reason that, in the Book of Genesis, which gives such a particular account of all that God created on each day, there is not a single word about the creation of the angels, although they are the most excellent amongst all creatures, as far as their nature is concerned? Theodoret answers this question, which he puts to himself, as follows: It would not have been good for the people of the Old Law to have known anything about the angels, for, they were so addicted to idolatry, even to the extent of worshipping a calf as their god, that they would certainly have adored the angels, had they known anything of their invisible, noble, and glorious nature.⁵

The Prophet Daniel can give us some idea of the glory and majesty of the angels, for he saw one, whose clothing

¹ Ita ut minimus angelus custos possit potentiae totius inferni resistere.

² Chorus castrorum. ³ Cum omni militia caelestis exercitus.

⁴ Cecidi ante pedes ejus, ut adorarem eum. - Apoc. xix. 10.

⁵ Quid non perpetrasset invisibilis naturae notitiam assecuti.

he has described: "I saw him," he says, "and I was so overwhelmed by his majesty, that there was no strength left in me; and the appearance of my countenance was changed in me; and I fainted away and retained no strength." Certainly, it was his beauty and excellence that made Lucifer so conceited and proud, that he thought himself equal to the Almighty God, and when it was announced to him that he must one day adore God in human form, he began to rise up against God (in this his sin consisted, according to the general teaching), as if he thought it a shame for such a great spirit as he was to subject himself to one who was to be clothed with weak human nature.

Behold, my dear brethren, it is these glorious princes of Heaven that our heavenly Father gives to you and me, poor mortals as we are, to be our tutors, guardians, and leaders, nay, even, so to say, our servants and attendants, as long as we are sojourning in this earthly pilgrimage. "Behold," says the Lord, "oh, man, and see my goodness, learn how I love and value thee. I send my angel," "who is to go before thee, and with thee and to protect thee on thy way," who will never depart a hair's breadth from thee during thy whole life: "who will bear thee in his hands," wherever thou goest or art during the day. And in the night, when you are asleep, he will stand by your bed, and keep a continual watch over you. If you ask him to do so, he will put you right when you go astray on your journey; and many must be persuaded of the truth of this. If you ask him in the evening with confidence, he will awake you in the morning at the desired hour; as many experience every day. Finally, his greatest care will be to watch over you alone, so that no evil may happen, against your will, to either your soul or your body. "With great care and watchful diligence our guardian angels are with us at all times and in all places, providing for our necessities." Such are the words of St. Augustine. In what necessities, do you say, St. Augustine? In all. What particular hours of our lives do our angels keep guard over us? At all times without exception. In what places? In all places, at home and abroad. And what angels are thus made our tutors and guardians? Not the

These mighty princes of Heaven are guardians of our souls and bodies.

¹ Vidi, et non remansit in me fortitudo; sed et species mea immutata est in me. et emarculi, nec habui quidquam virium.—Dan. x. 8.

² Ecce ecce mitto angelum meum. ³ Qui præcedat te et cusodiât in via.

⁴ In manibus portabunt te.

⁵ Magna cura et vigilantî studio adsunt nobis omnibus horis, atque omnibus locis custodes angeli, providentes necessitatibus nostris.

lowest only but also some from the highest choirs. The Apostle says: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to minister for them, who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?"

What great esteem and love God thus shows for us.

Oh, David! As you were once considering in deep meditation the beautiful sky with its twinkling stars, the vast earth with all its fruits, the boundless ocean with all its fishes, the great expanse of air with all its birds, you thought that all this was created by God for man's use, and ravished out of yourself in sheer astonishment, you cried out: "Oh, Lord, our Lord, what is man that Thou art mindful of him? Thou hast subjected all things under his feet. Oh, Lord, our Lord, how wonderful is Thy name in the whole earth?" But, oh, Prophet, how does that astonish you, when you say, immediately after that, God is not satisfied with having subjected to man all things under heaven, but he has also given what He has in heaven, namely, His holy angels, His own courtiers, for the service of man. You say in the same place, "Thou hast made man a little less than the angels."² Yes, it is true, that so far as our nature is concerned, we are poor beggars compared with those mighty princes of heaven; but when you consider their office, could you not say rather, Thou, oh, Lord, hast raised man somewhat above the angels,⁴ inasmuch as Thou hast given them to him as guardians.

What a dignity for our souls.

My dear brethren, what are we to think of all this? When Tobias learned that it was an angel who had shown the way to his son, he and all his family prostrated themselves, through holy fear, on the ground. "Then they lying prostrate for three hours upon their face, blessed God. And rising up they told all His wonderful works."⁵ Oh, souls of men, how God esteems and values you, cries out St. Jerome: "Oh, surpassing dignity of souls that each one should have an angel sent to guard it." Could we have a clearer proof of the divine clemency, love, and goodness to us? If God the Son had not died for us, if we had received no other benefit from Him, this alone should suffice to convince us that we are very near, so to speak, to the heart of

¹ Omnes sunt administratorii spiritus, in ministerium missi propter eos qui hereditatem capiunt salutis.—Heb. i. 14.

² Domine, Dominus noster! Quid est homo, quod memor es ejus? Omnia subjecti sub pedibus ejus. Quam admirabile est nomen tuum in universa terra!—Ps. viii.

³ Minuisti eum paulo minus ab angelis. ⁴ Exaltasti eum paulo magis supra angelos.

⁵ Trementes ceciderunt super terram in faciem suam; tunc prostrati per boros tres in faciem, benedixerunt Deum. Et exsurgentes narraverunt omnia mirabilia ejus.—Tob. xii. 22.

⁶ Magna dignitas animarum, ut unaquaque habeat in custodiam sui angelum delegatum.

God, that He is very much concerned about man, and that it is His sincere wish and desire that all men should be saved. This alone would be enough, if we have not hearts of stone or steel, to force us to love, with all our strength, and with our whole hearts, such a kind and loving Father. Christians ! think a little over this matter, and see whether it is not so. And we think so seldom of it ! Have we even once reckoned that amongst the benefits we receive from God, and thanked Him for it? Why have we not done so? Now, at least, let us begin with Tobias to relate the wonderful goodness of God to us, to praise and to bless Him for it. There is still another point to consider: every one has an angel guardian; what reverence, love and gratitude does not each one owe his angel! Have we ever thought of that? Let us do so now, and briefly.

Second Part.

Even if the holy angels were not given to us as guardians, if they were in no way connected with us and we were quite strange to them, if we could neither hope nor expect any benefit from them, we should still have reason enough to hold them in great respect; for, if it is according to the natural order and to all laws that inferiors should show reverence and respect to superiors; if we must honor even foreign princes, to whom we are in no way subject, how much more are not we mortals bound to honor the holy angels, whose glory and excellence far surpasses that of all earthly kings and potentates? But now, oh, man; whoever you are, count, if you can, all the moments of your life, recall to your memory all the dangers that threatened your soul and body, from which you have been happily saved; all the dangers to soul and body into which you might have fallen, but which have been kept away from you. How often might you not have fallen down in your childhood and broken a leg, or an arm, or even your neck? How often might you not have fallen down stairs or into the fire? How often, in after years, might you not have been drowned, struck with lightning, or with a thunderbolt, pierced with a knife or sword, shot with a bullet, or crushed beneath a falling rock or beam? Count the sins you have committed, and those which you might have committed; how often were you in such a state, that if an accident had happened to you and you had lost your life, you would have been condemned to hell forever? How often were you in such a state that the devil and all his creatures were looking out for you, like sleuth-

The many benefits we receive from our angel deserve our greatest gratitude.

hounds, their teeth watering with the desire of being revenged on you, and awaiting only the word of their Creator to fulfil their desire, and out of that state you have been saved by an inward impulse, that you felt, to repent and to recover the state of grace? Count the temptations which sometimes assailed you so violently, and which you overcame, and the temptations and snares which the enemies of your soul laid for you, and from which you were protected. How often have you had, in this or that occasion, a desire to sin, which you opposed by the fear that you felt within you? How often have you wished to go into that house, or that company, in which you would have been in danger of sinning, when something occurred to prevent you? How often might you have incurred many dangers from temptations and seductions, especially in your youth, and you were saved from them all? Count the inspirations that have impelled you to read a spiritual book, or to hear a sermon, by which you have been kept away from evil, or incited to do good. Count all the good thoughts you have had in your life, which have been to you the occasion of meritorious works: when you can bring all these, and a lot more that have escaped your memory, before your mind, then you may cry out with astonishment: My holy angel, what do I not owe thee? These are the benefits I receive from my tutor and my guardian, which he either obtained for me from God by his intercession, or bestowed on me himself, or which were given me through his instrumentality; since, according to the general teaching, God does everything by means of the angels.

Especially since they are much greater and nobler than we are.

And this great service has been rendered to me, a poor, miserable mortal, for such a long time, so carefully and so constantly by a great, mighty, beautiful, and blessed Prince of Heaven. What an honor, nay, what a humiliation! What Clianus writes of the whale is remarkable. This great monster, since it has small eyes and bad sight, would often be exposed to dangers from other fishes, and from different causes, and could not long avoid them, if nature had not given it a pilot and conductor. This pilot, says Clianus, is a small fish of a white color,¹ which swims continually before the whale, is always on the lookout, and when it sees any danger, it gives due warning: it leads the whale to its feeding place, and guides it away from rocks and stones which might do it an injury; in a word, it does everything that, among human beings, one friend can do for another. The same au-

¹ Piscis est parvus colore albo.

thor says it is a very remarkable thing that nature has given to such a small animal the charge of such a huge one.' But that does not excite my wonder so much as if the contrary were the case. and the big fish rendered those services to the little one. I should certainly be astonished at that, for it is a common and daily occurrence for the less to serve the greater; but that the greater should be at the service of the less, day and night, that a mighty whale should conduct a small fish about the ocean, that would indeed be wonderful. And precisely on this account, it is no mere natural effect, but an extraordinary beneficence, and an unspeakable love for us mortals, that makes the angels serve us as they do. What are we in this life, my dear brethren? "Men are as the fishes of the sea," says the prophet Habacuc, and if we compare ourselves to the holy angels, what small and worthless fishes do we not appear, in contrast to these heavenly princes, whose greatness and might our whole nature cannot reach. Nevertheless, one of these great angels has, up to the present, done me all these services and a great many more, and as long as I live he will not cease to serve, protect, and watch over me. What a great dignity that is, I must repeat, and what a humiliation!

And these services are performed for me by one who has not the least need of me, and who can expect no reward, to say nothing of profit or utility from me, as tutors expect from their pupils. If I gave him, like Tobias, the half of my goods, or even the whole of them, what would it profit him? He has no need of such thing, so that he serves me gratuitously. What goodness! And he showed me that goodness many times when I refused to listen to his warning voice, despised his inspirations, turned a deaf ear to his entreaties, and troubled him with my sins. I have so often tried to drive him away from me, and he would not leave me; he still remained with me and continued his usual watchful care of me. What mildness, patience, and mercy on the part of my angel! And hitherto I have hardly even thanked him, hardly thought of him once during the week. What monstrous ingratitude on my part! And in my temptations, dangers and difficulties, I have hardly ever had recourse to this guardian, who is always at my side, although he is so powerful and so anxious and ready to help me. What a want of confidence! And in his presence, before his eyes (I am ashamed of

They perform these services for us, though we are unworthy of them.

¹ Quod mirum videri debet.

² Homines quasi pisces maris.—Habac. i. 14.

myself when I think of it), I have dared to commit those crimes, which, in order to keep them hidden from men, I committed only in darkness and in secret, to use language which I would not wish an honorable man to hear, and to be so proud, vain, immoral, and passionate in my thoughts, desires, eyes, and behavior, that I have reason to blush even before a mortal like myself. What shameless depravity!

We must therefore, in future, show them all the more honor, gratitude, and love.

When I consider all this, what must I think, what conclusion must I draw? Is it not right that, in the future, I should show all the more devotion, confidence, honor, and love to this, my greatest benefactor, in proportion as I have been hitherto so rude, so thoughtless, so ungrateful, so shameless and so impious towards him? Let us, therefore, my dear brethren, all make the resolution which St. Bernard suggests: "Let us then all be devout to these great guardians. Let us thankfully return them love for love. Let us honor them as much as we can and ought." If we do this with all our strength, it will still not be a sufficient return for the great and manifold benefits we have received from them. It is not in vain that I implore the assistance of the holy angels guardian, in the beginning of all my sermons. My end and object in so doing is to remind you of your duty of honoring the angels. As often, then, as you hear that, in future, let each one think to himself, there is another hint, another warning for me to reverence my angel guardian. And make this resolution also: no day of my life shall pass without my doing something in his honor, either by going on my knees before his image, or by doing a certain work, or by visiting the sick, or giving alms to please him. I shall set apart a certain day of the week in his special honor. In all my business, you, oh, holy angel, shall be my help and support; in doubt you shall counsel me, and console me in trials and difficulties, for I shall always call on you for help. As often as the wicked enemy shall assail me with temptations and evil inspirations, whenever wicked men try to lead me into sin, or my own corrupt flesh incites me to unlawful pleasure, you will be my protector, to you I will fly for refuge, with as much confidence as the child runs to its mother's lap, and I will cry out, as the younger Tobias did to his guide, when the huge fish leaped up at him to devour him: See, oh, master, my holy angel! he is attacking me.² The blood-hounds of hell are opening their jaws to

¹ Simul igitur tantis custodibus devoti simus; grati redamamus eos: honoremus eos, quantum valemus, quantum debemus.

² Domine, invadit me!

devour my soul, temptations are troubling me and I am afraid of being faithless to my God. "Help me, holy angel, protect me, that I may not perish."¹ What have I to fear with you on my side? And at the end of my dangerous journey, when my troubled soul shall be most in need of help, when, on my death-bed, the journey into eternity will begin, you shall be my companion on the way, who, as I trust, will lead me into the land of eternal joys, where I, with the greatest thankfulness, and amidst the congratulations of all the heavenly court, shall see my heavenly Father, and say, as the younger Tobias said to his father on his return home: Behold, this angel has conducted me to and fro, and has happily led me hither.² I must thank him that I have not been devoured by the fish, by the hellish dragon. Through him we have received all kinds of benefits :³ there, oh, holy angel, I shall be thy companion in joy for all eternity, and with thee, I shall praise and love the infinite beauty of God forever. Help me, that this may come to pass. Amen.

SIXTH SERMON.

ON THE NECESSARY OCCUPATION OF CHRISTIANS.

Subject.

1. It is necessary for us to be always and entirely occupied in that alone which concerns God and our soul's salvation. 2. The great majority of men know little or nothing of this one necessary occupation.—*Preached on the first Sunday after Epiphany.*

Text.

Nesciebatis quia in his, quæ Patris mei sunt, oportet me esse?

"Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?"—Luke ii. 49.

Introduction.

The Incarnate Word of God preaches for the first time; who would not wish to listen to Him? The Master of all masters gives His first lesson; who could doubt of its truth? It is true that it is a Child of twelve years who is speaking; but it is also He who is from eternity, and who inspired the prophets with what

¹ *Salva, Domine, nos perimus.*

² *Me duxit et reduxit sanum.*

³ *Benignis omnibus per eum repleti sumus.*

they had to say. Let us hear, then, oh, Christians, what Christ preaches to us : I must, it is necessary for me ; what ? “ I must be about my Father’s business.”¹ Oh, that is certainly a truth of great importance ! But, alas ! the greater part of men could be asked, regarding it : Did you never know anything about it ?² It is necessary that you, as well as I, should be always occupied in those things which concern my Father and your souls. Did you know that before ? Oh, gracious God ! as necessary as this is, there are few who have a right idea of it, as I will now prove by Thine own words, and bewail.

Plan of Discourse.

1. *It is necessary for us to be always and entirely occupied in that alone which concerns God and our soul’s salvation. Such is the subject of the first and principal point.* 2. *The great majority of men know little or nothing of this one necessary occupation. Such will be the sad complaint of the second point.*

Oh, wisest of all teachers, Jesus Christ, who excited the admiration of all in the temple, give to me to-day, and to all here present, a clear insight into this great truth : it is necessary, and teach us, too, to deplore our blindness, which has caused us to be hitherto so ignorant of that truth ! This we ask of Thee through the merits of Thy Mother Mary, and the intercession of our holy angels.

First Part.

A necessary, important, and indispensable occupation must be undertaken by us with all diligence.

We are obliged to perform, with all diligence and at all times, that business, for the sake of which alone we are sent into this world, and which, if we neglect it, will cause us an irreparable loss. For instance, a servant is dispatched to Treves, in order to appear before the prince, on a certain appointed day, and at a certain hour, to give an account of the service rendered by him, so that he may be promoted to a higher and more lucrative position. Suppose that you are acquainted with this man, and that you invite him, at the time appointed for his business, to dine, to play, to dance, to hunt, or to amuse himself with you, would he allow himself to be persuaded by you to accept the invitation ? No, he would say, I have something else to do now. I must appear at court, for it is for that alone that I came to Treves. Oh, never mind that, you would answer, come with me and let us amuse ourselves. What ! he would reply, amuse myself ? There is no time for that now ; what I have to do is much more im-

¹ In his, quæ Patris mei sunt, oportet me esse. ² Nesciebatis.

portant. But, you might say again, there will be time enough to-morrow. No, he will answer, I have been ordered to come, not to-morrow, but to-day; if I lose the opportunity now, I lose all my future prospects with it. It is not a profitless or trifling thing that I have to do to-day; there is question of my promotion, on which all my future life depends. I must consider that before everything else.¹

My dear Christian brethren, of this kind, and of far greater importance, is the business that we have to do concerning God and our souls. For what end and object are we in this world? What are we doing here? Ask the children in the catechism class why man was created. They will know how to answer better than many grown-up people, and they will tell you that man was created to know God, to love God, to serve God, and thereby to bring his soul to eternal happiness. This is the one necessary occupation, of which the Son of God spoke to Martha: "One thing is necessary,"² without which all the others are worthless, to which everything else we undertake must tend, as to its final object. I may be rich in this world, and have gold and lands, but that is not necessary; it is not for that that God has sent me here. One thing is necessary, and that is, to serve God and save my soul. I may be held in honor and esteem by men, but that is not necessary, it is not for that I am sent here; one thing is necessary, to serve God and save my soul. I may live in quiet and peace, in pleasures and lawful enjoyments, but that is not necessary, I am not created for that. One thing is necessary, to serve God and save my soul. That I can and must do, although I may be poor and despised, although I may be living in trouble and misery. That is the business on which the whole life of man hinges, and it concerns each and every one of us, without exception, to attend to that. Such are the words of the Wise Man: "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is all man,"³ that is to say, every man. This is the business of the Pope, in governing the Church; of the king, in ruling his kingdom; of the courtier in the palace; of the soldier in the field; of the merchant in his counting-house; of the laborer at his work; of the father of the family in his household; of the servant and hand-maid in their employment. To fear God and be eternally happy: "For this is every man." The Pope was not sent into the world to be Pope; the king, courtier, citizen,

Such is the business of our salvation, for that alone is necessary for all men

¹ Oportet me esse.

² Porro unum est necessarium.—Luke x. 42.

³ Deum time, et mandata ejus observa, hoc est enim omnis homo.—Eccl. xii. 13.

peasant, merchant, soldier, father of a family, all these are not in this world to be kings or citizens, peasants, merchants, or servants, but to serve God and save their souls. This is the chief occupation, which alone the Apostle Paul calls our business. "My dear brethren, one business I wish and desire you to perform, that you abound more in every good work;"¹ "and that you do your own business."² All other worldly occupations, no matter how great and important they may seem, are, when compared to that, what St. Augustine calls "most worthless trifles and most empty vanities."³

All other
business
must be
done for the
sake of this
alone.

The same St. Augustine says, when explaining the words of Christ, "Seek first the kingdom of God,"⁴ that the meaning of our Lord is, not that we may seek anything else in this world besides the kingdom of God; but that, first of all, that is, with the greatest care, we must seek nothing but the kingdom of God and the salvation of our souls in every business we undertake. It is not forbidden to labor for worldly wealth, for food and clothing, in order to support decently ourselves and those who depend on us; it is not forbidden to work and to be diligent in the performance of the duties and services required of us, nor to get through our ordinary tasks carefully; nay, even we are commanded to do the duties of the state of life to which God has called us. But no one must separate his daily labor from the business which concerns God and the soul, as if they were two different occupations, one of them consisting in serving God and working for salvation, the other in looking for temporal prosperity and in serving the world. No; all this must form but one business for us all, and must tend to the end and object for which we are created. Money and property: you must be sought for, and labored for and kept, only as a means of serving God better and securing the soul's salvation. Good name and reputation before men: you are praiseworthy and good, only in so far as you can help the glory of God and the salvation of souls, and no farther. Eating and drinking, sleeping and other bodily necessities and conveniences: you must be used and enjoyed for no other purpose but to keep up our strength that we may be able to serve God longer and more zealously, and to gain eternal happiness for our souls. Worldly joys, honors, and riches: you cannot make me happy, if you do not help in the business of my soul to this

¹ *Negotium rogamus, ut abundetis magis in omni opere bono.*—I Thess. iv. 10.

² *Et ut vestrum negotium agatis.*

³ *Nugæ nugarum et vanitates vanitatum.*

⁴ *Quærite primum regnum Dei.*

end; you will make me miserable if you are, in the least degree, a hindrance to me in the business of my soul. Humiliation, contempt, poverty, and contradictions from the world: I must not be esteemed unhappy on your account, if I can only serve God by means of you, and work out my salvation; you are even good and desirable to me, if you furnish me with a better opportunity of doing this. Every thought, word, and act that cannot be referred to this business, is vain and useless. Every thought, word, and act contrary to this business, is sinful and damnable; for this is my only necessary business. Because, "I must be about my Father's business,"¹ in which alone I must be always and everywhere occupied, to serve God and to save my soul: for this reason alone, I have been called by God, for this alone am I in the world.

And, woe to me! if I do not perform this business carefully and terminate it successfully. No favor of an earthly master, no lucrative employment in a worldly court, is to be won or lost thereby; everything depends on it: an endless eternity, an eternal Heaven, the perpetual favor and friendship of the great God of Heaven, an eternal crown of honor, an unfailling treasure, perpetual, indescribable joys in Heaven; all these things depend on this business and occupation, as to whether they are to be won or lost in a short interval of time. Ah, my God! imprint deeply on my heart and memory every one of these words of Thine, that I may never forget them: "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul;"² and lose Heaven? "What doth it profit him?" What are the base joys of earth when compared to the beauty of Heaven? What is the praise of man, compared to the dignity of Heaven? What are the vain goods of the world to the eternity of Heaven? "What doth it profit him?" What is the good of all these things if I lose Heaven forever? Oh, what a terrible loss! But, woe is me! now that I think of it, it is not alone the loss of the eternal good, but everlasting damnation also that depends on this great business of mine. It is a very different thing from a temporal, worldly business. If the servant delays beyond the appointed time, and loses the promotion his prince promised him, he has certainly lost his good fortune, but he has not therefore incurred a misfortune: he has gained nothing, but neither has he lost; he re-

Everything depends on this business.

¹ Quia in his, quæ Patris mei sunt, oportet me esse.

² Quid prodest homini, si mundum universum lucretur, animæ vero suæ detrimentum patiat. — Matth. xvi. 26.

mains as he was before. But how will it be with us, my dear brethren, how will it be with all of us, if we neglect the business of our salvation during the appointed time of this life? We shall lose an eternity of happiness, and, at the same time, incur an eternity of misery. If I do not gain all, I lose all. If I am not in eternal joys, I am in eternal torments. If I do not go to Heaven with God, I must remain in hell with the devils. Either Heaven, or hell, forever; there is no other alternative, no third place for Christians during eternity. My dear brethren, is there any business of such importance as this, any on which so much depends? Is it not right, then, that we should direct all our thoughts, desires, cares, and troubles to the successful accomplishment of that alone?

When it is once neglected, the injury cannot be remedied.

Now if this were the same as any worldly business, there might be some hope of a remedy, in case it is neglected. The profit that I lose to-day by carelessness, I may make to-morrow by redoubled diligence, or if I cannot find exactly the same good fortune, I may find something very like it, if I wait long enough. But, oh, man, if you neglect the business of your soul during life, where will you find another life in which to serve God? If your soul is once lost and damned, where will you find another to make eternally happy? We have only one life, and that a very short and uncertain one, for this business. We have only one soul; if that is lost, then all is gone, and forever; there will never be any chance of repairing the loss. In the Areopagus, in Greece, as Father Cataneus writes, there was once a curious case tried. Listen to it, my dear brethren. In those days the old law prevailed, "eye for eye, tooth for tooth,"¹ so that he who gave another a box on the ear, had his own ears boxed, without further trial; he who beat another, was beaten in return; he who killed another, lost his own life. Now it happened that a tradesman, who was blind of the left eye, lost the other eye also, in consequence of a blow that he received from an opponent. The criminal was convicted, the crime proved, the law clear, and the sentence was, that he who put out the other's right eye, should himself lose his right eye also. But a skilful lawyer stood up and said: "Wait, my masters, it must not be so; the sentence is not just." "How is that," said the others, "the law says, 'eye for eye.'" "Yes," he answered, "when the circumstances of the case are the same on both sides. To put out the eye of a man who has only one, is a far greater injury than to deprive of one eye him who has two, for the

¹ *Oculum pro oculo, dentum pro dente.*

former must remain completely blind all his life, while the latter, having one eye left, can still see. Hence the punishment decreed is not proportioned to the injury suffered. The poor tradesman, having lost his only eye, can no longer see: the sun is darkened for him as long as he lives, he has nothing but a continual night, he will never more be able to see his wife and children, his parents and dear friends, nor anything else in the world. Is not that a grievous misfortune which this wicked man has caused him? Consequently, according to justice, the punishment must be equal to the crime, and he who deprived another of his sight, must himself lose his sight completely also, and if he had a hundred eyes in his forehead, they should be all put out, for the loss of one eye is as great to him who has only one, as the loss of a hundred is to him who has a hundred; for it is just as impossible for him to see as if he had lost a hundred thousand eyes." Thus spoke the wise lawyer, and he showed thereby how irreparable is the loss of a thing that is absolutely necessary and that we can have only once.

My dear Christian brethren, if one man had a hundred souls, and another only one, and the latter lost his only soul, while the former lost his hundred souls all at once, is not the loss of him who has but one soul just as great as that of him who has a hundred? Let the latter die one bad death, and the former a hundred bad deaths, is not the eternal misery of hell just as great for one as for the other, if the lives of both have been equally bad? Ah! we have only one soul to lose, we can die only once! If we lose that one soul, then all is gone and the loss is irreparable. Should we not then undertake such an important business with all possible diligence, in order to bring it to a successful termination? Oh, certainly! it is necessary; with this business we should be always occupied, in it we should be completely occupied, with it alone we should be occupied, to serve God and save our souls. But, alas! (and we can make this complaint before God) did you not know² that? Of all business, that of the soul is the only one of which the majority of men care to know little or nothing. This just complaint we shall consider briefly in the second part.

Therefore we must attend to this business with all diligence.

Second Part.

Many men do not know that they are created for this end and object alone; for they occupy themselves with anything rather than the business of their souls. Many do not know that all de-

This business is, generally speaking, set aside.

¹ Oportet

² Nesciebatis?

pends on this, for they hardly ever think of it. Many do not know that its loss is irreparable, for they do exactly the contrary thing. See, my dear brethren, how just is my sorrow, when I consider the life that most men lead. Who is not astonished at the stupidity of the Emperor Michael of Constantinople? A courier once came to him in great haste, when he was at a tournament, and brought him word that the greater number of his provinces were in revolt against him, and had taken up arms against their emperor; he therefore begged of the emperor to find some means of quelling the rebellion, or else his throne would be in the greatest danger. Such news as that certainly demanded prompt and careful attention. But what did the emperor do? He got into a great passion with the courier, not through anger at the rebels, nor through impatience at the bad news, but because, as he said, he was disturbed during the tournament with such trifles. Oh, you foolish man! you look upon rebellion among your subjects and the imminent danger of losing your crown as trifling things, of so little importance that you are not to be disturbed in your amusements on their account. So that the caracoling of horses is a far more important matter in your eyes, and deserves your closest attention! But why should I say anything about this emperor? There was question only of losing a temporal crown. Blind mortals! I have far more reason to complain of you! do you not act in the same manner, although there is danger of losing your soul and forfeiting eternal happiness? To enjoy yourselves and have a pleasant time, to be full of cares day and night and to run to and fro to make some profit in your worldly business, to hoard up money and worldly goods, to curry favor with the great ones of the earth, to obtain a prebend for yourselves or those belonging to you, to gain a lawsuit, to get your son or your daughter married advantageously, these are the things that keep your mental and bodily powers always on the stretch, says Thomas a Kempis; for these things you can never look out soon enough, nor long or carefully enough. To keep up the state of the family, to leave a rich inheritance to their descendants, to build houses, to cure their bodies, to procure food and clothing, to eat, drink, and sleep well, these are occupations in which the greater part of men spend most days in the year and most hours in the day. And what becomes of the service of God? What of the salvation of the soul? Oh, that is, generally speaking, the last thing of all; that may be attended to when all the other things are secured. A courier comes to many a one, and says to him, there is a revolt in your kingdom;

that is, God, by His inspirations, calls out to those in the state of sin, and preachers warn them with the word of God: poor man! you are in the greatest danger of losing your soul forever; the devils are on the look-out for it, when death surprises you. Quick, you must immediately seek help; do not loiter, go at once and show yourself to the priest,¹ examine your conscience, repent of your sins, confess them, perform your penance, and rescue yourself from this dangerous state! Eh! what nonsense you are talking; I will do it some other time, next Easter; I have something else to do now. A courier comes—a good inspiration in the morning—to say that it would be well to hear Mass, and thus to begin the day with God. No, my business does not allow me: I must first attend to what concerns my house, my condition, and the world. A courier comes, with the sound of the bell on Sundays and holydays, to say that it is time for the sermon; God will now instruct you in matters relating to your soul's salvation. No, it does not suit me now, I should have to get up too soon, I must sleep a little longer, I must dress first, it is too cold, and so forth; some other time. Christ Himself comes, in the person of some poor man, to your door: Give me an alms, for God's sake! No, I cannot give you anything now; some other time, when I am richer. The Apostle Paul cries out: Parents, bring up your children in the fear of the Lord, to their last end. Oh, they can learn that later on; they must first know the world, learn foreign languages, and know how to play, to fence, and to dance, and how to behave in society. An uneasy conscience gives warning: do not go to that house, nor into that company—your soul might be in danger there. Oh! that does not matter, perhaps there will be no danger; it will be time enough to keep away when I find out that there is danger. On the other hand, if an eye pains us, if there is danger of a fever, or some other illness, not to say of death, there is no talk then of putting it off to some other time, or of having something else to do, but to-day, at once, immediately, the doctor must be sent for, and medicines must be procured. And so, generally speaking, all other occupations have the preference in time, care, and diligence; the business of the soul is the only one that is put off to the last moment. All trouble taken with the former seems light, while the least care employed on the latter appears exceedingly grievous and intolerable! Ah, stupid mortals! did you not know² that this is the only and most important business, for

¹ *Vade, ostende te sacerdoti.*—Matth. viii. 4.

² *Nesciebatis?*

the sake of which you are in the world, and that, therefore, all your care and labor must be bestowed on it?

Many hard-
ly think of
it.

But, there is little use in talking! there are many who hardly think of it earnestly once a day. If we could see into the hearts of others, what a swarm of thoughts, ideas, and opinions would we not find, and hardly one amongst them that has reference to the affairs of the soul. How often does the merchant in his office, the tradesman at his work, think of his last end? I will try to consider the thoughts of one who is about to make choice of a certain state or occupation, on which the whole of his after life, and his eternity, generally speaking, depends. It is, for instance, some one who wishes to marry; what is the direction of his thoughts? Yes, he thinks, that person is suitable for me, she is rich, of a noble family, and I can live contentedly with her. And is that all? Will you be able in that state, and with that person, to serve God and to secure your soul's salvation better than in any other state of life? There is no thought of that, that business must look after itself. Another man is looking out for some employment; what are his thoughts? Is the employment a profitable one, is it not too laborious, is it a respectable one in the eyes of the world, will it enable me to keep up a certain style, &c., &c. Has he thought whether he is able to fill the position or not? whether he can satisfy God and his conscience therein? whether he can save his soul in that position? Alas! those are the last thoughts that enter his mind. That child must become a clergyman. Why? because he has fortunately received a benefice, he will be able to live respectably. But is the child called to that state of life by God? Will he certainly be able to work out his salvation therein? What a question! I do not even dream of such a thing. And so it goes on, as if the business of the soul were nothing at all to us, or as if it could look after itself while we are asleep. Ah, Christians! of what use is our reason to us if we do not use it for the one thing necessary, for which it was given to us, namely, to gain Heaven and to escape the eternal pains of hell? This very reason we use, or rather abuse, in the veriest trifles, while we utterly neglect the most important business of all, on which all depends. We can hardly bring ourselves to think seriously upon it.

Many do
the exact
contrary, as

I have made a mistake, my dear brethren, and to my greatest sorrow, when I said that many hardly think of the busi-

ness of their souls. They do think of it, they give themselves a deal of trouble and labor about it; but why? That they may lose their souls, that they may forfeit Heaven and be lost for all eternity. This requires no proof; all sinners, who constitute, unfortunately, the majority, show the truth of this: for all their thoughts, desires, undertakings, and labors have only the one object, to satisfy sensuality and the lusts of the flesh, to gratify their thirst for revenge, to practise injustice, to commit sin. Well may you weep and lament, oh, Jeremias! "They give their beloved soul into the hands of its enemies."¹ They often labor and suffer more to lose their souls than others do to gain Heaven. Precious, immortal souls, bought by the Blood of Jesus Christ, how blind you are to your own salvation! How I pity you! How many millions of you are ruined eternally! "Did you not know?"² did you not know what it is to lose Heaven, a place of eternal joys, to gain which we should easily and willingly spend a hundred millions of years in the most abject misery? did you not know what it is to be condemned to hell for all eternity, that is, to a place of torments so great that all that men have suffered from the beginning of the world, and all they can suffer to the end of it, is as nothing compared to them? You lose this Heaven so recklessly, you give your souls to hell for such miserable things in a short and uncertain life!

Ah, my dear brethren, I ask of you all, not for my eternal welfare, but for your own, in the words of the Apostle: "I ask of you to do your own business,"³ your only business, your most necessary business, at all times and with the greatest care. I must go about my Father's business.⁴ Let that be our conclusion. I must necessarily, as long as I live, be employed in the service of God; I must necessarily, let it cost what it will, save my soul. If, in future, a creature, an occasion, or a temptation tries to allure you into sin,—"I must, it is necessary"⁵—let the thought come immediately, no, it is not for that I am here, I have another business to attend to, I must and will save my soul. In everything that happens to you, think and say every day, with that holy servant of God, who always used to ask himself before commencing anything: "How will this help me to save my soul?"⁶ Will it help my soul to attain its last end? If it is likely rather to hinder me from doing so, away with it! even if I could there-

If they knew nothing of it.

Conclusion and exhortation.

¹ Dant dilectam animam suam in manus inimicorum ejus.

² Nesciebatis?

³ Rogamus, ut vestrum negotium agatis.

⁴ In his, quæ Patris mei sunt, oportet me esse.

⁵ Oportet me esse.

⁶ Quid hoc ad vitam æternam?

False and True Happiness of Christians.

ly gain the whole world and all its joys. "What would it profit me,"¹ if I lost my soul on its account? That soul, which will still exist when the whole world is destroyed! that soul, for which God would give a thousand worlds! that soul, for the love of which God has given His own life's blood! that soul which, if once lost, cannot be saved for all eternity! But is this business of my soul a profitable one? Then I must and will undertake it with all my strength, no matter how hard it is to nature and sensuality. I must and will serve God; I must and will bring my soul to Heaven. Is it necessary to this end that I forget those sinful thoughts and love my enemy? Then come here, my dear enemy; I forgive you from my heart. Does that end require me to restore the property of others? Then, away with whatever I have no right to, even if I were to be reduced to beggary. Must I, for my soul's sake, leave that person, that friend, that house, that company, which is the proximate occasion of sin to me? Then good bye to them, once for all; no matter how dear they are to me, I will have nothing more to do with them. Must I, for my soul's sake, do penance, chastise my flesh, mortify my five senses, renounce the vanities of the world, enter on the narrow way of humility, poverty, persecutions, trials, and contradictions, and suffer these things whenever God decrees that I should do so? Then come, you will henceforth be my dearest friends. I must and will go to Heaven. Amen. Most merciful God, strengthen me in this resolution. Amen.

SEVENTH SERMON.

ON THE FALSE AND TRUE HAPPINESS OF CHRISTIANS.

Subject.

True happiness is nowhere to be found in the world; so that most people trouble themselves about it to no purpose. Let us therefore seek Jesus, in whom alone true happiness is to be found. —*Preached on the Feast of the Epiphany.*

Text.

Usque dum veniens staret supra, ubi erat puer.—Matt. ii. 9.
"Until it came and stood over where the Child was."

¹ Quid prodest?

Introduction.

There, where the poor Child lay in the stable, the star finally rested; there, where the Child was, the three kings found what they were seeking in such a long and tiresome journey. They went in, they saw, recognized, and adored their King, their Saviour, and their God.¹ What joy, what consolation and sweetness filled their hearts in the presence of this Child! Who can describe it, unless they who have experienced it? My dear brethren, all of us mortals are following a star also, I mean the star of happiness, for it is well known that happiness is called a star. All men, great and small, old and young, rich and poor, follow this star. "Every man," says St. Augustine, "no matter who he is, wishes to be happy."² But how few there are, alas! who reach this star of happiness! How many, after long striving, come back empty-handed, because this star would not stand still for them! Nay, even the greater number, notwithstanding their endeavors, cannot even catch a far-off glimpse of that star. On that account, so many are heard to sigh everywhere: Oh, what an unhappy man I am! I have no luck, no happiness! I seem to have been born under an unlucky star, &c. And why is this, my dear brethren? Because we do not seek for that star in the proper place, where it is really to be found. We run over the whole earth and give ourselves no rest in the pursuit of worldly goods, and we place all our happiness in them. Ah, no, Christians! we should not do that; such labor is in vain, for our star is not to be found in worldly goods. And where then? Follow the three kings. There, where Jesus is,³ there is our star and our happiness. Where Jesus is not, there is neither star nor happiness for us. As I shall show in to-day's sermon.

Plan of Discourse.

True happiness is nowhere to be found in this world, so that most people trouble themselves about it to no purpose. That is the subject. Let us therefore seek Jesus, in whom alone true happiness is to be found. Such shall be the conclusion.

Jesus Christ! our only end, our highest good, we beg of Thee to-day, through the intercession of Thy Virgin Mother, and our holy angels guardian, to let the star of Thy grace shine before us, that we may see the vanity of worldly goods, and seek our happiness in Thee alone.

¹ Et intrantes invenerant puerum. ² Omnis homo, qualiscumque sit, beatus vult esse.

³ Supra, ubi erat puer.

In what true
happiness
consists.

True happiness, as all agree in describing it, consists in the certain and peaceful possession and enjoyment of a true, perfect, and lasting good. If one of these qualities is wanting, then there is no true happiness. A good thing may be great and beautiful in itself, but as long as you have not certain possession of it, or cannot enjoy it, it cannot make you happy, any more than the coat that I wear cannot keep you warm; nay, even the greater the desire one has for something he cannot attain, the greater is the pain he feels; just like a hungry dog, who sees a piece of meat hung up above his reach, and keeps snapping at it with his teeth, although he cannot get at it. And supposing you actually enjoy some good, if it is not a real one, you are again at fault. Who would think a fool happy because he imagines himself a king, and that he has authority over countries and peoples, and that he is seated at a well-spread table, although in reality he can hardly get bread and water enough to keep himself from starving? Such a man deserves Christian compassion and is not to be felicitated on his condition, for, although he is happy in his own imagination, yet, since the good he thinks he possesses is only an unreal one, he is in reality an unhappy man. Further, the good must be a perfect one; for, as long as there is the least thing wanting to you, or you feel the least uneasiness, you cannot call yourself happy. Ask some hungry beggar man, who has managed to slip into a theatre, where he sees and hears everything that can delight his eyes and ears; say to him: My good friend, are we not both very happy in being present at such a fine play, and in having such a good place to see it from? Yes, he will answer, that is all very fine, but I wish I had something to eat, for neither music, nor singing, nor dancing will fill my stomach, and I am very hungry. Finally, it must be a constant, lasting good; the greater the joy and pleasure one has in a thing, the more is he troubled, even in the midst of his joy, at the thought of losing it in a short time. So that no one can have true happiness, unless he enjoys a true, certain, perfect, and lasting good.

This is not
to be found
in any
worldly
goods.

Vain children of the world! You may well despair of finding your star of happiness in the world, as long as you do not find Jesus. Walk, run, fatigue yourselves as much as you will, and if you find the star, let me say to you, like Herod: "When you have found it, let me know, so that I too may come"¹ and be happy with you. But I am afraid that I would remain

¹ Cum inveneritis renuntiate mihi ut et ego veniens.

here for eternity before one of you would come back to me with the joyful news. St. Augustine asks: "Are you looking for a happy life in the land of death?"¹ You foolish people! what do you mean? There is no such thing there.² For, tell me, what good can you find in the whole world? St. John describes it for us: "All that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life;"³ that is to say, riches, honors, and sensual pleasures, that is all. So that, if I were to describe to you a man who is happy, in the estimation of the world, I should represent to you one who is looked up to and beloved by all, who has money and property in abundance, who spends day and night in sensual gratifications, so that he cannot wish or desire more of these things than he already has. Oh, what a happy man, you would say, admiringly; he was born under a lucky star. But, God help us! what a wretched happiness that is! what a plastered-up poverty! Have you nothing else, oh, world, to give to those who love you but these false goods? Away with you and your beggar's wallet; your wares are rotten, the things you offer are no good, they are useless and transitory. I am sorry for those whose desires carry them, day after day, to such a worthless shop, while they forget the real happiness that they should seek elsewhere.

Tell me, in God's name, what are the goods of the world? Ask St. Nilus, and he will say: "All worldly things are shadows, smoke, and empty bubbles."⁴ What can be more worthless? If you grasp at them, nothing remains in your hand. What is more unsubstantial than the smoke, which is driven away by the wind, or more perishable than the air-bubble, which is all the more likely to burst, the bigger it gets? "Oh, ye sons of men!" sighs the Psalmist, "why do you love vanity, and seek after lying?"⁵ Money! what is it but shining earth, which is precious because it is rare? Take a handful of iron, or a few needles, to many countries in the East, and you will get gold enough for it. In former times shoe leather was used instead of silver coin. Many think more of a copper penny than of a golden ducat. The value of such things depends on caprice and imagination. Honor, favor, a great name, what else are those things but the esteem in which one is held? There may be, perhaps, a hundred people

For they are
only vain
goods.

¹ *Beatam vitam quaeritis in regione mortis?*

² *Non est illic.*

³ *Omne, quod est in mundo, concupiscentia carnis est, concupiscentia oculorum, et superbia vitæ.—1. John ii. 16.*

⁴ *Omnia mundana umbræ, fumus et bullæ sunt.*

⁵ *Filli hominum, ut quid diligitis vanitatem et quaeritis mendacium?—Ps. iv. 3.*

who have a great opinion of me, but what better am I for that? There may be, on the other hand, a thousand who cannot bear me. What worse am I on that account? That does not make me more wicked than I am in reality. So that all this is mere imagination. What are sensual joys and gratifications but vile pleasures which belong properly to the brute beasts and which we enjoy in common with them? One takes pleasure in one thing, another in another, all being led therein by the imagination. There is nothing in the world but falsehood, it possesses no real good. "Why do you love vanity and seek after lying?"¹

They are
uncertain
goods.

But what is the use of taking so much trouble to prove the vileness and emptiness of worldly goods? I shall not succeed in convincing those who love them. Very well, then, granted that they are precious and worth having. But, tell me, how do you come to that conclusion? How can you bring all the necessary conditions together in any worldly goods? Show me one man who has everything that he wishes for and desires, one, that is to say, who has money enough, honor enough, pleasure enough. You will not find one such person in the whole world. You will find many, in fact, the greater number, who labor for these things, who desire and strive for them day and night, like the dog snapping at the piece of meat, but they are always unhappy because they never can attain the object of their desires. St. Augustine asks, "What is certain on this earth?"² "You hope for money, it is uncertain whether you will get any; you hope to marry a certain person and you know not whether your hope will be fulfilled."³ Since these things are so uncertain, thousands of people toil and worry themselves about them, and no one gets all that he wishes to have. The labor and trouble that we give ourselves seem to me to resemble the spider's web, as the Prophet says: "They have woven the webs of spiders."⁴ The spider draws all the material for its web out of its own body; and to what purpose? To catch any fly or gnat that may perchance fall in its way. And when the poor spider has spun itself out, after days of labor, and is contentedly waiting, perhaps a week, for some fly or other insect to come into its net, the housemaid suddenly comes and, with one sweep of her broom, puts an end to the whole affair, and to the spider itself in the bargain. "They have woven the webs of spiders." The children of the world go through the same fruitless labor, when they seek after worldly goods and place their

¹ Ut quid diligitis vanitatem et queritis mendacium? ² Quid in hoc terra certum est.

³ Spero pecuniam, incertum est, an proveniat; spero uxorem, incertum est, an accipiam.

⁴ Telas araneæ texerunt.—Isa. lix. 5.

happiness therein ; they are trying to catch gnats and flies, and get caught themselves in the end. How often, how many days and years have we not worried ourselves to get that property, that employment, or that person in marriage ? How many sleepless nights and troubled days have we not passed, how many plans have we not invented for the sake of these things ? And when we thought that everything was ready to carry out our project, there comes the housemaid and sweeps it all away with her broom : a sickness comes and confines us to bed ; death comes and hurries off into eternity the person on whom we had built our hopes of happiness. Sometimes our designs are crossed by another person, or some difficulty comes in the way that we cannot surmount ; there is an end to all our hopes ; we have caught no flies, our labor is fruitless. Such is the way of the world ; it shows us its goods from afar off, and there is hardly any one who can have as much of them as he desires.

But what am I saying about goods and pleasures ? Does not everything that we seek in this world contain more gall and bitterness than pleasure and sweetness ? Can there be any real pleasure in that good which, before we possess it, costs so much labor and trouble, while we have it, causes us so much care and anxiety lest we should lose it, and when we are deprived of it, fills us with grief ? Ah, the saying of St. Augustine is only too true : “ The bonds of this world have in themselves a real bitterness, a false pleasure, a wearying labor, an anxious repose, abundant misery, and a vain hope of happiness.”¹ If there was ever a man who had the goods of the world in abundance, it was King Solomon ; he had treasures and money as plentiful as the stones in the street, as we read in the 10th chapter of the 3d Book of Kings ; he was so highly esteemed for his wisdom that kings and queens came from far distant lands to Jerusalem to hear him and admire him. Of the pleasures he enjoyed, which were such as no man, except himself, ever had enjoyed, or ever will enjoy, he says himself : “ Whatsoever my eyes desired I refused them not ; and I withheld not my heart from enjoying every pleasure, and delighting itself in the things which I had prepared.”² Was he therefore happy ? Hear his sighs : “ Behold, all is vanity and affliction of spirit.”³ What a bitter sorrow it

These goods are imperfect and mixed with evil.

¹ Vincula hujus mundi asperitatem habent veram, jucunditatem falsam, durum laborem, timidam quietatem, rem plenam miseria, spem beatitudinis inanem.

² Omnia quæ desideraverunt oculi mei, non negavi eis, nec prohibui cor meum, quin omni voluptate frueretur.

³ Ecce universa vanitas et afflictio spiritus.

is to lose the good that one has sought and loved, by misfortune, sickness, or death? How true the saying of the Prophet about the world: "I nourished them with joy: but I sent them away with weeping and mourning."¹

They are in-
constant
and transi-
tory goods.

And, my dear brethren, what makes worldly goods so contemptible, and takes all semblance of happiness away from them, is the fact that they can be enjoyed for such a very short time. Even if they were real goods, even if every one could have as much of them as he desired, and in the highest perfection, without trouble, or anxiety, or bitterness—a supposition that contradicts the experience of every one of us—still, oh, heart of man! they cannot make thee happy. Tell me, how long do you think this worldly happiness will last? Not longer than your life. Once death comes, you must leave all behind. He will take away from you honors, riches, pleasures, and life itself. You have often noticed how, when a great lord makes his entrance into a town, he is preceded by a number of mules, decked out with bells, and carrying vessels of gold and silver. If a miller's ass saw all this grandeur at a distance, he would, if he had the gift of reason, wonder at the great happiness of the fortunate mules; but let him wait till evening, and he would see them stripped of all their finery and tied up in the stable; their grandeur is at an end. And what good is it all to them now? They are tired and wearied out with carrying it all day. The miller's ass is much better off, for he goes to his stable all the same, although he may not have carried a single sack of corn the whole day, because there was no water to turn the mill. My dear brethren, that is exactly like the world. While we are in this life, some of us live in great splendor and magnificence, and enjoy all kinds of pleasure, to the detriment, if not of the body, at least of the mind, and soul, and conscience. The evening comes, death knocks at the door, and we are hurried bare and naked into a long eternity, in which the beggar will be just as rich as a king or emperor. As we cannot be sure of our lives for a single moment, neither can we be sure, for a moment, of possessing the goods that we love so much. St. Augustine asks: "What can the world promise? Let it promise what it will, it promises to one who may die to-morrow."² Often this happiness does not last as long as life. Are you rich in money and property? It will not take much to make you a

¹ Nutrivi illos cum jucunditate. Dimisi autem illos cum fletu et luctu.—Baruch, iv. 11.

² Quid potest mundus promittere? Quidquid libet, promittat, fortassis crastino morituro promittit.

poor man ; death is not necessary for this, a single misfortune may do it. If a war breaks out, a party of the enemy may plunder you, a thief may rob you, one of your debtors may become bankrupt, the lightning may strike your house and set fire to all you have ; and there you are, a poor man in spite of your former riches. Are you high in favor with your prince ? How little it takes to destroy it all ! A calumny whispered by your rival, a slight fault committed by yourself, a simple suspicion of your fidelity is quite enough to unseat you, to deprive you of your office, and to put your happiness to flight. Have you all the pleasures and enjoyments you could wish for ? How long will they last ? A fever confines you to bed—nay, not even that is necessary, a tooth-ache suffices—your child, your wife, your father or mother die, you become quite depressed, you have no taste for anything, your pleasures and enjoyments are gone. A rich man, who was highly esteemed by great princes, as Draxelius narrates, was once asked what he could still desire for himself in this world, and he answered : I want nothing but a nail, by which I may fix my happiness so that I cannot lose it. This nail has not yet been found, my dear brethren. Everything is transitory, changing, short-lived, and momentary. St. Paul says : “For the fashion of this world passeth away.”¹ “What hath pride profited us,” the children of the world will one day exclaim, but too late, like the wicked in the Book of Wisdom, “or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us ? All these things are passed away, like a guest of one day that runneth on like a post.”²

See, Christians ! on account of these false, imperfect goods, which are full of care and bitterness, while they are, at the same time, changeable and transitory, on account of these, people travel over the whole world, and plough the deep with their ships ; on account of these they plague and worry themselves day and night. He who possesses such goods is a happy man in the eyes of the world : “They have called the people happy, that hath these things.”³ Oh, how we are deceived ! Not to speak of the fact, that these unfortunate goods generally deprive those who possess them of eternal happiness, and ruin their souls forever ; for, for one who saves his soul by the esteem in which he is held, there are thousands who are damned through the very same cause ; for one who gains Heaven by riches, there are thousands who

Most men seek their happiness in such goods, but in vain.

¹ Præterit figura hujus mundi.

² Tunquam memoria hospitis unius diei prætereuntis. Sap. v. 15.

³ Beatum dixerunt populum, cui hæc sunt.—Ps. cxliii. 15.

lose it ; for one who indulges his senses and still saves his soul, there are countless others whom the same indulgence hurls into hell. Oh, what bad men of business we are ! We give ourselves so much trouble about those things, and do not think of that good which alone contains true happiness. If instead of plaguing ourselves so much about the world, we had visited the Child in the stable of Bethlehem, like the three holy kings, we should certainly have found real happiness.

in Jesus
alone is
true happi-
ness to be
found.

Jesus, my dear brethren, is the only good, in and with whom the star of happiness always remains. "It rested over where the Child was."¹ "To rejoice in Thee, and on account of Thee, that is to live truly happy."² You may seek for another happiness, another life, I can find none but this, says St. Augustine. Jesus is the only true and supreme good, in whom all imaginable goods are comprised, in their fullest perfection, without end or limit, fault or flaw. St. Ambrose says : "Christ is all things to us."³ Thy honor, oh, proud man, will not feed thee ! Thy money, oh, miser, will not give thee a good name ! Thy vile pleasures, oh, libertine, will not bring thee money ! Thy wine, oh, drunkard, will not clothe thee ! "Christ is all things to us." He is a certain good that I may possess ; I may enjoy His friendship and love at all times, how, when, and as long as I wish. If I have property in my possession, I am lord and master over it, but I am prevented by a higher power from doing all that I wish with it ; I may be a very rich man, but I cannot use my wealth while I am asleep ; I may have good things to eat, but once my stomach is full, the least bit of food disgusts me ; I may have a right to an inheritance of a thousand ducats, but, if my right is to be shared with a hundred others, I shall get only a very small portion. But none of these things can stand in my way, if I possess Jesus, the highest good, by being in the state of grace. Not violence, because nothing but my own will can deprive me of God ; not sleep, for during sleep I am still the friend of God, and am beloved by Him ; not enjoyment, for, the more I know and love Jesus, the greater will be the joy and sweetness I shall receive from Him ; not the sharing Him with others, for Jesus is an immense and infinite good. Although the saints in Heaven possess Him, yet my share in Him is none the less therefore. Finally, Jesus is a lasting and constant good, with whom I can gain eternal joys

¹ *Supra, ubi erat puer.*

² *Ipsa est ista beata, gaudere in te, gaudere propter te ipsa est et non altera.*

³ *Omnia Christus est nobis*

and endless wealth. "They shall perish, but Thou remainest."¹ If Heaven and earth were to pass away, Thou, oh, Lord, wouldst still remain to me. "Happy," indeed, "is that people whose God is the Lord."² Oh, more than happy, oh, only happy souls, who seek and find Jesus!

Alas! how then can we be so blind as to attach such little importance to this supreme good? How can we grub in the earth like moles, and seek God so little, and think so little of losing Him? If we find a small piece of money in the street, our heart leaps for joy; if we find God by grace, we hardly think anything of it. The loss of a few shillings will often force the tears from our eyes; we can lose Jesus and all good with Him, by sin, and never shed a tear. In fact, we do that deliberately every day, and laugh at it. If I say to a vindictive man, forgive your enemy, or you will lose Jesus; to an unjust man, give back what does not belong to you, or you will lose Jesus forever. Oh, they would say scornfully, is that all? That is a small loss. If, on the other hand, I were to say to such people, forgive, or you will be hanged on a gibbet; leave that sinful company, or you will become stone blind; give back those ill-gotten goods, or you will be reduced to the extreme of poverty. Oh! that would be quite another matter; then my threats would at least deserve serious consideration. So much is thought of the loss of temporal things, so little of the loss of eternal things. If I ask another, a merchant, for instance, who may otherwise be a good Christian, why are you so downcast and melancholy? Oh, what an unhappy man I am, he would say; a man who owed me a hundred thalers has absconded. Be satisfied, I would answer, he has not taken away Jesus from you, and in Him you have all good. Yes, he would answer, that is very true, but I have lost my hundred thalers all the same. If I ask a tradesman, why are you so sad? I have no bread for my children, would be his reply; or a widow, why do you weep: oh, my poor husband is dead, would be her answer. Be comforted, Jesus is still your friend, and in Him you have all you can desire. Very true, they would both think, but that is a poor consolation; I wish I had some bread for my children, I wish my husband were still alive. Behold, oh, my dear Saviour, so little do people value Thy friendship! So strongly are they attached to temporal things, that their affections are drawn away from Thee!

Which is however, least thought of by blind mortals.

¹ *Ipsi peribunt, tu autem permanes.*—Ps. c. 7.

² *Beatus populus, cujus Dominus Deus ejus.*—Ps. cxliii. 15.

Conclusion,
to seek and
to preserve
Jesus alone
and His
friendship.

Away, then, with all the trumpery of the world! Thus should each Christian soul among you resolve with me. I will henceforth seek Jesus alone, and will love Him alone, above all things. Let others heap up earthly goods, I will be content with Jesus, poor though He may be. Let who will seek honors and esteem, the humble Jesus is sufficient for me. Children of the world, you may depend on your inheritance; for my part, I will say with David: "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance."¹ Jesus alone is enough for me! When I have Him, I have everything, and I can afford to despise all things else. When you have striven in vain for many years for your desired happiness, I will certainly have found mine; while you suffer sorrow and care on account of your goods, I shall possess my God in the joy of my heart and the peace of my conscience. Your happiness will leave you after a short time; mine, that I am now about to seek, cannot be taken from me even by death. You will sleep the sleep of the rich, and will have nothing in your hands; when I die with Jesus, whom I love, I shall possess eternal life. You will say, in eternity, when it shall be too late, what good is our money, our honor, our pleasure to us now? "Therefore we have erred from the way of truth, and the light of justice hath not shined unto us,"² the star of happiness has never shown itself to us! Then I will rejoice with my God, and exult. I may have had nothing during life; what harm is it now that I have been poor, despised and crucified with Jesus? Oh, most merciful Saviour! why have I not thought of this before? why have I not sought Thee earlier? Ah, wretched me! I have lost Thee before now, and have cast Thee off for the sake of some worthless thing! It would have been far better for me to have lost everything, than to have lost my supreme good by sin. Henceforth, nothing shall be so dear and so precious to me as to separate me from Thee. I say with the Spouse of the Canticles: "I found him whom my soul loveth, I held him, and I will not let him go."³ Take away from me, oh, my God, all consolation, joy, temporal goods, friends, parents, I shall regard their loss as nothing; provided only that I have Thee for my friend, and that I love Thee and possess Thee alone, then I shall have happiness enough. Amen.

¹ Dominus pars hereditatis meae.—Ps. xv. 5.

² Ergo erravimus a via veritatis, et lumen justitiæ non luxit nobis.—Sap. 5. 6.

³ Inventi quem diligit anima mea, tenui eum, nec dimittam.—Cant. iii. 4.

EIGHTH SERMON.

ON THE SINS OF CHRISTIANS.

Subject.

The sin of a Christian is greater and more inexcusable than that of a Jew or a heathen. 1st. On account of the greater lights and helps that he receives from God. 2d. On account of the stricter obligation he is under to serve God more holily.—*Preached on the fifth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Nisi abundaverit justitia vestra plus quam Scribarum et Phariseorum, non intrabitis in regnum Cælorum.—Matth. v. 20.

“Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.”

Introduction.

Oh, my God, what do I hear? Is it sufficient to exclude a Christian eternally from the kingdom of Heaven, that he is not more just and perfect than the Scribes and Pharisees, that is to say, those who were looked upon by the Jews as the highest patterns of justice? What kind of damnation, then, awaits those who, instead of living holier and more perfect lives, live more impiously and irreligiously, than in former times under the Old Law, the Pharisees, Jews, and heathens? That is, however, my dear brethren, the complaint that may be justly made in our times. It would not be difficult for me to prove that the vices of the Pharisees are found amongst Christians, in a far worse degree and more frequently; that is to say, that Christians are prouder, more hypocritical, more avaricious and unjust than the Pharisees were. But I will not confine my subject within such narrow limits as to render it applicable only to one or another of you. I shall seek a wider field, and prove what is applicable to all of us, that a sin committed by a Christian under the New Law is greater and more inexcusable than the same sin would be, if committed by a Jew or a heathen.

Plan of Discourse.

Certainly the sin of a Christian is greater and more inexcusable than that of a Jew or a heathen, on account of the greater light

and helps he receives from God. That will be the first point. Greater and more inexcusable is the sin of a Christian than that of a Jew or a heathen on account of the stricter obligation he is under to serve God more holily. That will be the second point.

Therefore, if we wish to enter Heaven before the Pharisees, the impious must hasten to arouse themselves to repentance and sorrow for their sins, and good Christians must conceive a still greater horror of sin. Oh, merciful God! grant us both these graces, through the merits of Blessed Virgin Mary, and the intercession of the holy angels.

First Part.

He who falls in clear daylight, is less deserving of pity, than he who falls in the dark night.

Imagine to yourselves, my dear brethren, that there are two people walking in the same icy, slippery street, in winter time, the one during the night, and with bad sight too, without staff or leader, following the misty light of a small lantern that is borne before him to show him the way; the other in clear daylight, with good sight and a good staff in his hand; the first stumbles and falls, the second, while he keeps staring around him, falls also, and both break a leg. What would you think of this accident? Both are to be pitied, no doubt, but which of them deserves the greater pity? Oh, certainly, you would say, the first poor, unfortunate fellow: for it is no wonder that he fell on the slippery ice, in the dark night, with no light but that of a small lantern to guide him. And what would you think of the other? Oh, he may thank himself for his misfortune; why did he stare around so? He should have looked where he was going, and have used his stick; or if he saw a dangerous place ahead he should have avoided it. It is his own fault that he fell; he is not so deserving of pity as the first. Such must be the judgment of every one who rightly considers the case.

A Christian has more light and knowledge than Jews and heathens formerly had.

See there, my dear brethren, the difference between the sin of a Christian under the New Law, and of a Jew or infidel under the Old Law. No matter who we are, we must all, according to the end of our creation, travel the same road to eternal happiness. In former times, Jews and heathens wished to go to Heaven, just as we Catholics do now, and the way thither is not less slippery, difficult, and dangerous for us, than it was for them. It is true that no one was ever without the light necessary to distinguish good from evil, nor without the divine assistance necessary to enable him to avoid dangers, and to save himself from a fall; and therefore I will not patronize the Jews and heathens so far as to say that they could not be blamed for living a bad life and

committing sin; if they did so, it was their own fault, and a just God could always say to them, “Thy perdition is from thyself, oh, Israel.” Still, there is a great difference between light and light, between helps and helps. What a small, flickering candle, so to speak, was borne before the former in the dark night, while a clear day and the full blaze of the sun is shining on us Christians! How sparingly and how seldom did they receive the means and opportunities of learning, knowing, and doing good, how lavishly and how often those helps are given into our hands, and how much easier we can recover ourselves after a fall into sin, than they could!

And with regard to the light, could not a heathen or a Jew excuse himself, to a certain extent, on the day of judgment, by pleading his ignorance and saying: I have wandered, oh, Lord, from the way of justice, and sinned against Thy holy Law, but I did not know any better at the time; Thou hast certainly taught me Thy Law and Thy eternal truths and Thy divine mysteries by Thy prophets and in Thy written Word, but they were all hidden under dark shadows. I was taught by hidden figures and parables, which I did not understand, and I had hardly any one to explain them to me. But how could I plead ignorance as an excuse for my sins, and say that I did not know enough? I, a Catholic Christian, who have been taught all these truths, not by figures and mystic prophecies, but by the clear Word of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, interpreted according to its true sense and meaning by an infallible Church, explained by so many holy Fathers and Doctors, and rendered so easy for my intelligence and appreciation by so many sermons and instructions, just as food is prepared for a child to eat; and I am besides encouraged, and almost forced to observe this Gospel and to live according to it, by so many warnings and exhortations, by the reading of good books, by the examples of the saints, and by the daily meditation of the lives of good Christians around me. How could I, a Christian, if I go astray, plead ignorance as an excuse, since the way is thus smoothed before me, and I have nothing to do but what I can see plainly before my eyes, while I have Jesus Christ, my Saviour, to go in front and lead me onward; so that my task is, simply, to do my best to imitate His life, which is proposed to all Christians as a pattern, and which is the infallible and only way to Heaven? Oh, certainly not! “They have no excuse for their sin.”² So said Christ formerly of the Jews; much more could He say it, nowadays, of us Christians, who re-

Therefore the sin of the Christian is less to be excused than that of the others.

¹ Perditio tua exte, Israel!

² Excusationem non habent de peccato suo.—John xv. 22.

ceive so many lights. What Salvianus says is more than true : “ We sin, not through ignorance, but through a perverse and rebellious will.”¹ “ We are not merely transgressors, like the Jews, but we also contemn and scoff at the Law of God;”² as the same holy man says. Like obstinate and disobedient servants, who know their master’s will and do not fulfil it, when we commit sin, our guilt is greater and more difficult to be excused.

The sin of
pride still
more inexcusable.

To descend to particulars, with regard to these sins, my dear brethren, what wonder was it that, in the Old Law, the Pharisees were exalted in their own opinion and esteemed themselves better than the common people? They had as yet known nothing, or at least believed nothing, of the Son of God emptying Himself, and taking the form of a servant, and coming, not to be ministered to, but to minister; they had not seen this Incarnate God, who had hidden Himself away in a lowly hut, amongst chips and shavings, as a poor workman’s apprentice, despised and unknown; they had not seen Him stooping down to wash the feet of a few poor fishermen, and laughed at and mocked as a fool and a sinner by a rabble crowd, and shamefully done to death on the cross, through love for man. They had never heard, and perhaps never will hear the words of the lowly Saviour: “ Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart,”³ “ He who is the greatest amongst you shall be the servant of the rest,” etc. Here, again, I must say that I do not wish to defend the pride of the Pharisees; I mean simply to show that the pride of a Christian is far more inexcusable; for, as St. Bernard says, what is more intolerable, shameless, and culpable, than for a Christian, who sees and knows by faith how the great God of Heaven and earth humbled Himself, to strive for honor and a great name? “ What more shameless impudence can there be, when infinite Majesty humbles Itself as a worm,”⁴ according to the words of the Lord Himself,⁵ “ than for a wretched mortal, a poor worm of the earth, to become puffed up with pride?”

Vindictiveness.

It was more tolerable and more to be excused in a Jew, if he could not forget or forgive an injury. For, in those days, what heroic example had men seen to encourage them in that respect? They thought that the law obliged them to love their friends, but

¹ Non inscitia, sed rebellione peccamus.

² Et contemptores pariter et prævaricatores sumus.

³ Discite a me, quia mitis sum et humilis corde.—*Math. xi. 29.*

⁴ Intolerabilis impudentia est, ut, ubi se exinanivit Majestas, vermiculus infletur et intumescat.

⁵ Ego autem sum vermis, et non homo.

not their enemies. They took, as their chief maxim, that imaginary law of which Christ afterwards said: "It was said to the ancients, thou shalt hate thy enemy," "eye for eye, tooth for tooth." And therefore, when they afterwards saw the first Christians, they looked upon them with astonishment. See, they said, how these men love one another; what extraordinary people they are! But a Christian, a disciple of Jesus Christ, brought up in the school of the cross, who so often hears from the lips of his master the words: "But I say to you, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you," etc.;¹ a Christian, who knows well that his Lord and God suffered on the cross for those who tortured and murdered Him, how could such a one palliate or excuse his secret spite and hatred, his vindictiveness and jealousy, when he tries to supplant his neighbor, his cursing and calumny when he gives expression to his bitter hatred against his fellow man? Oh, I could well say, that what was a sin for the Jews is a double sin for Christians.

Is it wonderful that, in former times, a heathen or a Jew should surrender himself to impurity, sensuality, gluttony, or drunkenness? Such is the question that Tertullian puts to those who, in his time, appealed to the Old Law to palliate and excuse their self-indulgence. In the Old Law there was nothing known of perpetual chastity, and perpetual virginity was looked upon as a disgrace to a family; even the most holy men were allowed a plurality of wives. "Let the flesh have its way, before the coming of Christ," answered Tertullian. "It was not yet worthy of such a great gift as that of chastity;"² because it was not yet purified by the Incarnate Word of God, nor washed in His Blood by Baptism and thus raised to a more pure and perfect life. It had not yet been adorned with those glorious titles; "it had not yet been called the body of Christ, the members of Christ, the house of God, the temple of the Holy Ghost."³ And all these titles now belong to our bodies, since God was born of an Immaculate Virgin and clothed himself with our flesh. Therefore the Apostle warns us so energetically that we must hold our bodies in the highest honor, and treat them as becomes the Body of Christ, and that we must not even name sins of impurity, or dishonor by one bad thought, a body that is sanctified by and through⁴

Sensuality.

¹ Dictum est antiquis; odio habebis inimicum tuum

² Ego autem dico vobis: diligite inimicos vestros, benefacite his, qui oderunt vos," etc. — Matt. v. 44.

³ Luserit ante Christum caro, imo perierat; nondum erat digno dono salutis.

⁴ Non Corpus Christi, non membra Christi, non templum Dei vocabatur.

Christ. If now the old written Law, nay, even the natural law, considers sins of impurity as so grievous, that, on their account, an angry God destroyed whole cities and countries, like Sodom and Gomorrha, and deluged the whole earth and drowned every human creature on it, except a few just souls, and condemned the majority, if not all of them, to hell forever; how abominable, intolerable, and inexcusable in the eyes of God must not the impurity of a Christian be, who is a member of Christ, and a temple of God? And that vice is so common among Christians nowadays, and all the more inexcusable. "They have no excuse for their sin."¹

The scandal given by immodesty in dress.

If the Jewish women dressed in such a vain, frivolous and indecent style, as is now the diabolical custom in many Christian towns, there might have been some little excuse for them; for they knew nothing of the poor, lowly, humble, and holy Gospel of Jesus Christ, nor of the woe that He announces: "Woe to the man by whom scandal cometh;"² no matter how the scandal may be given. Nor did they know anything of the new fashion that the Apostles, Peter and Paul, introduced amongst Christian women. St. Paul writes: "I desire, therefore, that women dress in decent apparel, adorning themselves with modesty"—mark these words—"and sobriety, not with plaited hair, or gold or pearls."³ How St. Paul would have thundered forth, if he saw the fashions of the world in these days, which cause those who are modest and wish to preserve pure hearts to close their eyes! Oh, Salvianus! cry out again, so that the whole of Christendom may hear you: "We sin not through ignorance, but through a perverse will."⁴ We Christians, when we sin, no matter what the vice may be, do not sin through ignorance, but with a deliberate, perverse, and rebellious will. We are not to be excused; our light, our knowledge is too great.

Less to be excused on account of the many graces and helps to do good.

Besides all this, we have so many helps and opportunities to avoid evil, do good and save our souls. Poor people! I sometimes think, poor people, who formerly lived in Judaism or heathenism, how ill off you were, compared to us Christians! Your sacraments were only a shadow, a figure of ours, and from them you received the grace of God drop by drop, while we can receive it now, if we wish, like a rushing torrent. If one of you had offended

¹ Excusationem non habent de peccato suo.

² Væ homini illi, per quem scandalum venit.

³ Mulieres in habitu ornato, cum verecundia et sobrietate ornantes se, et non in trottis crinibus, auro et margaritis—I. Tim. ii. 9.

⁴ Non insectia, sed rebellione peccamus.

God grievously, he had no other means of gaining eternal happiness but perfect charity, and repentance, and sorrow, along with suffering the terrible punishments generally inflicted on sin; while we can be absolved from our sins so easily in the Sacrament of Penance, and may be freed by indulgences from the punishment due to them. You had nothing, as a sacrifice of atonement for sin, but the flesh of rams and goats (what a wretched offering!); while we have the Flesh and Blood of Jesus Christ, an infinite Sacrifice, to offer daily to the Eternal Father, on the altar. For you the Lord, as a stern judge, had an iron rod always ready in His hand, when a more serious crime was, generally speaking, immediately followed by the terrible punishment of eternal death; while He deals with us like a mother, who will take the rod in her hands twenty times to threaten, but hardly once to strike. In a word, you were treated as servants and slaves of God, we have the great honor, as the Apostle says, “that we are brethren of Christ, that we are called, and are children of God.”¹ But, precisely on this account, I must look at the matter in another light, and say: miserable, wretched Christians! why should you not live holier and love your God more than the Jews and heathens did? How much more inexcusable you are, how much more deserving of punishment, when you deliberately offend your God! So it is, my dear brethren, a single sin, committed by us Christians, makes a deeper wound in the Heart of our heavenly Father than twenty sins of a Jew or heathen, on account of the greater lights and helps that we receive from God. The same is to be said also on account of the stricter contract that we have made with God, to serve Him more holily; as we shall see in the—

Second Part.

Much greater and more hurtful is the injury that I, undeservedly and without cause, suffer from a dear friend, who has sworn constant love and fidelity to me, than that which I suffer from a stranger, who has nothing in common with me, except that we are fellow men. And that is self-evident. What wonder is it that a sovereign is often attacked by foreign foes! That is nothing new, nor is it by any means an intolerable thing, although it may often be done in support of injustice. But, if he were attacked by his own subjects, after they had acknowledged him as their lawful ruler appointed by God, and had sworn allegiance to him; if he were attacked by his own officers and soldiers, after

An injury inflicted by a friend is worse than that inflicted by an enemy.

¹ Ut *Omni* Dei nominemur et simus.

they had taken the oath of fidelity, that would be a crime deserving, not of one, but of two or three deaths; because, along with the injustice, there is the wickedness of contempt, disobedience, perjury, and rebellion. Much more grievous and painful is the injury suffered by a husband, who finds another in unlawful intercourse with his wife, than if he found him committing the same sin with his sister or daughter. And why? Because his wife has sworn to give him alone her heart, and has given over herself to him next after God, in the Sacrament of Matrimony. So that, in addition to the crime of impurity, there is also that of injustice and adultery.

A Christian has sworn a special oath of fidelity to God, which Jews and heathens do not do.

It is true, my dear brethren, that all men, no matter who they are, even Jews and heathens, owe to their Creator a most submissive obedience, respect, and love. No one is excused from this or dispensed from it, in the least. This duty is enforced by nature itself. St. Augustine says, "Heaven and earth cry out to us, that we must love thee, oh, Lord."¹ But it is also true that a Christian is more bound by this duty than other men. And why? Because he, in addition to the obligation incumbent on all men and enforced by nature itself, has bound himself, by a special and a higher title, to the constant love and service of his God. Think, Christians, of the irrevocable contract that you have made with God in holy Baptism, in which He promised to consider you as His children, and you undertook to give Him due honor and obedience, as your Father. You then publicly, and in presence of witnesses, protested, with a solemn oath, that you would have nothing to do, during your whole lives, with the devil and his pomps and vanities, or with the flesh or the corrupt usages of the world, and that you would always remain faithful to your God. "I renounce,"² were the words you used, I renounce all that is not pleasing to God. No allegiance of peasants to their landlord, or of soldiers to their general, no contract between married people, has such strength or obligatory power, as this Baptismal contract. Hence, the holy Fathers call Baptism, sometimes, a levying of soldiers, in which men are enrolled under the banner of Christ to fight unceasingly against the enemies of God, and sometimes a spiritual marriage between the soul and its heavenly Bridegroom, in which the Christian gives his whole heart and love to God alone forevermore. This contract is strengthened by subsequent confessions and communions, although not in express words, yet

¹ Cœli et terræ clamant, Domine, ut amemus te.

² Abrenuntio.

implicitly it is ratified, approved of, and renewed. You may easily see that no Pharisee, or Jew, or heathen, ever made such a contract with God.

And yet if any of these latter transgressed the divine Law, they were not to be excused and were deserving of the eternal punishment of hell. How enormous, then, must your sin be, oh, Catholic Christian! When you sin, you do not merely despise the command of God, like a Jew or a heathen, but you also commit a spiritual adultery, and you are guilty of perjury and rebellion against your rightful Lord, to whom you have, in a special manner, solemnly and publicly sworn eternal fidelity. Oh, what a terrible thing it is, says the Lord Himself, by the mouth of the prophet Ezechiel: "Shall he prosper and gain his salvation, who does such things?"¹ "Shall he go unpunished, who has violated a contract?"² Salvianus, speaking of plays, comedies, and ballots, in which holy purity is violated, or at least endangered, says that it is a sin for a heathen or a Jew to be present at such things, but not near so great a sin as it would be for a Christian; for, if the former is induced thereby to sin against purity, he does not, at all events, profane the holiness of the Sacrament, as we should do; nor would he, like us, act against his promise, so that he would not be guilty of perjury, as we should be. But for a Christian, who has publicly renounced Satan and his works, and given himself soul and body to God, to imitate heathens in this matter, for a Christian to commit grievous crimes, that is no ordinary violation of the divine Law; it is a spiritual apostasy, an idolatry, an adultery, and a denial of God. What are we Christians thinking of? "What excuse can we make for our sins? We make open profession of the gift of salvation, and at the same time deliberately deny it. Where is our Christianity?"³ Have we sworn fidelity to God in the Sacrament, only to make our sins more grievous and inexcusable! Thus far Salvianus.

Therefore the sins of Christians are more grievous.

In truth, my dear Christian brethren, if Jews and heathens are damned on account of their sins, as the Lord declares in the Gospel of St. John: "They have no excuse for their sin,"⁴ what has an impious Christian to expect, who enjoys such perfect light, such frequent helps and graces, such a close connection and relationship with God? If it is true, according to the infallible

Hence the sins of Christian are more deserving of condemnation.

¹ Numquid prosperabitur, vel salutem consequetur, qui fecit hæc.—Ezech. xvii. 15.

² Qui dissolvit partum numquid effugiet.

³ Nos quid respondere pro nobis possumus? Confternar munus salutis pariter et negamus. Ubi est Christianitas nostra?

⁴ Excusationem non habent de peccato suo.—John. xv. 22.

words of God Himself, that we cannot enter Heaven, unless our justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, what kind of a Heaven can we expect, or rather, what sort of hell awaits us, if we are not merely not more perfect and just, but even more vicious and sinful than they? St. Augustine supplies me with an apt simile here, when he compares Christians to the branches of the vine, and Jews and heathens to the oak and beech trees of the forest. Which wood is better and more precious? Certainly, he answers, as long as both are green, the vine is more valuable than the forest trees, because it produces a valuable and agreeable fruit; while the latter can bring forth nothing but green leaves that are of very little use. But, cut down the oak and beech, and place them on one side, and the vine and place it on the other; if you had your choice then, which wood would you prefer? Without any hesitation you would take the former, although it is only forest wood. And why? Because, you think, that wood can be of some service, when it is cut and planed: you can make chairs and tables or anything you will out of it. But what is the vine good for, when it is cut down? You cannot even make a wooden nail out of it, it is only fit for the fire. Such is the difference, says St. Augustine, between Christians and infidels. A good, pious Christian is a branch that grows on the vine, which is Christ: "I am the vine and you are the branches."¹ As long as he is united to Christ, he brings forth good fruit, that is pleasing in the sight of God; he does more for the honor and glory of God than all Jews and infidels together, for they only bring forth green and useless leaves in the forest. On the other hand, a wicked Christian, as soon as he cuts himself off from the vine by a mortal sin, is far worse and more useless than an infidel. Why? Because, when he is enlightened by the grace of faith, the Lord can make him into a vessel of honor in His house, that is in the Church, to show His power and goodness; but a false Christian, a Christian only in name, who lives according to the world and the flesh, is a disgrace to the House of God; so that, being cut off from the vine, if he does not repent, he is good for nothing but hell-fire. "If he is not on the vine, he will be in the fire,"² are the words of St. Augustine. Such is the threat of Our Lord, in the Gospel of St. Matthew: "And I say to you that many will come from the east and the west," and will condemn you, for they have led better lives with less light and grace than you, and many of them will one day

¹ *Ego sum vitis, vos palmites.*—John. xv. 5.

² *Si in vite non est, in igne erit.*

enter the kingdom of Heaven.' "But the children of the kingdom," who had a right to heaven by belonging to the true Church, "will be cast out into the exterior darkness."²

Ah, my dear brethren, let us often think of the high dignity to which we are raised ! We are Christians, and that is a great honor and glory for us ; but, at the same time, it imposes on us a very strict duty and obligation to serve God all the more holily. We are Christians, and that is a great grace and privilege for us, that a merciful God has freely bestowed on us in preference to so many thousands ; but it is, at the same time, a cause of deeper damnation to us, if we dishonor this holy name by a bad life. We are Christians, that is to say, brethren and members of Jesus Christ, sworn to Him in holy Baptism, and servants and children of God ; woe to us, if we deprive ourselves of this great happiness by sin, and make ourselves slaves to the devil. Let us think of this in all temptations, allurements, and occasions to sin, and say at once in our hearts: I am a Christian ! Far be it from me, oh, God ! to perjure myself before Thee; the allegiance that I have sworn Thee, I will keep forever. If I have not hitherto always kept my promise, as I must confess with shame has often been the case, I am sorry for it from my heart. I renew my vows;³ once again I renounce the devil forever, and all belonging to him. I belong to Thee, oh, my God ! and to Thee alone ! I will be Thine and remain so, in order that my justice may abound more than that of the Pharisees, and that I may thus come to Thee in the kingdom of Heaven. Amen.

Conclusion
and resolution
of
amendment

NINTH SERMON.

**ON THE NECESSITY OF HEARING THE WORD OF GOD IN
SERMONS.**

Subject.

To hear the Word of God often in sermons is necessary. 1st. For the salvation of the majority of people. 2d. It is very useful for the salvation of all.—*Preached on the ninth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Erat quotidie docens in templo.—Luke xix. 47.

"He was teaching daily in the temple."

¹ Recumbent in regno cœlorum.—Matth. viii. 11.

² Illi autem regni ejicientur in tenebras exteriores.

³ Abrenuntio.

Introduction.

Christ taught daily in the temple at Jerusalem, and yet the Jews remained, as before, hardened in wickedness, so that when the Saviour looked on the city, His eyes overflowed and He wept bitterly: "If thou hadst only known on this day," when my teaching and instruction are not wanting to thee! Oh, if Christ, the Preacher who holds the hearts and minds of all in His hands, could do no more than that with His teaching, how can I and other preachers complain that our words often produce so little fruit in the hearts of our hearers? Still it is a lamentable thing! Every Sunday and holyday we cry out, or rather, Christ does so through us; how many Christians lead better lives on that account? We have now to see the cause of that, my dear brethren. Many do not come to the sermons; many do not come as they ought; others do not listen as they ought; others do not go away from it as they ought. These four faults shall furnish matter for the next four sermons, or instructions. And it is on this matter that the fruit of all other sermons must depend; if we do not understand and practise what it teaches, no other sermon will be of any use to souls. To-day I shall commence with those who do not come to sermons.

Plan of Discourse.

To hear the Word of God often in sermons is necessary for the salvation of the majority of people. That will be the first part. It is very useful for the salvation of all. Such will be the second part.

Oh, Holy Ghost! Thou alone shouldst speak by the mouths of preachers and move their hearers. We beg of Thee, through Mary, Thy Virginal Spouse, and through the intercession of the holy angels, as dispensers of Thy graces, excite in us the necessary fervor, so that we may in future hear Thy divine Word with great desire.

First Part.

He who is ignorant must be instructed.

He who is ignorant of something that he is bound to know, is under the necessity of learning and of being taught. In the ordinary course of nature, no one is born learned. We all bring ignorance, as an effect of original sin, with us into the world; it is cradled with us and accompanies us for many years. Parents know by experience what trouble it costs them to bring up their children, until the latter are able to take care of themselves. For

¹ Si cognovisses et tu!

this reason there are universities and schools established in towns to give instruction in all kinds of arts and sciences. In one place, young people are taught Latin and other foreign languages; in another, oratory; here they can learn worldly wisdom; there, theology; here they are instructed in law; there, in fencing, dancing, singing, and music; and there is no one who would venture to enter on a profession, unless he has first been diligent in his attendance at the schools, and gone through the long and wearisome task of learning all that is necessary.

Now if learning and instruction are necessary for natural sciences and vain arts, how much more are they not necessary for the art of living and dying well, and in a Christian and holy manner? Especially in the art of living and dying well. Are the former, perhaps, more important than the latter? asks St. Jerome: "We learn all other arts with the help of a teacher; is this of such little value that no teacher is required for it?" And yet, this is the art of arts, the most important business that can engage our attention, on which our immortal soul and its eternal happiness depends; nay, it is the only business that must of necessity occupy us, the only art that we must be thoroughly acquainted with. I may not be able to speak Latin or other foreign languages, but I can go to Heaven, all the same, with my native tongue; I could even go there if I were dumb and unable to speak. I have not practised dancing or fencing, but that will not hinder my eternal happiness; there is neither dancing nor fencing in Heaven. I may have no knowledge of law, but I can find my way to Heaven. But, if I am ignorant of the one necessary science, that of leading a holy life, then all the others will not help me to save my soul. If I know and practise that science, no matter how inexperienced I am in all the others, then I am learned enough for the end of my creation.

But, alas! how many there are who are utterly ignorant of this holy science. The greater number of Christians, even those whom the world looks upon as wise, skilful, and learned, are only beginners in the knowledge of what concerns their soul and their eternal happiness. They know very well how to live before the world, according to their station and position, but they are very ignorant as to how they are to live for Heaven; they profess, indeed, to follow the law of the Gospel, but they know very little of its different obligations, and much less as to how they themselves should live as Christians; they can instruct others in worldly business, but they are unacquainted with the very first rules and prin-

Most men are ignorant of this science.

¹ *Cæteras artes non sine præceptore discimus: hæc tam vilis est, ut præceptore non egeat?*

ciples of the science of salvation ; for temporal matters they have a hundred eyes, for spiritual, not one that they can see clearly with. Therefore, I have reason to compare such people to monomaniacs, who are mad only in a certain thing, while they can talk for half a day on different subjects, without giving any sign of insanity ; but as soon as that point is touched upon which is the cause and origin of their madness, then it is easy to see that they are not consistent and that they have not the full use of reason. See that man, how prudent he is in the management of his domestic affairs, how careful in all he undertakes to keep himself and his family decently ; how far-seeing and skilful he is in buying, selling, and keeping accounts ; how quick he is in foreseeing dangers and losses, and how carefully he avoids them ; how diligent and attentive he is to make use of every opportunity of gain that offers ; how well he knows how to deal with people, and to treat them according to their rank and position. You wonder at his prudence, his intelligence, his cleverness, his skill. But ask the same man about something that regards the future life, his soul, his salvation, or his God ; ask him what is the meaning of contempt for the world, self-denial, mortification of the flesh, poverty of spirit, the necessity of humility, continual repentance, love of the cross, patience under contradictions, union with God, contentment with divine Providence, purity of intention in all his actions, the love of his neighbor and of his enemies, hunger and thirst for justice. Ask him what does he know and think of God, whose infinite majesty is insulted by the least sin ; the strictness of His justice, which punishes the sin of a moment by an eternity of fire ; the irreparable loss caused by sin ; the flight of dangerous occasions, so necessary to avoid sin ; the sincerity of the sorrow that is necessary for the forgiveness of sin ; the uncertainty of the hour of death, which will put an end to everything ; the sanctity of the commandments of God, and how he must observe them according to his state in life ; the exceeding great reward promised to the just ; the happiness of the servants of God who love Him above all things ; and many other such things which every Christian ought to know and to observe. Oh, what an idiot you will find him to be in all these things ! He will speak and judge of them as the blind man does of color, or as the monomaniac of his particular madness ; these things are unknown to him, he does not understand them. Consider his mode of life, and compare it with the commandments and rules of our faith, and you will find one mistake after another, one error after an-

other, one fall and one sin after another ; as if all the things of the next life were nothing to him. And no wonder that he knows so little of them ! How could it be otherwise ? He never learned that science ; he has not imbibed it with his mother's milk.

On the contrary, it is the lamentable condition of us all, inherited from original sin, that our understanding is darkened and blinded in the things that concern God, and our soul and its salvation ; and it would remain so, if it were not enlightened supernaturally ; so that, according to the Apostle, we cannot even think anything good by ourselves.¹ If he has at one time received this light, if he has known something, nay, even all about it, he has lost it all again ; for it is another of our deplorable miseries in this matter, that there is nothing so easily forgotten as the art and science of divine and heavenly things, unless one keeps them always before his mind, and constantly studies and practises them. Even if he still preserves some knowledge and remembrance of them, they are kept out of his mind, his attention is distracted from them by a thousand thoughts, undertakings, and cares. If he does think of them, if his understanding is convinced of his obligation to regulate his life according to the sanctity of the Christian Law, his will still remains sluggish and inactive. And who can do all these things ? he asks himself. Does he take counsel with his own nature and disposition ? But that is corrupt and will lead him in quite a contrary direction. Does he ask and follow the advice of one like himself ? Then it is one blind man leading another. Does he look to the customs and usages of the world for instruction ? Alas ! its false maxims are utterly opposed to Christ, and they are consequently lying and treacherous.

So that a man of this kind, of which there are countless individuals, if he wishes to attain eternal happiness, must go to some school in which he can learn how to live piously, or will at least be induced to do so. And what sort of a school is that ? One to which the Catholic Church calls her children on appointed days, and in which good Christians assemble to hear sermons and exhortations. They are public schools, and may be attended by all, great and small, rich and poor, master and servant, learned and ignorant, clergy and laity, men and women, without distinction. They are holy schools, in which only holy things, and those that lead to holiness are treated of, namely,—how we are to

We have inherited this ignorance from original sin.

We must therefore get instruction in this matter, by listening to sermons.

¹ Non sufficientes simus cogitare aliquid a nobis quasi ex nobis.—II. Cor. III. 5.

think, act, and labor as Christians. They are safe and certain schools, for the matter treated of in them is founded on the Word of God ; the teacher who gives the instruction is the Eternal Wisdom, the infallible God Himself. If you look only at the person who stands in the pulpit and speaks, you see only a poor mortal, who is subject to the same faults and mistakes as yourselves ; who, like you, is inclined to evil, who can sin like you, and who is, sometimes, even a more impious and wicked sinner than all of you together ; and who, therefore, has himself need of sermons, exhortations, and warnings. But, do not forget the office he is entrusted with ; in that, you will find another teacher who cannot betray you. The Apostle says, in the name of all Christians preachers : “ For Christ, therefore, we are ambassadors. God, as it were, exhorting by us.”¹ It is God who makes use of our tongues to frighten you away from sin, to exhort you to good, and to explain to you His will. The Lord Himself says to them : “ He who heareth you, heareth Me.”² “ For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaketh in you.”³

And that according to the command of God.

God could certainly instruct our ignorant understanding in good. He could spur on our sluggish will in His own Person, as He spoke in the Old Law to His prophets; but, according to the present and ordinary arrangement of His Providence, He wills that men should be taught and instructed by men, and not otherwise. Thus we see that, although our Saviour appeared to Paul to convert him, yet He sent him to Ananias, who was to teach and instruct him in what he had to do and how he was to live. This means God now makes use of so generally, that St. Augustine says that he would be guilty of rashness who would seek to be enlightened without hearing sermons.* Could any one hope to excuse his own ignorance, and to free himself from all the sins he commits against the duties of his state of life; to excuse and exculpate himself from the neglect of so many good works that the Christian Law requires of him, when he seldom or never hears the Word of God preached? You will say that you did not know such a thing was a sin, that you did not think you were bound to perform such and such a good work; but you ought to, and you could have learned it. Why are there so many instructions, exhortations, and sermons on Sundays and holydays in so many

¹ Pro Christo legatione fungimur. Tanquam Deo exhortante per nos —II. Cor. v. 20.

² Qui vos audit, me audit.

³ Non enim vos estis, qui loquimini, sed Spiritus Patris vestri.

⁴ Non tentemus Deum. ut nolimus prædicantem hominem audire.

churches? Are they not for you, as well as for others? Would the man who has violated some law of his sovereign be excused from punishment because he deliberately absented himself when the law was being published? Would he be freed from all guilt because he says, I knew nothing about it? He should have known of it, he should have inquired; the law was publicly promulgated for all.

It is therefore necessary to hear sermons attentively and frequently, for those who are ignorant of many matters connected with their eternal salvation, and also for those who forget these matters, or who do not think of them, or who cannot consider them with sufficient attention, because they are occupied the whole week with temporal cares. I leave it to yourselves to say, my dear brethren, whether the number of such persons is not great, nay, whether it does not even include the great majority of men of the world? On account of this necessity, the Catholic Church, although she forbids excommunicated persons from hearing Mass, even on Sundays and holydays, prevents no one from hearing sermons. And I am fully convinced that there are some in such a state that it would do them far more good, as far more necessary for them, to hear a sermon, than to hear Mass or receive Holy Communion, and perhaps their sins would be worse and more dangerous if they neglected the former, than if they neglected the latter. Even if there are many who are not in the absolute necessity of hearing sermons, in order to save their souls, yet sermons are of the greatest utility to all, as we shall see in the—

Consequently it is necessary for the majority to hear sermons.

Second Part.

The frequent hearing of sermons is very useful for the salvation of all Christians, no matter who they are. It is useful to those who are in the state of sin, and to those who are in the state of grace. As far as sinners are concerned, they are compared in the Holy Scriptures to persons sleeping, according to the exhortation of the Apostle to the Romans: "It is the hour for us now to rise from sleep."¹ Imagine, my dear brethren, that you see some one buried in a deep sleep; he is wanted in a hurry to attend to some business of importance; the servant goes to his door and knocks gently, thinking that that will be sufficient to awaken his master; but it is not enough. He knocks again, but hears no movement inside, and, at last, he enters the room, draws the bed curtains aside, and lets the light shine on his master's face; but even this

Very useful for those who are in the state of sin.

¹ Hora est jam de somno surgere.—Rom. xiii. 11.

does not do. Finally, he calls out once, twice, thrice in his ear, that he must get up at once, there is an important matter to be attended to, and the latter half opens his eyes, turns on his side and falls asleep again. What is to be done now? He must be shaken and pulled about, whether he likes it or not, until he is fully awake. That is a true picture of one who is buried in the sleep of sin, who completely forgets his soul, and thinks of nothing but satisfying his unbridled desires. Sometimes a good thought knocks at his heart, to remind him that he is in a bad state; that the life he has been leading hitherto cannot end well; and yet he will not overcome himself to abandon his wicked ways. The light of the good example of the pious shines in his eyes, but it cannot make them open themselves to the necessity of amendment. His conscience warns him, it calls and cries out to him: What you are doing is not right! It is high time for you to awaken from your sleep and to adopt another mode of life. Hereupon he begins to feel disturbed, to sigh and to moan, but falls back again into his former sleep. Then the God of mercy must go to him, and knock at his heart by the living voice of His preacher, in order to rouse him thoroughly and to exhort him, as the Apostle does Timothy: "Preach the Word, be instant in season and out of season," whether it annoys or not, "reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine."¹ The preacher knocks, according to divine inspiration. Sometimes he frightens the sinner by the threat of an unhappy death, of a severe judgment, of the eternal fire of hell, unless he repents. Sometimes he promises him an everlasting reward and perfect happiness in Heaven. Sometimes he makes him uneasy by describing the infinite majesty of God, who is offended by sin, and the terrible sentence of the divine justice. Or he encourages him by reminding him of the patience, mercy, and goodness of God, with which He is always prepared to receive the sinner. Sometimes he condemns the malice of past sins, or entices to good by portraying the beauty of virtue, and the peace of mind that a just man enjoys. Sometimes he cries out: "Be reconciled to God,"² do penance, or you are lost; restore those ill-gotten goods, leave bad company, give up impurity, avoid the proximate occasion, or you are lost; forgive your enemy, make friends with him with whom you have hitherto lived in hatred and discord, correct that bad habit of swearing and cursing, or you are lost.

¹ *Insta opportune, importune, argue, obsecra, increpa in omni patientia et doctrina.*—II. Tim. iv. 2.

² *Reconciliamini Deo.*

Such warnings are the shortest and surest way of touching obstinate hearts (as St. Augustine and St. Chrysostom say) whom God seeks out that he may arouse them from the sleep of sin. These are the pointed arrows that strike sinners in a vital place and arouse them to penance. These are the last means that God Himself uses to draw them to Him. For, as He created all things by His Word; as He has redeemed the world by His Incarnate Word; as He sanctifies man by the sacramental words; so he generally converts the sinner by no other means than His Word explained in sermons.

To this source are to be attributed the many wonderful conversions that have taken place at all times. David, enlightened as he was, did not enter into himself, or do penance, until he heard the accusing voice of the Prophet Nathan. Josophat refused to abandon his ill-made alliance, until Jehu upbraided him. Augustine was not converted by the acuteness of his understanding, nor by his daily studies, nor by the stings of conscience, but the truth shone on him through the sermons of St. Ambrose; he was overcome and converted by them. And, my dear brethren, if we could see the most secret thoughts of all men, what surprising changes of disposition might we not mark in them? How often might we not see men going home from a sermon quite different from what they were when they came to it! How many, who thought of nothing so little as of the amendment of their lives, yet, touched by some word or other, feel the influence of some great grace from God and go home full of repentance and determination to change their lives and to live better and more piously in future!

So many conversions have been caused by it.

This is not unknown to the crafty tempter, and therefore he tries, in every possible way, to keep those who are under his yoke, from hearing the Word of God, for fear that he might lose the game he has caught in his net. When the time comes for the sermon, he puts all sorts of difficulties in their way, he suggests all sorts of excuses and pretexts and multiplies annoyances, so as to make them hate sermons; or at least he keeps them away from those sermons which would have most effect on them. If by some unlooked-for chance they happen to be present at a sermon, in which the right matter is treated of to stir up their conscience, he often secretly tries to drag them out of the Church immediately after it has commenced. So speaks St. Cyrillus of the traitor Judas who, at the Last Supper, went away during Our Lord's dis-

Therefore the devil tries to keep sinners away from sermons.

¹ *Fecisti omnia verbo tuo.*—Sap ix. 1.

course.¹ And do you know why? he asks: “so that he might not be induced to abandon his intended wickedness, by hearing the Word of God.”² Oh, sinner! whoever you are, do not let yourself be deceived and detained by the devil. Do not remain away from sermons, if you do not wish to persevere in that blindness that puts you in danger of eternal darkness. There is no use in looking for the divine light in any other way than that which God has generally established for the conversion of sinners, and that is the hearing His Word explained in sermons.

Sermons
are also very
useful for
the just.

And you, just! Do you wish to be strengthened and confirmed in justice? then frequent sermons diligently. A white garment, no matter how beautiful and precious it is, can easily be soiled, it can soon lose its splendor and become defiled, unless it is often cleaned; a house, no matter how strong and massive it is, may soon become shaky, if the parts that are injured by wind and weather are not repaired; a fire, no matter how clear it burns, will soon go out, unless you keep it supplied with fuel; a living body, no matter how healthy it is, must have food and nourishment at certain times, or it will soon die. Pious and just souls! oh, what a precious, snow-white garment adorns you, since you are in the state of sanctifying grace! Yet, you sometimes fall, through weakness, negligence, and ignorance, into a thousand faults and imperfections, which, although they do not make this garment black, yet stain it each time with spots that mar its beauty and make it less pleasing in the eyes of God. The Word of God is the water, of which the Wise Man says: “He will pour forth the words of his wisdom as showers,”³ by which the soul is cleansed and filled with a greater knowledge of the Supreme Good, and a greater hatred of evil. You are the house and dwelling-place of God,⁴ according to the words of the Apostle. But, to how many storms are you not exposed, that is, daily temptations, dangers, and occasions of sin? And if these are not constantly opposed, will not the building soon fall down? The Church, in which the Word of God is explained, is the armory from which you must supply yourselves with weapons, in order to conquer the enemy of your souls and to defend yourselves against every attack. Your souls are in a healthy state; the Word of God is their food and nourishment; St. John Chrysostom says. “what food is to the body, the Word of God is to the soul.”⁵ If you neglect to give your

¹ Continuo exivit.

² Ne moram faciens, et audiens verbum Dei, scelus expueret.

³ Tanquam imbres mittit eloquia sapientiæ suæ.—Eccli. xxxix. 9.

⁴ Templum Dei sanctum est, quod estis vos.

⁵ Quod corpori cibus est, hoc animæ est divinorum eloquiorum doctrina.

souls this food, they will get wearied in the service of God, will grow cold and will die through want of strength. You seem to be all on fire with the love of God; but no matter how burning this love is, it stands in need of fresh fuel. Where can that be had, if not in sermons? The Lord says: "Are not my words as a fire?"¹ which enlivens devotion by the continual remembrance of the divine mysteries, and which preserves and increases the impulse of the will to good.

And what should I think of all this, my dear brethren? Should I rejoice or fear, exult or deplore? I have certainly reason for joy, when I think of the wonderful goodness of God to us, who bestows this light, this spiritual food, so plentifully, so frequently, so generously on us, in preference to so many others. But, alas! it is this very thought which makes me fear and tremble for ourselves, since we have such little esteem for this precious grace, and neglect it so frequently. Perhaps there are many Christians nowadays, perhaps many even of those here present, to whom the words of Jeremias might be applied: "The word of the Lord is made a reproach to me and a derision all the day."² For, they who seldom or never hear a sermon during the month, or during six months, or even during the whole year, and some of them because they fear that their secret wounds might be touched, or their consciences aroused, or their repose troubled, are afraid of being converted, and of being induced to lead better lives. Wretched and blind people! what other means have you of being enlightened as to your salvation? and yet you deliberately shun the light, like bats and owls!

There are others who seldom or never come to a sermon, because they think they are wise, learned, and experienced enough. I can read it for myself in books, they say; I have heard so many already that there is no chance of my hearing anything new. Now, you should be more modest; do not be so very proud; granted that you are learned enough; I will believe it with all my heart; but is that a reason why you should not stand in need of the living, inspiring Word of God? His Spirit does not breathe everywhere and at all times, but, "it breathes where it listeth,"³ and dispenses its graces. You can hear nothing that you have not heard already. Be it so; but I tell you, confidently, that you will hear many truths that you have not yet perhaps put in practice. You can read them in spiritual books, and perhaps

Therefore they are greatly to be pitied who seldom go to sermons, for fear of being made better.

Some imagine that sermons are not necessary for them.

¹ Numquid non verba mea sunt quasi ignis?—Jerem. xxiii. 29.

² Factus est sermo Domini in opprobrium.—Jerem. xx. 8. ³ Ubi vult, spirat.

in a better style than you would hear in sermons; that may be true also, but it is one thing to read and another to hear, and it is to this latter that God has, generally speaking, given the power of moving hearts and bestowing the grace of the Holy Ghost. The rain, falling from the clouds, gives a quite different refreshment to the earth, to that which it would receive from artificial irrigation; and, in the same way, the word that God speaks to your heart, by the mouth of His servant, is much better able to produce fruit in your soul, than the thoughts which your own cleverness and ingenuity suggest to you. "Woe to you that are wise in your own eyes,"¹ and do not see the deceits by which the devil tries to keep you away from the Holy Ghost!

Those who are not regular in hearing sermons.

Finally, there are others who come now and then, when the whim takes them, but not regularly. As if God were obliged to store up the light of His grace, and keep it in reserve for them, until it may happen to suit their convenience to come for it, and even then, too, it would be necessary that the subject treated of be one that is suited to the state of their souls. All sermons cannot treat of all subjects, nor can all be equally profitable to every one; it may be that there is only one sermon to which God, in His wise decrees, has attached your conversion and the sanctity of your life, and your eternal salvation; and if you wilfully neglect that opportunity, you will never, perhaps, have a similar one again. But, you think, if I miss the sermon, I will be told at home, afterwards, what it was about. That is good, and it is a work of Christian charity; but it is a different thing to hear a sermon second-hand, and to hear it yourself: the words that the preacher spoke may be repeated to you, but not the inspirations which God sends to the heart. To say the very least, such carelessness is a sign of a very indifferent appetite, of a very weak desire to hear the Word of God. If we had to do without food for a whole day, either through want, because there is no bread in the house, or because we are compelled to abstain from all nourishment, we should think it a very hard thing; and yet there are many who, through indifference, deprive their souls of nourishment on Sundays and holydays, and they think nothing of it! What wonder is it that they should continue in their sins, or in their tepidity, or in their ignorance?

They must render a strict account therefore.

Oh, what a strict account will not many Catholics have to give, because they neglected so many and such frequent opportunities of being exhorted to good! That we shall see on the day

¹ Væ, qui sapientes estis in oculis vestris. Isa. v. 21.

when the Lord will show each one how well and how wisely He acted with regard to all of us; when He will show each one the great graces He had in readiness to bestow on him, if he had heard the exhortations, not of the priest, but which God Himself uttered by the mouth of the priest. He will say to them in reproof: "How often would I have" enlightened thy ignorance in sermons, and thou didst not come to hear them.¹ In that sermon, oh, sinner, I was ready to give thee a mighty impulse to sorrow and repentance, and to save thee from thy evil habits, thy bad company, and the proximate occasion of sins; and thou wouldst not come. I had then intended, oh, tepid Christian, to make thee zealous. Vain man of the world, I had intended to inspire thee, with a disgust for the worthless things of earth, and thou wouldst not come. Thou, rich man, I would have taught thee how to use thy riches for thy last end, and thou, poor man, how thou couldst have profited of thy poverty; and thou wouldst not come, thou wouldst not listen to me. Thou who art in trouble couldst have found consolation and patience in thy difficulties; thou, just man, couldst have become more pious and have reached a higher degree of glory in Heaven; and thou wouldst not, thou didst not wish; the fault is thine, not mine. Poor, unfortunate souls! who seldom or never hear a sermon, although they could do so easily enough! They bear about them one of the certain signs of reprobation, since they have no taste for spiritual food. So say the Holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church. Christ Himself, the Infallible Truth, has said: "He who is of God, heareth the Word of God;"² "therefore (oh, terrible conclusion!), you do not hear because you are not of God."³ If you are not of God, you have no part in Him.

Let it not be so, oh, Lord, for us! All of us, here present, hope to have a part in Thee and to possess Thee for all eternity. We thank Thee from the bottom of our hearts, that Thou hast bestowed so much light on us, in preference to so many others. We wish to receive this light, whenever it is offered to us. We shall seek it regularly on the usual days, by hearing Thy divine Word, unless absolute necessity prevents us. Do Thou speak to our hearts, Thy servants will hear Thee. Let Thy Holy Spirit suggest those words to Thy preachers which Thou knowest to be good for our souls, and grant us to hear them in such a way that they may not be fruitless in us. Amen.

Conclusion
and resolu-
tion of
amendment

¹ Quoties volui, et noluisti.—Matt. xxiii. 37.

² Qui ex Deo est, verbum Dei audit. ³ Propterea vos non audistis quia ex Deo non estis.

*Another Introduction for Whit-Monday.***Text.**

Venit lux in mundum, et dilexerunt homines magis tenebras, quam lucem.—John iii. 19.

“The light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than the light.”

Introduction.

The light had come into the world, and yet men were still in the darkness of night. And why? Because they loved the darkness and closed their eyes to the light. The light of the Holy Ghost is also, in our days, frequently offered in Christian exhortations and sermons, by the explanation of the Word of God, but there are, comparatively, very few who are enlightened and improved by it. Why? Because many hate this light and seldom come to hear a sermon. Many seek for the light, and are diligent in hearing the Word of God, but they derive little profit from it, because they do not hear it as they ought. The desire of remedying these two evils has impelled me, my dear brethren, to exhort you to hear sermons frequently, and to explain to you how you may hear them with profit. I shall speak to-day of the first point, and I say—*continues as before.*

TENTH SERMON.**HOW ONE SHOULD GO TO SERMONS.****Subject.**

One should go to sermons—1st, with a heart well-prepared; 2d, with speedy steps.—*Preached on the tenth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Duo homines ascendebant in Templum, ut orarent.—Luke xviii. 10.

“Two men went up into the Temple to pray.”

Introduction.

Two men went to the same place, the Temple of God; they went with the same intention, to pray; but how differently they carried it out! The one was a Pharisee, who was looked upon as

a pattern of piety; the other a Publican, a public sinner, whose wicked life was known to all. The one was full of secret pride, the other, of humility and contrition. The one went to extol himself in his prayer, and to raise himself above others; the other to repent of his sins, and to beg the mercy of God. What wonder is it that they both left the Temple in very different states? "This man went down into his house justified, rather than the other." A picture, my dear brethren, of many Christians, who go into the same Church, at the usual time, to hear the same sermon; but all of them do not return home in the same state. If there are ten of them who derive great profit for their souls, there are fifty who derive much less, and a hundred who have no profit at all. One sinner is touched and moved to penance, another remains as hardened as he was before. One just man is made more zealous in the service of God, the other remains as he was. One poor unfortunate gets consolation and courage, the other is just as discontented as ever. The one understands, knows, and fulfils the truth preached to him, the other is not at all enlightened by it. Whence arises this difference amongst men of the same nature, who hear the same Word of God, preached at the same time, and in the same place? The fault lies with themselves: they do not come to the sermon in the same way and with the same dispositions. To remedy this great defect, I will tell you, in to-day's instruction, how you must go to a sermon in order to profit by it.

Plan of Discourse.

One should go to sermons—1st. With a heart well-prepared. The first point. 2d. With speedy steps. The second point.

I rely upon the help of the Holy Ghost, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the holy angels.

First Part.

If you wish to hide a treasure in the ground, you must set to work in a very different manner to that in which you would prepare to sow seeds. He who thinks of hiding a treasure, does not consider the nature of the ground, whether it is free from stones, or full of them; whether it is hard or soft; fruitful or unfruitful; he looks to nothing else, but to making the hole deep enough, that his treasure may not be discovered and stolen. On the other hand, he who sows seed must first carefully prepare the

The seed produces fruit according as the ground is prepared.

ground; for the seed will bring forth little or much fruit, or no fruit at all, according as the ground is ill or well prepared, or altogether unprepared.

The seed is
the Word
that God
plants in the
hearts of
those who
hear it.

Our Lord Jesus Christ uses the same simile in the Gospel of St. Luke, when He speaks of the Word of God: "The seed is the Word of God."¹ This is sown by sermons; not the ears, but the hearts of the hearers are the ground in which it is sown, in order to bring forth abundant fruit of eternal life for souls. But, no matter how powerful and impressive this Word may be, the whole profit and advantage of it depends mostly on the preparation and disposition of the heart that is to receive it. Not the preacher, as I said before, but God is the sower, who speaks by the mouth of His preacher and distributes His graces to hearts. Oh, there is no doubt about it! It is neither I, nor any one else, who does the good. Thou, oh, Lord! Thou must do it: "Neither he who planteth is anything, nor he who watereth, but God who giveth the increase."² Sermons may be as polished, as well conceived, as impressive as you wish, but if the Spirit of God does not enlighten the hearers with supernatural light, those sermons will be as incapable of producing an effect, as ice-cold water is of making a fire burn brighter. The voice of the preacher goes no farther than the ears of his hearers; it has then done its duty, and it comes back again, while the voice of God forces its way into the depths of the heart. We may cry out and shout, and make a great noise, in exhorting you to good, St. Augustine says: "If there is no one to teach inwardly, all the noise we make is of no use."³ There are always two preaching together: besides him whom you see in the pulpit, there is another Preacher in Heaven, who with one hand directs the tongue of him who is preaching, while with the other He moves the hearts of his audience. "He has his seat in the Heavens, who teaches hearts."⁴ "My tongue is the pen of a scrivener that writeth swiftly,"⁵ says David, and all preachers must acknowledge it. Why does he call his tongue the pen of a scrivener? The pen may be made as well as possible, but the good writing is attributed, not to the pen, but to the writer, who knows how to make the letters neatly. So that the meaning of David is, my tongue is the pen of a scrivener, namely,—

¹ Semen est verbum Dei.—Luke viii. 11.

² Neque qui plantat, est aliquid, neque qui rigat, sed qui incrementum dat Deus.

³ Admonere possumus per strepitum vocis nostræ, si non sit intus, qui doceat, inanis fit strepitus noster.

⁴ Cathedralam in cælo habet, qui corda docet.

⁵ Lingua mea calamus scribæ velociter scribentis.—Ps. xlv. 2.

God, who, by means of it, writes good things in the hearts of men. You also were well aware of that, oh, great St. Paul, when you wrote to the Ephesians: "Pray for me that speech may be given to me, that I may open my mouth with confidence,"¹ and that God may give me words to move hearts and to stir them up to divine love! It is on that account, my dear brethren, that we always ask the help of the Holy Ghost by devout prayer, in the beginning of a sermon; and I am certain, that if any good is done, it is oftener to be attributed to the pious prayer of some poor, humble, but holy man, who stands in self-abasement behind a pillar, than to the preacher himself.

But to return to our subject. Theologians teach that according to the present general arrangement of Providence, God bestows His lights, gifts, and graces, only on those who are ready and able to receive them; just as the sacraments themselves cause grace according to the disposition of those who receive them. It sometimes happens, as experience teaches, that an impenitent sinner, who chances to go to a sermon, without the least idea of amendment, and with some wicked and impious intention, is struck with the light of grace, moved to repentance and converted. But these are rare and extraordinary examples of the mercy of God. Let no one trust his salvation to a miracle like that. So that the first thing we must bring with us to a sermon, if we wish to profit by it, is a well-disposed and well-prepared heart.

It requires a well-prepared heart.

And how? what does that preparation consist in? In this, that we must cleanse our hearts, like ground that we prepare for seed, from the stones that would prevent the Word from fructifying, and from the thorns that would choke it; that is to say, we must lay aside all other cares, evil desires, and thoughts, and wilful attachments to sin, and we must go to the sermon with no other wish, no other intention, but a true and earnest desire to understand the will of God, to learn the truths taught and to act according to them. If I am in the state of sin, my first wish must be to understand the deformity of sin, so that I may be moved to true sorrow and penance, and avoid evil in future. If I am in the state of grace, my only object must be to be incited more and more to the love of God, and to His service, to the esteem of virtue, and to the desire and longing for heavenly things. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."² What is the meaning of that? Have not all got ears who come to hear ser-

What this preparation consists in.

¹ Orate pro me, ut detur mihi sermo in aperitione oris mei.

² Qui habet aures audiendi, audiat.—Luke. viii. 8.

mons? They are not deaf, or they would remain at home. It is true, says Cardinal Hugo, that all have ears, but all have not ears to hear.¹ They who hear must have such ears that they can profit by what they hear and obey the divine will, when they understand it.

They fall
in this point
who come
to sermons
without a
proper in-
tention.

Do we bring such ears with us, my dear brethren, when we come to a sermon? Are our hearts thus prepared, our minds ready, our intentions pure, our desires earnest and sincere? Would to God that it were so! If I might ask each and every one particularly, what induced them to come to the sermon, and expect from all a true answer, how different would be the causes they would assign, and not one of them conformable to the true object of a sermon! Some could not even assign a cause; they go to the sermon, and they hardly know why or how they went; they had simply the desire of following the crowd, of keeping up a custom, of pleasing their fathers, mothers, masters, or mistresses, who ordered them to come and who watch them to see that they do so. There are many simple, good souls, who could give no other reason for their coming except that they wished to hear a sermon, thinking that when they have done that, they have performed a good, holy, and meritorious work; so that it is all the same to them whom they hear, what they hear, and how they hear; nor do they trouble themselves about the subject, for their only object is to hear a sermon, and of course every subject is good. That may be all very true, but the good work does not consist therein. If you have no other intention but that, I would not give you anything for all you could gain, even if you heard ten sermons in the one day. The hearing of sermons, in itself, is not a holy or meritorious work, it is only a means of learning holy things, so as to do something holy and good afterwards; and that is the intention which makes it good and meritorious to hear sermons.

Through
curiosity or
a bad mo-
tive.

And you others, why do you come now and then to sermons? Is it that you may pass away an hour or so, on Sundays or holydays, which you would otherwise find too long, as you have nowhere else to spend your time? Or is it to satisfy an idle curiosity to hear how the preacher acquits himself of his task, that you may criticise him afterwards? They say, like those people of whom the Prophet Ezechiel writes: "Come, let us go and hear what he has to say,"² what sort of ideas and thoughts

¹ Habent aures, sed non habent aures audiendi.

² Venite et audiamus, quis est sermo egrediens.

he has; as if they were going to see a play! Poor, blind wretches! who only try to satisfy their curiosity, and seek merely for pleasure and enjoyment, where they might find their eternal salvation, and whose only object is to glut their ears, where they might feed their souls, and learn what their obligations are and how to fulfil them. I will say nothing of other still more culpable, nay, even wicked motives, that induce many to come, who have not the least idea of amending their lives; but come with the deliberate intention of opposing holy inspirations, and driving them out of their minds. What sort of profit can all those people hope to have? No one is forced to receive grace against his will; he must seek it, desire and long for it.

I say, my dear brethren, “bring with you longing and devout hearts”¹ to the sermon! The greater your appetite, when you sit down to table, the better flavor has your food, and the more good it does the stomach. The purer your intention, the greater your desire to be instructed and moved by the Word of God, the more profit will you bring home with you. So that, first of all, before you go to a sermon, or while you are in the church before it commences, you must raise your heart to God. Think to yourself: God is now about to speak to my heart. Sigh and pray in the words of the Prophet Samuel: “Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.”² Enlighten my understanding that I may know what Thou desirest from me, arouse my will that I may do what Thou willest; behold, oh, Lord! my heart is prepared, and in Thy hands. Turn it, direct it, draw it whither Thou wilt. Speak, Lord! Thou art my Lord, I am Thy servant, Thy handmaid; it is for Thee to command me in all things, and for me to obey Thee; I am here now with the intention of hearing, learning, knowing, and doing whatever is pleasing to Thee. Thy servant heareth. That is one of the things required, my dear brethren, to draw profit from sermons; to come with a well-prepared heart. The other is, to come with speedy steps, and it will be the subject of the—

Therefore, all that must be mended.

Second Part.

And what is the meaning of that, you ask, to come with speedy steps? Does it mean that we must all set off running, as soon as we hear the bell ring, and rush into the church in a body? What a noise that would make in the streets, and what confusion at

To come too late to sermons is an irreverence towards God: this

¹ Afferte facies esurientes, et corda devota.

² Loquere Domine! quia audit servus tuus.

proved by a
smile.

the church doors! No, my dear brethren, my meaning is that you must come in time to the sermon. What prevents a great many from deriving the proper fruit, is their sloth and laziness; for some make it almost a habit not to come until the sermon is begun, or even half over. What a great irreverence this is to the Word of God, what advantages it deprives them of, and what harm it does their souls, they can hardly imagine. And, in the first place, with regard to the irreverence, tell me: Do you think the master should wait for his servant? or should not the servant rather wait for his master? If the Prince sent you word last night to be in his presence this morning, at eight o'clock precisely (for he will await you at that hour, as he wishes to say something particular to you), would you neglect being there at the appointed time? Would you think, there is no hurry yet, I can sleep a quarter of an hour longer; I have still something to do at home; there will be time enough for me to get ready at eight o'clock; the Prince can wait a little until I come, or he can talk with his other attendants meanwhile? You would never dream of such things, nor let a word to that effect fall from your lips, for fear some one should hear it. Your anxiety not to come too late would drive you out of bed at four o'clock, so that you might be dressed in time, and wait half an hour in the audience chamber, before the appointed hour. But if you knew, moreover, that he sent for you to grant you a favor at the appointed time, how early and speedily you would get ready! Would you allow yourself to be delayed by any other business, no matter how short a time it might occupy? I think not; for, you would say, if I lose this favor now, I may never have such an opportunity again.

God bestows
His favors
in sermons.

My dear brethren, I have often told you before, that you do not come to Church merely to hear the preacher, whom you see in the pulpit; otherwise I should have spoken far too audaciously, when I brought forward the comparison of the master and servant, and it would certainly make little matter whether you came late or early; there is no use in your expecting any grace from me, I can give you none. It is the King of Heaven, the great God, who wishes to speak in and to your hearts by the voice of His instrument; it is He who calls you half an hour beforehand, by the sound of the bell, to His audience-chamber; He is there at the hour that is fixed and known to all, and He waits for His servants, to give them gratuitously certain graces, that is, either to impel them to a certain good, or to restrain them from a cer-

tain evil; and if the appointed time is neglected, these graces may never be offered again. Oh, how great are the goodness and mercy of God to us!

Ah, my dear brethren, only think of it for a moment seriously. How many populous cities and countries there are, in the four quarters of the globe, in which God seldom or never speaks to hearts or makes known His truths in this manner? How many millions of men there are amongst the heathens, Jews and heretics, who hear nothing of the mysteries of our faith? How many, even faithful Christians, there are, here and there, in out-of-the-way villages, who can sigh and complain with Jeremias: "The little ones," the afflicted, the ignorant, stretch out their hands for the Bread of the soul, in order to be comforted, strengthened, and instructed, and "there is no one to break this bread and set it before them."¹ For a long time they have been without a chance of hearing the Word of God preached. And here we have such frequent and easy opportunities! Have we merited more than they? My God, that is a secret that I cannot find out, or try to find out. It is enough for us (praise and thanks be to Thee forever) that Thy goodness pours itself out upon us, and that Thou speakest so generously to our hearts; we are not capable of valuing such graces and favors according to their worth, much less of making Thee an adequate return for them. And, my dear brethren, do we think so little of these graces, that it is no great matter to us whether we come too late or too early to receive them? We can easily imagine what they, who come late to the sermon without necessity would say, if they gave utterance to their thoughts: let God wait a while and speak with those who are there with Him; there is time enough for me; I will come presently; He can wait, and distribute His graces to others meanwhile; whatever He may have over will be good enough for me. What irreverence, what discourtesy and ingratitude to so great and good a Lord! You might make a great many excuses to an earthly prince, to explain the delay, in case you came too late; but could you hope to do anything of the kind with the Almighty God, who knows the secrets of your heart, and understands the reasons of your delay?

Oh, if you only had a greater love of God and of His Word, you would certainly come earlier! How quickly Magdalen ran to the door when she heard the words: "The Master is here and calls thee."² Hardly had St. Peter heard the words: "It is the

It is therefore an ingratitude and discourtesy toward God.

A want of the love of God.

¹ *Parvuli, petierunt panem, et non erat, qui frangeret eis.*

² *Magister adest et vocat te.*

Lord,"¹ as he was sitting in the boat and saw Christ coming along the water, then he leaped overboard immediately, in order to come to Him at once. And if you, too, oh, man, knew that any one, whom you love very dearly, were at home waiting for you, love would add wings to your footsteps, that you might be there as soon as possible. And, see, whenever there is a sermon, your Lord and God is waiting for you, and you delay! And you come a quarter, or half an hour too late, while He is in the middle of His discourse! Is that a sign that you have a love and esteem for God and His Word?

Such people can derive little or no profit because they cannot understand the sermon.

And what sort of advantage do you expect to draw from such bits of sermons? None, or at least a very slight one. So that, in addition to the irreverence, discourtesy, ingratitude, and want of love towards God, there is also a loss occasioned to your soul by your coming late. Because, first of all, you are not present at the opening prayer, by which the whole congregation asks and receives the light of the Holy Ghost from Heaven; a thing that you need most of all, as I said in the beginning. And in the second place, you are not able to understand the sermon, so that it cannot give you any impulse to good. Imagine that you see two people quarrelling and fighting in the street; the dispute has been going on for some time, and at last you run up and hear how the two are shouting at and abusing each other. They speak distinctly, and you know the meaning of all the words they use, but you do not know the cause and subject of their quarrel; and so you ask one of the bystanders: What is the matter with these two men? But the only answer you get is: Why were you not here sooner, and you might have known all about it? And so you go away just as wise as you came, knowing nothing about the matter, except that two men had a quarrel. In the same way, if you come into the church during the sermon, you see some one standing in the pulpit; he is speaking of all sorts of things, according as his subject requires; he makes use of different comparisons; awakens different affections; sometimes raises his voice with a sigh to Heaven, sometimes speaks directly to his audience in tones of pity and wonder; at one time he threatens, at another entreats. And meanwhile you stand there gaping and wondering what is it all about. What is he preaching about? you think; you dare not ask any one, for fear of distracting him, and if he could tell you the subject in one word, you would still be ignorant of what has gone before, so

¹ Dominus est.

that all your gaping and listening is of very little or no use to you.

Again, no matter how good a sermon may be, either in form, or in the instruction it gives, or in the eloquence with which it is delivered, if it is to produce any fruit, the understanding must be convinced, by clear proofs and reasons, of the truth preached, so that the hearer may acknowledge it, and say to himself, yes, that is true, it is right to do this, or to avoid that; and then the will must be moved and excited, by appealing to the affections, in order that it may fulfil the truth; thus, one depends on the other, like the links of a chain. But, if you come too late, you hear only one part; the chain is broken, the order disturbed; and so how can the truth make the proper impression on you. Your will cannot be moved, because the understanding, which must give light to the blind will, is neither convinced nor enlightened by the proofs given in the beginning, which you have not heard. So that you go away just as wise as you came; the only thing you have gained, is to be able to say, I have heard part of a sermon; not another particle of good have you done yourself.

Finally, you do not come prepared; that is, with a real desire and longing to hear the Word of God. What would you think of him who, being invited to table, would delay, without cause, until the first and best dishes were removed? You would say, there is something wrong with that man; either he has no appetite, or he is utterly indifferent to eating and drinking. Certainly, if he was hungry, he would not require to be asked a second time, nor would he wait for the signal of the bell; his stomach would give him sufficient warning, and the cook must look out, if his meal is not ready at the proper time. Is there any reason, then, to think that he has a true desire to hear the Word of God, which is the food of the soul, who, as a matter of habit, without any necessity, through sheer sloth, or because he fritters away his time in useless things, comes too late to the sermon? Oh, certainly not! The Holy Ghost says: "Teach the just man," who has a great zeal and desire for justice; "and he will hasten to receive the teaching."¹ He will not sit down in his house and wait until the last toll of the bell resounds in his ears: he will hasten, that he may have time to prepare himself beforehand by prayer, so that he may thus derive greater fruit from the sermon; he will hasten so as not to lose a single word. The whole matter depends on getting up half an hour earlier in the morning.

Because they cannot be moved.

Because they do not come with the proper preparation.

¹ *Doce justum, et festinabit accipere.*

But if some complain of the difficulty of having to stand during the sermon, and remain away (as I think some do) on that account, or come late, then I would say to them: would you think it too hard if you had to stand for an hour talking to a Prince? And if it is God who speaks to you, how can you make such a difficulty of it? You are often able to go an hour too early to the theatre, although it is not very comfortable to sit there, on account of the heat and close air. You can stand for hours looking at a juggler or a mountebank. If there is one for whom you have an unlawful affection, you can stand talking at the door with that person, for one, two, or three hours, without being tired; and when the great God speaks for the good of your souls, you think an hour too long! The great emperor Constantine, as Eusebius of Cæsarea relates, always stood when hearing sermons, because, he said, it was the Supreme Lord of Heaven who was speaking by the mouth of the preacher, and it was only right to show that mark of reverence to His Word. I do not mean, my dear brethren, that you should not sit down, if you have the opportunity of doing so; but you must not make such a difficulty of standing, if you have to stand, that you remain away or come too late on that account, and thus deprive your souls of a great advantage.

Conclusion
and exhortation.

We see now how we ought to come to sermons: we must come with our hearts well prepared and full of desire to understand and fulfil the will of God; we must come with speedy steps, at the proper time, so as not to lose anything of what is said. When you hear the first sound of the bell, remember what the three holy kings said, when they saw the star: "That is the sign of a great King:"¹ come, quickly, let us go to him; God is calling us by that signal; I will go at once and hear what the Lord has to say to my heart.² Oh, if every one was always thus prepared and disposed, says St. John Chrysostom, what good might be done by a single sermon! What great treasures of grace the divine generosity would lavish on souls! How sinners would be filled with sorrow and repentance, the just with the love of God, the needy and distressed with spiritual consolation, the tepid with zeal, the ignorant with light, and all with devotion! Would that every one were always thus disposed! Too happy should I be, if God deigned to use me only once as an instrument to further His honor and glory and the salvation of souls! But, as it is, I must rather fear that instead of doing the good I hope for and desire,

¹ Hoc signum magni Regis est.

² Audiam, quid loquatur in me Dominus.

I may rather be the cause why many Christians will have to render a far stricter account on the day of judgment, and have to suffer a far deeper damnation; inasmuch as through their own fault, they do not understand the will of God, nor take it to heart, nor fulfil it. But I look for consolation from you, my dear brethren. And Thou, oh, great God, who art the only Lord and Master of our hearts! who canst turn and move them as Thou pleasest! Do Thou open our mouths to announce Thy praise, Thy law, Thy truths, according to Thy will; and, at the same time, open the hearts of our hearers, that they may understand and undertake what is pleasing to Thee; so that Thy Word may profit us all to the cleansing of our souls, increasing in Thy grace, progress in Thy love, and to Thine and our greater glory forever. Amen.

Another Introduction for Sexagesima Sunday :

Text.

Qui in corde bono et optimo audientes verbum retinent.—
Luke viii. 15.

“Who in a good and very good heart, hearing the Word, keep it.”

How does it happen, my dear brethren, that, although the Word of God is sown so generously, although there are many hearts who receive it, yet this divine seed, generally speaking, produces such different kinds of fruit? There are many different kinds of Christians, who go to the same Church, at the usual times, etc.—
continues as before.

Introduction.

1. One should go to sermons with a good and very good heart.
2. In good and very good time.

ELEVENTH SERMON.

HOW ONE SHOULD HEAR SERMONS.

Subject.

1st. One should hear them with continued attention and recollection. 2d. And with an earnest desire to profit by them.—
Preached on the eleventh Sunday after Pentecost.

Text.

Adducunt ei surdum et mutum.—Mark vii. 32.

“They bring to him one deaf and dumb.”

Introduction.

Miserable is the condition of the man who is deaf and dumb ! He can neither make known his thoughts to others, nor hear or understand what they say to him. Our divine Lord, moved with pity, as we read in to-day’s Gospel, freed one of those unfortunates from his unhappy condition, and gave him speech and hearing together. Ah, my divine Lord, Thy power is not lessened : we beg of Thee, therefore, through the intercession of Thy Blessed Mother Mary and of our holy angels guardian, show the same mercy now to us ! How many are deaf and dumb, nowadays, where the hearing of Thy Word is concerned ! How many there are who come to sermons and hear and understand as little of them as if they were deaf ! How many there are who listen to them and are yet as little capable of interpreting them for their own advantage, as if they were dumb ! To remedy this twofold deplorable misery, I will, with the help of Thy grace, show how sermons must be heard, in order to profit by them. Namely—

Plan of Discourse.

One should hear them with continued attention and recollection. The first and principal point. And with an earnest desire to profit by them. The second point.

First Part.

If a great man, or any one, is speaking to us of important matters, we must be very attentive.

If all who listen to sermons were always moved by the one desire of understanding the Word of God, and the truths contained in it, and of living according to that, then I should not require to enter into a longer explanation of the first point, nor to go to any further trouble to prove it. For he who is earnestly intent on understanding the subject of the discourse and what is said about it, must, as a matter of course, be sufficiently attentive and recollected. Even in ordinary conversation, amongst men of the same condition, it is very annoying to find that the person you are speaking to allows his mind to wander, and does not pay the least attention to what you are saying. How much more annoyed would not a great man be to find his words made so little of ? See how they behave who have the privilege of an audience with their sovereign ; how self-restrained and reverent their de-

meanor, how attentively and eagerly they listen to every word that their Prince says to them! If, meanwhile, one of those privileged individuals were to play with his lap-dog, or to bandy jests with the servants in attendance, or even to turn his eyes and countenance away from his sovereign to look at the pictures hanging on the walls, and that while the Prince is actually speaking to him; what would you think of such conduct, my dear brethren? Is it not true that not even a simple peasant would dare to forget himself so far in such circumstances, to say nothing of a courtier, who knows how to act with his Prince? Even at table, where general conversation is allowed, if the Prince only opens his mouth to speak, oh, then immediately, every one is all attention and eagerness! Again; if I should ask a man, even of a more humble station in life than myself, advice in some important matter, for instance in a law-suit, how attentive would I not be to everything that he would say in the way of answer, advice, or explanation, and how deeply would I not imprint it all on my memory, so as to forget nothing! I make him repeat it two and three times over, so that I may understand it clearly and remember it well; for, it was on that account that I went to him. If I did not pay any attention to him, it were better for me not to have gone near him, for he would then have reason to look upon my conduct as insulting, and to think that I wished to make a fool of him.

My dear brethren, what are we doing when hearing a sermon? For what object are we all assembled? Is it not to understand what God wishes to say in and to our souls? Could any one ever speak with us, poor mortals, who would be more deserving of reverence and respect than the great God? What is the majesty of all the kings and princes of earth, compared with Thine, oh, Almighty Monarch of Heaven?—A little crumb bestowed on them out of the infinite treasures of Thy greatness. And this is the great Lord who, as I have often told you before, speaks to our hearts by the mouth of the preacher. And what does He speak to us of? Of things that are necessary to our eternal salvation, or at least, helpful to it. He tells us, for instance, how we are to live according to the end of our creation, what we are to avoid in order to escape the eternal fires of hell, what we are to do and to shun that we may gain a victory over the enemies of our souls, who are on the watch, at all times, in all places, to betray and ruin us, how we are to increase daily our merit and our treasure for eternity, and finally, how we are to enjoy ourselves with Him in

It is God who speaks in sermons, and of very necessary things.

His eternal kingdom. This is the end of all Christian sermons and instructions. Could any business be of greater importance or necessity to us? And it is for that very object that we come to sermons; at least, such is the ostensible object of our coming.

We owe
Him contin-
ued atten-
tion.

Therefore it is evident that the great Lord who speaks, the important business of which He treats, and our own intention, desire, and wish, all exact from each one of us the closest attention and recollection during the sermon, so that we may know and understand what is spoken of; otherwise it would be better for us to remain away, for the very walls and benches of the church would form just as good an audience as we should, if we merely allow the preacher's words to strike the ear and nothing more.

All do not
give even
that much
attention;
many are
wilfully
distracted.

But, what am I saying? That good intention and preparation of the heart, that earnest desire to understand what is good and to fulfil it, is not, as I have before remarked, by any means the object that brings every one to the sermon. Therefore, I am afraid that there are some who do not trouble themselves about paying the necessary attention. And how, you ask? why am I afraid of that? Every one seems to attend, the people are all sitting or standing quietly in their places, and no one speaks a word. That is true; but what about the disposition? Where are the thoughts? The learned Philo says justly: "There are enough who bring their ears to the sermon, but not their hearts or their minds."¹ These are distracted with all kinds of thoughts and cares, at home or elsewhere; or if their thoughts remain in the church, they are caught up by some chance object that offers itself, such as, for instance, to see who is coming in or going out, to admire others, and sometimes even to feed their own wicked desires; so that when the sermon is over, they are not able to say what it was about. Nay, sometimes they throw the blame on the preacher, and say they could not understand him or his way of speaking. I should not dare to accuse people of such things, my dear brethren, did I not know from the teaching of holy men, nay, from Christ Himself, how the devil tries to prevent the fruit of the Word of God from coming to those who hear sermons. Those whom he cannot keep away from the sermon, under the pretext that they do not require it, or that they cannot stand so long, or that they cannot leave home at such an early hour, or that their conscience would be made uneasy, the crafty enemy attacks during the sermon: he presents all sorts of objects before their eyes, he distracts them with a hundred imaginations, he

¹ *Aures in auditorium, non mentem afferunt.*

makes them tired and sleepy, so that they will either understand very little, or will receive no impression or profit in their hearts from what they have listened to distractedly and with a divided attention. Christ says, in the Gospel of St. Luke: "The devil cometh and taketh the word out of their heart, lest believing they should be saved."¹ It is just like what happens at great public banquets, at which many people sit down at different tables; sometimes a hungry soul comes up, in the person of one of the waiters, and seizing the full plate of some guest, who happens to turn his eyes away from it for a moment, puts an empty one in its place. The evil spirits are like hungry robbers, says St. Ambrose; they are hellish birds of prey, who fly about in the church during the explanation of the Word of God, and where they see any one who is not watchful over his senses and thoughts, they steal away the food of his soul from his mouth, and the Word of God from his heart.² Therefore, let each one be careful not to allow those invisible birds of prey to find any room in his thoughts, if he does not wish to remain hungry after the meal is over; that is to say, to go home after the sermon without any profit, and in the same state of ignorance as before.

If there are only a few (and to judge from outward appearances, I think I can congratulate myself that such is the case), if there are only a few who are wilfully distracted, and pay no attention, there are perhaps many more who, though not wanting in attention, yet do not take the same notice of everything that is said. The saying of the Wise Man is full of meaning: "A fool receiveth not the words of prudence, unless thou say those things which are in his heart."³ If anything ludicrous or novel is said, then all are eager to listen; but in other things the attention is not so much strained. See what happens in a theatre: when the curtain is raised, there is complete stillness, and all eyes are directed to the stage, to see what is coming on; in half an hour's time curiosity begins to languish, the people talk and laugh with each other, so that it is sometimes difficult to hear what is said on the stage. This is especially the case if the subjects represented are of a serious character and occupy a considerable time, although they may be necessary to the understanding of the play. But the people do not trouble themselves about the latter point. As soon, however, as there is a change on the stage, a new piece, a

Others do
not attend
to the whole
sermon.

¹ Venit diabolus et tollit verbum de corde eorum, ne credentes salvi fiant.—Luke viii. 12.

² Harpæ infernales sunt, ut auferant verbum de corde eorum.

³ Non recipit stultus verba prudentiæ, nisi dixeris ea, quæ versantur in corde ejus.—Prov. xviii. 2.

dance or a comedy, then the attention of the audience is aroused again, and they listen with admiration and pleasure. When the novelty is over, they commence to talk again about what they have seen. Oh, they say, that was fine; how well he danced, what a clever play, etc. Ah, my God! how is it that I am forced, by the sluggish desires and weak appetites of many Christians for the food of their souls, to compare the preaching of Thy most holy Word and Thy eternal truths to a vain and idle play? Yes, my Lord, Thou Thyself wast forced to do the same by Thy Prophet Ezechiel: "Thou art to them as a musical song which is sung with a sweet and agreeable voice; and they hear Thy words and do them not."¹ And the same thing happens nowadays among those to whom Thou orderest Thy truths to be preached. In the beginning of the sermon, when they who come in time are still in their first fervor, they are all eagerness to hear what the subject is, but bye and bye they grow indifferent; I know what he is going to say, they think to themselves, and they allow their eyes and their thoughts free play, and show by their behavior that they are inattentive. If some story is related, or a striking simile brought in, then they are all attention, they listen open-mouthed, so that it is easy to see that they have become quieter, but when the story is at an end, some of them allow their heads to sink down again; they relapse into their former distraction, or begin to think of the story they have heard, without paying any attention to the conclusion to be drawn from it, which is, after all, the real truth that God wished to imprint on their hearts in that manner. "Thou art to them as a musical sound." They hear Thy Word, oh, Lord, as if it were a play or a profane song! And thus it is often necessary to introduce something interesting, in order to awaken or to keep up their attention.

That is a
great irre-
verence to-
ward God.

But is that the way to treat God, who is speaking to us, with proper reverence and respect? I feel ashamed when I think that, if an earthly sovereign speaks to us, we observe a most reverent and humble demeanor, and pay the greatest attention to what he says; although we might easily allow ourselves to be distracted, for no matter how powerful earthly kings are, they cannot see what is passing in our minds. But God is present in the hearts of every one of you, my dear brethren, when we are preaching His Word to you, and He knows their inmost recesses. What does He think, when He finds your minds so distracted

¹ Es eis quasi carmen musicum, quod suavi dulcique sono canitur, et audiunt verba tua, et non faciunt ea.—Ezech. xxxiii. 32.

that they are wandering here and there in search of enjoyment and pleasure, and your hearts so cold that you hear everything as if you heard nothing, and allow the principal parts of the sermon to escape you? What does He think when He sees that you are so carried away by distractions that your senses are occupied with other things, while His voice passes by you unheeded, while your thoughts are filled with vanities and sinful imaginations? Certainly the Almighty has reason to complain, as He did long ago by the mouth of the Prophet Isaias: these people assembled before Me to hear Me, "but their heart is far from Me;"¹ nay, sometimes even against me.

Is that the way to hear sermons with the desire of being instructed and of learning what is good, and of deriving therefrom advantage for one's soul? If, for instance, one who has been to Jerusalem, were to relate his experiences in company, to tell how far that place is from here, what towns must be passed through to get there, what roads are the most dangerous and difficult, what one must principally guard against, what he must observe and how much money he must bring with him in order to arrive in safety; some of those who listen to him, and who have no idea of ever visiting Jerusalem, do not take much interest in what he says, unless he relates something amusing, strange, or wonderful that he has seen in those countries; for, they think, what is it all to me! I do not intend going to Jerusalem. On the other hand, if there is, amongst those listening, any one who intends visiting Jerusalem, he listens to everything with the greatest attention, and he is more interested in the details of the journey than in the amusing circumstances that accompany it, because he wishes to know what he has to do in order to accomplish his intended journey successfully. The same thing happens in a sermon, my dear brethren; we speak of the Heavenly Jerusalem, for which all men are created as for their last end, and of the joys that are to be found there; we describe the rough and narrow way that leads thither, and the many dangers that must be encountered on that way, as well as the temptations and dangerous occasions that must be overcome and avoided, and the virtues and good works that must be practised, in order to arrive there with greater security; we speak, too, of the way in which we must use our money and riches, by placing them, as if by an exchange, in the hands of the poor, so that we may have a great treasure of merits to bring with us. Now, if a man is so frivolous

It is a sign of a very remiss desire of learning what is good.

¹ Cor autem ejus longe est a me.—Isaias xxxix. 13.

that he seldom comes to a sermon, or has little taste for such subjects, or listens to them in a sleepy, indifferent, or distracted manner, and pays attention only when something amusing is said, what are we to think of such a one? Oh, certainly, I have reason to think that that man does not seriously intend to reach the Heavenly Jerusalem, for he has no desire to learn how and by what road one must travel to get there. He loves earth more than Heaven, and, in a word, the kingdom of Heaven is not for him, he does not care about having any share in it.

Earnest
listeners do
like Mag-
dalen.

But he who loves his soul and his eternal happiness and is determined to undertake this journey to his heavenly country, pays the greatest attention, that not a single word may escape him; he stands, or sits, like Magdalen, at the feet of Jesus Christ, to hear his teaching and instructions. How motionless, how attentively, how eagerly did not that zealous soul listen to her Lord? Her sister Martha came up and asked her to help in the work of preparing food for Christ: She said, Lord, dost thou not see that I must work alone, while my sister sits idly there? "tell her, therefore, to help me."¹ And what did Magdalen do? She remained where she was, enraptured with the words of her Lord. She made no answer, not even a gesture of displeasure, although she could have easily and modestly replied: Go away, I have no time now. No, says St. Augustine, speaking of this matter, she did not wish to say even those few words, for fear of interrupting her Lord: "If she had given any answer, she would not have been able to listen so attentively."² And therefore she remained silent and immovable. For she knew very well how important it was for her to hear always with the greatest attention whatever her Lord had to say to her. So that the first thing to observe, when hearing a sermon, is to listen with the greatest attention to everything that is said. And we should be impelled to this, my dear brethren, partly by the reverence we owe the Almighty God, who speaks to our hearts in sermons, and partly by the interests of our own souls, which render such attention very necessary. The second thing that must be observed, and even with greater diligence than the first, is to listen to sermons with the greatest desire to profit by them. The meaning of that is, that every one must apply to himself, and to his own advantage, everything that he hears in the sermon. How this is to be done, we shall see in the

¹ Domine! non est tibi curæ? Dic ergo illi ut me adjuvet.

² Si enim pararet respondendi sermonem, remitteret audiendi attentionem.

Second Part.

As I have already proved from the Holy Fathers, the Word of God, explained in sermons, is the food of souls, by which these latter are to be maintained in their strength, health, life, and zeal in the divine service. Christ, the eternal Truth, in the Gospel of St. Matthew, says: "Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God!"¹ It is a much more necessary and strengthening food than eating and drinking are for the body; because corporal food, no matter how strong it is, could not raise a dead body to life, whereas the Word of God can raise the dead to life; that is to say, it can move to sorrow and repentance, to confession and penance, sinners whose souls are dead, and it can thus restore them to the life of grace. But now, suppose that there is a table spread with all sorts of viands before me, what good is it to me if I only look at the different dishes, without eating any of them? In the same way, what advantage is it for my soul if I hear a sermon with attention, but do not apply it to myself, eat it, so to speak, and appropriate it for my own advantage? The Wise Ecclesiasticus says: "A man of sense will praise every wise word he shall hear, and will apply it to himself."² That is to say, he listens to wise words with joy, and uses them for his own advantage.

The Word of God is the food of the soul; every one must therefore seek his own nourishment therein.

There are three classes of people who fail in this particular: the first consists of those who are like the carvers at a table who have nothing to do but cut up the meats and place them before others, while they eat very little themselves. So, there are some who apply to others what they hear in a sermon, and keep nothing for themselves. Ha, they think, how well that fits such a one! Quite right; it is just what that other wants! He is getting his share of it now! What a pity that such a one is not here, this sermon is just the thing for him; and so forth. But, do we come to sermons only to apply what we hear to others, and that too often with a rash judgment? What good is it to you that others should be warned of their duty, if you yourself receive no fruit therefrom? You come here to look after your own soul, and not to pronounce judgment on others. Christ says of the good: "They hear the Word and keep it."³ Although it is impossible to treat of every subject in one and the same sermon, yet, in every truth that is preached, he who is earnestly intent on his salvation,

This is not done by those who apply what they hear to others.

¹ Non in solo pane vivit homo, sed in omni verbo quod procedit de ore Dei.—Math. iv. 4.

² Verbum sapiens, quodeunque audierit scius, laudabit, et ad se adjiciet.—Ecccl. xxi. 18.

³ Audientes verbum retinent.

will certainly find something good that he can apply to himself with profit.

The same people are displeased when the truth is told them.

And meanwhile, the very same people, who trouble themselves so much about the affairs of others, if their own vices are even barely alluded to, commence to get vexed, to murmur and complain, as if they thought it wrong to allude to them in such a way. If you throw a stone amongst a number of dogs, the one you hit will begin to howl. As long as these people are not interfered with, they think the sermon a very good one indeed. They wish others to hear the truth, they do not want to hear it themselves. The unjust and avaricious are quite pleased when they hear the impure and the intemperate condemned; but speak to them of giving alms, of restoring ill-gotten goods, or of withdrawing their hearts from the things of earth, and they get quite angry and displeased. On the other hand, a libertine or an impure man listens with pleasure to every sermon, as long as there is nothing said of impure love, dangerous company and occasions, mortification of the flesh and of the senses. If the sermon is against drunkenness, it pleases the women, because they are anxious to have their husbands cured of that evil habit, and they think the preacher cannot talk severely enough about it. If, on the other hand, some subject is introduced which touches them up on some sore point,—for instance, the vain and frivolous fashions of the day, obstinacy, self-will, disobedience, jealousy, credulity, unfounded suspicions of their husbands, the wasting of precious time, unnecessary visits, the habit of gambling, dangerous meetings, speaking of the faults and failings of others, etc.; oh, then they do not like the sermon at all, and there is no end to their complaints about it. They think that the preacher does not know how people in the world must act. So true is the saying of St. Augustine: “They love the truth when it shines on others, but not when it reproaches themselves.”¹ Writing of the words of Christ: “If I tell you the truth, why do you not believe me?”² the same St. Augustine says, in answer to these words: because thou speakest truth.³ “Even on that account, oh, Lord, they refuse to believe Thee, because Thou speakest the truth.”

There are some who apply everything to themselves too anxiously.

The second class of people who do not hear sermons properly, comprehends those who, failing in a different way altogether from the former, act like guests who take their share of everything at table, whether it is good for them or not, although they thus

¹ *Amant veritatem lucentem, oderunt redarguentem.*

² *Si veritatem dico vobis, quare non creditis mihi.*

³ *Quia veritatem dicis.*

overload the stomach, to their own great inconvenience. There are some who apply to themselves, with a scrupulous anxiety, everything they hear in a sermon, although there is not the least reason for them to do so. So that sometimes a preacher hardly knows what to do, or how to treat of a subject. If he preaches, no matter how carefully, of some consoling doctrine, he cannot reprove the sins of the wicked; if he denounces sin and represents its malice and the way in which it is committed, he disturbs the consciences of the pious and innocent, who take to themselves that which was meant only for others. Alas! they think, full of fear and anxiety, perhaps I have done that too! Oh, my God, what shall I do? I may not have made a good confession in my whole life! If such is the case, I shall never go to Heaven; and any number of such absurdities. Although this is a sign of a good and tender conscience, yet it often prevents the proper advantage being derived from a sermon. Perhaps I have done that too? Yes, perhaps, and perhaps not. What is the good of this perhaps? None, but to fill you with unnecessary fear and anxiety, which will completely disturb you, and make it impossible for you to understand other parts of the sermon that are of real use for you. First of all, you should pay attention to what is said. If an uneasy thought or a scruple comes into your mind, wait till the sermon is over; you will have plenty of time then to think it over and see whether you are really guilty or not, and if you are guilty, you can amend your fault. Otherwise you must not take to yourself what is meant for others; it belongs to them, not to you. St. Augustine again furnishes me with a beautiful simile here: he says we must hear preachers and apply their words to ourselves, as if they were letters sent us from Heaven. Now suppose you went to the post-office to look for a letter; you ask if there is anything for you, and you are told that you must look for your letter yourself. You do so: there are hundreds of letters lying on the table; you take up the first one and after seeing the address, you throw it away, and the same with the second and third and fourth. And why? Because, you say, my name is not on those letters, none of them belong to me. You continue your search and at last you find one addressed to you, and you say at once, this letter is for me, and you take it home and read it. You must act in the same way when you hear a sermon. I know that I am not guilty in this matter, this letter is not for me; here is something in which I must amend my conduct, that I must bring home with me and think over.

Some attend merely to the style of oratory and not to the truth preached.

The third and last class embraces those who resemble guests that neither eat anything themselves, nor carve for others: they occupy themselves in talking, or in admiring rare dishes. People of this class, who hear the Word of God, do not, it is true, apply it to others, but neither do they apply it to themselves; their only concern is to hear something new, beautiful, or interesting. What would you think of a sick man, suffering from fever, who when the doctor comes to bleed him, would occupy himself only with looking and wondering at the surgical instruments of the latter? Oh, what a beautiful lancet? Where did you buy it? Who made it? How much did it cost? Ah, my good friend, the doctor would say, that is not the question now; I am come to restore you to health; it is no matter to you whether the instrument is a beautiful one or not, whether it has cost much or little; the only thing that must trouble us now is to take away the poisonous blood from you: you need not concern yourself about anything else. My dear brethren, some of us are, perhaps, suffering from a spiritual malady; we are all liable to the fever of evil inclinations and desires! "The fever from which we suffer is ambition, or avarice, or lust,"¹ says St. Ambrose, or pride, or drunkenness, or impatience, or tepidity. Now God wishes to make or to keep you healthy by sermons. He uses His divine Word as an instrument to detect the weakness of your soul, to cleanse it from evil inclinations, and to provide it with a remedy against vices and the dangerous occasions of sin, and to draw its desires away from earthly, in order to direct them to heavenly things. Therefore let it not be your sole care to see whether the sermon is a fine one or not, it is not for that you come: your only intention should be to seek the profit of your soul by the truths you hear, to amend your evil ways, and to become more zealous in the service of God; that should be your only business here.

Conclusion and exhortation.

I conclude with the words of the Wise Man that I quoted before: "A man of sense will praise every wise word he shall hear, and will apply it to himself."² Let each one, therefore, ask himself at the beginning of a sermon, like St. Bernard: "Why art thou here?" Why did I come to the sermon? Was it not to draw profit out of it for my soul? Therefore I must pay attention to what is said, and I must and will apply to myself the truths that I have heard and understood. If we hear sermons in this manner, my dear brethren, they will help us to our eternal salvation. Amen.

¹ Febris nostra ambitio est, febris nostra avaritia est, febris nostra luxuria est.

² Verbum sapiens, quodcumque audierit scilicet laudabit, et ad se adjiciet.

*Another Introduction for the Twenty-second Sunday after
Pentecost:*

Text.

Hæc illo loquente ad eos, ecce princeps unus accessit, et adorabat eum.—Matth. ix. 18.

“And as he was speaking these things unto them, behold a certain ruler came up and adored him.”

During the last three years of His life, Jesus was always to be found amongst the people to whom He preached and explained His divine truths. Who would not think that the words of the Man-God would have force enough to move all His hearers and to draw their hearts to himself? And yet there were very few who were so much influenced by His preaching as to remain constant to His doctrine. The Scribes and Pharisees became only more obstinate and wicked; the common people, who followed Him everywhere, and many of whom believed in him, kept their faith as long they could see the signs and wonders He worked, but when the innocent Jesus was taken prisoner and condemned to death, there was no one to take His part or to say a word in His favor. Even those whom He had miraculously healed of their diseases, were, according to the testimony of the Holy Fathers, amongst the rabble who cried out: “Crucify Him!”¹ Oh, divine Teacher! Since that was the case with you, I no longer wonder that in our days we can do such little good with our preaching. How many Pharisees there are still who hate the truth, and who are made only more obstinate by it? Amongst all those who listen to sermons, how many are there who derive real profit from what they hear? Where the fault lay in olden times, and where it lies now, is known to Thee. My opinion is that there are three principal faults committed by those who hear sermons. Some fail before the sermon, others during the sermon, and the majority after it. I have spoken of the first, when I explained how one ought to come to sermons; I will now speak of the second, and explain how one should act during the sermon. How must we hear sermons?
—*Continues as before.*

¹ Crucifige!

TWELFTH SERMON.**HOW ONE SHOULD ACT AFTER HEARING A SERMON.****Subject.**

1st. We must so take to heart what we have heard, that we will act on it. 2d. If we do not do so, we have reason to fear.—*Preached on the twelfth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Vade et tu fac similiter.—Luke x. 37.

“Go thou and do likewise.”

Introduction.

When Christ, the first and chief of all preachers, had preached the Gospel of to-day, and explained to the doctor of the law what he should do to be saved, and after He had shown him, in the clearest manner, that he should love God with his whole heart and whole soul and with all his mind, and all his strength, He adds: “Do this and thou shalt live.”¹ Again, after having told him that to save his soul he must love his neighbor as himself, and having explained how that is to be done, he adds again: “Go thou and do likewise.”² A beautiful conclusion, if the doctor of the law had only taken it to heart and acted upon it: “Go and do.”³ Oh, my dear brethren, if Christians, nowadays, always took to heart the conclusions of the sermons they hear, how much could we not do for the salvation of their souls by our preaching! “Go thou and do.” But when that is not the case, all our preaching and your listening are of no avail. And this is the fault of the greater number, But I shall try to do my duty and to prove to you that you must take to heart the sermons you hear. St. Augustine agrees with me, and furnishes me with the divisions of my discourse. He says: “Christ speaks by the mouth of the preacher, we must hear, act, and fear.”⁴ That we must hear sermons, how we are to go to them, and how we are to hear them, has been already explained on the three last Sundays; to-day we have to treat of the principal thing, namely, how we are to go away after the sermon: “Go and do.”

¹ Hoc fac et vives.

² Vade, et tu fac similiter.

³ Vade et fac.

⁴ Christus loquitur, audiamus, faciamus, timeamus.

Plan of Discourse.

We must so take to heart what we have heard, that we will act on it. This will be the first point. If we do not do so, we have reason to fear. That will be the second point.

Oh, God, who speakest to us in every sermon through the intercession of the Mother of Thy Incarnate Word and that of the angels who are so obedient to Thy Word, we beg of Thee to give us grace to keep Thy Word after having heard it and to fulfil the truths we have learned, so that we may have nothing to fear.

First Part.

Although the husbandman may have prepared the ground with great labor, and sown the seed in due season, and rejoiced in the prospect of a good crop, on account of the favorable weather, yet, what good is all this to him if the roots of the plant are gnawed by the mice and the worms, or the plants themselves are eaten by the cattle before they are come to maturity, or dried up by drought, or washed away by heavy rains, so that he cannot reap any harvest? What good will all his labor be to him? The poor man has toiled in vain, his work goes for nothing! If he had kept quiet and remained idle at home, he would not have had any hope of a harvest, and would be spared the pain of disappointment.

It is useless to put the seed into the ground if it produces no fruit.

My dear brethren, "the seed is the Word of God."¹ It is, as I have often told you before, sown in your hearts by the Supreme Lord, through the mouth of the preacher. Suppose, now, that this latter does his duty, and calls on the Holy Ghost, by earnest prayer, to inspire him with what is useful for you; he spares neither trouble nor labor, that he may explain the truth he intends to preach about so clearly and impressively, that every one may understand it. Suppose, too, that there is no fault on your part, that you come to the sermon in good time, with a pure intention and a great desire of saving your soul, that you listen with great attention and an eager wish to profit by what you hear, that your sighs and other signs of emotion have inspired the preacher with courage and hope, and that the resolution you make in secret gives joy and pleasure to God, to His angels and to the whole court of Heaven. But, with all this, if the Word of God did not remain in your heart, nor His truth in your memory, what good would his hope be to the preacher, your resolution to yourselves,

It is useless to preach the Word of God, if the hearers reap no fruit from it.

¹ Semen est verbum Dei.

or the joy and pleasure to the heavenly court? What good is it, if your hearts are like a broad public way, of which Christ speaks in the parable, on which the seed is trodden under foot, or eaten by the birds? If you know that what you have heard is true, and you are resolved to fulfil it, and yet, as soon as the sermon is over, banish it all out of your mind by other thoughts, cares, business, company, so that you never think of it again, what will it profit you? Ah, the preacher has labored in vain; your hurrying to church has not helped you, Heaven has rejoiced fruitlessly; we have altogether done as little good as if we poured water into a sieve, out of which it must all empty itself immediately, or as if the sermon was preached to the empty benches and walls of the church.

The whole good of the sermon consists in fulfilling the truths we have heard.

Oh, my dear brethren, it is after the sermon that the real good of it is seen, it is then that the first fruits must be reaped. There is a great difference between a sermon and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. If you hear Mass on Sundays and holydays with inward attention and outward reverence, you do your part, and, as far as this commandment is concerned, you are not bound to do any more. On the contrary, if you come to a sermon, and hear it as you ought, even if you think often of it afterwards, that is not near enough, that is only the smallest and least profitable part of your duty. What stills remain for you to do is the most important of all and everything depends on it, and that is the real observance, the practical fulfilment of the truths you have heard. The Apostle says: "For, not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." And that should be the only end and object of your coming to sermons; this the only fruit that we must derive from them, namely, so to take to heart what we have heard, that we are not satisfied with merely speculating upon it, but really act according to it. "Go and do."²

This explained by an example.

A pious woman in Paris, as our Father Rogaccius relates, was once going home after a sermon, when she met a gentleman, hurrying to church in the hope of hearing a part of the sermon, who asked her if it was over yet. No, said the woman, it is not over yet. And how is it, then, asked the gentleman, that the people are coming out of the church in crowds, and do not remain to the end? Because, said she, the preacher has finished his exhortation and has left the pulpit. This answer surprised the gentleman. Are

¹ Non enim auditores legis justi sunt apud Deum, sed factores legis justificabuntur.—Rom. II. 13.

² Vade et fac!

you in your senses, he asked, or do you take me for a fool? I have asked you if the sermon was over and you said, no; and now you tell me that the preacher has left the pulpit. What is the meaning of that? It is all true, answered the pious woman; I maintain what I said. You must know, sir, that it is one thing for the preacher to have ended his discourse, and another for the sermon to be quite finished. The first concerns the preacher alone, the second concerns both him and his audience, and is certainly not finished for either of them, because what he said to the people from the pulpit has still to be performed by them. So that the sermon is not yet over, nor will it be, until the people who have heard it realize its teaching in their lives and actions. There is still a great deal to be done before the sermon comes to an end. What a clever answer that was!

Here, my dear brethren, we come upon the place where the fault of the greater number lies hidden. We have great reason, nowadays, to make the same complaint that St. Augustine made against the Jews and Pharisees, who heard the doctrine and preaching of Christ with such attention. The Holy Scripture says: "They wondered;"¹ "but they did not amend their lives,"² adds the saint. Is not this complaint true of many, who, when going home after the sermon, can only say with astonishment: What a fine sermon that was! And that is all the good it has done them! Poor preacher! did all your efforts tend to nothing else but to hear the empty praise—you have preached well? Oh, if that is the case, I pity you: you had better have remained at home in your room and said the Rosary. Is it only for this that you have worked all the week, to hear a few empty words of praise? A fine reward for your labor, indeed! Unfortunate hearer! Have you derived no other profit from the sermon than to be able to say a few words in praise of it? If so, I am sorry that you listened with such patience and attention; it was not worth your while to come away from your house, and tire yourself by standing a whole hour in the church. What good is it to you that the preacher has delivered a fine sermon, when you do not live according to it, and are not made a bit better by it? Alas, the sermon was not a good one, nor was it well listened to! Neither you nor I have attained our object; both of us have lost all fruit and profit; you, that of your patience and attention; I, that of my labor. And, while the Apostle glories in the Thessalonians: "For you are our glory and joy;"³

Therefore they are wrong who merely praise the sermon.

¹ Mirabantur.—John vii. 15. ² Sed non corrigebantur.

³ Vos enim estis gloria nostra et gaudium.—I. Thess. ii. 20.

“therefore we always give thanks to God without ceasing ; because that when you had received of us the word of the hearing of God, you received it not as the word of men, but (as it is indeed) the Word of God, who worketh in you that you have believed.” We, on the contrary, might well say: You are our shame and confusion, because we have preached to deaf ears and done no good to souls.

Still more those who are in no way improved by the sermon, of whom there are many.

How many are there not, also, amongst those Christians who hear sermons, of whom it might be said with truth: “They admire, but do not amend their lives?” Sermons are preached so often, in so many different places, for the last twenty, thirty, or forty years, and longer, and what is the result of it all? People come and listen with wonder and pleasure, with desire and longing, but there is not the least improvement in their lives. Sermons are preached against pride, avarice, injustice, immorality, dangerous companions and meetings, hatred, envy, vindictiveness, and enmity ; against the common habit of swearing and cursing, against back-biting, calumny, rash judgments, impure conversations, drunkenness, vanity in dress, sloth in the divine service, and so forth. But have people become more humble or modest? Have they restored the ill-gotten goods, or the injured character of their neighbor? Do they avoid bad company? Are they more chaste and restrained in their thoughts, desires, language, dress, manner, and actions? Have Christian charity, union, and friendship been established amongst enemies? Is there no cursing or swearing to be heard any more? Is drunkenness at an end? Is there an increase of zeal in the divine service? Would to God that it were so! “They wondered,” they have heard and understood well enough, “but they did not amend their ways,”¹ they are not a bit better for it. Preachers recommend the works of Christian virtue, the frequent reception of the Holy Sacraments. They inculcate the necessity of true penance, of patience in adversity, of a pure intention, by which we must direct all our works to our last end, to God, and to Heaven. They warn parents of their duty towards their children, and children of their duty towards their parents, masters and mistresses of what they owe their servants, subjects of what they owe their rulers, and so forth. Has all this done any good to those who heard it? Many have admired what was said to them ; but they do not amend their ways ; they remain as they were before, without making any improvement.

¹ Mirabantur. Sed non corrigebantur.

Have you ever remarked, my dear brethren, what occurs in a large establishment, in which there are many different people together? All these people have different occupations, according to their different positions: some sit at the fire and warm themselves, others stand and talk together, others drink and play, or merely look on; one of the servants is cleaning the room, another is in the kitchen cooking, a third is spinning or sewing; there is a waiter laying the table, here is some one engaged at his trade; the master of the house is writing or studying, the mistress is occupied with the children, and all the others have their own occupation. Now, suppose that a band of musicians come before the door, and begin to play; at once everybody in the house leaves his or her business; some run to the door, others to the window and listen with all their ears. How beautiful that is, they say to each other. When the music is over, they return to their former occupations: one to the fire, another to the interrupted conversation, the third to his trade, the fourth to the kitchen, the fifth to the spinning-wheel, and so on for the others. A striking example of what happens to many who hear sermons is the complaint that God makes to the Prophet Ezechiel: "Thou art to them as a musical song. . . they hear Thy words and do them not."¹ The many different occupations of those people mentioned above represent the different vices of the inhabitants of each town and community. One is inclined to one thing, another to another. When the bell rings for the sermon, they all leave their vices for a time, they go to church and, for a whole hour, they hear the Word of God with attention, eagerness, and pleasure. They say: That was a good sermon, I could have listened still longer to it. But what is the fruit of it? "They hear Thy words and do them not." They all return to their former occupations. They go back to the same vices, the same company, the same habits, the same foul sins, as before. They do not act according to what they have heard.

This proved
by a simile.

Even many of those who are frightened by the terrible truths they hear from the pulpit, do not amend their conduct in the least when the sermon is over. They seem to me like the blind man of Bethsaida, to whom Christ restored sight, as we read in the Gospel of St. Mark. Our Lord asked him if he could see anything. He answered: "I see men, as it were trees, walking."² What do you mean? It seems that you are still blind; trees do not walk, how can men walk like trees? Yet he saw right enough,

The worst
are those
who, though
frightened,
do not
amend. Ex-
plained by
an example.

¹ Es eis, quasi carmen musicum. . . audiunt verba tua, et non faciunt ea.—Ezech. xxxiii. 32.

² Video homines velut arbores ambulantes.—Mark viii. 24.

says St. Peter Chrysologus: "After being cured by Christ, he saw that men are like trees in this world."¹ You may have remarked, my dear brethren, that, when a strong wind blows, the trees shake, the branches and leaves begin to tremble as if the whole tree were about to be torn up by the roots. But the roots hold firm: it is only the branches and leaves that are stirred; the trunk remains firmly attached to the ground, or if it is sometimes blown down, the wind must be very strong indeed. Do we not see the same thing nowadays amongst Christians? The storm of truth assails their consciences, when they listen to a sermon, and moves them, by representing the eternal truths of our faith, the shortness and uncertainty of life, the bitterness of death, the rigor of divine justice, the pains of hell, the joys of Heaven. Many are moved, frightened, and made uneasy by these truths; they sigh and tremble like leaves on the trees, and often condemn their own wickedness. But are the roots of their sins torn up? How many of them make good confessions? How many do penance? When and where is the real amendment of their lives to be found? Oh, blind man of Bethsaida! If you could only look now you would see many men going about like trees,² you would see how they humble themselves, sigh and so forth, as if they were about to leave their sins. But it is only the head that moves with them, not the heart. As soon as the wind is over, when they have forgotten their fear and anxiety, they settle down into the same vices as before, they have strong roots that still fasten them to the earth; that is to say, their sins, of which they do not repent.

How one
must think
and act af-
ter the ser-
mon.

It should not be so, my dear brethren; we must indeed be moved like the trees, but we must not remain stationary like them. We should pull up our sins by the roots, and do and fulfil what we have heard in the sermon. "Christ speaks, we must act."³ He who wishes to derive profit from a sermon must preach it anew to himself. He must either remain for some time in the church, or go home quietly and think over what he has heard, especially that which concerns his own faults, or that in which he feels himself moved by divine inspiration. He must ask himself: How have I behaved hitherto, with regard to this truth which I now acknowledge; what has been said was certainly uttered for my good, and not to the walls and benches of the church. Have I always avoided the vice mentioned in the ser-

¹ Post curam Christi viderat, quod homines velut arbores transirent in hoc sæculo.

² Velut arbores.

³ Christus loquitur, faciamus.

mon, or have I thought it a matter of little importance to do so? Have I hitherto practised the good work recommended in the sermon, and in the manner recommended? What will I do in future? How am I to realize in my daily life, in such and such circumstances, what I have heard to-day? In this way we can make new resolutions, and beg of God the grace to keep them, and every accident of life reminds us of what we have heard, acknowledged, and resolved. That is the way to hear sermons with profit to the soul, and to cause the seed of the Word of God to produce its fruit a hundred fold. They alone who act thus are called blessed by Christ: "Blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it."¹ "Go thou and do it!"² "Christ speaks, we must act!"³ If we do not, there is only one alternative, and that to our great loss; "we have reason to fear,"⁴ as we shall see in the

Second Part.

What have we to fear? That the sermons we hear will cause the lessening or the total deprivation of divine grace in this life, and will subject us to a more rigorous judgment and a deeper damnation in eternity. There is no doubt that sermons, preached frequently and zealously, are a great sign of the divine liberality and mercy to a town or community; but do you not think that they are also a means of satisfying the justice and anger of God? That as they give food and nourishment to some souls, they are poisonous to others; that they are a reward to some, a punishment to others; an enlightenment for some, a deprivation of light to others, and that while they help some to save their souls, they occasion the loss of others? The Word of God is certainly a great blessing for many, who live according to it and are guided by it, and who would be lost eternally without it; but it is also a great curse to others, who, although they hear and believe it, yet do not amend their lives, but remain in their sins. St. Augustine says: "The same rain that ripens the corn for the barn, causes the thorns to grow in order to be cast into the fire."⁵ In the same way, the heavenly rain of the Word of God, when it pours itself upon souls that are well disposed to receive it, makes them grow in virtue and disposes them for Heaven; but when it falls upon souls that are filled with the thorns of sinful

To know the truth and not fulfil it, causes God to cast us off even in this life.

¹ *Beati, qui audiunt verbum Dei et custodiunt illud.*—Luke xi. 28.

² *Vade et fac!* ³ *Christus loquitur, faciamus.* ⁴ *Timeamus.*

⁵ *Segeti pluit ad horreum, spinis ad ignem.*

inclinations, wilfully indulged in, without any effort to uproot them, it only hastens on their ruin and destruction. This is what God says by the mouth of the Apostle: "For the earth that drinketh in the rain which cometh often upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is tilled, receiveth blessing from God. But that which bringeth forth thorns and briars, is reprobate, and very near unto a curse, whose end is to be burnt."¹ Hence the Holy Fathers conclude that when a sinner, after hearing many sermons, gives no sign of amendment, it is a sure proof that he is hardened in wickedness and abandoned by God and by His grace; nay, that God, who at first sent His preacher to explain to him His Word, with the benevolent intention of enlightening his understanding and moving his heart, will at last make use of the same preacher, as an instrument of His anger, to make the sinner blinder and more hardened than before. It is terrible what God says to the provoking house, by the mouth of the Prophet Ezechieh: "Thus saith the Lord God: set on a pot, set it on, I say, and put water into it;"² when this was done and the pot was not yet cleansed, He says further: "Set it empty upon burning coals, that it may be hot, and the brass thereof may be melted; and let the filth of it be melted in the midst thereof, and let the rust of it be consumed."³ And after all this, what follows? "Great pains have been taken, and the great rust thereof is not gone out, not even by fire."⁴ And what was said of it at last? "Thy uncleanness is execrable, because I desired to cleanse thee, and thou art not cleansed from thy filthiness: neither shalt thou be cleansed, before I cause my indignation to rest in thee."⁵ And what is this pot? Oh, hardened sinner, it is you, says St. Augustine: "God compares the soul of the sinner to a brazen pot."⁶ You are an unclean vessel, full of the filth of impurity, of the blood of vindictiveness, of the foulness of many scandals. The merciful God has so often desired to cleanse you with water, when He caused to be explained

¹ Terra enim sæpe venientem super se bibens imbrem, et generans herbam opportunam illis, a quibus collitur, accipit benedictionem a Deo. Proferens autem spinas et tribulos, reprobata est, et maledicto proxima, cujus consummatio in combustionem.—Heb. vi. 7, 8.

² Hæc dicit Dominus Deus; pone ollam, pone, inquam, et mitte in eam aquam.—Ezech. xxiv. 3.

³ Pone quoque eam super prunas vacuum, ut incalescat, et liquefat æs ejus, et confietur in medio ejus inquinamentum ejus, et consumatur rubigo ejus.—Ibid. xxiv. 11.

⁴ Multo labore sudatum est, et non exivit de ea nimia rubigo ejus, neque per ignem.—Ibid. 12.

⁵ Immunditia tua execrabilis, quia mundare te volui, et non es mundata sordibus tuis.

⁶ I nec mundaberis prius, donec quiescere faciam indignationem meam in te.—Ibid. 13.

⁶ ~~Æneæ~~ ollæ animam peccatricem comparant.

to you how wonderfully patient and merciful He is towards sinners, in order to move you to repent. He desired to cleanse you with fire when He caused the eternal fire of hell to be described to you in order to frighten you. "Great pains have been taken." Preachers sent by God have had much trouble and labor with you; but all in vain; nothing has induced you to repent. Hear, therefore, what will become of you: "Thus saith the Lord: Thy uncleanness is execrable, because I desired to cleanse thee, and thou art not cleansed from thy filthiness, neither shalt thou be cleansed, before I cause my indignation to rest in thee."¹

And, after such long continued ingratitude and obstinacy on the part of the sinner, and such fatherly mercy on the part of God, ^{As a just punishment} that punishment is not too severe, that anger and indignation not without just cause! A father who has a bad son, after trying by every means possible to bring him to a sense of duty, when he sees that his efforts are fruitless, is at length compelled, for the sake of his family, to disinherit that son and not to look upon him any more as his child. But how does he do that? In order to free himself from all blame, and to give his son no just cause of complaint, he sends a friend to the latter to explain how disobedient he was and to tell him of the punishment that is impending over him, although there is no hope that this warning will do any good. Now, who is to be blamed for this disinheriting of the bad son? Is the father to be accused of acting an unfatherly part and of being too severe on his son, or is the son to be blamed because, after repeated warnings, he still perseveres in his wickedness? There is no doubt that the latter has all the fault, and it is only right that he should be disinherited. What, then, must I think, on the one hand, of God who calls incessantly, in sermons, on the sinner to repent. On the other hand, of the sinner who hears the call but does not obey it? What am I to think, when I hear that God, after so often warning the wicked Pharaoh, said to Moses: "Go in to Pharaoh."² I know well that he will not hear nor obey thee,³ because he is hardened. Nevertheless, go to him, and speak to him. What, I ask, am I to conclude from this, except that God is a merciful, patient, and long-suffering Father; and that we are His wilful and disobedient children, who abuse His patience so long that the warnings and sermons He so often causes us to hear become

¹ *Immunditia tua execrabilis, quia mundare te volui, et non es mundata sordibus tuis.*

² *Ingrederere, loquere ad Pharaonem.*—Exod. x. 1.

³ *Non audiet vos Pharao.*

the terrible instruments of His anger, when He deprives us of our inheritance, because we refused to listen to Him.

A stricter
account to
render to
the divine
justice.

We must fear;¹ if we do not do as we are told in sermons, we have reason to fear. What else? The stricter account we shall have to render in judgment. For there is no doubt that more will be expected from him who has received more, as our Lord Himself says: The judgment of one who has no excuse to offer, will be sharper and more rigorous; and he is less to be excused, who was offered graces more frequently, which he neglected to profit by. How will you fare then, oh, sinful Christian? You have shown no sign of improvement after having heard the Word of God so often; how will you fare, when an account is demanded of your vices and sins, and of the good that you omitted to do? Alas! even if the great book were not opened against you to convince you of your wickedness; if both angels and devils kept away from you, and did not appear against you; if the just Judge Himself remained silent and refrained from condemning you, there would still remain another judge to put you to confusion. Hear what Christ says: "And if any man hear my words and keep them not, I do not judge him."² "He that receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him."³ "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."⁴ The exhortations you have heard, the truths you have learned, will stand against you, and strike you dumb with shame: the sermons, too, that you have heard will appear and cry out against you before the whole world: you knew it, you were aware of it, you could have done it, it was your duty to do it, but you did not wish to do it; and they will accuse you, too, of having profited so little by them, whereas if others had had a chance of hearing them, they would have produced much fruit, as Christ says in to-day's Gospel: "I say to you that prophets and kings have desired to hear the things that you hear and have not heard them." "But I tell you," is His threat in another place, "that it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you."⁵ The sermons that you have heard will bring forward, as so many witnesses against you, all those who profited by them. See, they will say, these people have entered into themselves and done penance for their sins; this impure man has given up his impurity

¹ Timeamus.

² Si quis audierit verba mea et non custodierit: ego non judico eum.—John xii. 47.

³ Qui non accipit verba mea: habet qui judicet eum.—Ibid. 48.

⁴ Sermo quem locutus sum, ille judicabit eum in novissimo die.—Ibid.

⁵ Verumtamen dico vobis: Tyro et Sidoni remissius erit in die judicii, quam vobis.—Matth xi. 22.

and criminal love; this other has pardoned his enemy, others again have restored ill-gotten property, or confessed the sins they concealed through shame, or corrected the habit of cursing and swearing, or have become more careful in talk, behavior, and the company they frequent; that child is more respectful towards his parents, these parents are more careful of their children's salvation; these tepid Christians have become more zealous in the divine service, and all these whom you see on the right hand of the Judge, have thereby saved their souls. But you, who have also heard us, have not become a bit better. "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." So that the Word of God, which is now given to you out of pure mercy, will then cry out for stricter justice and a severer vengeance against you.

And besides that, it will make the pains of hell greater for you for all eternity. For that must be fulfilled which Our Lord has said in the Gospel of St. Luke: "And that servant who knew the will of his Lord, . . . and did not according to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes."¹ Ah, my Lord and my God! Do I and so many others ascend the pulpit only to bring down eternal ruin on those souls, whom thou wishest to save by our preaching? Must we be a stumbling-block to Thy people, to make their fall more dangerous? Must I and others, whose only wish is to bring all those people with us into Heaven, appear against them as witnesses, on the day of Thy justice! Must the truths they have heard from our lips be the voice of one crying out, not in the desert, but in hell, to those unfortunate souls: You knew it, you could and ought to have done it, but you did not wish to do it! What a disappointment for our zeal! What a mistaken charity was ours! We always had the intention and the hope, my dear brethren, of helping you to save your souls, and behold, whether we like it or not, we help you to a deeper damnation! Instead of the good thoughts and works that we may have left in many pious souls, many more become more culpable, and less deserving of pardon, because we have preached to them! How can that be, oh, my God? Would it not be better for us to remain silent? Should we not renounce preaching? But, if we did, Thou wouldst be against us, and we should have to utter that eternal woe against ourselves: "Woe is me, because I have held my peace,"² and have not done my duty! Must we then continue to

Deeper
damnation
in eternity.

¹ Ille autem servus, qui cognovit voluntatem Domini sui . . . et non fecit secundum voluntatem ejus, vapulabit multis.—Luke xii. 47.

² Vae mihi, quia tacui.—Isai. vi. 5.

preach? But, oh, terrible thought! by doing so, we shall make the sins of some more grievous; from one sermon to another, they will be more inexcusable, and will make their judgment more severe, their hell more intolerable! Must the people then remain away from sermons? Alas, they will be then still more culpable, and they will one day hear the words: "I called and you refused;" I have prepared my light and grace for you and you did not wish to accept them! So that I do not know what is to be done.

Conclusion. Ah, Christians, if you wished, you could solve this difficulty, and free us from this anxiety, and yourselves from this fear. "Christ is speaking to us, let us act."² Let us stir ourselves to do the work that, as we have heard in sermons, we ought to do, and then there will be no cause for fear on either side. And Thou, oh, God of mercy! God, our Saviour! do not allow my voice to be the instrument of destruction to a single soul. Let the voice of Thy Blood, which was shed for all, pierce the hearts and consciences of all, and fill them with a wholesome fear of offending Thee, and leave behind in them a gentle attraction to love Thee constantly. If there are any who, on account of habitual sins, have hitherto refused to listen to Thy voice, ah, then, since they are, at all events, souls for whom Thou hast died, no matter how hardened they are, Thou hast still a voice left to pierce and soften them. Therefore, speak with Thy mighty word, inwardly to them, until they submit to Thy holy will, and one day see, with us all, Thy living, Incarnate Word, with the Holy Ghost, and praise and love Thee forever. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Third Sunday in Lent, and also for the Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary:

Text.

Beati, qui audiunt verbum Dei, et custodiunt illud.—Luke xi. 28.
"Blessed are they who hear the Word of God, and keep it."

To hear the Word of God in sermons is necessary for the salvation of the majority of people, and very useful for the salvation of all. To hear the Word of God in sermons willingly, attentively, and constantly, is one of the signs of eternal salvation, as I have proved on a former occasion. And yet, my dear brethren, not all who

¹ *Vocavi et renulisti.*—Prov. i. 24.

² *Christus loquitur, faciamus.*

hear the Word of God in sermons willingly, attentively, and constantly, are pronounced blessed by Christ, but those who hear the Word of God, and keep it;¹ that is to say, those who fulfil what they hear in sermons. Oh, if this were done by every one, what a great thing it would be! etc.—*continues as before.*

Another Introduction for the Feast of St. John the Baptist:

Text.

Posuerunt omnes, qui audierant in corde suo.—Luke i. 66.

“And all they that had heard them laid them up in their heart.”

That the aged Elizabeth should give birth to a son, and that Zacharias, after having been dumb, should commence to speak—these were wonders that might well be laid to heart. And in reality, all who heard of them were impressed deeply: “And all they that had heard them laid them up in their heart.” These words, my dear brethren, furnish me with matter to continue my instructions on the proper manner of hearing sermons. For on to-day we celebrate the Feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, the first preacher, who when asked who he was, replied: I am the voice of God crying out. Oh, would that my voice, too, like his, could penetrate hearts and awaken sinners to sorrow and repentance! Oh, that I could do that at least on this day; so that, like those people mentioned in the Gospel, we might always lay up in our hearts what we have heard, or will hear in sermons! For if this point is not gained, all our preaching is useless. Oh, holy St. Augustine, it is from you that I take the division of to-day’s sermon; Christ spoke,² etc.—*continues as before.*

¹ *Beati qui audiunt verbum Dei, et custodiunt illud.*—Luke xi. 28.

² *Christus loquitur.*

ON THE
PARTICULAR DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS
IN DIFFERENT STATES OF LIFE.

THIRTEENTH SERMON.

ON THE DUTIES OF THE YOUNG TO GOD.

Subject.

1st. To serve God in the time of youth is a service most pleasing to God, which He expects and requires in a most special manner. 2d. Therefore, they act very unjustly towards God, who refuse Him this service, and give it to another.—*Preached on the Sunday in the Octave of Christmas.*

Text.

Puer autem crescebat, et confortabatur plenus sapientia: et gratia Dei erat in illo.—Luke ii. 40.

“And the Child grew, and waxed strong, full of wisdom: and the grace of God was in Him.”

Introduction.

See, Christian children, that is meant for you! The new-born Child Jesus is your special model and pattern, from whom you must learn how you ought to grow up and regulate your lives. “The Child grew;”¹ you also do that, daily and hourly; even while you are asleep or at play, you grow in age and size. “And waxed strong;”² you also wax strong by eating and drinking. But the chief thing is: “full of wisdom: and the grace of God was in Him.”³ It is in that you must imitate Him; so that the grace of God may never be lost on you. Therefore, you must understand the duty and obligations to which you are bound from your childhood: first, as to what you owe to God; secondly, as to what you owe to your parents, and thirdly, as to what you owe to yourselves in your future choice of a state of life. Since God is to be preferred to all, we shall commence with your duty

¹ Puer autem crescebat.

² Et confortabatur.

³ Plenus sapientia, et gratia Dei erat in illo.

to Him. What do you owe to Him? A zealous service, and a constant love from your very childhood, from your earliest years. And all men, no matter what their age or condition may be, must acknowledge that they also owe this to God. You young people, however, are bound to it in a special manner. And why? That is what we have to see in this and the following sermons. Namely—

Plan of Discourse.

To serve God and love Him in the time of youth, is a service most pleasing to God, which He expects from and requires of you in a most special manner. This I shall explain in the first part. Therefore, they act very unjustly towards God, who refuse Him this service and give it to another. This will form the subject of the second part.

Virgin Mother Mary! obtain from thy divine Child, who grew in divine wisdom and grace, as an example to the world, that all children may have knowledge and grace to spend the time of their youth in the love and service of thy Son alone; and for us, who have, perhaps, been wanting in our duty in this particular, obtain grace that we may redeem, by an increase of zeal, the shortcomings of our youth. This we beg of you, too, oh, holy angels, in whose charge we are from our very childhood.

First Part.

What is the reason that, in the Old Law, God always commanded the Jews, on the presentation of their first-born, to sacrifice to Him a lamb one year old, or two young doves? Would not a full-grown sheep, or an ox, have been a better token of man's gratitude and submission to Him? Or has God a preference for one animal more than another? But He is the Creator and Lord of all. It is He who said of all created things, that they were very good: "And God saw all the things that He had made, and they were very good."¹ Nor is He in need of any of His creatures, as the Apostle says, for none of them could add anything to His infinite happiness. Therefore, why was the lamb for sacrifice to be a year old, and no older? Why were young and not old doves appointed as a substitute? To show (as in addition to many other things, the interpreters remark of this passage of the sacred Scriptures) that God, who is the beginning of all things, has an especial pleasure in the firstlings of His creatures, and desires them to be consecrated in

God always required, in the Old Law, that the first fruits should be offered in sacrifice to Him.

¹ Viditque Deus cuncta, quæ fecerat, et erant valde bona.—Gen. 1: 31.

a special manner to His service. This is proved by many of the laws that were given to the Jews; the first fruits had always to be offered to God. "Thou shalt carry the first-fruits of the corn of thy ground to the house of the Lord thy God."¹ He must have the first of wine, oil, food, and drink: "you shall separate first fruits to the Lord."² The first-born of animals were to be immolated to Him, nay, even the first of men were to be consecrated to Him. He said to Moses: "Sanctify unto me every first-born, as well of men as of beasts."³ In the very beginning of the world, He regarded the sacrifice of Cain with displeasure and disgust. And why was that, since He accepted the sacrifice of Abel? St. Ambrose answers: "What Cain offered were not the first fruits, Abel, on the contrary, offered the first, not the second fruits."⁴ And therefore the latter pleased Him, but not the former.

Even among men the first fruits are the best and most acceptable.

To speak plainly of the matter, my dear brethren, even amongst men, the first fruits are the most pleasing and acceptable. According to the general opinion, the first fruits that a tree bears are the best of the season. The first fruits even of common vegetables, such as potatoes, turnips, pease and beans, may be set before the greatest lords, because they are the first fruits; although when these things grow older and larger they could not be served at table. A single handful of cherries, in the first of the season, is of more value, in reality and imagination, than a basketful at other times. What trouble do not flower gardeners give themselves, and how they boast, if they succeed in having the first of any kind of flowers!

Therefore God requires to be served, especially in the time of youth, because that is the best part of life.

From this, my dear brethren, you will easily see my meaning, and how it is that God, although our whole lives belong to Him as to our last end, so that not a moment should pass without being devoted to His service, yet commands and requires of us, in a most special manner, to devote the time of our youth, from childhood upwards, to His love and honor. For, what are the years of youth but the beginning and first fruits of human life? They are the flower of life, as St. Augustine says, speaking to young people: "To you my words are addressed, oh, young people, who are in the bloom of life."⁵ If all our thoughts, words, and actions are fruits, as of a tree planted by God, that we must offer to Him,

¹ Primitias frugum terræ tuæ deferes in domum Dei tui.—Exod. xxiii. 19.

² Separabis primitias Domino.—Num. xv. 19.

³ Sanctifica mihi omne primogenitum, tam de hominibus, quam de jumentis.—Exod. xiii. 2.

⁴ Cain obtulit non a primis fructibus primitias Deo, Abel obtulit non secunda, sed prima.

⁵ Ad vos mihi sermo est, O juvenes, flos ætatis!

then the works of youth are the first, and therefore the best and most pleasing that we can offer to God. St. Thomas Aquinas says: "A young man offers whatever he gives to God from the best part, the flower and vigor of his life;"¹ while, on the other hand, in later years, only old, dry, and half-withered fruits, so to speak, can be offered to Him. "An old man offers the dregs of his life,"² are the words of the angelic doctor. In youth we can offer that part of our lives which, according to the order of nature, is the purest and freest from vice; for then the knowledge of evil is generally less than in later years; the understanding is not so taken up and blinded by the false maxims of a vain world; the memory has less experience, and is therefore less disturbed by dangerous and lively images of deep-rooted habits; the will is simple and innocent and not inclined to evil; the evil desires of unlawful things are not so eager, because the forbidden pleasure has not been tried and experienced, so that they are like smouldering embers, without fire or flame; the conscience is in its first tenderness; the fear and terror of grievous sin, inspired by reason, have not yet lost their power; the shamelessness, with which crime is committed in later years, is still kept under by inborn modesty; the whole soul is adorned with the beautiful garment of sanctifying grace received in Baptism, from the first gifts of the divine favor and clemency, and the first efforts of the guardian angel's protecting care. What, then, could be more agreeable to that Lord, who, in the Old Testament, so expressly excluded unclean animals from being offered to Him in sacrifice, than the service of still unspotted innocence? How often has not the world experienced, in difficulties and dangers, that when an angry God refused to be appeased by processions, or fasting, or alms, He yielded at last to the prayers of little children, and moved with pity, restrained His hand from chastising?

I know well that this time of youth, unless looked after very carefully, does not remain long undefiled, and it is to effect this that the devil, the hated and envious enemy of God and man, directs all his efforts, that he may deprive the Almighty of what is most pleasing to Him, rob Him of the first fruits of life, and make them a sacrifice for hell; for if he succeeds in doing this, he may make pretty sure of the remaining years of life. Therefore, he lays many a private and public snare: sometimes he fills the minds of the young with wicked thoughts; sometimes he makes use of other young people of both sexes, who are already corrupt-

And because it is usually the time of temptation.

¹ *Adolescens offert Deo de meliore vitæ suæ, de flore, de vigore.*

² *Senex vero de fœco.*

ed, to teach wickedness, by word and example, to those who are still innocent ; sometimes he brings them into dangerous occasions or bad company, where they see and hear wickedness and sinful familiarities, by which they become corrupted and fascinated by the first taste of worldly pleasures and allurements. On this account the time of youth is not unaptly called the time of temptations and of combat. But from that very circumstance, it is evident that it is also something very precious and valuable, since the proud spirit of evil makes so many attacks on it, and tries so hard to overcome and conquer it.

We can give God a more pleasing service in youth.

And so, too, it is evident that they who remain true to God during their youth, and preserve their innocence, offer a most agreeable sacrifice to Him. It is no great proof of bravery for a soldier to fight from behind a wall, or where he cannot see his enemy ; the real heroism consists in defending the honor of his king in the midst of the battlefield, with wounds and death on every side of him ; then he can show how great are his love and fealty to his sovereign. What great wonder would it be if a man were to keep free from sin during a time of inward peace, when there is nothing to entice him to sin any more ? What wonder is it for an old man, who has lost all taste for pleasure, to live a chaste, retired, and temperate life ; for the near approach of death shows him the vanity of earthly joys, and directs his thoughts to eternity ! But to fly and avoid sin in the time of temptation, when everything invites to sin, to love God in those years in which the freshness of youth inclines us to love creatures, to avoid dangerous occasions and bad company, when others of the same age invite us to go, to live temperately when others spend their time in drinking and gambling, to remain modest, humble, and chaste, although the fire of youth excites the majority to freedom, vanity, pride, and sensual pleasures ; in a word, not to sin when sin is so easy, to serve God when there are so many temptations to abandon Him, that is a proof of solid virtue, and a sure sign that we really love God above all things. Hugo says, speaking of those who live piously during their youth : “ Such as these offer to God a pleasing, perfect, and spotless sacrifice.”¹

God has a special love for the young.

Consequently, it is no wonder that they are loved most tenderly by the Almighty God, that He protects them with fatherly care, and bestows on them His choicest graces. They are like Benjamin, of whom the patriarch Jacob said : “ The best beloved of the Lord shall dwell confidently in Him ; as in a bride-chamber

¹ Tales offerunt hostiam viventem, Deo placentem, immaculatam.

shall he abide all the day long, and between His shoulders shall he rest.”¹ What great tenderness, favor, and grace our Saviour showed to the young during His life on earth! The Holy Scriptures often testify to this. He said: “Suffer the little children to come unto me;” “and embracing them, and laying His hands upon them, He blessed them.”² Who was it, of whom we read in the same chapter: “And Jesus looking on him, loved him?”³ It was a young man, who came to Him and said: “Master, all these things (the commandments of God) I have observed from my youth.”⁴ Who was it whom Jesus loved most among the twelve Apostles?⁵ Was it not John, the youngest and most innocent of all? Three persons Jesus raised from the dead, the daughter of Jairus, the son of the widow of Naim, and Lazarus, and all of them were young. In a word, He had as much care for the young as for His own person: “He that shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth Me.”⁶ And on the other hand, He threatens most severely those who give scandal to even the least of the little ones that believe in Him; it were better for them to have a millstone tied round their necks, and to be cast into the sea.⁷ “O young people, who are in the bloom of age,”⁸ I must repeat with St. Augustine, in concluding this first part; see, oh, young boy, oh, young girl! the flowers of age, how much God loves you! See how concerned He is for your salvation, and how much He desires to be served, honored, and loved by you! Can you then refuse to give Him this most valuable portion of your life, or could you deprive Him of it and give it to another? What a cruel injustice that would be! as we shall see in the

Second Part.

Beautiful time of youth! Alas! I must now begin to complain; beautiful time of youth, how shamefully you are squandered, in our days, by the greater number! What a small share God receives as a sacrifice! As if this were the very time that

The time of youth is, generally speaking, squandered most shame-

¹ Benjamin, amantissimus Domini, habitabit confidenter in eo; quasi in thalamo tota die morabitur, et inter humeros illius requiescet.—Deut. xxxiii. 12.

² Sinite parvulos venire ad me; et complexans eos, et imponens manus super illos, benedicebat eos.—Mark x. 14, 16.

³ Jesus autem intuitus eum, dilexit eum.—Ibid. 21.

⁴ Magister, hæc omnia observavi a juventute mea.—Ibid. 20.

⁵ Discipulus, quem diligebat Jesus.—John xiii. 23.

⁶ Qui suscepit unum parvulum talem in nomine meo, me suscipit.—Matth. xviii. 5.

⁷ Expedit ei ut suspendatur mola asinaria in collo ejus, et demergatur in profundum maris.—Ibid. 6.

⁸ O juvenes! flos ætatis.

fully and
taken away
from God.

might be squandered without scruple, without thought, without profit! As if these were the years that must necessarily be devoted to idleness, foppery, and ostentation, to gambling and drinking, to dancing and amusements and carnal love! As if this part of human life belonged especially to sinful lusts and to the service of the devil; as if it were a pity and a shame to devote the beginning of life to what the world calls the doleful business of attending to one's soul and practising virtue! As if, in a word, this part of life were too precious for God and for Heaven! Such is in fact the idea that has impressed itself upon many, that, namely, more liberty ought to be allowed to the young than to the old in these matters. Such is the opinion of friends, relatives, nay, even of parents themselves. The boy, the girl, they say, is still young, and can well be allowed some license. And old, prudent, and often sensible men and women speak in that way; what is the use of troubling about it, they say; when we were young we did the same (more is the pity!); what can we do to make matters better? We know well what young people are, (God help them if they are not good!), let them have their fling; when they grow older they will not find any more pleasure in such things (alas! that change will come too late!); the sooner they sow their wild oats, the better (and when the best part of life is gone, what remains is not worth much). Oh, what a pity it is that such a beautiful child has entered a convent (a pity that that beautiful soul goes to God, to Heaven? Hear, oh, Lord, what they say: it is a pity that any good thing should be sacrificed to Thee!); such is the vain discourse of the world. And young people use this vain talk to encourage each other; we are still young, they say, with the fool in the Book of Wisdom: "The time of our life is short,"¹ who knows how long it will last? "Come, therefore, and let us enjoy the good things that are present," we are still young; "let us speedily use the creatures as in youth." We are still young: "Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments." We are still young: "Let not the flower of the time pass by us." We are still young: "Let us crown ourselves with roses, before they be withered." We are still young: "Let no meadow escape our riot."² We are still young: "Let

¹ *Exiguum est tempus vite nostrae.—Sap. 11. 1.*

² *Venite ergo, et fruamur bonis, quæ sunt.—Utamur creatura, tanquam juventute, celeriter.—Vino pretioso et unguentis nos impleamus.—Non prætereat nos flos temporis.—Coronemus nos rosis, antequam marcescant.—Nullum pratium sit, quod non pertranseat luxuria nostra.—Ibid. 6, 7, 8.*

us everywhere leave tokens of joy ; for this is our portion, and this our lot."¹ We can serve God afterwards.

Oh, accursed philosophy ! What fiend has taught you to draw such false conclusions ? How wrong, how unjust is your conduct towards your God, since you educate youth in that manner ! How I pity your poor souls, that you treat so unmercifully ! So that the best part of your life, in which you enjoy the best health and strength, in which you have the most time and the best opportunity, and the greatest freedom and liberty to serve God and to work for the salvation of your soul—since you are then free from all other cares, business, and hindrances, this part of your life, I say, is to be spent in that wretched manner ; while for God, to whom you owe your whole life, you reserve your old age, or that part of your life in which everything will conspire against you, to keep you away from virtue and piety ; for, bodily discomforts, which increase day by day ; vicious habits and inclinations, that always grow stronger ; the manifold cares of business and domestic concerns, which multiply as age advances ; the evil customs and habits of the world, according to which you imagine you must live, and many other things besides, will arise to hinder or altogether prevent you from thinking of your soul. Is this the time, I ask you, that you reserve for God ? Do you consider that honorable ? St. John Chrysostom says, with astonishment : “ If none of you would like to have an aged servant,”² nay, if you often dismiss your servants because they are too old, and hardly able to attend to their duties, and seek out others who are young and strong : “ How much more does not God require the service of youth, so as to have the first fruits of life ?”³ How displeased, too, He will be : “ If one who has exhausted the vigor of his youth in sin, gives only the residue and dregs of his life to virtue ?”⁴ The meaning of that is, that the pure gold is given to the world, the flesh, and the devil, while the dross is reserved for God ; the devil gets the precious pearl, but the empty shell is given to God ; the devil has the flour of the wheat, while God has only the husks and chaff ; the devil gets the body while it is still vigorous, but God has no service from it until it becomes dried up and withered ; the devil has the first roses of the spring,

How unjust
this is to
God.

¹ Ubique relinquamus signa lætitiæ ; quoniam hæc est pars nostra, et hæc est sors.—*Sap. il. 9.*

² Si nullus vestrum vult possidere servum senem.

³ Quanto magis Deus vult adolescentiam, ut ejus vitæ primitias ambiat.

⁴ Si quis, cum juventutem peccando exhausserit, enervatam senectutem ac vitæ faciem virtuti reservet.

while God has only the withered leaves and thorns, which the devil did not care for; the first, rarest, and most beautiful fruits are offered to the devil, while those that have fallen from the tree and lie on the ground, half eaten away by the worms, are offered to God; that is to say, you offer to Him that service and love which misery and the fear of approaching death force from you. In a word, you wish to serve God when you are tired and wearied of serving the devil, and when you have lost all taste for sensual pleasures. That is not the way, as Hugo says, to offer a spotless young lamb, such as God wishes; such an offering consists rather of a fowl swine.¹

A great
curse is
therefore
to be
dreaded.

And what sort of welcome will you get when you come with such an offering? If the Lord has before now cursed those who kept the best of dumb animals for themselves, and brought the worse to be sacrificed: "Cursed is the deceitful man, that hath in his flock a male, and making a vow, offereth in sacrifice that which is feeble to the Lord,"²—what a dreadful curse must they not expect, who deliberately intend to give nothing to God but the end of their lives, when the senses are dulled, although they promised in Baptism, by a solemn vow, to consecrate their whole lives to the service of God? I will say nothing of the danger you thus place yourself in, of not doing anything at all for your salvation (I shall speak of that on a future occasion), inasmuch as you wish to begin to live for God when you will perhaps have to leave this life. Have you never heard of that maxim of the jurists: "He who builds on another man's ground loses his building?"³ You now wish to spend the years of your youth in forbidden joys and pleasures, and to defer the service of God until your old age. Ah, you are building on ground that does not belong to you; you let your eternal happiness depend on a time over which you have absolutely no control, and which God alone can give you, or withhold from you. I fear, therefore (and your fear ought to be much greater), that your imaginary spiritual edifice will come to nothing, and will be a complete failure. Read the narratives of the Holy Scriptures: they will show you plainly enough what becomes of edifices of that kind: there you will find two sons of the Patriarch Juda, Her and Onan, two of King David, Amnon and Absalom, two of the High-Priest Heli, Ophni and Phineas, all of whom were stricken by the hand of God in the midst of the vices of their youth, and thus had no time left

¹ *Hi non offerunt agnum immaculatum, sed ut ita dicam, porcum curatam.*

² *Maledictus dolosus, qui habet in grege suo masculum, et votum faciens immolat debile Domino.*—Malach. i. 14.

³ *Qui in alieno ædificat, amittit ædificium.*

to work out their salvation. And it is much to be desired that the same unhappy fate may not be the lot of countless young people of the present day, for many of them are hurried away by an untimely and sudden death, or are suddenly deprived of their reason, or their wills become hardened and they grow obstinate in sinful habits, until they die impenitent, or otherwise end miserably. Such things, oh, God! are the instruments of Thy just anger, with which Thou punishest those who despise Thee in their youth and cast Thee off, and who determine to serve Thee only when they have, as slaves of the devil, completely satisfied their wicked appetites!

And even if God had patience with you and allowed you to finish your building; to do penance, to amend your life, to serve Him in your old age and to go to Heaven, still, with all your good works, you cannot atone for the injuries you offered to God in your youth; for no matter how great your penance, how sincere your amendment, it still remains true and will remain true for all eternity, that you have shamefully offended God who loved you so much, who desired so much to be loved by you, and whom you will see and love in Heaven; for you have taken away from Him the best part of your life, your youth, and given it to the devil. This ugly stain will remain always; this truth cannot be upset by any amount of tears and repentance. When the penitent David thought of that, he cried out in grief and sorrow: "Every night I will wash my bed: I will water my couch with my tears."¹ Now, you children, who are still young, have it in your power to save yourselves from the necessity of ever having to weep in that way. How foolish it is to do now what you know very well will afterwards cause you to repent bitterly, if you wish to go to Heaven; or to do what, during a whole eternity, you must wish you never had done!

How foolish it is to do now what we must afterwards be sorry for.

Therefore, you ought to draw a better conclusion from the sayings of the world; you ought to say: we are still young, our life is short, who knows how long it will last; come, therefore,² and let us do good, now that we can do it easily and at our convenience. We are still young, therefore let us make use of the favor we enjoy with our Creator. We are still young: let us then adorn our souls with virtues. We are still young: let us not squander this precious time of youth. We are still young: let us sacrifice ourselves to God before we get withered. We are still young: therefore let us give an example of innocence, purity,

Conclusion for young people.

¹ *Lavabo per singulas noctes lectum meum, lacrymis meis stratum meum rigabo.*—Ps. vi. 7.

² *Venite ergo.*

piety, and the fear of the Lord in every church or house we enter, and in every place and company that we frequent. And so we shall give our whole hearts to Him alone who is worthy of possessing them, and who desires them so earnestly: "Son, give Me thy heart!"¹ Not a divided heart, not the last and worst part, but the whole heart. We are still young: let us then so live that we may not be cast into everlasting fire! We are still young: let us therefore so live that we may reign with God in Heaven! "For this is our fortune, this our happy lot;"² this is our only end and aim, and this too will be our eternal joy.

For parents.

Christian parents! I ask of you now to recall to your memories all that you have ever heard of your obligation (and it cannot be preached to you too often) to offer your children to God from their very infancy, to bring them up for God and to keep them faithful to His service. What a great consolation and reward will be yours, if you do not fail in this duty! What an immense responsibility, and what a curse you will incur, if by your carelessness, negligence, foolish affection, by omitting the necessary instruction, correction, and watchfulness, or by bad example you prevent a single one of your children from serving God, and make him a slave of the devil. As was said before now of the Jews: And they sacrificed their sons and their daughters to devils!³ What a responsibility you will incur if, as often happens, when your children are inclined to virtue, to piety, or to the ecclesiastical state, you say or do anything to prevent them, or threaten or abuse them, or put obstacles in their way, like the disciples in the Gospel who tried to keep the children away from Christ. The Evangelist St. Mark says: "And the disciples rebuked those that brought them."⁴ A rebuke that displeased our Lord very much. I have not time now to say any more to you on this point. Think of what I have said, and meditate on it every day.

For grown-up people who have spent their youth badly.

From all this, I can draw only one conclusion for myself, and perhaps for many others of different ages and conditions, and that is, that I must cry out to Thee, full of sorrow and repentance: oh, my most merciful God, "The sins of my youth do not remember."⁵ Oh, beautiful time of youth, what has become of thee! Where are the best years of my life gone? Alas, I cannot deny it; Thou, oh, Lord, hast had the least share of them! Hours and days have been spent mostly in useless play, in vanities,

¹ *Præbe fili mi cor tuum mihi!*—Prov. xxiii. 26. ² *Quoniam hæc est pars nostra, hæc est sortis.*

³ *Immolaverunt filios suos, et filias suas dæmonibus!*—Psal. cv. 37.

⁴ *Discipuli autem comminabantur offerentibus.*—Mark. x. 13.

⁵ *Delicta juventutis meæ ne memineris.*—Ps. xxiv. 7.

sensual gratifications, fopperies, idleness, and impurity! The flower and vigor of my life I have given to Thy sworn enemy, although it belongs to Thee alone by right! Oh, Lord, “remember not the sins of my youth!”¹ How little have I regarded Thy commandments, although, in truth, it is not hard to observe them! How little have I regarded the malice of mortal sin, by which I have often done Thee the greatest injustice! How little have I valued my immortal soul, which I have so often sold for a momentary pleasure! How little I have done for Thy heavenly joys, which I have so heedlessly neglected! How little I have feared Thy threats of everlasting punishment, which I have so often deserved by my own deliberate act! My whole youth is lost, and I must say with St. Augustine: “I went about in my youth, and the more I grew in age, the more shameful did my vanity become.”² Ah, most loving God, too late have I known Thee, too late have I loved Thee! But it is done now. And what remains for me to do but, according to the advice of the Apostle, to make up for lost time by a greater zeal in Thy service, as far as it is possible for me to do so. Will I refuse Thee this too? Will I continue as I have begun? Will I still refuse to listen to Thy voice calling on me, “My son, give Me thy heart”?³ Thou makest the same request even now. Hear, therefore, all ye who have not yet begun to love God as you ought, what the great Creator wants from us: My dear son, my dear daughter, give Me thy heart at last! You have left it long enough in the power of my enemy; am I never to find any place in it? You certainly do not wish to prefer the devil to Me; therefore, treat Me at least as you have treated him. Up to this I have not had full possession of your heart, which should belong to Me; let Me at least share with the devil, and have half of it. I have been obliged to look on while you were sacrificing the best part of it to him; give Me now, at least, the worst part of it, which is still left, and begin now to serve Me. No more, oh, my God! I am covered with confusion; I am sorry, really and sincerely sorry, that I have to make such a division of my heart between Thee and the devil. I am resolved to serve Thee in future, and not to defraud Thee of a single moment of my life. Ah, would that I could recall my youth—how much better would I now use it in Thy service!

¹ *Deflecta juventutis meae ne memineris.*

² *Ibam in juventutem, quanto aetate major, tanto vanitate turpior.*

³ *Præbe illi mi cor tuum mihi!*

for innocent children.

Pious and still innocent children, how easily might I not envy your happiness! Yet I do not envy you, I rather feel a deeper sorrow at having so unjustly taken away that time, which I once had as you have now, from the God whom I now love above all things; and the more reason I have to congratulate you, who still preserve your first friendship with God, the more must I repent of my own misspent youth, and repent of it until the end of my life. The last request I make of you is to preserve your innocence unstained and to remain faithful to God. One day you will know what you do not perhaps yet understand, what a desirable and precious privilege it is to serve God from childhood and to preserve your innocence unstained to the end. Oh, what happiness, what joy, after ten, twenty, thirty years of this mortal life, to be able to say to the Lord, with the young man in the Gospel: "I have observed all these things from my youth!"¹ Thou, oh, God, hast desired the first bloom of my life: I have kept it for Thee. Thou hast wished for my love and fidelity: I have given them to Thee alone. Thou hast declared to me Thy law, according to which I must live pure, chaste, temperate, and pious: "I have observed all these things from my youth." The world, the flesh, and the devil have had no share in my life, nor shall they ever have any share in it. I am Thine from my childhood, I will be Thine to the end, Thine I will remain for all eternity. So should you resolve, children. So should all resolve, at least for the future. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary:

Text.

Tulerunt illum in Jerusalem, ut sisterent eum Domino.—
Luke ii. 22.

"They carried Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord."

The purest of Virgins is purified like an ordinary woman, the great God is presented as a servant, and redeemed by money. How wonderful the humility of both! It is the most Holy Virgin who offers, and it is the only begotten Son of God who is offered! Here is a subject for your pious meditation, my dear brethren. The Virgin Mother presents her only beloved Child in the Temple, the Child Christ gives Himself up completely to the will of His Father! What a beautiful lesson for us all! Learn from this

¹ *Hæc omnia observavi a juventute mea.*—Mark x. 20.

Mother, oh, parents, to bring up your children for God from their earliest years ! Learn from this Child, oh, children, to give yourselves to the service of God from your youth ; and learn all of ye who have misspent your youth, to bewail your sins. These and similar conclusions will be drawn from to-day's sermon, after I shall have proved that the time of youth is that which we must give to God in a most special manner ; namely, to serve God in the time of youth, etc.—*continues as before.*

Another Introduction for the Feast of the Holy Innocents:

Text.

Hi empti sunt ex hominibus primitiæ Deo, et Agno.—Apoc. xiv. 4.

“These were purchased from among men, the first fruits to God and to the Lamb.”

Be attentive, Christian children, for this is your particular feast day ! Those innocent children, who shed their blood for Jesus Christ in their infancy, teach you how you too must live piously and in innocence ; hear, therefore, now, your duty and obligation, etc.—*continues as before.*

FOURTEENTH SERMON.

OUR AFTER LIFE DEPENDS ON OUR CONDUCT DURING YOUTH.

Subject.

According as a child is good or bad in his youth, so will he be when he grows up.—*Preached on the Feast of St. John the Baptist.*

Text.

Quis putas, puer iste erit ?—Luke i. 66.

“What an one, think ye, shall this child be ?”

Introduction.

Not without reason did the friends and neighbors of Elizabeth, as well as all who were in the hill-county of Judea ask each other this question about the newly-born John the Baptist: “What an one, think ye, shall this child be?”¹ “For the hand of the Lord was already with him.” The extraordinary things that happened at

¹ *Quis putas, puer iste erit ?*

his circumcision indicated something out of the usual course of events, and that was, that he should be, as the Angel said, "great before the Lord."¹ Nowadays, too, my dear brethren, parents ask the same question: what will this child be?² If you ask me what your child will be in and before the world, I must tell you that I know not, and neither do you know. But if you ask me what he will be before God and before Heaven, that I can tell you, although I am no prophet. See what the child is when he comes to the full use of reason, ask yourselves in what state you would wish him to be; so will he be hereafter. And that is what I undertake to prove in to-day's sermon.

Plan of Discourse.

As a child is good or bad in his youth, so will he be when he grows up. That is the whole subject. Parents and children may learn therefrom: the former, in order that they may give their whole attention to the pious education of their children; the latter, that they may devote themselves in a special manner, during their youth, to piety and the fear of the Lord. If both these things were observed, the whole world would become holy.

That both may be observed by all here present, we beg of Thy grace, oh, Almighty God, through the intercession of the most Holy Mother of Thy only begotten Son, and that of the angels whom Thou hast given us as protectors, from our childhood upwards.

It is certainly not an infallible rule, that as the child is, so the man will be.

As the child is in his young days, so will he afterwards be. But, how can I say that without making any exception? Or, can I dare to assure those children, who are now good and pious, that they will certainly save their souls and go to Heaven? If that is the case, how is it that we are told to fear? "He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall."³ He who is good and pious must take care that he does not become bad and wicked. No one is sure of final perseverance; no one knows for certain whether he is worthy of love or of hatred. *As the child is in his young days, so will he afterwards be.* Must I therefore take away all hope and courage from so many children who are now wicked and impious? Must I say that it is impossible for them to amend? Must I drive them to desperation and condemn them to hell for all eternity? If that is the case, why do we cry out so often in sermons: "Be recon-

¹ Magnus coram Domino. ² Quis putas, puer iste erit?

³ Qui se existimat stare, videat ne cadat.—I. Cor. x. 12.

ciled to God"?¹ Be converted ! change your sinful life ! In whatever moment the sinner does penance, he will find favor with God and will not die. The gate of mercy is closed on no one during this life. The laborers who came into the vineyard at the last moment, although they had spent the preceding part of the day in idleness, yet received their penny in the evening, as well as those who had borne the heat and burden of the day. It is all true, my dear brethren. It may happen, and has happened, that a child who is badly reared, and who has spent his youth in sin, becomes a good and pious man, and dies a happy death. Magdalen was a great sinner in her youth, and a great penitent in after life ; Augustine was notoriously wicked in his youth, and became a model of holiness afterwards ; the good thief on the cross was a murderer in life, and an heir to Heaven at the hour of death. And it is this thought that consoles me now, when I consider the multitude of depraved young people there are at the present day, and the great number of sinners ; so that I need never despair of their conversion. It may happen, and has happened, that a well-reared child, who has spent his youth in piety, and the fear of the Lord, afterwards, through the wiles and deceits of the devil, through the allurements of the occasions of sin, or through bad company, becomes completely perverted and is lost forever. Saul was a pious youth, but a vicious and reprobate king. Solomon was wise and virtuous as a young man, and he became foolish, effeminate, and idolatrous in his old age. And it is this that draws from me tears and sighs of compassion, when I think that some begin their lives as pure and unsullied as angels, and end them defiled with sin like devils. And, therefore, I cannot affirm that what I said in the beginning is an infallible rule, or that it admits of no exception.

Yet, I maintain that, generally speaking, the way in which one lives in his youth is a good sign of how he will spend his after life ; so that as he is good or bad in youth, he will be good or bad in after life, and at the hour of death. In order to prove to you the truth of this, of which, alas ! so little is thought, I shall appeal to the infallible Word of God, to sound reason, and to undeniable experience. And, in the first place, why should the Holy Scriptures so often, so particularly, and so impressively hold forth the necessity of being careful of the time of youth, of being, during that time, especially on our guard against sin, and of practising virtue and having the fear of the Lord, if our sal-

Yet it is generally the case. Proved from Scripture.

¹ Reconciliamini Deo. —I. Cor. x. 30.

vation did not depend on that time? Why does the Prophet Jeremiah say: "It is good for a man, when he hath borne the yoke from his youth."¹ Why does the Wise Preacher say so earnestly: "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth."² Should we not then think of God and keep Him always before our eyes, every day of our lives? Is He not our Creator in old age, as well as in childhood, and does He not always deserve to be honored and loved by us? Without doubt; but this latter obligation will be fulfilled of itself, if the former is duly attended to; for, he adds in another place: "A young man according to his way, even when he is old he will not depart from it."³ If he walks in the way of virtue, he will, generally speaking, continue in it as long as he lives; if he enters on the broad way of vice, he will likely continue in it until death. How is it possible, asks the wise Sirach, for a man to find in his old age, what he did not seek or gather in his youth?⁴ On the other hand, what is gained then, will never be lost. Son, hear learning from thy youth.⁵ And why? "And thou shalt find wisdom in thy gray hairs;"⁶ that is to say, thou shalt preserve thy virtue. The whole book of Solomon's Proverbs consists of nothing else but similar advice and instructions to youth. And to what purpose is all this, if it is no great matter how one acts in his youth? Could we not accuse the Holy Scriptures of deceit and treachery, if the time of youth is not, generally speaking, an indication of what one's after life will be, or if it were an unusual thing for a man to continue the course of life he has begun and laid the foundation of in his youth?

From the nature of things.

And reason and experience prove this to be the case with almost everything. If a skillful man considers the beginning of anything, he is almost sure to be able to say how it will end. The morning dawn tells us what sort of weather we shall have during the day; according as the sky is pale or red at sunrise, any farmer, if you ask him, will tell you whether we shall have wind or rain. If it is clear and cloudless, it will remain so till evening. If you wish to know whether you will have a fruitful or an unfruitful year, look at the first blossoms that appear, and you will know, for it almost always depends on them. Last spring the

¹ Bonum est viro, cum portaverit jugum ab adolescentia sua.—Lam. iii. 27.

² Memento Creatoris tui in diebus juventutis tue.—Eccles. xii. 1.

³ Adolescens juxta viam suam, etiam cum senuerit, non recedet ab ea.—Prov. xxii. 6.

⁴ Quæ in juventute tua non congregasti, quomodo in senectute invenies.—Eccles. xxv. 5.

⁵ Fili, a juventute tua excipe doctrinam.—Ibid. vi 18.

⁶ Et usque ad canos invenies sapientiam.—Ibid.

blossoms of the trees were destroyed in great part by the frost and snow ; what will become of the cherries, apples, and pears ? We have eaten them before now, and it is not of much consequence, as even the children could tell us. But there are few who are so indifferent as to the fate of the corn and vintage ; if these get on well, there will be good hopes of a fair harvest. It is just the same with living creatures. A horse that is driven, when he is young, under a peasant's wagon, will never become a good riding horse. A lap-dog that spends its time lying down on a comfortable cushion will never make a good hunting dog. A young wolf can be tamed so as to follow you like a dog ; but attempt it with an old one caught in the forest ; it is and will remain wild. So true is the saying of the old poet : " A nettle stings early, when it intends to remain a nettle ;"¹ and also that saying of the jurists : " The beginning is the most important part of everything."²

I know, my dear brethren, what you think of all this : these things are all lifeless or senseless creatures, they have not the gift of reason, they act through blind necessity, and are influenced only by instinct or by the guidance of others. But man has reason and free will, he can make choice of different modes of action just as he wishes and thinks fit, and he can change his manner of life whenever he pleases. That is true ; but who does not know, who has not experienced the great power and influence that a deep-rooted custom has over our will, free though the latter is ? " Habit is second nature"³ is a well-known proverb. Habit drives us like a natural impulse, so that we can do easily and without any difficulty that to which we are accustomed ; just as it would cost us a deal of trouble to abstain from doing it. That is especially the case when the habit is one that pleases our senses, and the contrary is irksome and disagreeable. It is no wonder, says Cardinal Hugo, that a poor peasant is contented and happy with his meal of hard beans and half rancid fat and coarse bread, which he washes down with spring water, for he is accustomed to such rude fare. But if a rich man were invited to eat such food, and were obliged to be content with it, he would find it hard enough and would have to leave the table without eating anything. And why ? He has his free will, and he can use his teeth. Oh, he is accustomed to better things and cannot eat that coarse food. Tell a

From the nature of man.

¹ Urit mature, quod vult urtica manere.

² Cujusque rei potissima pars principium est.

³ Consuetudo est altera natura.

man who was once rich, but who is now poor, that he must go and dig and work and earn his bread like so many other poor people, who make no difficulty of doing so. Ah, he will say, like the man in the Gospel: "To dig I am not able; to beg I am ashamed."¹ And why? You have your free will. But, he will say, I am not used to it. As far as moral conduct is concerned, this is much more likely to be the case. The observance of the commandments of God, the refraining from unlawful pleasures, the flight of dangerous occasions, the practice of the necessary mortification and penance has long been a sweet yoke and a light burden to the pious man; while one who is accustomed to a vicious and sensual life finds in these things a fearful burden, an insuperable difficulty, and hence it is that so many despair of amendment, when they think that they must abstain from this or that sin their whole lives long. To do good after having learned to do evil is like trying to wash the blackamoor white, or to make the leopard change his spots,² as God says by the Prophet Jeremias. It is a hard thing to give up a habit. Now there are no habits so deeply rooted, so long retained, and so difficult to be abandoned as the habits we adopt in youth; for, since children have little experience, and a disposition untried by cares, with a clear head, a sharp memory, and a perpetual curiosity to see, hear, and learn something new, it follows that what children learn and experience (since everything is new to them) makes a deeper and more lasting impression on them, so that they can hardly forget it their whole lives long. Consequently, their good or bad inclinations, morals, and conduct grow up with them from year to year, and more frequently than not, accompany them to the grave. St. Jerome says of good morals that, as fresh wool generally keeps the first color it receives, so also the piety that is imbibed with the mother's milk in childhood, generally remains.* Sophar gives undeniable testimony about bad habits, when he says to his friend Job: "His bones shall be filled with the vices of his youth, and they shall sleep with him in the dust."⁴

From the
general ac-
tion of
God.

The last proof is as follow: All that we have said hitherto depends on the help and assistance of God, who, as we have shown elsewhere, is cold towards the cold-hearted, generous towards the generous, and more especially does He show tenderness, love,

¹ Fodere non valeo, mendicare erubescio.—Luke xvi. 3.

² Si mutare potest Æthiops pellem suam, et pardus varietates suas, et vos poteritis benefacere, cum didiceritis malum.—Jerem. xlii. 23.

³ Difficile eraditur, quod rudes animi perhiberunt.

⁴ Ossa ejus implebuntur vitis adolescentiæ ejus, et cum eo in pulvere dormient.—Job xx. 11.

and friendship towards those souls who give Him the best, the first and most agreeable part of their lives, that is to say, their youth, for He helps them with special graces in all dangers and temptations, that He may keep them from sin, or, if they fall through weakness, He helps them to rise again that they may continue to walk in the way of virtue to the end: on the other hand, they who, with the greatest injustice, sacrifice the flower of their lives to the devil and to sin, and reserve for God nothing but the crumbs, as it were, that are left over from the service of the devil, their bodies enfeebled by sin, and the scum and dregs of their lives, these God generally despises, leaves unassisted in danger and abandons to their own weakness, so that at last they become obdurate in wickedness, without fear and without love, and they die as they live, because they have not feared or loved in the time of their youth.

I could bring forward a number of examples of both kinds, if I had time to do so, from the Holy Scriptures alone, such as Jacob, Joseph, Tobias, Eleazar, Susanna, etc., who were models of virtue and holiness amongst the Jewish people in their old age, and that, too, amid the most cruel persecutions and the greatest difficulties and temptations, and they remained so till death. Read their lives in the Sacred Scriptures and you will find that they were patterns of piety from their youth upwards, and that was the very thing that paved the way for them to the favor of God and the grace of perseverance. The examples of the other kind are almost numberless: read the history of the Kings in the Old Testament and you will see that after the death of Solomon, amongst his nineteen successors on the throne of Israel (an almost incredible thing), there was not one who was converted before his death. Amongst the kings of Juda who came after Solomon, there were only six out of nineteen who were good, all the others were wicked. Those who were good were so from the first; the others grew up in vice, and continued in it without any attempt at amendment, with the exception of Manasses, who was brought to his senses by his captivity.

Example
from the
Sacred
Scriptures.

On the strength of these proofs, I can repeat my proposition: *As a child is in youth, so will he, generally speaking, afterwards be during his life.* If I am asked, therefore, how such or such a child will get on; what do you think he will turn out when he grows up?¹ I should answer without hesitation, in the ordinary course of things, he will be then as he now is. The boy or girl who is now quiet,

Therefore
we can
judge of
what chil-
dren will be
in old age,
from what
they are in
youth.

¹ *Quis putas, puer iste erit?*

modest, reserved, respectful, and obedient to his or her parents, who is never idle, is inclined to piety and the fear of God, hears Mass daily, is frequently at confession and communion, is regular in attending church in order to hear sermons, kneels down every morning and evening at home before a little altar to pray to God; who willingly reads and hears about holy things, is frightened at the thought of a mortal sin, and carefully avoids all bad company, no matter what may be the inducement to frequent it; what think you will that child become? ¹ Oh, ye children who lead such angelic lives, continue as you have begun! Ye, O parents, rejoice; and all children, profit by that example, for they will become pious, God-fearing, zealous, and holy Christians and heirs of Heaven. The boy or girl who now shows no inclination or desire for piety, what will become of him or her? ² They who now spend the whole day in running about the streets, with the greatest boldness and impudence, what will become of them? They who now are given to idleness and vanity, what will become of them? They who now look at or treat their mothers with disrespect, and dare murmur at them, what will become of them? They who now get up in the morning without blessing themselves, go to bed without saying their prayers, steal away from school or church, or laugh or talk if they are compelled to remain; what will become of them? They who now know better how to tell lies and to call upon the devil, than to praise and bless God; what will become of them? They who are more occupied with fishing and bird-catching than with their rosary beads, who carry about with them cards and dice, instead of their prayer-books, who read dangerous romances and love stories, instead of Thomas à Kempis, who listen to play actors, rather than to preachers, who visit drinking houses, instead of the houses of God, what will become of them? They who now rob their parents right and left, who spend more time and care adorning their bodies before the looking-glass, than in the confessional or at the communion table, adorning and decorating their souls, what will become of them? They who now spend their time at the window, looking at the passers-by, they who are willing to see and be seen, who go into the society of persons of the opposite sex, and do not avoid dangerous meetings, what will become of them? They who now waste their precious time, their parents' money, and their own best years doing nothing, or committing sin, what will become of them? Alas, these are unhappy but certain signs of a vain, idle,

¹ Quis putas, puer iste erit ?

² Quis erit ?

spendthrift, unchristian, and impious life ! What will they turn out in their old age ? Most probably they will be hardened and obdurate in their accustomed vices ! What will become of them at the hour of death ? Most probably, unless the divine mercy gives them some extraordinary grace, they will be impenitent sinners ? What will become of them on the day of judgment ? Most probably they will be amongst the goats, on the left hand ! What will become of them during eternity ? Most probably they will be fuel for hell and will burn there with the great majority of men ? Yes, that will be their lot, if what the Holy Ghost says of the general course of things is true : “A young man, according to his way, will not depart from it when he is old.” Oh, blindness of youth, that makes so light of these things, and thinks so little of them, that those years on which eternal happiness or misery generally depends are spent so badly ! The more I think of it, the less do I wonder at that terrible truth, “Many are called, but few are chosen.”²

Oh, parents, you can best prevent this misfortune ? As children behave in their youth, so, generally speaking, do they remain during their lives ; but how children behave in their youth, depends much, if not mostly, on you, so that they are and will be what you wish them to be. That land, capable of cultivation, brings forth good or bad crops, depends much on the way it is cultivated ; if you sow thistles, you can never expect to reap wheat. That a young bird learns to sing well or badly, depends on the way in which it is taught in the beginning : a nightingale would never learn to sing sweetly with an owl for its master. The young crab will never learn to walk forwards, if it sees the old one always going backwards. In the same way, the good or bad conduct of your children is the consequence of the good or bad example you give them. Think, then, of that, and see what an amount of good or evil you may do, not only to your own children, but to your children’s children, and all your posterity. Ask yourselves often : How will my son or my daughter turn out ?³ If we do not plant the good seed by instructions, warnings, and continual exhortations to virtue and the fear of the Lord, or when we are unable to do this ourselves, if we do not see that our children are properly instructed and educated by others ; what will become of them ? They will be like uncultivated ground, overgrown with thorns and thistles : they will be ignorant of what concerns their last end, God and Heaven. If our

Exhortation
to parents.

¹ *Adolescens juxta viam suam, etiam cum senuerit, non recedet ab ea.*

² *Multi enim sunt vocati, pauci vero electi.—Matth. xxii. 14.* ³ *Quis putas, puer iste erit ?*

children hear the servants at home, or their own father and mother sometimes, cursing, swearing, backbiting, indulging in impure conversation, singing unchaste songs ; if they seldom hear of God, unless when His name is dishonored and blasphemed, what will become of them ? ' They will soon sing to the same tune, and follow the example of their elders. If they see anything in our conduct that young eyes should not behold, if they notice that their father and mother are slothful and lazy in the service of God, that the one is passionate, avaricious, or intemperate, while the other is given to idleness, vanity, and pride, and goes about immodestly dressed, or is not careful of her company ; what will become of them ? They will walk backwards like the young crab, and follow the evil example of their parents. If we are not always watchful over them, if we are sparing of the rod and of parental correction when they do wrong, or if, in place of punishing them, we curse or swear at them, as many parents do ; if we do not guard them against every occasion of seeing wickedness, or of hearing or thinking evil ; if, under the pretext that they are still young, we allow them to sleep together, or with the servants, without distinction (oh, parents, what a dangerous thing that is ! more so than I can now tell you) ; if, when they grow older, we allow them to go and walk where, and with whom, and as long as they please ; how will they turn out ? Ah, certainly not well ! The beautiful souls that God gave us to bring up for Him and to lead to Heaven, will be lost forever. These thoughts, and such as these, should be constantly in the minds of parents, they should reflect on them daily, and use the proper means to prevent any evil from happening to their children, with the full persuasion and conviction that, if they fulfil their duty in this particular, a great deal more good will result from it, than from all their other duties and cares. Christian parents, think well on it ! When you go to confession, it is not enough for you to see whether you have lived as good or bad Christians : you must examine your consciences carefully to see whether you have been good or bad parents, whether you have properly fulfilled the duties of a father or mother. If you fail in this, I would not give a straw for all your other pious practices and good works. If you have no sins of your own, remember, as St. Ambrose and Origen say, that the sins of your children and of those who are subject to you, will be imputed to you, in so far as you have given occasion for them, or not prevented them

¹ Quis erit ?

when you could have done so.' If you have good and pious children, thank God for it, and keep them pious, consoling yourselves with the thought that you will have a share in their good works, as well as in their eternal reward, which they must ascribe to you, after God. If you see that they are inclined to evil, correct them, while there is still time, in their youth. If they do not obey you, you have done your duty, and they must blame themselves for their own destruction.

And you, oh, children, I beg and implore of you: "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth!"¹ Give to your most loving God that part of your lives which He particularly desires and asks of you; that part on which, generally speaking, your eternal happiness or misery depends! If God has given you good parents, who bring you up well, look upon it as a great grace, which many have not; follow their instructions and example with unceasing reverence, love, and obedience, persuaded that you can never make them a sufficient return for what they are doing for you. If they fail in their duty, although I pity your souls, still you are not, therefore, to be excused if you do not practise the fear of the Lord and hatred of sin, by always avoiding dangerous occasions, and thus supply what is wanting to you in parental instruction. "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth," and often ask yourselves, What shall I be at the end of my life? An angel in Heaven, or a devil in hell? I must be one or the other. God preserve me from the latter fate! I will strive for the former and begin early to do so. Every morning and evening, I will offer up and recommend my youth to the Blessed Virgin and to my guardian angel, so that they may help me to keep it faithfully for God. Every day I will ask of God in humble prayer, Oh, Lord, keep me always in Thy love! Let me rather die in my childhood than offend Thee by a mortal sin! And I will try to obtain that grace by frequenting the sacraments, by hearing Mass every day, and by hearing sermons and instructions.

All you others present, who have either passed the years of your youth in innocence and piety, or after having committed many sins, have at last changed your lives and commenced to live as Christians, praise and bless the mercy of God for the extraordinary grace you have received, and make a firm resolution to remain faithful to Him to the end. I must class myself amongst these latter, and say from my heart, with St. Augustine:

¹ Omnia, quæ deliquerint filii, de parentibus requirentur.—Origen.

² Memento Creatoris tui in diebus juventutis tuæ.

Accursed be the darkness in which I wandered in my youth! Accursed the blindness that kept me from seeing the light of Heaven! Accursed my ignorance and folly, through which I have so little known, so little loved Thee, oh, God of love and beauty! I thank Thee, oh, Almighty Lord, for having shown such patience in bearing so long with my sins, and for the light by which Thou hast enabled me to see and to love Thee! The remainder of my life shall be spent in bewailing the sins of my youth, and in serving Thee with constant zeal; so that, at the hour of death, when I ask myself, what will become of my soul in eternity, my conscience may console me, and answer that I shall become an heir to the kingdom of Heaven. May God grant that grace to us all. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Feast of the Epiphany:

Text.

Vidimus stellam ejus in Oriente, et venimus adorare eum.—
Matth. ii. 2.

“We have seen His star in the East, and are come to adore Him.”

How quick the obedience of the three holy kings! We have seen His star, and as soon as we saw it we set forth at once, in order to pay Him our obedience and respectful homage. If these three Wise Men had delayed long, after having seen the star in the East; if they had deferred the toilsome journey, or given it up, as other people did in the same country, because they did not know where to find the Saviour; or if they had allowed themselves to be detained by King Herod in Jerusalem, they certainly would not have had the great privilege of seeing Jesus, the Saviour of the world, of knowing Him and adoring Him. Christian children, you are still in the East, that is to say, in the dawn of youth. The Divine Star has risen for you, as soon as the use of reason has brought you to the knowledge of the true God. How many of you can now say, with the three holy kings: “We have seen His star, and are come to adore Him;”¹ from the time that we began to know our Creator, we have served Him as we ought? Oh, happy souls who can say so, continue as you have begun; you will see God your Saviour in eternity. But, alas, how many of you, perhaps, who after having known the true God, have allowed yourselves to be betrayed by a Herod, to be

¹ *Vidimus . . . et venimus.*

led into error, to be robbed of your innocence and of God and His grace by sin? Alas, how I pity you! How I fear that if you continue as you have begun, during your youth, the star of grace will never rise on your amendment. I have already shown that we are bound to serve God especially during the time of youth, because then our service is most pleasing and desirable to Him; so that he who refuses this service acts very unjustly towards God. Now I must present this subject in another light, and I say: Children, serve God from your childhood and from early youth. If you refuse to do so, you will have a great difficulty in doing it afterwards, and will lose God forever. And why? As the child, etc.—*continues as before.*

Another Introduction for the Sunday in the Octave of the Nativity of Our Lord:

Text.

Futurum est enim ut Herodes quærat puerum ad perdendum eum.—Matth. ii. 13.

“For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the Child to destroy Him.”

Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, had hardly commenced, as a child of one year old, to bless the world with His presence, when the bloodthirsty Herod conceived a design on His life, so that He was obliged to take refuge in Egypt. Christian children, who have, up to this, spent the flower of your age in innocence, and have still kept your first favor and friendship with God, I congratulate you a thousand times from my heart! Continue as you have begun; but be cautious even in your youthful years, for there is a bloodthirsty Herod on the watch for your souls, in order to destroy them. The hellish foe tries all sorts of snares and deceptions in order to rob you of your first innocence and of the flower of your youth, and, unless you are careful in the midst of so many dangers, and often take to flight, it will be all up with your souls, and perhaps they will be lost for eternity. I have already shown, etc.—*continues as before.*

ON THE
DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS TOWARDS
THEIR PARENTS.

FIFTEENTH SERMON.

ON THE RESPECT THAT CHILDREN OWE THEIR PARENTS.

Subject.

1st. Children ought to respect their parents. 2d. Many are guilty of great neglect herein.—*Preached on the first Sunday after Epiphany.*

Text.

Et erat subditus illis.—Luke ii. 51.
“And He was subject to them.”

Introduction.

Who was subject? asks St. Bernard, treating of this passage. Jesus Christ, the all-wise and all powerful Son of God! To whom was He subject? To a poor Mother and to a carpenter! In what was He subject to them? In the lowliest and most abject domestic employments! How was He subject? With profound humility and reverence, ready and willing to obey them. How long was He thus subject? Up to His thirtieth year, for during that time we read nothing of Him except: “He was subject to them.”¹ St. Augustine exclaims: “Children, learn to be subject to your parents,”² for He who rules Heaven and earth, was subject to His parents. Up to this, oh, Christians, I have shown you how to behave towards God; namely, that you are to serve Him from childhood and to persevere constantly in His grace. Learn now how you are to behave towards your parents, if you wish to be good children. And how is that? I do not want to increase the number of the commandments, nor to make them more difficult than they are. Such is the well-known command: “Honor thy father and thy mother.”³ And here the matter may rest. But, in

¹ *Erat subditus illis.*

² *Discant pueri, subdi parentibus.*

³ *Honora patrem tuum et matrem tuam.*—Deut. v. 16.

what does this honor consist? St. Bonaventure divides it into three kinds of obligations, and thus supplies me with the subjects of the three following exhortations. He says: "There is an honor of love, an honor of respect, and an honor of submission, or obedience."¹ I shall take the second of these as my subject to-day, and I say—

Plan of Discourse.

Christian children, you owe the honor of respect to your parents. That will be the first part. There are many children who are guilty of great neglect herein. Such will be the second part. Do not think, my dear brethren, that I am going to speak only of little children who are still under the government of their parents; I speak to all of you who are grown up, and even married, no matter what may be your age, condition, or position, who still have parents alive. Those whose parents are dead may also, perhaps, hear something that will move them to repentance, so that they may atone to their dead parents, by their prayers and suffrages, for the faults they committed against them when living.

Christ Jesus, Thou who gavest to all children an example of the respect they owe their parents, impress upon all children, by Thy grace, the same respect towards their parents, through the intercession of Thy holy Mother, and of our angels guardian!

First Part.

The reverence and respect that subjects owe their prince or king, belong also to his ambassadors and representatives, who, being sent in his name, act in his stead; and any insult or injury offered to them, is looked upon as affecting the prince or king; for, although the former are of lowlier descent and have less authority, yet we must not consider their persons, as much as the dignity of him who has sent them to act in his place. This right is maintained among all nations of the world. But why do I bring forward kings and princes, my dear brethren, when I have only to speak to children about their duty towards their parents! Because it is necessary that you should understand, from the beginning, how high and important a duty it is that I am about to explain to you. Your fathers, oh, children, your mothers, no matter what may be their condition, quality or character, hold in your regard the place of prince, king, and potentate. In early times, before there were any properly constituted states in the world, and be-

Parents hold the place of kings and princes to their children.

¹ Est honor dilectionis, est honor reverentiæ, est honor obsequii—seu obedientiæ.

fore the earth was divided into countries, provinces, kingdoms, and governments, there were no lawful rulers, except the fathers and mothers in their households. And this arrangement was according to nature and reason; for, to whom did the chief authority in a household properly belong, if not to the master and head of the house? When the population of the world increased, it became necessary to establish some superior authority, to preserve due order, and each country had a king or prince placed over it to govern it; yet, as far as the family is concerned, the authority and supremacy of parents is not in any degree lessened. The only difference is that kings and princes have to act as fathers of the whole nation, while parents have to fulfil that office only for their own family and household. These are the express words of the Holy Ghost in Ecclesiasticus: "He that feareth the Lord, honoreth his parents, and as his masters will serve them that brought him into the world."¹ And St. Thomas Aquinas says even more than this: "Because under God we have received our being from our parents, we should honor them more than if they were merely our masters."²

Nay, even as occupying the place of God Himself.

Yet we have not said enough up to this. Your fathers and mothers, oh, children, represent the Almighty God Himself! Hear what St. Gregory Nazianzen says: "The father holds the place of God to his children."³ A heathen philosopher was once asked if one's parents should be honored. What! said he, even that very question is reprehensible; for even if there is anything like the divinity upon earth, it does not deserve more respect or reverence than one's father and mother do; because there is nothing amongst men that so closely resembles the God-head, as that which is to be found in one's parents, since the Creator has given them a share in His greatest perfections, namely in His paternal fruitfulness, His almighty power, His love and His authority. Therefore, in former times, the most honorable titles were given to parents; they were called "visible gods,"⁴ and as Plato says, "creators of a secondary order,"⁵ whom the great Creator has sent on earth in His place. This too is the reason why the command, "Honor thy father and thy mother,"⁶ is placed immediately after the first three commandments which concern the honor and adoration of God. As if God wished to

¹ Qui timet Dominum, honorat parentes, et quasi dominis serviet his, qui se genuerunt. — Eccl. iii. 8.

² Quia esse habemus ab eis, debemus magis revereri, quam dominos.

³ Liberis suis pater vice Dei est.

⁴ Dii visibiles.

⁵ Creatores secundarii.

⁶ Honora patrem tuum et matrem tuam.

say to us : The first thing, oh, man, that thou must do on earth, is to adore, honor, and love thy God, and the next thing is to honor thy father and mother above all thy fellow-men. Tertullian calls this commandment, "A second religion, or adoration after that which is due to God."¹ And, consequently, if we follow the order of the commandments, the next greatest sin after idolatry is to fail in paying due honor to our parents. Thus, oh, children, you owe to your parents the same respect that subjects give to kings and princes; nay, that creatures give their Almighty Creator, observing, of course, the due proportion.

Now how do subjects respect their sovereign ? Go into a royal palace, and see how things are carried on there ; see how politely, how respectfully, how humbly even the highest ministers and officials meet their royal master, how they bow down before him, if he only speaks a word to them, how respectfully and attentively they hear his commands, how quiet and still they are, although they may be only in the antechamber, and not actually in presence of their sovereign ; how careful they are in speaking of him even outside the court, so that not a disrespectful word may be said of him, and not even a doubtful expression may fall from them that would be in the least derogatory to the honor of their royal master. And that is right and proper. For, as Christ says, speaking of all superiors : "He that despiseth you, despiseth Me."²

What great respect subjects have for their princes.

Oh, God of majesty ! if Thou commandest honor to be paid to those who represent Thee on earth, what sort of reverence ought Thy creatures to pay to Thine own Infinite Greatness ? If we could only catch a glimpse of Thy heavenly court, in which Thou showest Thyself on Thy throne of glory, then should we see thousands and thousands of the heavenly princes, as Daniel saw them, covering their faces and bending their knees through respect, and trembling with awe at the majesty of Thy presence ! That we, my dear brethren, show such little honor to God, who is present everywhere, but especially in our churches, is to be attributed (alas, that I should have to say so !) either to our weak faith, or to the fact that we do not know how to pay proper respect to so great a Lord. And it is of that that the Lord complains by the Prophet Malachy : "The son honoreth his father, and the servant his master, and if I be a father, where is my honor ?"³ Mark those words, Christian children ! From them you can form

God requires still greater honor or from His creatures.

¹ Secundum a Deo religionem. ² Qui vos spernit, me spernit.—Luke x. 16.

³ Filius honorat patrem et servus dominum suum ; si ergo pater ego sum, ubi est honor meus.—Malach. i. 6.

some idea of the honor you owe your parents. For, when God complains of being deprived of the honor due to Him, He reminds us of His title of Father, as if the title of Benefactor, Creator, King of Heaven and earth, and God, that is, infinite good, were not sufficient to let us see the great injustice done by depriving Him of the honor due to Him. "If I am a father," He says, "where is my honor?"¹

Children
owe the
same re-
spect to
their par-
ents: they
must honor
them in all
things.

From this you may understand what a great esteem and respect you should have for the name and dignity of a father or a mother. For that esteem and respect resemble, not merely that which subjects pay to kings and princes, but even that which the Most High God demands from His creatures. The wise Ecclesiasticus tells us of what kind it must be: "Honor thy father in work and word and all patience."² In everything you do, in his presence, whether at home and in private, or abroad and in company; in all your outward behavior, in standing up and sitting down, you must show, with proper humility, what a great respect you have for your father and mother, and how you love and esteem them. Such was the conduct of the patriarch Joseph, even when he was Viceroy of Egypt; he went out to meet his aged father Jacob, with great pomp and magnificence, and served him with great humility to the end of his days, so that as a shepherd, such as he was before, he could not have shown his father greater reverence. Solomon, the greatest king of the earth, whose glory and riches were never equalled and never will be, whom kings and queens admired on account of his wisdom, as soon as he saw his mother Bethsabee coming towards him, in the words of the sacred Scriptures: "The king arose to meet her and bowed to her; and a throne was set for the king's mother, and she sat on his right hand."³ The wisest king of the whole world wished thereby to show that even a crowned head must bow down in presence of those who gave him being.

In all words.

"In all thy words honor thy father"⁴ and mother, inasmuch as you must always listen to them with respect, and never interrupt them; you must never oppose your opinion to theirs, and must submit to their judgment in all things lawful; you must never contradict them by the least word, or if a contradiction is required, you must offer it with a loving respect, and without

¹ *Si ergo pater ego sum, ubi est honor meus.*

² *In omni opere et sermone, et omni patientia honora patrem tuum.—Ecl. iii. 9.*

³ *Surrexit rex in occursum ejus, adoritque eam; positusque est thronus matri regis, quae sedit ad dexteram ejus.—III. Kings ii. 19.*

⁴ *In omni sermone honora patrem tuum.*

giving the least sign of ill-humor, displeasure, or contempt, although you may think you understand the matter better than they. You must be particularly careful not to say anything in the presence of others, that would in the least detract from the honor due to them, and you must excuse their faults as best you can, and put a charitable interpretation on them.

Finally, you shall honor your parents in all patience,¹ bearing with their weakness, their infirmities, their old age and their troubles; although they may be poorer, simpler, and lowlier than you now are, still you must never forget the childlike reverence you owe them, for they still represent the person of Him who says: "He that despiseth you, despiseth me."² If they have become almost childish, and have lost the use of reason through old age, nevertheless, says Ecclesiasticus, you must bear with them patiently and respectfully: "Son, support the old age of thy father, and grieve him not in his life, and if his understanding fail, have patience with him, and despise him not when thou art in thy strength."³ For, whatever faults and imperfections your parents may be subject to, whatever their dispositions may be, they are still your father and mother, to whom, under God, you owe your being, and whom you must consequently treat with all possible respect. Nay, even if your parents were wicked, impious, given to drunkenness, spendthrifts, passionate or cruel, you still owe them childlike love and respect. If they have reared you badly, wasted your substance through idleness or folly, dragged you down to poverty and wretchedness, and, as one would think, thus lost all claim to your love and respect, still you are not excused before God, if you fail in paying them that respect. For, if the love that we owe to God binds us to forgive our worst enemy, who gives us reason to hate and detest him, and if it commands us to love him and do good to him, much more does the honor that we owe the Most High God, bind us to honor our parents, although, by their bad conduct, they may appear to have lost all claim to respect and reverence. This honor, then, we must pay them, because such is the will of Him who is always worthy of having His holy will fulfilled by us in the most perfect manner. At the same time, since children are bound to do all they can to further their parents' salvation, they are not forbidden to remonstrate with their parents when

In all patience.

¹ In omni patientia honora patrem tuum.

² Qui vos spernit, me spernit.

³ Fili, suscipe senectam patris tui, et non contristes eum in vita illius, et si defecerit sensu, veniam da. et ne spernas eum in virtute tua.—Ecc. iii. 14, 15.

necessary, nor do they sin against filial respect by doing so; on the contrary, they are bound to do it when there is reason for believing that good will come of it. Thus they might try to wean their father or mother from the habit of cursing, or drinking, and from other vices, by remonstrating with them gently and respectfully; but, if they can do no good in that way, they must keep quiet, and pray that God may give them the grace of amendment, and think to themselves at the same time: I, at least, will do my duty as a child, according to God's will, and will show my parents, such as they are, all honor in word and work, with all patience. In a word, there are no circumstances under which a child can be dispensed from paying due honor to his father or mother. Canon and civil law mention different ways in which a child may be released from the parental authority, and become his own master, but neither canon nor civil law, nor any human power, can exempt a child from the obligation of honoring his parents to the last moment of his life. The divine command is there, and it will remain forever: "Honor thy father and thy mother."¹ Ah, Christian children! How many of you are there in Christian families, who fulfil this great and strict commandment as it ought to be fulfilled? Hear the complaint that I have to make in the

Second Part.

Many children sin against this.

Children are called, "the crown of their parents."² But what a difference amongst them! Some may be said to place a heavy leaden crown on their parents' heads, others a crown of thorns, others a crown of roses, but with sharp thorns sticking out through it here and there; and how few children there are of whom their father or mother could say with truth, as far as filial reverence alone is concerned, in the words of St. Paul: You are "my joy and my crown,"³ and the only consolation of my life? How many, on the contrary, of whom their parents might well say with Isaias: "I have brought up children and exalted them, but they have despised me?"⁴ I have reared my children, and fed them, and given them a position in life, but they have despised and dishonored me!

Who forget the respect due to their

And such is the case, first with those children who do not show proper respect to their parents in words; who are ill-humored

¹ Honora patrem tuum et matrem tuam. ² Corona parentum.

³ Vos estis gaudium meum, et corona mea.—Philipp. iv. 1.

⁴ Filios enutrivit et exaltavit, ipsi autem spreverunt me!—Isai. i. 2.

and peevish, who contradict them, look crossly at them, spit at, or put out their tongues at them, or grind their teeth at them; who treat them rudely and with bad temper, who answer back, murmur, and will not let themselves be punished or warned; who mock at their aged parents, and make fun of their old-fashioned ways and simple manners; who forget the respectful name of father and mother, and call their parents old man, or old woman, or in any other way address them disrespectfully. So also, they who speak publicly against their parents' honor, and make known their faults and imperfections, their eccentric manners, their vices and bad habits, for the mere purpose of complaining of them. It is a foul bird that defiles its own nest. It is a great honor, indeed, for a child, that his father and mother have a bad name amongst strangers, or in their own neighborhood! Such children should be called, as Christ called the Pharisees: "Serpents, generation of vipers;"¹ you ought to protect the honor and good name of your parents with your lives, and instead of that, through a childish talkativeness, or, what is still worse, through ill-humor or a desire of revenge, you take away the best thing in life, namely, a good reputation from those who have given you your natural life! Still more grievous are the sins of those who are not afraid to call their parents by nicknames or to abuse them or curse them to their face. Many parents must hear from their children, when they wish to correct them, or keep them away from evil, expressions that they would not tolerate in one of their servants. This sin is so abominable in the sight of God, that He lays a special curse on it, by the mouth of the Wise Man: "He that curseth his father and mother, his lamp shall be put out in the midst of darkness."²

parents in words.

Ye parents may say: We have fed children and brought them up, but they have despised and dishonored us!³ And this is done also by those children who fail in paying proper respect to their parents through impatience. If a father or mother is enfeebled by illness or old age, and is peevish and sensitive, and requires his or her children to perform the duties of servants, oh, what sour looks, what sharp words the poor parents get! Their children look on them as a heavy burden tied round their necks, from which death alone can free them; they complain and lament

Who dishonored them by impatience.

¹ Serpentes et genimina viperarum.—Matth. xxiii. 33.

² Qui maledixit patri suo et matri, exstinguetur lucerna ejus in mediis tenebris.—Prov. xx. 20

³ Filios enutrivit et exaltavi, ipsi autem spreverunt me!

and say that they cannot put up with it any longer! No matter what they do for their parents, they cannot please them; they get angry for a trifle; they would wear out an iron patience; an angel could not please them, they are so ill-humored, etc. What! Do you, their child, dare to complain of them in that way? Is it your own father and mother whom you say you cannot please? Either they have cause to complain of you, and to be vexed and displeased with you, or they have not. If they have cause, why do you complain of them? The whole fault lies with you, for you do not do your duty, nor fulfil your obligations. If they have no reasonable cause for complaint, are you therefore justified in showing displeasure towards them, or in refusing them your services? You should rather have pity on them, when they are old and feeble and unable to help themselves, or if this is not the case with them, the respect you owe them should remind you that their obstinacy and ill-temper furnish you with an excellent opportunity of proving your patience and increasing your merit. You should remember that the cause of this over-sensitiveness and ill-humor in your parents is often the care and trouble that they had on your account, which Tertullian calls the cross of married people. How much anxiety often occurs in a family, so that the best tempered are driven distracted by it? And yet, they undergo this anxiety for your sake, to help you on and give you a position in life. If, then, your father or mother is sometimes ill-humored or angry, or breaks out into passionate words, should you not bear it with patience? You must remember that they had a great deal of trouble with you in your childhood, before they brought you so far that they might expect you to serve and wait on them. Is it not just, then, that you should bear something for their sake, if they are sick, or aged, or so feeble that they are in a state of second childhood? The Wise Sirach says to all children: "Make a return to them as they have done for thee."¹ Repay them for what they have done for you.

Who are
ashamed of
them.

I have fed children and brought them up, but they have despised me!² Such is the complaint, finally, that many parents, with perfect justice and in great bitterness of heart, might make of their children who are wanting in filial respect. And such children are they who, being raised to a higher and more prosperous condition, are ashamed of their father and mother, because they are poor, needy, and of lowly birth; who put their parents al-

¹ Retribue illis, quomodo et ille tibi.—EccI. vii. 30.

² Filios enutrivit et exaltavi, ipsi autem spreverunt me!

ways in the background, do not like to be with them in strange company, grow red and pale if anything is said of them, turn them out of the room if strangers come to visit at the house, and keep them out of sight; as if they wished to say with Peter, as they in reality do: "I know not the man;"¹ which are the words of Peter when he was asked about Christ. What! Do you not know those who gave you being? Do you not know her whose milk has nourished you? Are you ashamed of those who have lifted you out of the mud, and brought you so far, that you are now what you are? Are your parents too humble for you? If they had not taken care of you when you were younger, if they had not had so much trouble on your account, that they might bring you up and instruct you, what would you be now? Your father and mother may be poor and simple-minded, still they are your father and mother, and, therefore, you must honor them. There is a wooden crucifix over there; must you not reverence it? Certainly, you will answer, yes! But it is made of common wood. Oh, that is nothing, you will answer; it represents my crucified Redeemer as well as if it were made of gold and silver; it is not the material, but the mystery it represents that I have to consider. And you are quite right. But in just the same manner you ought to respect your parents, whether they are rich or poor, whether they are adorned with silver and gold, or are poorly clad; for in whatever condition they may be, they are your father and mother, and they represent to you the person of Jesus Christ.

What shall I say of those children who keep their needy parents in their houses, but treat them as servants, and not as their father and mother; who allow them to wait and attend on them without ever giving them even a friendly look? An old servant maid has often more to say in the house than the old mother. If there is anything left over after meals, it is good enough for the latter; if the son or daughter is displeased or out of sorts, the poor mother has to bear the sour looks, and to hear even sharper words than a servant. Sometimes she can hardly dare to speak to her son or daughter without fear and trembling. Truly, it is a sore trial for a father or mother to be dependent on the grace and mercy of such children! Bitter indeed is the bread that must be earned and eaten in such bitterness of heart! The innocent Joseph told two kinds of dreams to his father, as we read in the Book of Genesis. His father reproved him for only one of them.

Who allow their parents to wait on them as servants.

¹ Non novi hominem.—Matth. xxvi. 72.

The first was that he saw how the eleven sheaves of his brothers bowed down before his, wherein he prophesied that he should rule over his brothers. To this Jacob said nothing. The second dream was that the sun and moon adored him. Jacob could not bear this, and cried out with indignation: "What meaneth this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother worship thee upon the earth?"¹ What are you thinking of? You are our son; how can you rule over us? With the same reproof Christ reduced the Pharisees to silence, when they said that the Messiah was the son of David: "If David, then, call him Lord, how is he his son?"² And they could not answer Him anything. Christian children, I ask you too, must your parents treat you as their masters? How then are you their children, and they your father and mother? They have a right to expect you to attend on and serve them, but you can have no such right over them. St. Peter Damian writes to Albert, a nobleman, who through love of his wife, neglected his mother: "Think how cruel it is to treat with contempt those from whom you have received your very existence."³ With what great humility should you not submit, then, to those to whom you owe your life!

They who beat their parents, or threaten to do so.

Finally, what shall we say of those unnatural, or rather brutal children, who forget the respect due to their parents so far as to raise their hand against them and threaten to strike them, or actually do so? But it can hardly be possible that there are such children in the world; for, when I think the matter over, I almost find myself compelled to agree with the heathen philosopher, who, being asked why it was that among so many laws there was none to forbid children from threatening to strike their parents, answered: There is no such law because hitherto no one has ever thought it possible that there could be such unnatural children in the world, who would think of committing such a grievous crime. But, alas! that very law that was looked upon as unnecessary amongst blind heathens, how necessary would it not now be among Christians, since there are children who dare to commit that crime! Oh, great God, how does such a crime appear in Thy sight! If the eye, that looks scornfully on father or mother, deserves, according to Thy curse, to be torn out and devoured by ravens, what should be done to

¹ Quid sibi vult hoc somnium? Num ego et mater tua adorabimus te super terram?—Gen. xxxvii. 10.

² Si ergo David vocat eum Dominum, quomodo filius ejus est?—Math. xxii. 45.

³ Perpende, quantæ crudelitatis sit, illos despiciendo contemnere per quos habes et ipsum casu.

the impious hand that dares to raise itself against father and mother to strike them? If Ruben lost his birthright and his priesthood, because he was disrespectful to his father Jacob; if Cham was accursed and made the slave of his brethren forever, because he once ridiculed his father Noe, who was lying down overcome with wine, canst Thou allow such an inhuman act to go unpunished? No, Thou wilt not do so.

It has hardly ever occurred, my dear brethren, as far as we read in history, that a child who has dared to beat, or to threaten to beat his parents, has not afterwards been visibly punished by God. Must suffer fearful punishment from God. Passing over many other examples in support of this truth, which time does not allow me to relate, I will mention one that is related by St. Peter Damian: There was once a son who was celebrating his marriage feast, and who, on account of some mistake in preparing the food, forgot himself so far as to strike his mother on the cheek, thinking that she was in fault. But, see, how just are the judgments of God against those who dishonor their parents; immediately his left cheek became affected by a cancer, which caused him such intolerable pain that he ran about bellowing like an ox, until at the request of his mother, he went to the Church of the Holy Martyr Nazarius, where, after doing penance, he obtained a cure. Father Benedict Fernandus relates another example of a son who, growing impatient at the advice and reproofs of his mother, drew his sword and attempted to stab her, and would have done so had not another woman caught hold of him, and, acting under a sudden inspiration from God, said to him: "Hold, wicked man! in a short time you will die a violent death and without confession; and I am sure of that from the divine warnings as well as from human experience." Her prophecy turned out true; for, on the following night, the impious young man, while on the way to commit another crime, was attacked and his mouth was pierced by a sword, while the tongue, with which he had dishonored his mother, was driven down his throat; he died immediately without giving any sign of repentance, and doubtless was buried in hell for all eternity. Let all children who are disrespectful to their parents, take warning by this. Woe to you, who, at the present day, dare to attempt the like! And woe to all those who are in any way forgetful of the respect they owe their parents! Hear the words of the Almighty God: "Cursed be he that honoreth not his father and mother;¹ and all the people shall say, Amen!" Cursed

¹ *Maledictus, qui non honorat patrem suum et matrem.—Deut. xxvii. 16.*

in temporal things, for he will have no blessing in them! Cursed in his children, for they will treat him as he treated his own parents! Cursed in the years of his life, which the just judgment of God will shorten, so that he will die an untimely death, or, if he lives to be an old man, it will be only, as St. John Chrysostom says, that he may be more miserable and unhappy here; for the man who dishonors his parents, deserves no blessing, but rather a curse from God.

Conclusion
and exhortation.

“Honor thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest live long upon the earth.”¹ Keep always before your eyes the example of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who often said to the Jews: “I honor my Father.”² To this end were directed all His thoughts, words, and actions, that, namely, He and all men might honor His heavenly Father. Often imagine that you see Him in the lowly house at Nazareth. How respectfully He treated His foster-father and His poor Mother, for nearly thirty years, so that he did nothing against their will. “And He was subject to them.”³ Repent of the faults you have hitherto committed in this respect, before the punishment and the curse of God overtake you. Think and say: Henceforth I will atone by a greater and more humble respect for my former irreverence towards my parents. I will honor them as a child ought, in word and work, and with all patience. Reason itself tells me that I ought to do this, gratitude requires it of me, and I am commanded to do it by my heavenly Father, whom I must obey in all things, and whom I hope and desire to see with my parents in my heavenly country, where I will praise and adore Him forever. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Third Sunday after Easter:

Text.

Quia vado ad Patrem.—John xvi. 17.

“Because I go to the Father.”

Christ wished to console His disciples so that they might bear His departure from the world with resignation: “A little while and you shall not see me.”⁴ And He told them the reason why they should console themselves: “For I go to the Father.”⁵ As if he wished to say: My dear disciples, where the will of my Father is concerned, you must give way, whether it is pleasing

¹ Honora patrem tuum et matrem tuam, ut sis longævus super terram.

² Ego honorifico patrem meum. — John viii. 49. ³ Et erat subditus illis.

⁴ Modicum et non videbitis me. ⁵ Quia vado ad Patrem.

to you or not; for I will not strive against it, and you have often heard Me say: "I honor my Father;"¹ I always do what is pleasing to Him; so that, since my Father now expects Me in Heaven, I must leave you, and go away from you. Christian children, you may learn from the example of Jesus Christ, how you are to behave in accordance with your duty to your parents. And how? Honor thy father, etc.—*continues as before.*

SIXTEENTH SERMON.

ON THE OBEDIENCE THAT CHILDREN OWE THEIR PARENTS.

Subject.

How just this obedience is. In what, and how it must be practised. How manifold the faults that are committed against it.—*Preached on the second Sunday after the Epiphany.*

Text.

Quodcumque dixerit vobis, facite.—John ii. 5.
"Whatever he shall say to you, do ye."

Introduction.

So spoke the Mother of God to the servants at the marriage feast: if you wish to do the thing properly, attend to what my Son will say to you. You cannot make a mistake, if you do what He says. Christian children, it is not necessary for me to make a long introduction now. From these few words you may understand what my subject is: you owe your parents the honor of reverence and filial respect, as you have heard in the last sermon. And now, I say to you, in the words of the Blessed Virgin Mary: Whatever your father and mother shall say to you and command you, that do ye.² And that is the second honor you owe your parents—namely, the honor of obedience.

Plan of Discourse.

How just this is; in what, and how you are bound to obey; how manifold the faults that are committed against this obedience. Such is the subject of the present instruction.

Virgin Mother Mary, as thou hast spoken with such power to

¹ Ego honorifico Patrem meum.

² Quodcumque dixerit vobis, facite.

the servants, that they did what thy Son commanded, so also now, touch, with the powerful grace of God, the hearts of children, that they may do with readiness and obedience what their father and mother command them to do. All ye guardian angels of children, help herein. And now I begin.

An ignorant man should not undertake anything with out the advice and guidance of others.

He who is ignorant in many things that concern his soul, his body, his welfare and condition in life, and who does not yet know how to manage his own affairs properly, must, according to the laws of prudence and good sense, humbly follow the advice, direction, and guidance of others, and obey them blindly, if he does not wish to make a mistake or commit a fault to his own loss. And this is especially the case when he can have a counsellor and guide in whose acuteness, experience, good-will, love and fidelity he can fully trust, without any fear of being deceived. How much more is not this so when one has a right to command him, and whose commands and advice he is therefore bound to follow? Thus, as St. Paul writes, subjects are bound to obey their superiors, although the latter may be heathens and wicked men. And even if they command something unjust, as long as it is not displeasing to God, they must be obeyed with humility and their will must be fulfilled.

Such are children in their youth.

My dear brethren, children in their young days, what are they? The question answers itself; it explains itself sufficiently: they are children who have not reached the years of maturity. Their reason is undeveloped as yet and it shines only as a small gleam of light would through a slit. Now, what could an unripe reason of this kind undertake? Certainly not such an important and difficult business as the way in which a Christian should live, so as to save his soul. What could such a reason do that has no experience of the past, no power of looking forward to the future? A reason that receives no enlightenment except from its own ignorance; that allows itself to be governed only by countless wicked thoughts and inclinations? A reason that avoids only what it finds to be difficult and disagreeable; that strives for nothing except what is pleasing and agreeable to itself? A reason that believes an imaginary good to be a real one, and that resolves on a mode of action, before it understands what it has to do? Among young people, how much boldness do we not find, how much carelessness, how much imprudence in almost everything? And, if they are not otherwise instructed and directed, they are ready to rush blindly and stupidly into the greatest danger. How much thoughtless self-love do we not find amongst them, as

is shown by the fact that they do not know themselves rightly! How quick they are to speak of what they should keep secret! How eagerly they pursue what they should fly and avoid! How often they boast of their faults, and look upon their own disgrace as an honor! How often, on the other hand, they are ashamed of what is most honorable! How inconstant they are in their actions! They desire one thing now and its opposite the next moment, and they hardly know why! They praise what should be blamed, and reject what sensible people look upon as praiseworthy. If a young man, who is already inclined to evil, is led astray by a companion of his own age, and induced to taste forbidden pleasures, great God, what sins are then committed! What recklessness, what carelessness, what folly, what contempt for all divine and human laws! What insensibility to those eternal truths that are capable of moving the heart of one who thinks of them, of keeping him away from evil, and of making him exercise due restraint over himself? "Oh, youth," says St. Augustine, considering all these things, "oh, youth, thou art the flower of age, but thou art also a most dangerous time for the soul."¹ Thou art called certainly the most pleasant time of life, but if thou art not kept in check, it is much to be feared that thou wilt render the remainder of life most miserable, and wilt make an unhappy eternity in the next life.

Under such circumstances, and while still in the ignorance and want of thought that characterises their time of life, what would become of children, if they were left to do their own will, and if they were not obliged to follow the advice and instruction of others and to be obedient to them? What would become of them? The same that would become of a ship without a mast, that is driven about by the storm, on the high seas, in the dark night, until at last it is cast on a rock or a sand-bank, or is overpowered by the fury of the waves, that sometimes raise it up on high and sometimes sink it down into the depths. So that children stand in need of the advice and guidance of others, whom they are bound to obey in all things with humility and docility; as we see from the mere consideration of the natural qualities of young people.

And what better guides could they find than their own parents? Whose commands, directions, instructions, could they obey with more confidence and security; to whom could they confide their fortunes more fully than to their father and mother?

Therefore they require guides whom they must obey in all things.

Parents are the best guides, as they have the most experience.

¹ O juvenus, flos ætatis, periculum mentis.

For, in the first place, who has more experience in the things that they command their children to do and to avoid, as well as in those things to which they must exhort them, as their parents, who have already passed through the same years of childhood and youth, and who have now come to a ripe and sensible age, and who, therefore, know, from their own experience, how children must be dealt with, what their dispositions are, what passions and inclinations they are subject to, and who know also, from the way their own parents treated them, what faults may be committed in the rearing, the instruction, and the care of children? They can now remember what happened to themselves, and say: See, my father or mother treated me in such and such a manner, they gave me instructions in a certain way, they punished me when I did this or that; they never allowed me—God forbid that they should—to do certain things, and there were many things that I could not dream of doing. Oh, how good they were to me! I did not understand it then, and was often displeased at what they did to me; now I am filled with gratitude to them for it. In the same way, too, I shall bring up my own children, and look after, exhort, and restrain them. Or, if their parents were careless of them in their young days, they can now say, instructed by their own sad experience: Ah, what a great fault was committed in this particular in my youth! If my father and mother had not given me so much liberty then, if they had been more strict with me, if they had punished me when I did wrong, if they had been more watchful over me, if they had earnestly forbidden me to go near that house or that company, if they had not allowed me to go about where I liked, then I should not have been betrayed into such and such a vice; I should not have learned so early what I had no business to know then. If they had kept me better at work, and inspired me more with the fear and love of God, then I should have spent the beautiful time of my youth in the service of God, to whom alone that time belongs of right. But what is done, is done! I now see where the fault lay, and I shall try to deal better with my own children. See, oh, children, such is the experience that your father and mother have to guide you with; if they only make use of it as they ought. Reason enough, certainly, for you to resolve to give yourselves up to their guidance, and to obey every command and wish of theirs with alacrity.

They receive
special
light from

Again, is there any one in the world from whom you may with certainty expect such love, affection, and tenderness, as from

your parents, who take the greatest possible interest in your spiritual and temporal welfare ; as we see from the great care and trouble that they give themselves every day for your sake, from their affliction and sorrow when anything happens amiss to you, from their joy and pleasure in your good fortune. Nay, even nature itself tells you that, for, if you are in dread of any evil, you fly at once to your father's arms or your mother's lap, with full confidence that under their protection and guardianship you are safe from all harm. It would certainly be cruel and inhuman for a father or mother to forget their own flesh and blood so far, or to hate it to such an extent as to give a child a command, advice, or prohibition that they know to be disadvantageous and hurtful to him! It would be indeed impious for a father or a mother to command or advise a child to do anything which they know would cause him to lose his soul ! Therefore you can readily think to yourselves, and hold it for certain too, that whatever your father or mother commands and advises, although it might be injurious to your health now and then, still it can never be really hurtful to you, it must be wholesome and salutary for you. Say to yourselves, whatever my father and mother tell me to do and avoid, that I must observe as well as I can, although I do not now understand it ; still I am convinced that they mean well with me, they love me and seek only my welfare. Still another good reason, children, for you to be ruled by your parents, and to obey them readily and humbly in all that is not clearly opposed to the law of God.

God. in order to bring up their children well.

The Almighty God, as St. Thomas of Aquinas teaches, has given to every one, according to the position and state of life to which he is called, special graces, lights, and helps, that he may be able to fulfil the duties and obligations of that state properly; and these graces and lights are not given to others who are not in the same position. Now, since the chief obligation of the married state, the principal duty, the most pressing obligation and most important business of parents, is to bring up their children well, and to lead them to Heaven, so also God gives to parents, in preference to others, special lights for their understanding, and special graces and helps to fulfil their duty, in order that they may be able to advise and exhort their children in what is necessary and useful for their eternal salvation. Therefore, pious parents pray to God daily (a custom that should be observed by all parents who desire to do their duty) for light and grace, that they may not do anything

They have the greatest love for their children.

wrong in bringing up their children. There is a fresh reason for you, children, to induce you to obey your parents with the greatest willingness in all they say to you and command you. For, if you think that it is God who is speaking by their mouths, rather than they themselves, that God suggests to them what they are to advise or command you, and that He makes use of them to punish and correct you, you will at once see that whatever they do is only for your good.

God has also made them superiors, and commanded them to be obeyed in all things.

Finally, if there were no other reasons for doing so, Christian children should obey their parents humbly and perfectly, because the Almighty God, whose good-will and pleasure should be our guide in all things, has placed parents over their children as immediate and lawful masters and superiors. He has given them a share of His own superiority and authority, and has even wished them to represent His own person, which must be respected in them, as we have seen in the last sermon. The fact that God wills it ought to be more than sufficient to induce children to obey their parents, for it comes to the same thing to be obstinate and disobedient to one's parents, and to be rebellious towards God. Hear the command that God gives by the mouth of the Apostle St. Paul: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord."¹ That is, as Cornelius à Lapide explains it, "as the Lord,"² with the same readiness and perfection with which you should obey your heavenly Father Himself, whose person is represented by your father and mother on earth. Do what they tell you without delay, without contradiction, without exception; nay, even without thinking of not obeying. In what? Hear St. Paul again: "Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord."³ In all things, great or small, easy or difficult, agreeable or disagreeable. In all things.⁴ Not merely in those which concern the service of God and the salvation of your souls, for disobedience in such matters could hardly be excused from grievous sin, but also in all things which concern your temporal welfare, and which the circumstances of your family require.

As long as nothing displeasing to God is commanded.

However the condition must be fulfilled that they command in the Lord; that is to say, that they do not ask you to do anything against the law of God. St. Jerome says: "Honor your father, as long as he does not separate you from your eternal Father."⁵ If your parents tell you to do something sinful, even if it was

¹ Filii, obedite parentibus vestris in Domino.—Ephes. vi. 1.

² Sicut Domino.

³ Filii obedite parentibus per omnia, hoc enim placitum est in Domino.—Coloss. iii. 20.

⁴ Per omnia.

⁵ Honora patrem tuum, sed si te a vero Patre non separet.

only to tell a small lie, you could not obey them in the Lord,¹ but against the Lord. If they said to you, for instance: You must steal something here and there; you must manage to bring a way secretly from such and such a house, whatever you can, when opportunity offers; you must treat a certain person with harshness, you must curse and beat him; you must frequent the society of persons of the opposite sex in order to get on quicker in the world; you must dress foppishly, or adorn yourself in the same manner as others, although it is contrary to the Christian law; you must accept a benefice, or be ordained priest, or enter religion, or get married, although you may not be called to do so by God, etc., etc. To follow the will of your parents in such things would not be obedience in the Lord, but rather in the devil; and, therefore, you must immediately refuse obedience. Yet, you should do so with respect, humility, and modesty. You must show them, with friendly words, that when God commands or forbids anything, He must be obeyed before men. How beautifully St. Augustine speaks to parents, for their children, in such circumstances: Father, mother, why do you complain that I will not do or have what you wish? You should know that your child obeys no one in preference to you, except God alone. And he is certainly obliged to be always true to his Creator. Tell him to do something that is not against the will of God, and he will at once obey you as a child should. You cannot expect more from him; otherwise you would compel him to be of the number of those wretches, of whom Christ says: "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me."² In all other things, that are not against the will of God: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord,"³ as you would obey God Himself, in all humility, love, and willingness. "For this is just."⁴

Do you wish to have a pattern and an example of this obedience? You will find a beautiful one in the book of Genesis, in that son whose obedience has gained for him an undying name, and has made him an example for all posterity, in order to show the submission that children owe their parents. That is Isaac, the son of Abraham, the only joy and consolation of his father, the only hope of the family that God had promised to Abraham. Abraham awoke him: Come, my son; come with me; we are going to offer sacrifice to God. At the first word Isaac obeyed, and

Isaac an
example of
filial obedi-

¹ In Domino.

² Qui amat patrem aut matrem plus quam me, non est me dignus.—Matth. x. 37.

³ Filii, obedite parentibus vestris in Domino.

⁴ Hoc enim justum est.

followed without asking where or why. And after travelling three days, when they came to the foot of the mountain, his father placed upon his shoulders the wood for the sacrifice, that he might carry it up the mountain. While they were ascending, Father, asked the son, where is the victim for the sacrifice? Be satisfied, my child, said the father, God will provide one. Having arrived at the top of the mountain, and prepared the altar, he drew his sword. Now, my son, come here, said he; you are the victim that I must now immolate according to the command of God. Isaac, without saying a word, laid himself down on the altar, and stretched forth his neck as readily as if he had nothing to fear, and as if everything that his father did to him must be for his advantage. See, children, what obedience that was, even to death.

Even Jesus
Christ Him-
self.

But this is only a figure and a shadow of the obedience of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God: He says of Himself: "I came down from Heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me."¹ He was the divine Word, like to the Father in all things in His divine nature, so that the Father could not command Him to do anything, nor could He obey, and therefore, to show His obedience, He took human nature, and became less in that nature: He took "the form of a servant. He was obedient to His Father even unto death," and not merely to an ordinary or easy death, but "to the death of the Cross."² And not alone to His heavenly Father did He show this obedience; but, what is still more wonderful, this Son of infinite wisdom fulfilled this obedience for thirty years, not otherwise than according to the good will and pleasure of His poor Mother. As we have often said already, "He was subject to them."³ Christian children! If the example of the Son of God, obedient even to death, cannot move you to be obedient to your parents, oh, then, I may hold my tongue, my words will have no effect!

Many chil-
dren sin
herein, be-
cause they
do not do as
they are told,
or do it un-
willingly.

Alas! I am afraid that there are many to whom neither the one thing nor the other will do any good! I do not speak of those wicked, obstinate children, who, if their father or mother ask them to do something, make faces at them behind their backs, or even dare to say to them: I will not do it, or, do it yourself, I am not your servant, etc. Impious tongues are those, that deserve to be torn out by the roots! For, in addition to the sin of

¹ Descendi de cœlo, non ut faciam voluntatem meam, sed ejus, qui misit me.—John vi. 38.

² Formam servi accipiens factus obediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis.—Phillip. ii. 7, 8.

³ Erat subditus illis.—Luke ii. 5.

disobedience, there is also the sin of disrespect and rudeness towards their parents. I can hardly imagine respectable children acting in that manner; yet there may be some of them who indeed obey, and do and avoid what they are commanded, but how? That depends on what is commanded. If it is something that they like to do, and are pleased with, then they obey at once and quickly, so that one might think there were not more obedient children in the world than they. But if it is something they do not like, something against their desires and inclinations, oh, what sour faces they make! How they wrinkle their foreheads! How cross they look! How many complaints and excuses they have to make, what opposition they offer! How slow and tedious their obedience; they must be told to do the same thing three, six, ten times, before they stir themselves. And sometimes they cannot be moved until they see the rod in their father's or mother's hand, or even not until they feel it. And even then they do it in a lazy, sleepy, unwilling manner, which shows plainly enough that their obedience is forced, and not voluntary. It is ill hunting with unwilling hounds, and it is a hard thing for parents to see that everything their children do for them is done unwillingly, and only under constraint. I certainly should not care much for a service thus rendered under compulsion! Naughty children! who, like ill-trained horses, that will not go unless they are spurred, refuse obedience unless they are forced to it with the rod! For well-reared children, a mere sign is sufficient, or the bare idea of pleasing their father or mother is inducement enough for them to obey at once.

How many children there are, who, if they have to be punished and chastised for a fault, go about the house in a bad humor the whole day, and refuse to give their parents a friendly look; whereas, on the contrary, they ought to be grateful and thankful for the punishment inflicted on them, since it was given them for their good. If there were no looking-glasses in the world, how could one see himself? We might see everything about us, if our eyes are good and if we keep them open, but no one could see his own face. Must I then be angry with the looking-glass because it shows that I have a spot of dirt on my face, and thus warns me that I must wash it off? But the very reason why I use the glass and keep it, is that it may perform such services for me. Children, how many faults and imperfections have you not, that you yourselves cannot see or know? Now your father and mother are, so to say, the looking-glass which shows you those

Those who resist parental correction.

faults, and they help you to correct them as often as they chastise or punish you. You must therefore bear the punishment with thankful submission, and look upon it as a benefit, if you wish to practise filial obedience as you ought.

Those who, when away from their parents, do not do their will

How many children there are who are obedient enough in presence of their parents, because they are afraid to be otherwise, but as soon as their parents turn their backs, they give themselves little trouble about their father's or mother's commands. If they are told to go to school, or church, or sermon, or catechism, they go off somewhere else, and tell a lie to excuse themselves afterwards. If they are sent away by their parents to some other town to study, to learn some profession, they spend their parents' hard-earned money in idleness, drinking, and gambling, although that money may be the fruit of rigid economy at home, and was given them in the hope that they would make a good use of it; a hope in which the poor parents are deceived, to their great sorrow.

Those who undertake things without the knowledge and consent of their parents.

How many children there are, who, when they are somewhat grown up, are conceited enough to think that they can manage for themselves, and therefore despise their parents' advice and undertake many things out of their own heads, without asking their parents' opinion. Therefore, it often happens that what they commence in such a silly and imprudent manner, does not turn out well and is lost beyond hope of recovery. The wise Sirach says: "Children, hear the judgment of your father, and so do that you may be saved. For God hath made the father honorable to the children; and seeking the judgment of the mothers, hath confirmed it upon the children."¹ Sons and daughters sin especially in this respect, when they attempt to enter on a state of life without the consent and knowledge of their parents; for instance, if they wish to get married without asking their parents about it. I know well enough that parents cannot restrain the free will of their children in those matters, but must allow them to follow the vocation they have received from God; and therefore, if a child, after praying and considering the matter for a long time, and acting on the advice of his confessor, finds that God has certainly called him to the religious state, but fears that his parents, if they knew of it, would prevent him from obeying the voice of God, he is at perfect liberty to say nothing about it to them and to follow the divine voca-

¹ *Judicium patris audite filii, et sic facite, ut salvi sitis. Deus enim honoravit patrem in filiis, et iudicium matris exquirere firmavit in filios.—Ecc. iii. 2, 3.*

tion, whenever he gets a chance of doing so. Otherwise, theologians teach that children can commit a grievous sin by entering on a state of life without the knowledge and consent of their parents; for these latter have reason to feel hurt and offended that their own children did not think it worth while to ask their advice in a matter on which their whole lives depend, and besides, God cannot and will not give His blessing to that state of life which is entered on without the parents' knowledge and consent. "Children, hear the judgment of your father."¹ Children, do nothing without the advice of your parents. Filial obedience and submission require this.

Finally, the worst sins of all are committed against obedience by those wicked children who, in spite of the warnings and exhortations of their good parents, neglect the divine service, visit houses of ill-fame, frequent bad company, or otherwise secretly lead unchristian and sinful lives. It is a twofold sin that they commit: one against the law of God, the other, and in a serious matter too, against the obedience they owe their parents. And yet, who is there who thinks anything of this obedience? I am now and then disobedient to my parents. That is almost all that they think it necessary to say in confession. They never dream of saying how and in what they were disobedient, as if that were of no account. And what becomes of true sorrow and firm resolution of amendment under such circumstances? They remain until the next opportunity of disobedience offers itself. How? Naughty children! do you then think nothing of disobeying your parents? Yet the servants in your house are bound to obey under pain of sin, although they work for their daily bread or for small wages. How much more, then, is not a child bound to obey, who receives his very existence, under God, from his parents?

Those who, in spite of the warnings of their parents, lead a bad and wicked life.

Is it nothing to disobey one's parents, although that disobedience is strictly forbidden by God, and has always been severely punished? Hear what is said in the Old Testament, and learn to be afraid of disobedience: "If a man have a stubborn and unruly son, who will not hear the commandments of his father or mother, and being corrected, slighteth obedience, they shall take him and bring him to the ancients of his city, and to the gate of judgment, and shall say to them: 'This our son is rebellious and stubborn, he slighteth hearing our admonitions.'"² And what was

The Old Law had severe punishment for disobedient children.

¹ *Judicium patris audite filii!*

² *Si genuerit homo filium contumacem et protervum, qui non audierit patris et matris imperium, et coercitus obedire contempserit: apprehendent eum et ducent ad seniores civitatis, et ad portam judicii, dicentque ad eos: Filius noster iste protervus et contumax est: monita nostra audire contemnit.—Deut. xxi. 18, 19, 20.*

to be done with him? Hear the judgment: "The people of the city shall stone him, and he shall die, that you may take away the evil out of the midst of you, and all Israel hearing it, may be afraid."¹ Is it nothing, then, to be disobedient to one's parents? Have you never heard what happened to Absalom, when he rebelled against his father David, how he hung on an oak tree and was pierced with three lances, and was lost forever, as a terrible proof that they are not worthy to be on the earth, who will not submit to the authors of their being? Or of what befell Esau, when he took a wife without the knowledge and consent of his parents? He became the unhappy father of a people that are accursed by God for all time. Or what happened to the prodigal son in the Gospel, when he went to a foreign country against his father's will, and led an abandoned life? He sunk to such poverty that he was glad to eat of the husks that were given to swine, in order to appease his hunger. Oh, where could stones enough be found nowadays, if all obstinate and disobedient children were to be stoned to death? Where find oak trees enough to hang them on? Where herds of swine enough, among which to throw them? Yet, disobedient and wicked children, you may be certain that you will not escape punishment; although such a severe judgment will not be pronounced against you now, by your superiors, as would have been formerly, yet the all-wise providence of God will know how to punish you severely enough at the proper time.

It is also the case in our days.

Go through any of our hospitals and jails, and you will sometimes find in them children of rich and respectable parents, who now lead a miserable life, full of shame and disgrace, like slaves. Look at the soldiers in war-time, and especially those who complain most of the heat and cold, of hunger and thirst, to which they are not accustomed, and who undergo severe discipline besides. Most of them will acknowledge that the origin of their misery was that they did not wish to obey and listen to their parents in their youth, that they wished to be free and to do their own will. Visit the place of execution, and see those who, as robbers, murderers, or thieves, are hanging on the gallows or lying in prison; the most of them, as they generally acknowledge before death, would not have come to such an extremity, if they had paid more attention in their youth to the advice, exhortations, and commands of their parents. So that there is more than one prodigal son who must suffer hunger and want, more

¹ *Lapidibus eum obruet populus civitatis, et morietur, ut auferatis malum de medio vestri et universus Israël audiens pertimescat.—Deut. xxi. 21.*

than one Absalom who must end his life by hanging. But why should we go so far for examples? Visit any private house. The unfortunate families, in which there is nothing but fighting and quarrelling and disunion, are, generally speaking, composed of those who either entered on the married state without the knowledge and consent of their parents, or who were formerly disobedient and obstinate children. So that there is more than one Esau who, by despising his parents, brings down the curse of God on himself and his posterity. And all these punishments are perfectly just, oh, most just God! With them Thou pursuest disobedient children even in this life, according to Thy threats! And what will it be hereafter, when fathers and mothers themselves shall complain of and condemn their disobedient children? See, they will say, when God asks the souls of their children from them, we are not to blame because our son or daughter has lived in sin, and been lost forever. We have tried to do well by our children. We have often warned, punished, and chastised them. Daily have we tried to exhort them to good and to keep them from evil. But this our son, our daughter, has been self-willed and obstinate. Our children have neglected our warning, they would not listen to us, or obey us; they abandoned themselves to vice against our express command, and filled us with sorrow and trouble. It is for thee, oh, just Judge, to pronounce sentence! And how much more terrible that sentence will be, than was the sentence in former times among the Jews! There will be no stoning to death, but an eternal fire, to which those disobedient children, who die impenitent, will be condemned.

I warn you again in the words of the Apostle: Christian children! obey your parents in all things in the Lord,² and as you would obey the Lord. Do not, by disobedience, make the duty of your fathers and mothers still more difficult than it is, nor their obligation to bring you up well and to lead you to Heaven, more burdensome than it is already. Let it never be necessary for them to tell you twice to do a thing. Let a single sign, or the good will and pleasure of your parents suffice, as it ought with well-reared children, for you to do and to avoid all that they require of you. Obey with the same quickness and readiness with which the echo answers the voice. If you call out loud in a forest, or on a mountain, the echo answers immediately, as if to say, Here I am! So also, you, children, obey at once and with-

Conclusion,
and exhortation to
filial obedience.

¹ Filius noster iste protervus et contumex est, monita nostra audire contemnit.
² Filii, obedite parentibus vestris in Domino!

out delay, the first word of your father and mother, when they give you a command. The echo answers everything you call out to it. If I cry out, *Alleluia*, the echo repeats, *Alleluia*; if I say, *Miserere*, the echo answers in the same tone. Of the same pattern should your obedience be, whatever may be the command given you, whether it is pleasing to your senses, or not. Whether it is like the joyful *alleluia*, or the doleful *miserere*, you must obey with equal readiness and willingness in either case. It makes no difference to the echo whether the man who calls out be rich or poor, young or old, weak or healthy, ignorant or learned, pious or wicked; it answers at once without making any distinction. It is not on account of the riches, learning, skill, goodness, mildness, or piety of your parents, that you, oh, children, must obey them; nor is their old age, feebleness, ignorance, peevishness, obstinacy, or wickedness a reason for your being less obedient to them. It should suffice to think: it is my father or mother that commands me. We cannot go wrong if we obey them in all lawful things. Whenever your father tells you to do anything, think to yourself that Jesus Christ is standing there and speaking to you in the words of my text: "Whatever he shall say to you, do it;"¹ for that is my will and pleasure. Whenever your mother gives you a command, think that Mary the Mother of God is standing at her side, and saying the same words to you. "Whatever she says to you, do it," for such is my wish and desire. And as you would not refuse anything that Jesus Christ, or His holy Mother, would ask from you, but do it at once, as perfectly as possible, even in the same way, you must obey your father and mother, who represent them, so that you may gain the great reward of obedience, which is a long, happy, and blessed life here on earth, and eternal life in Heaven. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Fourth Sunday after Easter:

Text.

Vado ad eum qui misit me.—John xvi. 5.

"I go to Him who sent Me."

My father has sent Me on earth, and I came to spend thirty-three years on earth in poverty, sorrow, and suffering, according to His holy will; now He expects Me in His kingdom, and behold, I go there,² because He desires Me to do so. Thus spoke and acted Jesus Christ, our Saviour. Christian children, I need not make a long introduction, etc.—*continues as before.*

¹ Quodcumque dixerit vobis, facite.

² Vado ad eum.

SEVENTEENTH SERMON.

ON THE LOVE THAT CHILDREN OWE THEIR PARENTS.

Subject.

1st. Children must love their parents truly and constantly.
2d. Many sin grievously against this obligation.—*Preached on the third Sunday after Epiphany.*

Text.

Dico huic, Vade, et vadit ; et alii, Veni, et venit ; et servo meo, Fac hoc, et facit.—Matth. viii. 9.

“ And I say to this, Go, and he goeth ; and to another, Come, and he cometh ; and to my servant, Do this, and he doth it.”

Introduction.

All children should be to their fathers and mothers as this servant was to his master, and then so many parents would not have so much to suffer from the disobedience and obstinacy of their children, as we have seen in the last sermon. There is still another and a very serious obligation incumbent on children, which is the foundation of the other two, but which, alas ! is least of all considered and that is, that they should show their parents the honor of filial love. This will be the matter of to-day's sermon.

Plan of Discourse.

Children must love their parents truly and constantly. Such will be the subject of the first part. Many children sin grievously against this obligation. The second part. The conclusion will be a resolution of amending all past faults in this respect.

And mayest Thou, oh, heavenly Father, grant us to fulfil it by Thy grace, through the merits of the Mother of Thy Son, and the intercession of the holy guardian angels.

Children are bound to love their parents! That is a strange subject, indeed! What is the meaning of bringing that forward? Who ever dreamed of doubting it? Why, we are bound by the law of nature to love our friends and relatives. The law of honor teaches us to love our benefactors ; while the law of God tells us to love our neighbor, even if he be unknown and a stranger to us,

We are bound to love our neighbors, and even our enemies : how much more our benefactors.

even if he be a Turk or a heathen; nay, more, the law of Jesus Christ commands us to love even the worst enemies who have injured us. And do I now exhort and persuade children to love their fathers and mothers! If man had lost the light of reason altogether; if he had only as much instinct left as God has given even to the most savage beast, he must still know that he ought to love his father and mother more than any one else in the world. Yes, my dear, Christian brethren, if we all were as we ought to be, and acted according to reason and knowledge, then I would confess that I have made a mistake to treat of such a subject, since it is one which stands in need of no preaching or exhortation, one which the very law of nature and humanity suggests to us. But, alas, for the times in which we live! There are, in our days, children so undutiful as to act against the law of nature and reason in this respect; so that it becomes necessary to heap together proofs to show how just it is for children to love their parents, to preach often against the injustice of refusing them that love, and excite children to the fulfilment of this obligation by terrifying them with threats of punishment, and by encouraging them with hopes of great reward.

How much more our parents, since they are nearest to us, and are our greatest benefactors.

Therefore, children, I now ask you, if you must love your neighbor as yourselves, who are nearer to you than father and mother? If you must love your friends and relatives, who are more closely connected with you than those from whom you have received your flesh and blood, and whose blood still runs in your veins? If you are bound to love your benefactors, not to speak of those who injure you, where will you find a greater benefactor on earth than father or mother? You are cold and naked (so let each one imagine to himself), you are poor, hungry, thirsty, needy, and do not know where to turn. Some one takes pity on you and receives you into his house, clothes you from head to foot, provides you with money, keeps you for many years, gives you food and drink as good as he has himself, helps you in all dangers with the greatest care and readiness, waits on you day and night, and finally places you in a position suited to your birth, although he must rob himself in order to do so. What, I ask you, would such a benefactor deserve from you? Should not the bare recollection of him fill your heart with love for him? Would it be right for you, I will not say to hate or annoy him, but even to give him a cross look? Reason itself tells you that that would be wrong, for it would be intolerable

ingratitude. But all these benefits, and countless others, you have received from your parents.

On your account your mother has had much discomfort, sickness, difficulty, and pain before you were born, in your birth, and after it. For some years she had to carry you about in her arms, until she was tired. For your sake she had to remain awake hours and hours during the night, in order to help you when you cried. For your sake she had often to take what she would much rather have done without, and to deny herself what she would willingly have eaten or drunk, so that you might suffer no harm while she was nursing you. On your account was she often anxious and uneasy, through fear of some accident happening you. On your account she was often disturbed and tormented, and shed bitter tears if any misfortune befell you, and she suffered, too, if anything disagreeable happened to you. For you has your father, as well as your mother, toiled and labored for so many years, in order to keep you respectably and to provide you with food and clothing. For you they have often taken the bit out of their own mouths and have deprived themselves of many conveniences and luxuries, and, perhaps, too, have lived sparingly and parsimoniously, in order that they might leave you something to set you up in life. For you have they made so many wearisome journeys to and fro. For you have their minds been filled with anxiety and apprehension lest any evil should befall your soul or your body. For you have they spent the hard-earned money, that they put together with so much trouble, that you might be educated, instructed, and provided for. All your troubles, illnesses, and difficulties have afflicted the hearts of your father and mother. How patiently, how courageously Job bore his great misfortunes, the loss of all his land, the theft of his cattle, the plundering of all his goods; but when word was brought to him that his children, too, were slain, his father's heart could not conceal its sorrow any longer. The holy Scripture says: "Then Job rose up and rent his garments, and having shaven his head, fell down upon the ground and worshipped!"¹ By which he shows us that there is nothing so capable of disturbing the heart of a father as the misfortune of his children. The mother, in the Gospel of St. Matthew, came weeping to Christ, crying: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David."² And why? What was the matter with her? "My daughter is grievously troubled by a devil."³

For what have not father and mother done through love for their children.

¹ Surrexit, et scidit vestimenta sua, et tonso capite corruens in terram, etc.—Joh i. 20.

² Miserere mei Domine.

³ Filia mea male a daemone vexatur.—Matth. xv. 22.

It is your daughter, then, who is troubled! Why did you not say: Have mercy on my daughter, oh, Son of David? If there is nothing the matter with yourself, why do you cry out: Have mercy on me? The glossary answers: "She said, Have mercy on me, because the suffering of the daughter is also the suffering of the mother."¹ The children's sorrow is their parents' sorrow too. Such was the case, too, oh, child, with your father and mother, whenever the least mishap occurred to you. In a word, that you now exist, that you are alive, that you have not broken your leg, or your arm, or your neck, when you were a child, that you are now grown up, that you have some property, and a position in life, all these things you owe, under God, to no one but your father and mother. And what makes the benefit greater still, they did all this for you, for no other motive than the purest, most disinterested, most heartfelt, and tenderest love and affection for you.

Therefore they are worthy of special love.

Now, if you are an honorable man, I will leave it to yourself to say what they deserve, what they have earned from you, who have done all this for you. Are they worthy of comfort or sorrow, of help or neglect, of honor or contempt, of gratitude or ingratitude, of love or hatred? What do they deserve? The old Tobias will tell me, if no one else does: "Thou shalt honor thy mother all the days of her life."² Such was the advice he gave his son when he thought himself at the point of death. Why? "For thou must be mindful what and how great perils she suffered for thee?"³ What do parents deserve? The wise Ecclesiasticus tells us: "Honor thy father, and forget not the groanings of thy mother: remember that thou hadst not been born but through them: and make a return to them as they have done for thee."⁴ What do they deserve? Ask St. Ambrose, who speaks thus to a certain son, who, indeed, maintained his mother, but was not so friendly and loving towards her as he ought to have been: "The love due to parents should not be injured even by a cross look."⁵ "Although you maintain your mother,"⁶ and perform every service for her, do her all the good you can, "yet you have not repaid all that she has done for you." You have not yet given back the pain she suffered on your account, nor the services that

¹ *Dicit, miserere mei, quia dolor filiae dolor est matris.*

² *Honorem habebis matri tuae, omnibus diebus vitae ejus.*—Tob. iv. 3.

³ *Memor enim esse debes, quae et quanta pericula passa sit pro te.*—Ibid. 4.

⁴ *Honora patrem tuum, et genitum matris tuae ne obliviscaris: memento quoniam. nati per illos, natus non fuisses, et retribue illis, quomodo et illi tibi.*—Ecc. vii. 29, 30.

⁵ *Ne vultu quidem ledanda est pietas parentum.*—Ibid. 4.

⁶ *Etsi paveris matrem, adhuc non reddidisti dolores, etc.*

she performed for you from your childhood; nor have you repaid her for the milk with which she suckled you, for the hunger and thirst she endured for you, for the restless nights and troubled days she passed on your account; you have not yet wiped away the tears she shed for you, etc.; and so St. Ambrose goes on. What do parents deserve from their children? Even blind heathens tell us: "We can never show sufficient love and gratitude to God and to our parents;"¹ these are the words of the philosopher Aristotle. All that we have and are worth belongs to them of whom we are born, and who brought us up. Reason alone taught even heathens that children owe all love and service to their parents; nay, that they cannot even love and serve them enough. The reason of this is evident: since the life that we receive from them is the foundation of all other goods, it is a benefit greater than any other. Therefore, if, by a rare chance, a child were in a position to save his father's or mother's life by giving up his own, he would not do more for them than they have done for him, nor give them more than he owes them. From which we may conclude, that the law commanding us to love our parents more than any one else in the world, no matter how near he may be to us, is a privileged law, and admits of no exception. I love my friend, and friendship requires of me to show this love for him, but only as long as he is true to me; if I see and am convinced that he is false and deceitful to me, that he acts repeatedly against my interests, then it is in my power to show him that, love or not, just as I like, I am not obliged to have more love for him than I must have for all, even if they are strangers and unknown to me; all special confidences, visiting, and affectionate intercourse may cease at once. But it is not so with the law commanding me to love my parents: if they act against my interests even repeatedly, if they occasion me annoyance, trouble, torment, and misery, still I am not allowed to show them less honor and love, nor to go against their interests, nor to occasion them annoyance; unless, indeed, they try to prevent and hinder me from doing the holy will of God.

But, alas! What perversity even among Christian children! They all declare they love their parents, but in many cases their love consists in mere talk; their deeds are quite contrary to their words. It should be a true love, which, as the Apostle St. John writes, proves itself by works: a love which affects, not merely the heart, but the whole man, so that he endeavors to be the

Of what
kind that
love must
be.

¹ Deo et parentibus nunquam satis rependi potest.

comfort and joy of his parents in every possible way. It must be a constant love, that lasts beyond the years of childhood, and is not changed by difficulties, but perseveres even unto death. It must be an active, beneficent love, by which one is always ready to assist one's parents with advice and work, with help and service, and to take more care of them in their illness or in old age than of one's own children, and to maintain them, if they are poor, even by taking the bread out of one's own mouth. But, I repeat, what perversity ! How rare this constant love is ! Would to God that there were not many children, who, in place of gratitude, show their parents only the greatest unthankfulness, and in place of loving, rather hate and occasion them annoyance. Yet, alas, that is the case only too often ; as you will see in the

Second Part.

Many children do the opposite—shown by an example.

Diodorus Siculus tells a story of a father who had three putative sons, and who knew that only one of them was really his son ; he left, in his will, all his property to him who should be afterwards acknowledged to be his lawful son. The three young men presented themselves before the judge, after the father's death. Each one said that he was the lawful heir, and claimed the inheritance. The judge, not knowing how to settle the doubt, at length hit upon a plan, which all approved of. He caused the father's dead body to be bound fast to a tree, as a mark for the sons to shoot their arrows at ; he who hit the heart, or whose arrow went nearest to the heart, was to be the heir. The first son bent his bow and shot off his arrow, the second did the same, but neither of them hit the body near the heart. The third son, who had now the best chance, when he was told that it was his turn to shoot, grew pale and began to tremble all over, and let his bow and arrow fall from his hand. Ah, he cried, how can I aim at my father's heart, and pierce that body which gave me my life, and which I loved, therefore, more than my own heart ? It is impossible for me to do it ; I do not want the inheritance ; I would rather be a beggar. I cannot and will not do it ! On hearing these words, all present acknowledged him to be the lawful son, and the inheritance was given to him. My dear brethren, this story may be true or false ; it makes no matter in any case ; would to God that in our days every one bore such a filial love to his parents as the son in the story did, even to his dead father ! But could a child be found so hard-hearted, ungrateful, and cruel as to dare to pierce the heart of his father or

mother? This seems to me so strange and unusual, that if I had only arrived in the world to-day and were told of such wickedness, I could not believe it, but should look upon it as a falsehood. And yet, oh, just Heaven, if the proofs, that really exist, were brought forward to support it, I should be forced, against my will, to acknowledge the truth of it.

There is no doubt that there are such wicked, godless children, who are not afraid of wounding most cruelly, and piercing the living hearts of their father or mother, as if it were a mark for them to aim at, not indeed with swords or arrows, but by disobedience, and by scandalous and unchristian lives, which wound far deeper than arrows. How many wound their parents' hearts by irreverence, since they treat their father and mother with such little respect, and so contemptuously? How many wound and pierce their parents' hearts by disobedience and obstinacy, since they will not do as they are told, as we have seen in a former sermon? How many (to keep to our present subject) wound and pierce their parents' hearts by a want of filial love! for there are some children who, though they do not hate their parents, yet never show outwardly the love and affection they should have for them, because they are no longer in need of their parents' care. There are some, too, who always look crossly at their parents, hardly ever have a friendly word for them, and always meet them in a sulky manner, so that it is hard to say whether it is a son or a daughter, or a mere stranger that accosts them. That such conduct causes much secret grief to parents, we can easily imagine. Other children, who have still something to expect from their parents, are like those of whom St. Peter Chrysologus speaks: "They are so eager to succeed to the inheritance, that the life of their father or mother is a torment to them;"¹ they would rather see their parents carried out of the house dead, than see them coming into it alive and well. They act like birds of prey, that perch on a tree until they see some wild beast hunted down, when they swoop down upon the weak and wounded, or dead animal. Sometimes, even, they steal away their parents' property, while the latter are still alive, under the pretence of doing them a service thereby. A fine love, surely, which regards not the person, but the property, and which is so greedy of gain that it is impatient for the parents' death!

There are other children still worse, who refuse to help their parents in old age or feebleness; or who do not give them

Children who sadder their parents' hearts by their wickedness act in this way.

Those who refuse to help and

¹ Sic cupiditate hereditatis aestuat, ut patris vita torqueatur.

assist them
as they
ought.

proper food and nourishment, or give it them only rarely, and do not help them as they ought, in poverty; although in such circumstances father and mother are most in want of help and comfort from their children, and children are bound then, more than ever, to show their love and gratitude to their parents when the latter are in want. For they have received nothing but benefits from their parents in the past, and the time of old age, or poverty, is almost the only one in which the latter expect their children to do something for them in return. This is the time in which a loving child should be to his parents, as the holy Scripture says of the younger Tobias, a light to their eyes, a staff and support of their weakness, a consolation in the decline of their days. But, alas, this is the very time in which most children forget their filial affection. The aged patriarch Jacob, when his sons wished to bring Benjamin to Egypt, began to weep and lament bitterly, saying: "You have made me to be without children: Joseph is not living, Simeon is kept in bonds, and Benjamin you will take away; all these evils are fallen upon me."¹ What? Had he not ten sons besides Joseph and Benjamin? Yes, but he had not the consolation in them that he had in the other two, and therefore it seemed to him that he had lost all his children. Many aged or impoverished parents may make the very same complaint to-day—I have been robbed of all my children! I have many sons and daughters alive, but I am here alone as if I had not one; they have abandoned me and they give me neither help nor comfort.

What an
injustice!

Oh, father, oh, mother, deserving of pity! By toiling and laboring for so many years, you have kept two, three, four, five, six children, you have brought them up respectably and given them a position in life; and now—shame! that I should have to say it—three, four, or six children cannot manage to keep their old father, or their poor mother, respectably, for a short time! One throws the responsibility on the other. What is it to me? they say. I am not bound to do more than my brothers and sisters. Hardly has the son cast his eye on and given his heart to a stranger, hardly has the daughter given her affections to her future husband, when the father and mother are almost forgotten. And after the marriage of the children, their filial love often disappears altogether. They say: I must look after myself and my own family; my wife and children have the first claim on me; I have enough

¹ Absque liberis me esse fecistis. Joseph non est super, Simeon tenetur in vinculis, et Benjamin aufertis; in me hæc omnia mala ceciderunt.—Gen. xlii. 36.

to do to keep them ; I cannot provide for so many. And if they give anything to their parents, they look upon it as an alms, and expect that God will look upon it in the same light. Meanwhile, what a sad thing it is to see an aged father, or a poor mother, after having given themselves all sorts of trouble, spent their substance, and stripped themselves, so to speak, in order to help their children and give them a position in the world, what a sad thing to see these parents, now that their children are well off, suffering from poverty, so that they must beg a piece of bread, for God's sake, and as an alms, from those to whom they gave all they had ! Oh, earth, the common mother of all, how canst thou give bread to such heartless children ! For they do not give bread, or not enough of it, at least, to those who gave them birth, who fed and brought them up. Oh, ye heavens, how can you cause the fruits of the earth to grow for those who do not maintain, as they ought, the parents who gave them being !

Oh, ingratitude of which heathens and even wild beasts are ashamed ! Æneas was a heathen who, after the burning of Troy, left all his money and property as a prey to the flames, that he might all the better be able to carry his idols and his aged father, whom he took upon his back to a place of safety outside the town. That daughter, too, who fed her father with her own milk, when he was condemned to die of hunger in prison, was a heathen. The Chinese in the East are heathens, and yet, if their parents get sick, the children stand around the bed and tear the flesh off their arms, cook it, and give it to their sick father or mother ; thereby showing that they are willing to give up, not merely their money and property, but their flesh and blood, and even their lives, in order to preserve their parents in health and strength. I am ashamed to think that I must bring forward such examples of filial love, to make Christian children ashamed of their ingratitude. SS. Ambrose and Basil remind such thankless children of the conduct even of dumb animals, and especially of storks, crows, and ravens, who, when their parent birds are too old to fly, cover them with their wings, take them on their backs from place to place, and feed them carefully with the food they have collected. Even fierce lions share their prey with the old ones, when the latter are no longer capable of providing for themselves. So that children who refuse to serve or help their aged or poor parents, and who do not give them proper food, or care for them properly, are more ungrateful than beasts of prey and carrion birds.

An ingratitude of which heathens, nay, even wild beasts, are ashamed.

With regard to support, parents must be preferred before one's own wife and children.

You offer, as I have mentioned already, the heartless excuse: I have my own wife and children to keep; I must first provide for myself and my family; they have the first claim. But your distinction does not avail you! "In the first place," says St. Ambrose, and St. Thomas of Aquin agrees with him, "we must love God, then our parents, and then our children."¹ God says: "Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife;"² but that text must be understood, according to the explanation of St. Thomas, to speak only of co-habitation; in which certainly the wife has a prior claim to the parents; but not of support and maintenance, for in that the parents have the first claim when they are in want. Nay, those who are learned in the Holy Scriptures say with Abulensis, that in equal necessity I am more bound to support my father and mother, than I am to support myself; so that, if I had but one loaf of bread, it would not do merely to give half of it to my father or mother, when they are in want; I must even deprive myself of the last crumb, in order to preserve, as long as possible, the lives of those from whom I have received my life. Even the Almighty God Himself wills that, in certain circumstances, the love of parents be preferred to His; for instance, if one has made a vow to serve God in a religious order, and his father or mother fall into poverty, so that his help is required to support them, he cannot fulfil his vow, in accordance with the divine law, as long as his parents are in need of him.

What a sin for children to forget their deceased parents!

Finally, what shall I say of those ungrateful children who act like the two sons that shot their arrows at their dead father's body; that is to say, who not only fail in their duty of loving their parents during life, but neglect them also after their death? Who, after having got their share of the inheritance, never think of the souls of their deceased parents, and are so avaricious that they hardly ever get a Mass said for their comfort and speedy release, but look upon it as a matter of indifference whether their parents are in purgatory or not? Who do not give to the poor, or for pious uses what their parents left by will for those purposes? Sometimes it happens that a father or mother leaves thousands to be divided amongst their children, and a few hundreds, perhaps, for a hospital or a church for the good of their own souls, and their children contest the latter part of the will, refuse to fulfil it, and disobey the last dying injunctions of their father or

¹ *Primo loco diligendus est Deus, secundo parentes, inde filii.*

² *Relinquet homo patrem suum et matrem, et adheret uxori suæ.—Gen. ii. 24.*

rather through avarice. So little do they think of the souls of their parents, as long as they can have their property.

O wicked children, who in this, or in any other way whatsoever, wound the hearts of your parents by a want of affection for them! If it is ingratitude to make no return for a benefit received, what an enormity it is to forget it altogether and to act as if it had not been conferred at all! How intolerable is your conduct, then, who repay such great benefits by such black ingratitude! Who embitter and trouble the lives of those to whom you owe your own lives in so many ways! Have your good parents done and suffered so much for you, only that you might cause them still greater pain and suffering? Have they often taken the bread out of their own mouths for your sake, only that you might now refuse them the bread they require from you? Have they brought you up with such care that they might now be abandoned by you in their helplessness? Have they shed so many tears for you, for fear of losing you and with the hope and consolation of having you as a support and staff in their old age, on which they might depend with certainty, and do you now treat them thus? Alas, what sort of a staff are you for them? You are rather a rod to punish them, a nail in their coffins! Have they given you life, that they might find in you a murderer who shortens or takes away their lives from them? What a fearful crime it is to kill one's father or mother! Even barbarians abhor it! Yet, wicked children, although they do not commit this crime with violence, yet they commit it by their ingratitude, by their bad behaviour, by their disobedience, contempt, and want of filial love, for by all these things they make their parents suffer a bitter martyrdom. They might well say, as Rebecca said when she thought she was about to die in childbirth: "If it were to be so with me, what need was there to conceive?"¹ Since my children cause me so much suffering, would it not have been better not to have brought them into the world? O God of justice, where are Thy thunderbolts? Where is the terrible curse Thou hast long ago spoken against those who cause sorrow to their parents? Let it resound once more in the ears of all, so as to induce them to amend their lives: How dishonored is the child who abandons his father; and cursed by God is he who provokes his mother.²

Further explanation of the enormity of all sins whatever against filial love.

¹ Si sic mihi futurum erat, quid necesse fuit, concipere? Gen. xxv. 22.

² Quam male famæ est, qui derelinquit patrem; et est maledictus a Deo, qui exasperat matrem.—Ecc. iii. 18.

And is it not punishment enough, O my God, to be cursed by Thee ?

**Conclusion
and exhortation to
children.**

Christian children, is it not true that we do not wish to expose ourselves to such a punishment; and that, therefore, we shall always be true to the oft-quoted exhortation of St. Paul to the Ephesians: "Honor thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with a promise, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest be long-lived upon earth."¹ Honor them with the honor of a willing obedience which is due to them, and with the honor of a true, constant, and filial love and helpfulness, which is also due to them, "that it may be well with thee."² What is the meaning, asks St. Augustine, of the words: "That thou mayest be long-lived upon earth"?³ Oh, he says, that reward was promised to the Jews in the Old Law, it is too small for a Christian. "See thou hast done thy duty,"⁴ he says to a good child who loves his parents as he ought; "come here now and receive thy reward."⁵ "What reward?"⁶ "A resurrection to eternal life." Happy children! What greater honor could you have, before God and man, than to be able to say with truth: From my earliest years I have honored my father and mother, I have never done anything in the least disrespectful to them, I never did anything against their will, I have never caused them sorrow of heart either by word or deed, I never omitted doing what I thought would please them! Ah, would that I too could say that ! O my God, whom I have additional reason for choosing as my Father, since the death of my parents, I am sorry from the bottom of my heart for having ever failed in my duty as a child ! And you, my parents, pardon me if I have caused you sorrow by my disobedience and bad behaviour, and if I am, perchance, the cause of your now having to suffer in purgatory! I will atone for it by earnest prayer. And do Thou, O God, forgive this sin to me and to all those whose parents are still alive! They all promise, without exception, to fulfil their duty more faithfully in future, and to be a comfort to their parents till death, by being truly obedient, respectful, and loving towards them. Do Thou help all children to do this by Thy powerful grace, so that they may see Thee, their heavenly Father, along with their parents, in eternal joys. Amen.

¹ Honora patrem tuum et matrem tuam (quod est mandatum primum in promissione) ut bene sit tibi et sis longævus super terram.—Ephes. vi. 2, 3.

² Ut bene sit tibi. ³ Ut sis longævus super terram.

⁴ Ecce debitum reddidisti, accipe præmium.

⁵ Quod præmium ? ⁶ Resurrectio sine morte.

Another Introduction for the Fourth Sunday after Easter:

Text.

Ipsè enim Pater amat vos.—John xvi. 27.

“For the Father Himself loveth you.”

What Jesus Christ says to His Apostles of His heavenly Father, I say to all of you to-day, Christian children, of your parents. Your father and your mother love you.¹ Certainly reason enough for you to love them in return. And this is the last and principal duty you have to perform towards your parents, namely to honor them by filial love. It will form the subject of to-day's sermon. Children, then, are bound, etc.—*continues as before.*

¹ *Ipsè pater amat vos.*

ON THE
DUTIES OF THE YOUNG, AND OF ALL
MEN TOWARDS THEMSELVES.

EIGHTEENTH SERMON.

ON THE CARE OF ONE'S PRECIOUS SOUL.

Subject.

1st. The most costly image is the human soul.—2d. As costly as it is, it is little cared for by us.—*Preached on the twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Cujus est imago hæc?—Matth. xxii. 20.
“Whose image is this?”

Introduction.

As Cælius testifies, it was formerly the custom among heathens to brand their seals or escutcheons on the foreheads of their slaves, so that the latter might remain constantly in the service of their masters, and, in case they ran away, that it might be easily known to what master they belonged. My dear brethren, man is created to serve his God and his Lord; that is the only reason why we are all upon this earth. In order to keep man in His service, God has impressed His own image on the rational soul of man. What image is that? we might often ask ourselves. To whom does this image belong? What sort of an image is it, the like of which is not to be found in any other creature on earth for costliness? And yet, how cheaply we men hold that image! We must rejoice at the first proposition, and grieve at the second. I shall explain both to-day.

Plan of Discourse.

The human soul is a most costly image. Such will be the matter of the first part. As costly as it is, it is little cared for by us.

¹ *Cujus est imago hæc?*

Such will be the second part. Christians! look after your souls carefully! Such will be the conclusion.

Give us your powerful grace to do this, O Saviour of our souls. We ask it of you by the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and our angels guardian.

The costliness and excellence of an image must be judged, by one who is not a connoisseur in art, from the excellence of the master who has made it, from the skilful way in which it is completed, or from the price and value set upon it by those who understand the art. Thus, if I say, for instance, this picture is an original by Rubens, that famous painter, I need not say any more, especially to one who is a judge of painting, for he would immediately have a high idea of the value of this picture. And if I said, moreover, this is the most excellent work of that painter, in which, especially, he wished to show his skill; and if I added, that he would not part with this picture during his life-time for any money, every one who hears and believes these words, would certainly say, even without seeing the picture at all : Oh, it must be certainly something very valuable and precious !

What it is that makes an image costly.

Oh, man ! no matter how poor and lowly you may be before the world, what a beautiful, rare, and precious image you carry about with you ! Must I tell you how valuable your soul is ? Then I need say nothing of the exceeding beauty which it received from its Creator. I need not tell you that it is one, spiritual and immortal, eternal in its being; that it is created for no other end and object than to possess its Creator forever in eternal joys; that it is the dwelling-place, the daughter, the spouse of the Most High; that the life, health, beauty, sensibility, and movements of your body come from it, and are kept up by it. Think only of the skilful Master who has made this image; of the labor and care He bestowed on it; of the model after which He made it; of the price and value He sets upon it, and from that you must see how precious your soul is. The Maker of this image is the All-wise and All-powerful God Himself, from whose hand nothing bad can come; and the Almighty God alone, for I know well that all things come from God, as their first cause; and the human soul too, but in a special manner. He produced the first herbs, plants, and trees from the earth, the first fishes and fowls from the waters and the first beasts from the earth. He formed, too, the first human body from the slime of the earth, and no other body has been formed in that manner since, for each living thing re-

All these the human soul has ; it is the master-piece of God.

ceived strength and fruitfulness from nature to propagate itself. But it is quite different with the souls of men: in creating them God did not wish to make use of any pre-existing material. Through all time, as well as in the beginning, He wished to be the sole and immediate cause of their existence. God is the Father of every soul, and God alone, without the co-operation of any creature.

He has created it with the greatest care, and according to His own image.

If we consider the care and labor with which the soul was created, we must acknowledge that no other creature was the object of such solicitude; for although the Almighty God finished the creation of the world in five successive days, and brought so many beautiful things into being, yet, all this cost Him nothing more than the words: Let it be made. Let there be light, and there was light;¹ and so on for everything in the heavens and on the earth. He spoke and it was done.² But when He created man, a rational being, the principal part of whom is the soul, the Three Divine Persons assembled in council, to deliberate on that great work. The Eternal Father spoke with His Son, and the Son with the Holy Ghost, and they said together: "Let us make;"³ after having made so many creatures, as signs of our almighty power, let us finish the work by creating a being who will surpass them all by being the visible and living copy of our divine glory on earth: "Let us make man to our image and likeness."⁴ Meditating on this likeness, St. Ambrose calls out to me and to all men: "Learn, oh, man, wherein thou art great and precious. Is there anything so precious as the likeness"⁵ thou bearest to a God of infinite majesty and beauty? A spirit like God, one like God, living like God, immortal like God, the great soul of the great God. And this is the reason, says St. Ambrose, why He who created all other things without interruption, rested after having created the human soul: "And He rested from all His work, which He had done."⁶ As if there could be nothing of greater importance, or more precious to be made; nothing which would show forth more clearly His power and wisdom.

God values it highly.

Yet, what we have seen up to this makes very little impression on us, blind mortals, since we cannot see our souls with our bodily eyes. Learn, then, how valuable they are, from the high

¹ Fiat! Fiat lux! Et facta est lux.—Gen. i. 3. ² Dixit et facta sunt.—Ps. cxlviii. 5.

³ Faciamus!

⁴ Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram.—Gen. i. 26.

⁵ Disce, ubi grandis, ubi pretiosus sis! An quidquam tam pretiosum quam imago hæc?

⁶ Requievit ab universo opere, quod patraverat.—Gen. ii. 2.

price which the Almighty God, who values all things according to their worth, puts on them. Lucius Mummus, a noble Roman, who was more skilled in war than in works of art, sold a painting to King Attalus, and left the price of it to the judgment of the latter. The king paid him such a large sum of money, that it seemed impossible to count it. Lucius, surprised and amazed at seeing such a high price paid for the painting, the history says, "thinking that there was some hidden virtue in the picture, which he knew not of before, took it back and would not sell it."¹ Oh, man, what a precious image you have in your soul! You do not understand nor grasp it yourself, and, therefore, you often think but little of it. But see what a treasure the King of Heaven pays for it, and you will be surprised. St. Eusebius says: "If you do not believe your Creator as to the value of your soul, ask your Redeemer."² Ask Him why did He come down from Heaven, why was He born in a stable, why did He lie weeping in a manger, why was He brought up in poverty, so that He had to earn His bread in a workshop, by the sweat of His brow? The answer will be, as St. Augustine says: "Oh, my soul! exalt thyself; thou art worth all that."³ It is the price that God has paid for thee! Count the hours of His thirty-three years' life upon earth, the sighs He gave, the tears He shed, the thoughts He had, the words He spoke, the stripes He received, the thorns that pierced Him, the nails that bore through His hands and feet, the drops of blood that He shed; contemplate the gibbet on which He hung, the shame and loss of honor that He suffered, the life that was taken from Him, the spirit, the soul that He gave up; all these things cry out to thee: Oh, my soul! thou art worth all these things!⁴ Why dost thou wonder at the heavens, the sun, the stars in the firmament? Oh, soul, consider thyself, for thou art much more precious, much more beautiful, than all the beautiful ornaments of the heavens! Sometimes thou thinkest a great deal of the world and all its wealth and magnificence; soul of man, it is not worthy of thee; thou art much more valuable. Thou hast cost as much as the greatness of thy God; and that is neither Heaven, nor earth, nor gold, nor riches; but the Blood, the Soul, the Life, nay His very self that God has given for thee. Therefore, thou must be a very precious image indeed! Thou hast not known thyself hitherto, but

¹ *Suspiciatus aliquid in ea esse virtutis, quod ipse nesciret, revocavit tabulam.*

² *Quam pretiosus sis, si Factori forte non credis, interroga Redemptorem.*

³ *O anima! erige te, tantum vales!* ⁴ *O anima! tantum vales!*

believe Him who best understands the matter, and who, to purchase thee, offered everything He had to His eternal Father!

Even the
devil values
it highly.

Even the sworn enemy of souls, the devil, cannot conceal the great value He sets on thee, oh, human soul! He has already thought the whole world not too much to offer for a single sin which would injure the soul. He showed Christ all the riches of the world: "All these will I give Thee, if falling down Thou wilt adore me."¹ What trouble does he not give himself day and night to gain a single soul! How carefully does he not seek out wicked advisers, treacherous companions, bad books, impure company, seductive and bad habits and occasions, in order to catch a soul! Although he is the King of pride and Prince of vanity, yet he is not ashamed to perform the meanest services. He puts on, sometimes, the appearance of the lowest servant and drudge. Sometimes he serves those who are inclined to infidelity, as a shepherd, a cowherd, or a swineherd, and keeps their cattle safe for them. At other times he acts as a horse and beast of burden for the sorcerers and witches who give their souls to him; nay, although, as theologians teach, every soul that goes to hell increases his torments, he still suffers all that, as long as he can lead souls astray. Oh, can I not now say, oh, human soul, how precious thou art? If thou wilt not believe thy Maker, oh, man, who fashioned it to His likeness, nor thy Redeemer, who paid so dearly for it, then ask thy enemy, the devil, what value he puts upon thy soul.

Therefore
the servants
of God labor
so hard to
gain a soul.

In days gone by the merchants of the world were surprised, and looked upon it as madness and folly when they saw men like St. Francis Xavier. They are surprised even now, when they see and hear how many apostolic priests leave their native land, undertake dangerous voyages across the seas, and go to the remote Indies and the far-off islands, where, under a foreign sky, in a hot climate, amongst uncivilized people, they labor day and night, in hunger and thirst, in constant danger of death, and for the mere purpose of gaining a soul to Christ and bringing it to Heaven. Oh, ye merchants, how simple ye are! If you knew anything of the matter, and understood what a precious image a soul is, you would be much more astonished at your own folly, in undergoing so much trouble and labor on the same sea, and in the same island, and that you expose yourselves to the same danger, only to gain a temporal, an uncertain and a short-lived good, in the struggle for which you often lose sight of your souls. If you come home after a long absence (which is merely a chance),

¹ *Hæc omnia tibi dabo, si cadens adoraveris me.—Matth. iv. 9.*

what do you bring with you ? A ship laden with merchandise, and nothing more. Let twenty, thirty, or even a hundred of you return with millions of money. If, meanwhile, a zealous missionary, laboring among those savage people for twenty years, can succeed, with all his toil and trouble, in baptizing only one child in some out-of-the-way place, oh, certainly, he has gained a great deal more than you, with all your riches and treasures ! Ask him if he would change his gain with yours. He would not even deign to answer you : for that one soul has repaid his labor and trouble far more richly than if he had gained the whole world.

Our Annals speak of some members of our society who, in order to be able to reach the kingdom of Japan, undertook to work in a ship like galley-slaves. Why did they do that ? In order to gain a soul for God. Ask them if they would have done that for any temporal riches. Another who was shipwrecked, happened to seize hold of a plank, and could have saved his life by means of it ; but he gave it up of his own accord to a Jew near him who was on the point of drowning, with the condition, however, that the latter, on reaching the land, would receive baptism and become a Christian. The condition was accepted and the priest joyfully allowed himself to sink into the sea. Why ? In order to gain a soul for Heaven that would otherwise have been lost. Ask him if he would have done that to gain all the wealth of the world. Such people as these know the worth of a precious soul purchased by the Blood of Jesus Christ. Continue as you have begun, zealous merchants of souls ! Go to those countries where so many thousand souls are in ignorance and idolatry. If you can save a soul from committing even one sin, it is well worth your while to travel about the world. Oh, would that a similar zeal brought me, and others too, to those countries ! But, alas, what am I saying ? Come back, I might well exclaim, zealous hunters of souls ; we want you here, here in the midst of Christendom, in the broad day-light, in the sunshine of the true faith, even here—alas ! that I must say so—souls are held in little value by the majority of people ! This is what I have to complain of in the

Even by exposing their lives to danger.

Second Part.

St. John Chrysostom, writing of the deplorable carelessness with which people look upon their own souls, tells a story of a philosopher who went into a magnificent house. The rooms of this house were hung with gold and silver tapestry, even the floors were covered with silken carpets, while the master of the house,

Yet the soul is little valued by the majority. This explained by a simile.

who brought the philosopher into it, went about meanly and poorly clad. When the visitor had spent some time admiring all he saw, and having looked at all the splendor around him, he (pardon the expression) spat in the face of the master of the house. The latter indignantly protested against this insult, but the philosopher answered him, saying: I was compelled to spit out, and I could find no other place to do so in but your face. Giving him thereby to understand that while he adorned the walls and floors of his house in such a costly manner, he paid so little attention to his own person. The majority of Christians in the world, says St. Chrysostom, act in the same manner. They take a great deal of care of the house, and forget its master; that is to say, they look after the body very diligently, but forget the soul, which dwells in the body, as in a house.

As a general rule, the body is more cared for than the soul.

All the serious thoughts of the day, from morning till night, are given to the body, which is only a mass of uncleanness, and a whitened sepulchre, that will soon be food for worms; while hardly one in a week is bestowed on the soul, the immortal image of God! The best years of youth are spent in the service of the body; how few the hours that are given to the eternal welfare of the soul! The body is petted, fed, and nourished to repletion every day, and is allowed to want for nothing; the soul must often suffer hunger for a month at a time, receiving no refreshment either from the Word of God or from the holy Sacraments. The body is washed, clothed, adorned, beautified, and decked out in every way, and art is even made use of to supply the defects of nature, so that the body may please others, and sometimes betray them into sin; but the soul is left without merits and good works, neglected like a poor beggar child. A spot on the face or hands is washed off immediately; while the stain of sin is often allowed to remain on the soul from one month to another, from one Easter to another, before the water of true repentance is used to wash it off. No expense is spared to procure pleasure for the body: the night's rest is often sacrificed, the whole day is occupied and no end of trouble is taken for that purpose; but to give the soul an hour's devotion in the morning, to part with the twentieth part of one's superfluous wealth for the poor, or to take any trouble at all for the soul's welfare, would be an intolerable burden.

Bothly health and life are preferred to spiritual.

To preserve the health of the body, we avoid even a cold wind, while the soul is risked in all kinds of ways for a mere trifle. If the body is ill, the best and most experienced doctors are called in;

if the soul is ill, we are often afraid of going to a confessor who is most skilled in affairs of conscience, we dread going to sermons in which the truth is told for the good of the soul. In order to cure bodily illness thoroughly, we seek a change of air, and leave our home and country to do so, while we cannot resolve to fly the poisoned air of the world in order to restore our sick souls to health; that is to say, we are unwilling to give up the unlawful and useless vanities of the world, or to avoid bad company and the dangerous occasions of sin; all of which we should renounce if our repentance were sincere. To preserve the health of our mortal bodies we abstain from our favorite food and drink, we refuse not the most bitter medicines; but to preserve the eternal life of the soul and to atone to the divine justice for the sins we have committed, we refuse to mortify or deny ourselves, to fast or to do penance as a Christian should. If the body of another dies we grieve and mourn; if a soul dies we are unmoved. If the news is brought to a father or mother that their son or daughter has accidentally broken an arm or a leg, what wailing and lamentation there will be! If their souls receive a mortal wound, of which, perhaps, the parents are the cause, by allowing their children to go into the dangerous occasion of sin, it is looked upon as a matter of little importance. "Oh, blindness," cries out St. Augustine; "you mourn for the death of the body, which must die in a short time in any case, and you do not mourn the death of the soul, which ought to live forever." You grieve that the body has lost the soul that animated it, although it will be again united to the soul at the last day, and you are not sorry when the soul loses God, whom she will perhaps never regain again! So much care is taken of the house, so little of the master of it, the image of God, the precious soul!

And, what we cannot sufficiently deplore, oh, soul so dearly bought by God, how cheaply men sometimes barter thee, to their eternal damnation! As the Prophet Jeremias says in the person of the sinner: "I have given my dear soul into the hand of her enemies."¹ For, sinners give the souls of others into the hands of their sworn enemies by leading them into sin, and their own souls by the sins they voluntarily commit. And for what price? These souls that have cost the life-blood of Jesus Christ, what do men sell them for? God says, by the mouth of the Prophet Ezechiel: "And they violated me for a handful of barley and a piece of bread."²

The soul is sold for a miserable price.

¹ Dedi dilectam animam meam in manum inimicorum ejus.—Jerem. xii. 7.

² Violabant me propter pusillum hordei et fragmen panis.—Ezech. xlii. 19.

How often is the soul given over to the devil, by a Judas-like treachery, without any contract or agreement as to the price to be paid for it; that being left altogether to the enemy of the soul: "What will you give me, and I will deliver him unto you?"¹ The unjust and avaricious man says to the devil: What will you give me for my soul? And the devil answers: Ten dollars, for which you must swear a false oath; a dollar, for which you must cheat your neighbor, protract his lawsuit, or injure his business; five dollars, which you may keep, although you have no right to do so; one dollar, which you must give to an immoral man for a bad purpose. Very well, thinks the sinner, the price is enough; I will deliver it up to you.² I will give you my soul, take it away with you! What will you give me?³ asks the immoral man, what will you give me for my soul? A brief pleasure, that may be enjoyed by an immodest look, by an impure touch, by a filthy imagination. It is enough; take my soul with you, and do as you please with it. The ambitious man asks: What will you give me for my soul? The favor of your master, promotion to a higher position. Very well, you can take my soul. What will you give me for my soul? asks another. The satisfaction of your gluttony by immoderate drinking; the vengeance that you require to cool your hatred and anger; the covering of your shame, by concealing a sin in confession. Agreed; I will deliver up my soul to you. Ah, how often the precious soul is given up for a still viler price, and without any gain, any profit or pleasure whatever! How often, oh, sinner, have you not given up your soul without being paid for it? You commit a sin to-day for a price that you are not to receive till years have elapsed. How often have you gained nothing by your sin but disappointed hopes, difficulties, chagrin, and unhappiness! nothing but shame and disgrace before God and man!

What blindness! Shown by an example.

"What madness;" cries out St. Bernard with justice! "What madness! to value souls so cheaply which even the devil looks upon as precious!"⁴ What must the foul fiend think, when he sees he can have for a few cents, so to speak, that soul for which he once offered the whole world? That soul for which the Creator gave His life's blood! Ah, Christian! hear what St. Peter Chrysologus says: "Why is it that you value yourself so cheaply, although God values you so highly?"⁵ In the year 1558, as we

¹ Quid vultis mihi dare, et ego vobis eum tradam?—Matth. xxvi. 15.

² Ego eum vobis tradam. ³ Quid vultis mihi dare?

⁴ Quis furor, tam viles animas habere, quas etiam dæmon tam pretiosas habet!

⁵ Quare tibi tam vilis es, qui tam pretiosus es Deo?

read in the *Annals* of our Society, there was in Brazil a young girl, who was converted to the Catholic faith, and who, through her ardent love of God, made a vow of perpetual chastity. She was afterwards sold as a slave to a Christian, an impure man, who, like a savage wolf, tried to compel this poor lamb to consent to his wicked desires. The pious girl defended herself as long as she could, and at last, inspired by God, she adopted the following means: She hung a crucifix around her neck, thinking to herself: My master, who is a Christian, will see this image of his Redeemer and will respect it, and leave me in peace. When the abandoned man again attacked her, and she saw herself in great danger, she took the crucifix in her hand, threw herself down at her master's feet, and said to him: Think at least of the great God, whose image I hold in my hand, who shed His blood, and suffered so many torments in order to purchase your soul and mine! Ah, I beg of you, do not disgrace the soul that Christ paid so dearly for! If you continue to offer violence to me, the God who esteems your soul and mine so highly will take vengeance on you! At these words the wicked man entered into himself, begged pardon and gave the heroic slave her freedom. Ah, Christians, think of this in all temptations to sin! Keep the crucified Jesus, if not in your hands, at least in your memory. Think to yourselves: Shall I so shamefully disgrace my soul, which cost the life of the Son of God? And woe to you who betray souls! How Jesus will avenge Himself on you, for having given over to the devil by your flattery, seduction, and wicked conversation and teaching, the soul that he loves and esteems so highly!

I conclude with the words of the wise Sirach: "My son, keep thy soul, and honor it as it deserves."¹ St. Francis Xavier used sometimes to embrace, with both arms, the men who went to confession to him, shake them in a friendly manner, and say to them with the impressive zeal of an apostolic spirit, these words: "Ah, my child, keep this soul, preserve this soul, for it costs an immense price!" My dear brethren, I wish I could cry out to you all in the same zealous and impressive manner: Keep your souls. Oh, ye children, who are still young, fly carefully all occasions and dangers of sin, that you may not lose your precious souls! Oh, parents, watch over the souls of your children with the greatest care! God will one day require them at your hands,

Conclusion,
and exhortation to all
Christians
to be careful
of their
souls.

¹ *Fili serva animam tuam, et da illi honorem secundum meritum suum.*

and woe to you, if they are lost through your carelessness! How and whether your children are dressed, how they make their way in the world, what wealth you leave behind for them—these are the least important things committed to your care. How and whether they live piously, how you lead them on to devotion and to the love and service of God, how you keep them from sin, and from its dangerous occasions, in a word, what you do to bring them to your Creator in Heaven—that is the most important, nay, as far as your duty as father or mother is concerned, it is the only duty that God expects you to perform, under pain of eternal damnation. Oh, what zealous spiritual guides you might be, what joy you could give to God and His angels, if you only earnestly wished! Oh, you, who are rich and well off, keep your souls,¹ for they are your chief wealth. Never forget the words of Jesus Christ: “What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world?”² You who are poor and needy, be patient under your poverty; you have a soul as precious as any king or prince in the world. Ah, keep this soul, your best possession, and you will be rich and happy enough! Good and pious Christians, continue to guard your souls always! Sinners, take pity on your souls, and, without delaying any longer, resolve to save them from the claws of the devil by a true repentance and amendment of life! And to each and every one of you, no matter what your condition may be, I say: Keep your soul! Amen.

NINETEENTH SERMON.

ON THE CARE OF ONE'S ONLY SOUL.

Subject.

1. We have only one soul, and, therefore, even if it were not so precious, we ought to be most careful of it. 2. Yet, generally speaking, men treat their souls as if they each had thousands of them to lose.—*Preached on the twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Domine, filia mea modo defuncta est; sed veni, impone manum tuam super eam, et vivet.—Matth. ix. 18.

¹ *Serva animam tuam!*

² *Quid prodest homini?*

“ Lord, my daughter is even now dead: but come, lay Thy hand upon her, and she shall live.”

Introduction.

No wonder that the Ruler was grieved and troubled, and that he sought help from Jesus Christ. He had lost a member of his family, his only daughter, by death; and what father or mother is not sorry for the loss of a child? Yes, what saddened him most was the fact that she was his only daughter, as St. Luke the Evangelist plainly says: “ For he had an only daughter, almost twelve years old, and she was dying.”¹ If this only daughter had died, he would have had no other; therefore he was so anxious for her to live. My dear brethren, in my last sermon I have shown you how precious the soul is, and how deplorably careless most men are, in allowing their souls to die and to be lost. And now I say, as the subject of this sermon—

Plan of Discourse.

We have only one soul, and, therefore, even if it were not so precious, we ought to be most careful of it. Such, in a few words, is the subject of the first part. And yet, generally speaking, men treat their souls as if they each had thousands of them to lose. Such will be the complaint of the second part.

Virgin Mother Mary, thou hast, in thy very childhood, offered thyself to serve thy Creator perfectly with body and soul. Obtain now for us all from thy beloved Son, that He may give us, through our guardian angels, the grace to offer up our only soul to God, after thy example, and to keep it to eternal life!

The proverb says: That which is rare, of which we cannot have much, is dear and costly,² and is carefully preserved. If gold and silver were as common and plentiful as stones, they might be used in place of the latter to pave the streets with.

What we can have only once, is highly prized and well cared for.

But since they are the rarest of metals, they are also the most precious, and everything else may be purchased with them. Why are pearls and diamonds so highly valued? Because they are so rare. The rarest flower, no matter what its appearance may be, is looked upon by florists as the dearest and most precious. Now, if a thing, that is already precious in itself, is unique, so that one can have it only once, then it is beyond price. If there was only

¹ Quia unica filia erat ei, fere annorum duodecim, et hæc moriebatur.—Luke viii. 42.

² Quod rarum, carum.

one painting in the world, by a celebrated painter like Apelles, no monarch would be rich enough to buy it. If parents have only one son, and no other child, how much do they not love him? With what care, or to speak more truly, with what superstitious anxiety do they not look after him day and night, so as to keep him from harm and danger? All the servants in the house must be on the alert, if the child goes about anywhere by himself, to see that he does not fall. How his mother weeps and laments, if he gets sick! How she almost loses her senses, if he is in danger of death! But, my good people, why all this trouble? Is there anything particular in the child? Yes, everything for us. It is the only child we have, the only heir to our property, the only hope of our posterity, the only comfort of our life; if we lose him, we have no other, and all the joy and hope of our lives is gone too, as far as this world is concerned. In order to express the great and tender love he felt for Jonathan, David could find nothing better to compare it to, than the love of a mother for her only son. He says: "As the mother loveth her only son, so did I love thee."¹ As if there were no greater love on earth than this.

Christ Him-
self says the
same.

Christ our Redeemer Himself never showed more compassion in His mortal life, than when an only child fell sick, or died. He heard of the mortal illness of Lazarus, whose friends implored His help. Martha and Magdalen, the sisters of Lazarus, implored our Lord to come and help their brother and cure him. Lazarus was also the friend and host of our Lord; but still He would not yield. He waited four days before raising the dead to life. On the contrary, in the case of the widow of Naim, He was present without being asked, He consoled the afflicted mother, restored her son to life and gave him back to her again.² Why? Because, as St. Gregory Nyssenus says, she had only one son, according to what the sacred Scripture says: "Behold, a dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother."³ In the same way, we read in the fourth chapter of the Gospel of St. John, when the Ruler came to Christ and begged of Him to come and heal his son, who was dying, our Lord refused to go with him, although He restored the son to life at the repeated prayer of the father. While, on the other hand, as we read in to-day's Gospel, He went at once at the prayer of Jairus, whose daughter was dying, and restored her to life. Why was He so ready in the second instance?

¹ Sicut mater unicum amat filium, ita ergo te diligebam.—II. Kings i. 26.

² Dedit illum matri suæ. ³ Ecce defunctus efferebatur, filius unicus matris suæ.—Luke vii. 12.

“For he had an only daughter, and she was dying.”¹ Behold the reason, says St. Thomas Aquinas: As she was an only daughter, the Saviour's pity was at once excited, and He went down to the house to raise her from the dead, to restore her to life. So highly, my dear brethren, do men prize anything that is unique.

Now, oh, man, God has given you only one soul; tell me, for what purpose must you look after that soul? For the eternal joys of Heaven. If you neglect it, what will become of it? It will burn in hell for all eternity. There is no other alternative; it must be in Heaven or in hell for all eternity. You see, then, how much depends on caring properly for your soul. Now I ask you, how many souls have you either to care for, or to neglect? Have you a thousand? a hundred? twenty? Have you two souls? No! And how many, then? Only one soul, one single soul. Only once can you have this soul! It is the one most beautiful flower, that you can have only once. It is your only son, your only dove, your only spouse, as the sacred Scripture says. If you lose this one soul, you have lost everything for eternity! Ah, says St. John Chrysostom, mark this well: God has given you two eyes to see with, two ears to hear with, two hands to feel, two feet to walk; if one of them is injured you can use the other. “But He has given us only one soul; if we lose that, how can we live?”²

Man has but one soul, and much depends on its being cared for.

Now, if a mother takes such care and trouble, day and night, of her only son, that she may not lose him; if a monarch keeps the one rare picture that he has, so carefully that it may not be injured; if even a gardener is so careful of the one flower, because it is the only one of the kind, that it may not be stolen from him; how much greater care should you not then take of your one immortal soul, that it may not be lost forever? Can any care you take of it be even great enough? You have two eyes, ears, hands and feet; if I wanted one of them from you, what would you ask for it? If I wished to put out one of your eyes, what should I give you in return? If I wanted to cut off one of your hands or feet, how dear would you value it? Would you give it to me for a hundred, a thousand, a hundred thousand pounds? What! you would think, are you mad to try to drive such a strange bargain with me? No, I will not sell you my eye, my hand, or my foot for such a price. And why not? You would have another eye, another hand, another foot remaining.

Therefore it must be cared for most attentively.

¹ Quia unica filia erat ei, et hæc moriebatur.

² Animam vero dedit unam nobis: si hanc perdidimus, quam vivemus?

No matter, you would say, I will keep them both; away with you, I will not sell any of them to you. See now, oh, man, you have only one soul; what price do you put on it? The question that Christ asks in the Gospel of St. Matthew is: "What exchange shall a man give for his soul?"¹ Ah! "Strive for justice for thy soul, even unto death."² The Blessed Ægidius, a companion of the Seraphic Father St. Francis, used to say: If the world was full of men, and it was certain that only one of them would be saved, every one should strive to be the one who would bring his soul to Heaven; therefore, each one should now care for his soul with as much diligence and attention as if it alone were to be saved; for the salvation of his soul is as much to each individual, as that of all other men is to them; and if one man loses his soul, his loss is not less than it would be, if all men were damned.

What David did.

This was the care that the Prophet David, always and at all times, took most to heart, for he said: "My soul is continually in my hands."³ Mark the expression, my dear brethren. If you offer a petition, or a memorial to a great man, and beg of him not to forget it, if he is inclined to show you how anxious he is to serve your interests, he will say to you: It shall not leave my hands. In the same way, David wished to show the ceaseless care and anxiety that he had for his soul's salvation, by the words quoted above: I love my soul so dearly, that I keep it always in my hands, so as not to lose it. With the same care, says St. Bernard, speaking of this passage, should each one of us look after his soul: "As we do not easily forget what we hold in our hands, so we must never forget the business of our souls."⁴

The great blindness of those who care so little for their souls.

But, what happens in reality? What care do we take of our only soul? When the Portuguese, in former times, took the fortress of Socotra in the Indies, they put all to the sword so fiercely, that only two persons, who had hidden themselves away, remained alive. One of these was a blind man, who had crept into a dry well. The general, having discovered the two men, asked the blind man how he managed to find his way into the well. "Oh," said the latter, "the blind can find nothing so easily as the means of saving their life; because they have only one life." Ah, Christians, is it possible that the most of us are

¹ Quam dabit homo commutationem pro anima sua?—Matth. xvi. 26.

² Agonizare pro anima tua!—Ecl. iv. 33.

³ Anima mea in manibus meis semper.—Ps. cxviii. 109.

⁴ Sicut, quod in manibus tenemus, non facile obliviscimur, sic nunquam obliviscamur negotium animarum nostrarum.

blinder than that man? That we, who have only one soul, cannot find the way to save it from eternal death? Yes, alas, it is so! Of our only soul, of which we should take the greatest and most unceasing care, we take the least care of all, as if we had a thousand of them to lose. As I shall show in the

Second Part.

The Patriarch Jacob, when on the way with all his family to his native land, saw from afar his brother Esau, who hated him bitterly, approaching with four hundred armed men. What was he to do? Filled with apprehension, he could only look forward to the destruction of himself and his family. What plan did he at last follow in this great danger? He placed his cattle in battle array: the worst in front, the next best after them, while he kept the horses and camels in the rear. In the same way he arranged the people of his party. "And he divided the children of Lia and of Rachel and of the two handmaids; and he put both the handmaids and their children foremost; and Lia and her children in the second place; and Rachel and Joseph last."¹ What did Jacob mean by that arrangement? Was he thinking of attacking Esau, and giving him battle? But how could he fight with sheep and cattle, with women and children against armed soldiers? What was his intention, then? Listen and you will hear it. He thought to himself: "If Esau come," as an enemy, against me, "and shall destroy one company, the other company that is left shall escape."² He meant by that, to say: If my brother attacks me, I cannot defend myself; I must lose part of my people and property. Therefore, I will at least place in safety that which I love most, so that while he is occupied with the first company, the rest may have time to save themselves by flight. And even if he destroys the second company, my beloved Rachel and Joseph shall still be able to save their lives. If I save them, I shall not care much for the loss of the others. We learn from this, as Oleaster says, that to preserve what is dearest to us, we readily give up everything else we have.

The care we should take of our soul. Shown by an example from the Sacred Scripture.

My dear brethren, every day, nay, every hour, we are met on the road to our heavenly country by our greatest and sworn enemies, the devil with his temptations, the vain world with its

We do the contrary.

¹ Divisitque filios Liae et Rachel, ambarumque famularum. Et posuit utramque ancillam et liberos earum in principio, Liam vero et filios ejus in secundo loco, Rachel autem et Joseph novissimos.—Gen. xxxiii. 1, 2.

² Si venerit Esau ad urbem turmam, et percusserit eam, alii turma, quae reliqua est, salvabitur.—Ibid. xxxii. 8.

bad example and illusions, the flesh with its seductions and sinful desires. These are all so many highway robbers who fight against us far more bitterly than ever Esau did against Jacob. Sometimes we must give up a sensual pleasure, at other times a temporal gain, or the love of some creature, for the sake of our soul. How do we behave in this dangerous contest? What sort of an arrangement do we make? In order to save what is best and dearest we ought to expose all the other things readily. But, alas, the arrangement we make is altogether different to that of the prudent Jacob! The beautiful Rachel, the beloved Joseph, our only soul is placed in front and exposed to danger. If one company shall be destroyed, the other company that is left will be saved, we think in reality. If the enemy destroys what is in front, the other things are at least secured to us. If the devil takes away my soul, it is not much matter; I shall still have the temporal gain, the sensual pleasure, or the love of the creature.

**Explained
by another
example.**

When highway robbers meet a person in the forest, they draw their swords, or raise their clubs, and say to him: Your money or your life! Quick! there is no time for reflection! Alas, thinks the unfortunate traveller, I cannot give away my life, I have only one; if I cannot preserve it otherwise, then take my money and all that I have. In the same way, we may say, the highway robbers cry out to our conscience when we are tempted against the commandments of God: 'Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, etc.' You must give up your soul! or else lose that stolen property, and whatever else you have unjustly. Your soul! or else you must give up committing adultery; you must not, even in thought, desire your neighbor's wife, nor in any way whatever yield to sensual gratification. Your soul! or else you must declare your secret sin in confession. Your soul! or else you must give up hatred and anger against your neighbor. Your soul! or else you must leave that house, the proximate occasion of sin, and the company of that person, whom you like so much. Your soul! or else you must reform your bad habits and avoid idleness, and give up drinking and gambling, etc. Quick! you have no time for reflection! But that last word need not be said to us; our minds are already made up. And how? Is it like the traveller? Do we say, I have only one soul, if I cannot save it otherwise, then away with everything else that I have, wish for love, or desire? So should

¹ Non occides, non mœchaberis, non furtum facies, etc.

we act, such should always be our resolve ; yet it is the case with the fewest. And how do the others act? Alas, they say, I cannot give up my money, or my hatred, my love, the company and customs that are dear to me, the usages of the world, or the manner in which I have been living hitherto ! I am too fond of them ! Take my soul, if I must lose it, in order to keep the other things. Such is the resolution that each one makes who is guilty of a grievous sin of omission or commission against the law of God. Such is the way in which we abandon our only, most precious, and most beautiful soul, at the least difficulty or discomfort, and deliver it into the hands of our robbers and murderers.

Oh, how justly is not God incensed at such conduct ! We know from the sacred Scriptures what pleasure and joy He had in the obedience of the Patriarch Abraham. He had commanded him: "Take thy only begotten son Isaac, whom thou lovest ; and go into the land of vision, and there thou shalt offer him for an holocaust."¹ Abraham made no opposition, but was ready at once. He even had raised the sword to slay the innocent Isaac: "And behold, an angel of the Lord from Heaven called to him," hold, Abraham : "lay not thy hand upon the boy ; neither do thou anything to him ; now I know that thou fearest God, and hast not spared thy only begotten son for my sake,"² and that thou lovest God truly. And then the Lord swore to him : "Because thou hast done this thing,"—mark those words, "this thing," by which he showed the heroism of his obedience—"and hast not spared thy only begotten son for my sake ;" because thou art ready to give to Me and to sacrifice thy only son, thy only heir, thy only comfort in this world, "I will bless thee, and I will multiply thy seed as the stars of Heaven, and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."³ Ah, my God, I wish that I could now weep tears of blood, and lament like Jeremias, when I think that Thy sworn enemy, the rebel Lucifer, the foul fiend of hell, can boast more than Thou, that he has found not merely one Abraham on earth ready to sacrifice his only son to him, but thousands of faithful servants of both sexes, who are ready at the least sign to sacrifice to him their only son, whenever and wherever he wills !

How that displeases God.

¹ Tolle filium tuum unigenitum, quam diligis Isaac, et vade in terram visionis, atque ibi offeres eum in holocaustum.—Gen. xxii. 2.

² Et ecce, angelus Domini de caelo clamabat : Non extendas manum tuam super puerum, neque facias ille quidquam. Nunc cognovi, quod timeas Dominum, et non pepercisti unigenito filio tuo propter me.—Ibid. 11, 12.

³ Quia fecisti hanc rem, et non pepercisti filio tuo propter me, benedicam tibi, etc.—Ibid. 16-18.

In that way
the majority
sacrifice
their souls
to the devil.

Terrible thought! and yet it is true, every day proves it. All Christians know well that to give consent to an immodest thought, an impure look, a deliberate desire of revenge, in a word, any grievous offence against the law of God, is enough to sacrifice their souls to the eternal flames of hell; and yet, what happens? Very often the devil need do no more than say, with his wicked inspirations: "Take thy only begotten son,"¹ thy one only soul, and slay it in my honor, in that house there, by deliberate drunkenness. Take thy one only soul,² and sacrifice it to me, at every opportunity, by impurity. Take thy one only soul, and give it to me there, by an act of injustice. Take thy one only soul, and immolate it to me by a vain and scandalous manner of dressing, etc. And, at once, without opposition, they obey, like Abraham sacrificing his son. Nay, with a far more ready obedience do they offer a far more precious sacrifice; for, to slay one's son is to slay one's own flesh and blood; but to sacrifice one's soul is, in a manner, to sacrifice the Blood of Jesus Christ, which is the price of that soul. And that is the sacrifice you offer, oh, sinner, to the foul fiend, and not merely once, but twenty, a hundred, a thousand times, as often as you commit sin! What a gross injustice to God, your Creator! What a deplorable indifference to your one, only, and precious soul!

Many think
so little of
the loss of
their souls.

It is true, they say, but we are weak mortals! In temptations and occasions of sin one gets upset, one hardly thinks of the loss of the soul, or of sacrificing it in that way to the devil. What? You do not think of that? Why, that is the very thing that cannot be sufficiently deplored, for it is an evident sign that very little care is taken of the soul. Suppose a thief comes suddenly into your house; you think of your money at once, and do all you can to prevent it from being stolen from you. And why? Because you love your money; but if a miserable temptation to sin comes to you, to steal away your soul, you do not think of your soul, as you yourself acknowledge; and why? Because you do not think so much of your soul as you do of your money. Now, suppose that you have lost your soul; what do you do? What proof do you give that you grieve for that loss, and are afflicted at it above all things? A poor man comes home sad and melancholy; he refuses to eat and drink; he sighs and groans: Oh, what a wretched man I am! But what is the matter with you, my good friend? Alas, I have spent so much money on that law-suit and have lost it after all! Oh, what an unhappy

¹ Tolle filium tuum unigenitum.

² Tolle animam tuam.

man I am! There comes a citizen, weeping and moaning : Unfortunate man that I am! What is wrong with you? What is the matter with you? My house is pulled down to the ground; where can I go to now? God help me! Here comes a woman weeping, and refusing to be comforted. What has happened to her? Oh, I have lost my best ring with a valuable diamond; God help me! There is a man running about in the forest, up and down hill, whistling and shouting, full of uneasiness and anxiety; what is the matter with him? Oh, my best hunting dog has run away from me; I would not lose him for a good deal! Ah, let me cry out here, with St. Cyprian, God help us! A lost law-suit, a tumble-down house, a lost diamond, a runaway dog are mourned and grieved for; but a Christian loses his only soul, and where are his tears? Where his sorrow and grief? He thinks nothing of it; it does not even occur to him that he has lost it. He can laugh and sleep quietly, and renew his loss every day, as if his soul were nothing to him. St. Cyprian says: "Wretched man, you have lost your soul, and you do not weep bitterly!"¹ You can see from that, that the care of your only soul is that which troubles you least of all.

Finally, what can we say of those agents of the devil, who not only neglect the care of their own souls, but also drive a trade with the souls of others, in order to sell them to the devil? I mean those who, by immodesty in dress, seductive and impure conversations, or by open violence, endeavor to betray the innocent and to lead them into sin. To this class, too, belong many parents, who bring up their children, not in the fear of God, as they ought, but in the vanity of the world and its dangers. Woe to them! Fearful will be the vengeance which the just anger of God will take on these robbers of souls! When the Prophet Nathan wished to represent the full malice of David's sin to him, by command of God, he used that well-known parable: "There were two men in one city, the one rich, and the other poor,"² whose whole riches consisted in one little lamb: "he had nothing at all but one little ewe-lamb."³ Then the rich man came and took away the poor man's lamb. When he heard of this cruel act, says the Holy Scripture, "David's anger was exceedingly kindled against that man,"⁴ and he said to Nathan: "As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this is a

Some help
the devil to
ruin the
souls of
others.

¹ Animam tuam miser perdidisti, et non acriter plangis!

² Duo viri erant in civitate una, unus dives et alter pauper.—II. Kings xii. 1.

³ Nihil habebat omnino præter unam ovem parvulam.—Ibid. 3.

⁴ Iratus autem indignatione David adversus hominem illum nimis.—Ibid. 5.

child of death. He shall restore the ewe fourfold.”¹ And David was right; but, “Thou art the man,”² said Nathan to him; thou art he who has done this. And in the same way, I say, oh, traitor, oh, traitress, thou art the person of whom the parable speaks! Immoral man! It is you who robbed that unfortunate maiden of her only lamb, by your false promises, for she had only one, and that is her immortal soul, which you have stolen and given to the devil. It is you who by your immoral conversation taught wickedness to that innocent youth, which he would not have learnt otherwise, and thus you have taken from him his only lamb, his immortal soul. Vain girl! Frivolous woman! It is you who, by your immodest dress and manner daily rob so many men of their only lamb, and deliver it over to hell. Father! Mother! You by your unchristian training deprive your children of their only lamb, you steal their souls away from them and sacrifice them to the devil. Woe to you! when the angry Judge and Saviour of all shall demand an account from you of those souls that you have robbed Him of! He will exact a twofold and fourfold satisfaction for them. But, you yourselves have only one soul; how then will you be able to pay what you owe? But you must pay. If one, who sins alone by himself, is condemned to hell in punishment, then you will have a fourfold and manifold hell to suffer.

Conclusion
and exhortation
to care for
one's only
soul.

My dear brethren, is it not a deplorable thing that we think so little of our one precious soul, and sell it at such a vile price? In the Catholic Church we honor thousands and thousands of martyrs, who most joyfully gave up their honor, position, property, friends, and relations, and went cheerfully to the rack, the cross, the gallows, and the gridiron. Why did they do so? To save their only soul and to bring it to Heaven. We honor so many kings and princes who threw away crown and sceptre, and fled away to lead a hard life in the desert. For what purpose? To place their souls in safety. We honor, and are astonished at so many queens and empresses who changed their costly garments for sackcloth, the pleasures of the palace for the poverty of the convent and the hospital. What induced them to do so? Their only soul, which they wished to keep from danger. Were these people fools, or did they act wisely? Very wisely and prudently have they acted, and that we know in our own consciences. And how is it then that we go against our own judgment, and take

¹ *Vivit Dominus, quoniam filius mortis est vir, qui fecit hoc, ovem reddet in quadruplum.*
—II. Kings xii. 5, 6.

² *Tu es ille vir.*—*Ibid.* 7.

such little trouble about our souls, which are just as costly, just as dearly bought as theirs, and of which we have only one each, as they had? How is it we do not do more to place our souls in safety and to bring them to eternal salvation? Ah, take care of thy soul,¹ is my conclusion again; oh, man, take care of thy soul! Think of it! Thou hast only one soul, on which everything depends for thee; if that is lost, then thou hast lost all.

Charles, the fifth Roman Emperor of that name, was consulting once with one of his ministers about some state matters; the latter, an unscrupulous man, said to him: "You have a fine opportunity now, your majesty, to bring all these princes, one after another, with all their territories, under your sway, by force of arms." "True," answered Charles, "but what about my soul?"² Oh, beautiful answer and worthy of a Christian monarch! Let us also think, my dear brethren, whenever an opportunity presents itself to act against the law of God and our conscience, I could make that profit, I could get hold of that property, I might now make money by fishing in troubled waters, I could now gratify my sensual passion, revenge myself on my enemy, etc. Let us answer immediately: But what will become of my soul? No, away with all the goods, pleasures, and joys of the world! I will save my soul. I would rather be poor and despised and afflicted, so long as I can get to Heaven. A certain gentleman once recommended to Cardinal Bellarmine a very weighty matter, in a petition in which he frequently repeated the words: "I beg of you to take the deepest interest in this affair." Yes, answered the Cardinal, I shall attend to it; but you must know that my deepest interest and greatest care concerns my soul. Let each one say the same for himself, whenever domestic or other duties require his attention and diligence. I will look after my wife and children and will support them decently; I will perform the duties of my office as well as I can before God and the world; I will try not to lose my worldly goods; but my greatest care and diligence will always be for my soul, so that I may save it eternally. Let us say with David: "One thing I have asked of the Lord, this will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life."³ One thing I have received from the Lord, this will I try to keep. One soul He has given me, and my endeavor shall be to bring it safely into the house of the Lord for all eternity.

¹ *Serva animam tuam* 1

² *Sed anima, sed anima?*

³ *Unam petii a Domino, hanc requiram, ut inhabitem in domo Domini omnibus diebus vite mee. — Ps. xxvi. 4.*

Prayer to
God to save
our souls.

And Thou, oh, most merciful God, grant me to lay my petition before Thee, in the words which Thou spokest to Satan when he asked permission from Thee to work his will on Job, Thy servant: "Behold he is in thy hand, but yet, save his life." As long as that is safe thou canst do with him what thou wilt. Save his life.¹ The same thing do I say to Thee, oh, God, in the name of all the Christians of this country and city; each of them has a precious soul, purchased by the Blood of Thy Son, and each has but one soul. Oh, Almighty Lord, they are in Thy hands;² do with them what Thou wilt! one only request do I make of Thee—save their souls. In other things, do with them as Thou pleasest; take away their health by sickness, their wealth by wars and misfortunes, their food by unfruitful seasons and famine, if that is for Thy honor and glory and their greater good; chastise, punish, torment, kill them, but save their souls,³ keep them from mortal sin, strengthen them in temptations and seductions, that they may not offend Thee and be lost forever. As far as I am concerned, oh, my God, this is my earnest petition; behold, I am in Thy hands, do with me what Thou wilt; but grant, by Thy powerful grace, that I may save my soul; let me rather die a thousand times than lose my soul by a single sin. Ah, my precious soul, my only soul, if I save thee, I am rich enough for all eternity! Dear Christians, save your souls! Amen.

TWENTIETH SERMON.

ON THE COURSE TO BE FOLLOWED BY YOUNG PEOPLE IN
SELECTING A STATE IN LIFE.

Subject.

1st. Young people, wishing to enter a state of life, must follow God alone and His vocation. 2d. This is what very few young people do; to this course very few parents advise their children, to the great detriment of both.—*Preached on the fourth Sunday after Epiphany.*

Text.

Ascendente eo in naviculam secuti sunt eum discipuli ejus.—
Matth. viii. 23.

¹ Ecce in manu tua est, verumtamen animam illius serva.—Job ii. 6.

² Animam illius serva. ³ Ecce in manu tua sunt.

⁴ Verumtamen animam illorum serva.

“And when He entered into the boat, His disciples followed Him.”

Introduction.

The world is generally compared to a stormy sea, on which men sail, in the midst of countless perils, towards the haven of their heavenly country. But, oh, how many of them suffer shipwreck, and sink, body and soul, into the infernal abyss, because they have not a skilled pilot to guide their ship aright. That is to say, because they have not Jesus as their pilot to save them from danger; or, to speak more clearly, because they do not embark in that ship, because they do not enter on that state of life to which the voice of God calls them. My dear brethren, I have up to this explained how children must act in their youth towards God, their parents, and their own souls; but how must they act when they grow in years, so that it is time for them to separate from their parents, to embark in another ship, to enter on a certain state of life? Oh, here certainly they stand in need of good advice! Now I will give them the very best advice: Children, embark in that ship; parents, exhort your children to embark in that ship to which Jesus leads the way, to select that state of life to which God calls them. And this is the subject of to-day's sermon, namely—

Plan of Discourse.

Young people, wishing to enter on a state of life, must follow God alone and His vocation. Such will be the subject of the first part. This is what very few young people do; to this course very few parents advise their children, to the great detriment of both. The second part. A very useful subject for all of us.

Grant us Thy light and grace, oh, God, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and our holy angels guardian!

A well-known proverb says that we must deliberate long over a matter that we have only one chance of terminating successfully.¹ No man of sense would think of entering on a weighty business, on which much happiness or misery depends, blindly and without giving the matter due consideration, and taking the advice of experienced men. Otherwise he would expose himself to the risk of failure. For instance, a man has a large sum of money which he wishes to invest in some business; how he thinks and consults before he lets it go out of his hands! How such and such a person

A weighty business, on which much depends, is not generally begun blindly and without deliberation.

¹ *Deliberandum est diu, quod statuendum est semel.*

is situated, whether he will be able to pay the yearly interest, whether he has not borrowed money elsewhere, whether his property is unencumbered or mortgaged, whether the business that he carries on is a risky one, or not, etc., etc. All these points and many others similar ones must be cleared up first of all, with the greatest care and exactness, so that a complete knowledge of the man and of his position may be had. And that is quite right, for there is question of a large sum of money, that may be lost in that business. Even in matters of less importance, such as hiring a servant or a housemaid, many questions are asked about the person's fidelity and morality. And that is right, too; for it would be too late to deliberate afterwards, once the agreement is made. If the person is proved not to suit them, the master must put up with the inconvenience till the end of the year. Therefore, we must deliberate for a long time over a matter that we have but one chance of bringing to a successful conclusion.¹

A most weighty business is the choice of a state of life, because generally the salvation or loss of the soul depends on it.

What shall our son, or our daughter be? is the general question of parents. What state of life shall I enter on? children sometimes ask themselves. Father, mother, children, do you know what depends on this question, and what sort of a business is concerned in it? Is it about hiring a servant, investing money, gaining or losing property? Truly, if the world and its goods depended thereon, I need not lose my time exhorting you to mature deliberation, for such is beyond my line of duty. No, my dear brethren, a much greater and more important business, as we must acknowledge in our hearts, is concerned in this question. It is not enough for the daughter to find a rich husband in the married state, nor for the son to obtain a rich prebend or benefice in the ecclesiastical state, nor is it enough for the son or daughter to enter a well-regulated and holy community in the religious state; all this will not give a satisfactory solution to the question. The question is about a state of life, on the choice of which generally depends either Heaven or hell for all eternity; the eternal happiness of those young people, or their eternal misery in everlasting fire. And how is that? Cannot God bring all men to Heaven? Of course He can, and will do it too, if we only earnestly ask Him to do so. Can we not save our souls in any state of life? Of course we can; but remember that not every one can work out his salvation in any state, because, according to the unanimous teaching of the holy Fathers, a certain state of life is a certain way in which divine Providence, ordering all things in

¹ *Deliberandum est diu, quod statuendum semel.*

number, weight, and measure, leads a certain man to eternal salvation; and to this state God gives for that man suitable helps and powerful graces, which would not be found in another state, and without which that man, although, absolutely speaking, he could, still, generally speaking, would not persevere in good and save his soul, or would do so only with difficulty. It is evident, then, that our salvation does not always depend on the holiness of the state we make choice of, but on the conformity of that state with the will of God, and with the arrangements of His Providence that He made for us from all eternity. Thousands of both sexes have saved their souls in the ecclesiastical state; but that boy or that girl would be eternally lost in it. Thousands of both sexes have lost their souls in the secular state, and yet that boy or that girl will gain Heaven in it. There are thousands now in hell, who, if they had embraced another state of life, would be in Heaven; and there are thousands now happy in Heaven, who would have died miserably and lost their souls, if they had not chosen the state appointed for them by God. Even at this moment there are thousands leading bad lives, who will die an unhappy death and be lost, because they disregarded the divine will in embracing a state of life. "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways!"¹ and at the same time, how just!

Ah, my dear brethren, there is great need, then, of counsel and deliberation for parents and children, when the question is asked: What shall my son or my daughter be? What state of life shall I embrace? What state has God called me to? In what state can I save my soul according to the decrees of Providence? Who will tell me this? Whom can I ask about it? Whose advice shall I seek? Who can give me salutary counsel in such an important matter, so that I can accept his decision? What sort of knowledge must such an adviser have, do you think? Oh, almost infinite knowledge and understanding! He must be able to penetrate into the divine council-chamber, so as to know what are the hidden decrees regarding me, and the way of my salvation. He must know the order and variety of graces, one after the other, which are prepared for me my whole life long, at all times, in all places and circumstances. He must know if I shall correspond with those graces and in what degree. He must know all the

Therefore this choice must not be made without taking advice from an experienced person. Such an adviser is not to be found amongst men.

¹ O altitudo divitiarum, sapientie et scientie Dei! Quam incomprehensibilia sunt judicia ejus, et investigabiles vię ejus?— Rom. xi. 33.

temptations and snares that the devil, the world, and my own flesh will place in my way in the state of life he counsels me to choose. He must foresee all the occasions of good or evil that such a state will offer me, and many other things, too, must he know beforehand, so as to be aware of all the changes of time, age, prosperity, and adversity. He must be able to see into my heart and to know my inclinations and most secret desires. If he is wanting in any degree in this knowledge and experience, he cannot give me certain advice regarding the state of life in which I am to save my soul. But where in the world can I find such an adviser? If Solomon, that wonder of wisdom, came out of his grave, he could not help me. Father, mother, relations, no matter how much you love me and desire my salvation, this is too much for you, this you cannot do. Although my duty obliges me to obey you in all things with the greatest respect and filial love, yet in this matter, I cannot trust to your word and your guidance alone. I do not even know myself thoroughly, as far as the inclinations and weaknesses of my soul are concerned; much less can I know how it will be with me in the future, or what will happen to me in this or that state of life, so that, with regard to my choice of a state, it would be useless for me to have recourse to such advisers.

God alone
can and will
give safe ad-
vice on this
point.

It is God, my dear brethren, and God alone who has all the necessary knowledge, and who sees clearly what is good or bad for the soul of each one at all times and in all circumstances. He it is also who uses His knowledge for the greater good of man, when He calls him, by His Providence, to a certain state of life. It is God, and God alone, who has prepared for each one a special grace, called the grace of vocation,¹ by which he will lead each one to the proper state of life; and if any one enters a state of life without that grace, he recedes from the way of salvation and places himself in the way of eternal ruin. It is God, and God alone, who has reserved for Himself the office of decreeing the state of life that each one must embrace, and He never allows any one else to perform this office, even if any one else were capable of doing so. St. Gregory assigns the cause of this: "God," he says, "is the best and most excellent Father of all men; nay, He is the only one whom we can look upon as the Father of both body and soul, and He admits of no rival." When the heroic Mother of the Machabees saw her children undergoing the most cruel tortures at the hands of the executioners, when she saw them

¹ *Gratia vocations.*

flayed alive, cut in pieces and boiled, and yet bearing all this with the greatest patience and courage, Ah, she said, my dear children, lift up your eyes to Heaven! "I neither gave you breath, nor soul, nor life, neither did I frame the limbs of every one of you. But the Creator of the world, that formed the nativity of man, and that found out the origin of all." I am your mother according to the flesh; but the best part of you, your soul, is a masterpiece from the hand of God, your heavenly Father. From this it follows, my dear brethren, that the Lord God alone has the right of directing the vocation of man according to His will, and of prescribing to him a certain state of life; for, it is in this that dominion properly consists, as well as the fatherly care which He has for the soul, the spirit, and the will of man. An earthly father can and must look after the Christian education of his children; he must have a care of their support, nourishment, goods, and property; but in what concerns their own persons, that is their free will in the choice of a state of life. No one but Thou, oh, my God, can direct and ordain therein! And how comes it, asks St. Bernard, that each and every state of life, which constitutes the wonderful diversity of men in the world, receives the name of vocation? One is called to the worldly state, is the general expression, another to the religious, another to the military state, and so on. What is the meaning of that, if not that each one has a certain state appointed for him, to which he is called by God and by His all-wise decrees?

Why do the holy Fathers look upon it as such a great sin to select a state of life without being called to it by God? Certainly, because all states, with the sole exception of that appointed for us by God, are very dangerous and injurious to our salvation; and the man who is where he is not called by God, is, so to speak, out of his proper place. I do not mean to say that it is a mortal sin not to follow the call of God, but I must maintain, with the holy Fathers, that it is placing one's self in great danger of future sins, and so of eternal damnation. Amongst other sad mishaps that the world has experienced in this particular, listen to the following, related by Father Nicholas Lancicius, a man renowned for his writings, as well as for his holy life. I had, he writes, in the Roman Seminary, under my instruction, a lad endowed with the rarest natural gifts, who was a relation of a certain illustrious

Not to follow His advice is to put one's self in danger of eternal ruin. Shown by an example.

¹ Neque enim ego spiritum et animam donavi vobis et vitam, et singulorum membra non ego ipsa compegi, sed enim mundi Creator, qui formavit hominis nativitatem.—II. Machab. vii. 22, 23.

Patriarch. After having, under my direction, made the exercises of our Holy Father Ignatius very devoutly, the young man asked me if it would be a sin not to follow the voice of God calling one to the religious state. On account of certain things that I was aware of, I answered him very cautiously, that it might be done without any apparent grievous sin, since vocation is not a command, but rather a counsel on the part of God ; still, that it is certain that many are lost because they do not obey this call of God to the religious state, not precisely on account of losing their vocation, but on account of the many sins into which God foresaw that they would fall in the world, and to preserve them from which He wished to separate them from the world and to call them to the religious state. And such was indeed the case with that young man; for, not long afterwards, he left the Roman College, and went to Macerata to study law. Here he quickly forgot his former pious practices (as many young people do when they are left to themselves, away from their parents in foreign countries); he left off frequent confession and communion; instead of visiting the churches, he spent his time with companions of his own stamp, in gaming and drinking houses; in place of reading spiritual books, he read impure romances; and amongst other sins, which follow such an unrestrained mode of life, he nurtured an impure passion for an abandoned woman. As he was returning home one dark night from her house, he met a rival, who was also attached to the same woman. The meeting took place in the public street, opposite to the gate of the very convent to which he had received a vocation from God. The rival attacked the young man and stabbed him to the heart. The unfortunate youth, weltering in his blood, cried out, with dying voice, for his confessor; but before the latter could reach him, he breathed his last, right before the gate of those religious, amongst whom, according to divine decree, he should have found eternal happiness. Instead of that he found eternal damnation, and verified in himself the terrible sentence: "I called and you refused. You have despised all my counsel. I also will laugh in your destruction, and will mock. When sudden calamity shall fall on you and destruction, as a tempest, shall be at hand. . . . Then shall they call upon me, and I will not hear; . . . because they did not consent to my counsel."

¹ Vocavi et renulistis. Despexistis omne consilium meum. Ego quoque in interitu vestro ridebo et subsanabo. Cum irruerit repentina calamitas, et interritus, quasi tempestas inruerit. . . . tunc inuocabunt me, et non exaudiam; . . . eo quod non acque erunt consilio meo.—Prov. i. 24-30.

Many such sad examples may be read in the Annals of our Society, of those who refused to obey a call to the religious state.

All this forces me to the necessary conclusion of the first part. If all states in the world come from divine vocation ; if every state is not good for the salvation of every one ; if no one in the world can know, or teach me what state is the safest for me ; if no man has the right or the power to compel me to embrace a state according to his will ; if God alone knows which is the best for my salvation ; if God alone will and must direct me herein ; if it is dangerous not to follow the call of God, and meanwhile, salvation or damnation depends on the choice of a state, then it follows, of necessity, that it is God, and God alone, whom parents must often and earnestly ask: Oh, Lord, what dost Thou will my child to be ? He is in Thy hands, under Thy guidance ; Thou alone art the Father of his soul ; we leave the disposal of him to Thee ; lead and guide him to that state in which Thou wishest him to serve Thee ! The necessary consequence, too, is that it is God, and God alone, from whom children especially must ask counsel, and for a long time, by frequent, earnest, and zealous prayer, and, prepared for everything, they must cry out with the Apostle: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"¹ Give to my understanding that light Thou hast promised to those who ask it of Thee, so that I may know how and where I am to live according to Thy vocation and holy will ! Oh, if all children acted thus with regard to their state of life ; if all parents left their children to be thus disposed of by God, what a heavenly life would each one lead on earth, in the state appointed for him by God ! How many souls would then go to Heaven ! But, alas, it is God who is least of all asked for counsel in this matter, although it is of the greatest importance ; and even when He makes known His will inwardly, He is the last of all to be listened to or obeyed either by parents or children. Therefore, it is no wonder that all are not in the state to which God called them, and consequently that they are not as they would wish to be at the hour of death. No wonder is it that parents make such a gross mistake with their children, and often ruin them forever. As we shall see in the

Consequently, God alone must be asked for advice, by parents and children.

Second Part.

Our Father Masenius, in his Symbols, paints a ship with outspread sails, ready to leave the shore, but without any fixed direction, with this motto : "She is waiting for the wind."² As

That is little attended to by most children.

¹ Domine, quid me vis facere ?—Acts ix. 6.

² Expectat ventos.

who take
the first
state that
offers, with-
out deliber-
ation.

soon as the wind comes the ship goes away. If the wind is from the west, she goes to the east; if it comes from the east, she goes to the west; if it comes from the south, she goes to the north; if from the north, she goes to the south. She waits for the wind.' It is no matter whence the wind comes, or whither it blows. In the same manner, my dear brethren, it seems to me that many children act. When the time comes for them to choose a state of life, they are like ships with their sails set: they let themselves be driven in any direction, wherever the wind wills. They think not, reflect not. The first opportunity that offers seems good and acceptable to them, it is a vocation for them. Their voyage may be to the east or to the west; their state may be either religious or worldly, it may lead their souls to Heaven or to hell—they wait for the wind. Some evening or other, in pleasant company, a young woman attracts the attention of one, a young man that of another, acquaintance is made, an attachment begins, each party hopes that love is mutual. 'There is a favorable wind, let the ship go: I know what to do, I will get married. Here is one who wishes to resign a benefice in favor of a person who never thought of such a thing, or to procure a benefice for that person: what a favorable wind! The determination is made at once; no time is lost; the necessary orders are received: I will be a secular priest. There is a rich parish vacant, thinks another to himself; can I get votes enough if I apply for it? Yes, the majority are good friends of mine. See what a fair wind is blowing: let there be no delay; I will apply at once; I shall become a parish-priest. Here a lucrative position is vacant: oh, what a fair wind! I shall do my best to obtain it. But he who fills that office must be unmarried. No matter, I accept the condition. Thus in a moment the choice is made, the resolution fixed, in a matter on which the whole of one's after life, as well as eternity, depends. With reason does Seneca say: "You may see many wandering about in uncertainty, who do not what they had intended, but what occurred to them by chance."² Whether that marriage so blindly contracted, that chance position in the Church, that parish so luckily obtained, or that office with the condition of celibacy attached, will have a good or bad effect on the soul's salvation, or will give good opportunities for saving one's soul—that question is never even dreamt of, much less is it

¹ Expectat ventos.

² Plerosque videas sine proposito vagari, qui non, quæ destinauerunt agunt, sed in quæ incurrerunt.

maturely considered during waking moments, until the time comes when the state is chosen for life, and reflection is too late.

There are others who wish to act more prudently: they think and reflect for a long time beforehand and very carefully on the state of life they shall choose; but not with Him whom they should consult first of all. Such people seem to me like the sailors of the Eastern Islands, who, not knowing anything of the magnetic needle, and yet wishing to cross the sea, took a certain kind of bird with them, and when they wished to return, let the bird go, and, since it had a natural instinct to go back to its own country, they followed in the direction of its flight. But how unreasonably men act who allow themselves to be guided by unreasoning animals! Birds can show where land is, but they cannot point out where the safe harbors and secure passages are to be found. Therefore, it generally happened that the unlucky ship was driven on the rocks, and broken in pieces.

There are some who take counsel, but not from God.

Not otherwise, I say, do those children enter on the voyage of life, as far as the choice of a state is concerned; they allow themselves to be advised and led by untamed, unreasoning birds, that is to say, either by their bad inclinations and sensuality, or by men who, as I said before, do not and cannot know what is good or bad for their soul's salvation. In that state I can live most comfortably; in that other I can get on better in the world; in this I can have more pleasure; with that person I shall get great riches, and so on; and that is all they think of. They ask: What shall I be? But whom do they ask? Their parents, whose will and pleasure alone they want to know, or their relations or companions, whose advice and example they wish to follow. They leave the magnetic needle which alone can lead them safely: they never consult God, who alone knows the state of life suited to them, nor ask Him for counsel. And what a miserable shipwreck will be the result! What useless repentance and profitless complaints will be sure to follow! What an unhappy, discontented, and wicked life, and what a miserable death must be the result! And even if none of these consequences followed, how can there be any peace of conscience in a state in which one does not know whether he is doing the will of God, or not; in a life which was begun without God, and which, for all one knows, may still be without Him, inasmuch as we cannot know if it is regulated according to His pleasure?

Still it seems easier to excuse young people in this matter, on account of their want of experience. But should not the parents,

Still less is this done by many par-

ents, who
follow their
own will in
fixing a
state for
their chil-
dren.

at least, supply what is wanting in their children, by their care and instruction? Should they not often exhort and compel them to have recourse to God, and to pray earnestly for light in such an important matter, and show them how to pray? But, unfortunately, they are often wanting in this duty, in this parental obligation, so strictly enforced by God. Not only do they fail to exhort their children to recommend the matter to God, but they take the selection of a state for their children into their own hands, without taking any account of God. What do you think, or rather, as it is said in reality, what do you wish our son or our daughter to be? Such is the question put to the wife by the husband, and to the husband by the wife. Yes, they say, it will be a difficult matter to bring them all up according to our condition. Our eldest son, as a matter of course, must remain in the world; the other, who is a little stupid and awkward, will do for the Church, and we can look out for a benefice for him. We need not be uneasy about our youngest daughter; she will have suitors enough. The eldest looks rather plain; she will do for a convent. And so they settle the whole affair, and the poor children, thus predestined by their parents before they are grown up and able to judge for themselves, have to agree and to enter in the state pointed out for them by their father or mother, whether they like it or not, whether it is good or bad for them, whether it is their vocation or not. Now, if the children have no liking for that state, and if the parents are unwilling actually to force them to accept it (as I believe is the case with most Christian parents), still the matter can be so managed that the children must pretend to have a liking for it and to choose it freely. For those who are to remain in the world are allowed great liberty and are brought up to vanity; they are allowed to go into society and company, in which their tender minds, like young plants, are easily bent and biassed at pleasure, so that they become quite worldly. Nothing is spoken of in their presence but marriage. If they show the least sign of having an inclination for the religious life, they are at once sent off somewhere, or are kept occupied with all sorts of things that can be of no use to them except in the world. And, what is still more unchristian, temptations and snares are placed in their way, they are brought into dangerous occasions, they are sent to countries from which, as experience teaches, they will bring back nothing but vanity, frivolity, sin, and vice, so that the religious feeling must soon be dulled in them. They are kept away from sermons, so that they may not

hear anything good, and thus become more pious and more inclined to the religious life. In fact, my dear brethren, I know not what to think. It seems to me that an answer, that was once given to a preacher of my acquaintance, must be true. The preacher was complaining to a person that, after having preached on the duties of children for such a long time, they still seemed to have profited but little. Oh, said the other, you must not wonder at that, Father; parents are afraid that their children will become pious, and therefore they keep them from coming to the sermons, although the children would come readily enough if left to themselves. God grant that this may not be the case amongst us! The other children, whom their parents have predestined to the religious life, are treated in a totally different manner: they are kept in solitude at home, so as to hear and see nothing of what passes in the world; they are brought to convents and churches; pious books and pictures are placed in their way; they are continually told of the happiness and contentment of the religious state (and that is really true, as all experience who are called by God to that state). Oh, would to God that all parents brought up their children in that way, but with a purer and better motive, and after having first taken counsel from God, and leaving their children their own choice and free will to follow the divine calling, whatever it may be! In one word, the son or daughter is sometimes flattered, sometimes threatened, until consent is obtained; and if they refuse at first, the parents show such displeasure and dissatisfaction, that at last the innocent children are moved by a sense of shame and filial love to bow down beneath that yoke which is placed on their shoulders, not by the will of God, but by the will of their father and mother, who take no account of God in the matter at all. For, they say, if the vocation is not there yet, it must come by-and-by.

No, says Salvianus, with bitter irony, we are not living in the days of Abraham, when the sacrifice of children by the hands of their parents was a rare and prodigious event! Nothing is commoner in the world in our days, than for parents to imitate Abraham: they joyfully sacrifice their children to God; they do not even wait for a command from on high to do so; they do it before God requires it of them; they sacrifice their children although He has not asked for such a sacrifice and will not accept it. But I am wrong, after all, continues Salvianus; these parents are not at all like Abraham; for that holy man was ready to immolate his son, because God told him to do so. They, on the con-

Quite unlike
the patri-
arch Abra-
ham.

trary, sacrifice their children to God, not according to His counsel, nor for His service; but they force them on Him, so to speak, with violence, in order to satisfy their own avarice, or evil inclinations, or for some other temporal motive. Abraham received exceeding great praise and an eternal reward for his ready obedience. But you, oh, parents, what kind of a reward do you expect for the sacrifice you offer through self-will?

They sin
against God
and against
their chil-
dren.

What kind of a reward do you expect from God, whose office you thus insolently usurp? "If I be a Father, where is my honor?"¹ Such is His just complaint to the Prophet Malachias. If I am the supreme Father of all souls, where are the honor and respect that are due to me, where is the sign of my paternal authority, if other fathers and mothers try to take it away from me, if I have nothing more to do with those whom I have created, if I cannot appoint for them the state of life which I wish them to enter? Oh, mortals, can you dare to be guilty of such injustice? Who has given you authority and power to do so? I have given you your children in trust, I have lent them to you, that you may keep them according to my will and bring them up; but you constitute yourselves lords and masters over them; you actually turn their free will according to your own plans! Thus I am a Father only in name, while you have all the power. It is in vain that you protest sometimes that your children belong more to Me than to yourselves. If such were really the case you should leave it to Me to select a state of life for them. As the idea takes you, you order one into my service in the religious state, and you keep the other for the world. Who told you that I want the one and not the other? Must I then take what you do not wish to have? The vocation to a particular state is a grace. Who has given you power to distribute it according to your own will? I alone can and will give that grace to whom and when I will. The eternal happiness of your children generally depends on that grace. Where did you get knowledge enough to foresee what state would be best for their souls? This foreknowledge I have reserved to myself. And what sort of thanks do you expect from your children, if the state you force them into should cause the loss of their souls; if your son leads an impious life in the religious state, or an unchristian life in the world; or if your daughter lives a life of discontent and anxiety and despair in the convent, like a poor soul in purgatory? How bitterly they will cry out to Me for vengeance on you, and how they will complain

¹ Si Pater ego sum, ubi est honor meus?—Malach. i. 6.

that they have been brought to eternal death by those from whom they received life, and who should have brought them to eternal life! And know, too, that I will require those souls, which you have stolen from Me, at your hands.

Christian parents, take this to heart! Leave to their Creator alone the selection of a state for your children! I do not mean that you should give yourselves no trouble about it; that would be indeed a great mistake, and those who are careless of what becomes of their children must answer for their neglect, if they allow the latter to choose the first state that comes into their heads. No! It is your duty to help your children with advice and exhortation, and to assist them to the best of your ability to enter on the state to which God has called them. Your duty is, if your child wishes to undertake anything rashly, to restrain him, until he has thought the matter over. Your duty is, if your child chooses a state in which there are evident dangers of evil, or if his motives are not good, or if he wishes to enter on it by unlawful means, to use your parental authority, and to prevent him, even against his will. The whole lesson that you have to learn from to-day's sermon is this: You must not determine on a state of life for your children without first deliberating maturely and taking counsel with God, and you must frequently exhort your children to do the same.

And you, oh, children, to whom your vocation is of the greatest importance, remember the advice of the wise Sirach: "Pray to the Most High that he may direct thy way in truth."¹ Think, and think often: What shall I be, a saint in Heaven, or a demon in hell? Oh, certainly I ought not to hesitate. I must and will save my soul, no matter how the world may go with me; I will go to Heaven. Even if I must leave my parents, I will go to Heaven. Even if I must sacrifice all my goods and pleasures, I will go to Heaven. I can do without my parents and friends for all eternity, but I cannot do without Heaven. I can live poor and without sensual joys, but I cannot burn in hell forever! I am resolved, and firmly; I will go to Heaven! Therefore I must not choose a state of life in order to grow rich, nor to enjoy life, but to go to Heaven. Therefore I must and will choose that state which will most surely lead me to Heaven. And what state is that? No other than that to which God calls me. Therefore I must and will obey the voice of God; and, that He may show me what my vocation is, I will pray daily, especially in the

Exhortation
to parents.

To children.

¹ Deprecare Altissimum, ut dirigat in veritate viam tuam.—Ecl. xxxvii. 19.

holy Mass and at holy communion, when I have my God within me, and with humility and childlike confidence: Oh, Lord, Thou enlightenest all men that come into the world! Thou hast said with Thine own infallible Word: "Ask and ye shall receive."¹ Behold, oh, Lord, I earnestly beg of Thee something that nearly concerns Thy honor and my salvation, and which I cannot know without Thy inspiration: Show me the state of life in which Thou wishest me to serve Thee. To that end I will pray every day to the Blessed Mother of God and to my holy angel guardian. I will select a confessor, to whom I will open my heart and whose advice I will follow, as that of one whom God makes use of to declare His will to me. And then I shall at least have, in my future state of life, the consolation, however it may be with me, well or ill, that I did not choose it of myself, nor through the inspirations of flesh and blood, but with the divine counsel and according to the divine will. Then I shall be certain that God will assist me with special helps and graces in all dangers, temptations, difficulties, and anxieties of my state of life. And such is the case, Christian souls; you will then be in that ship which has Jesus Christ as its pilot, and He will guide you to the haven of eternal happiness. Amen.

Another Introduction for the First Sunday after Epiphany:

Text.

Nesciebatis quia in his quæ Patris mei sunt, oportet me esse
—Luke ii. 49.

"Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?"

This is the end and object for which all of us mortals are created. For this alone are we in the world, that we may be always about the business of our heavenly Father, that we may serve God, love Him, do His will, and finally be eternally happy with Him. Christian children, I have lately shown you what your duty is to God with regard to that business, and proved that you must, especially in your youth, be pious and zealous in the service of your God. But you will not always remain children and in the years of childhood. A time will come when you must make choice of a permanent state of life, in which it is the will and desire of God that you should serve Him during your lives. Do you think of that? It is a matter that you must early begin

¹ *Petite, et accipietis.*—John xvi. 24.

to reflect upon seriously and carefully. And certainly you require good advice in it. I will give you the best advice: *It is with God alone that children and parents should often and carefully take counsel in the choice of a state of life.* As I shall show in the first part. *Many parents and children never think of consulting God in this matter, to the great detriment of both.* As I shall prove in the second part, etc.—*continues as before.*

Another Introduction of this Sermon for the Feast of St. John the Baptist :

Text.

Quis putas, puer iste erit ?—Luke i. 66.

“What an one, think ye, shall this Child be?”

Oh, would that this were oftener asked and reflected upon by those whom it most concerns: “What an one, think ye, shall this Child be?” What do you think I shall be? Then would people lead a better and more Christian life, and a greater number of men would save their souls. My dear brethren, I allude to that question and deliberation in which the state of life of children is treated of. Certainly parents often think of it, and ask about it, and so do children; but they often do it wrongly. They ask each other about it, but say nothing to Him who can give them the most certain answer, and whom alone they should consult on this point, and thus it is that both parents and children make shameful mistakes that cause irreparable loss to both; as I shall prove in to-day’s sermon. *It is God alone whom parents should often and earnestly ask, What shall my child be?* The first point. *Many parents and children, etc.—continues as before.*

¹ *Quis putas, puer iste erit?*

TWENTY-FIRST SERMON.

ON REFLECTION IN THE ACTUAL SELECTION OF A STATE
OF LIFE.

Subject.

When actually choosing a state, I must consider: 1st. Whether and how the state I am about to select will help me to my last end. 2d. Whether and how that state is in accordance with the divine will.—*Preached on the second Sunday after Easter.*

Text.

Vocem meam audient.—John x. 16.
“They shall hear my voice.”

Introduction.

To hear the voice of the shepherd, and to follow it, is the mark of a good sheep. To hear the voice of God, and to obey it, is a sign of a chosen child of God. This is particularly the case with you, Christian sons and daughters, who have as yet selected no permanent state of life, and who are still waiting for the voice of God, and deliberating as to what state you will make choice of. What is to be done? How shall I know the voice of God, or whether He calls me to the religious, or secular, or unmarried state? Ah! some say, would that an angel would come to tell me plainly: This or that is the state that you must embrace according to the divine vocation. I would willingly obey. Now, it is not likely that the angel will appear to tell you this, but he will speak to you inwardly, if you only earnestly desire it. And what am I to do? The answer to this question is the subject of to-day's sermon. Be attentive!

Plan of Discourse.

When actually choosing a state, I must consider whether and how the state I am about to select will help me to my last end. How you are to consider that, I will show you in the first part. I must consider whether and how that state is in accordance with the divine will. How you are to find that out, I will show you in the second part. Every one may learn from this how he is to act when in doubt.

Oh, Holy Ghost, enlighten our hearts, in such an important choice, on which our future lives and eternity generally depend,

so that we may not go astray in making it ! Mother of Eternal Light and our holy angels guardian, help us herein !

The universal and only end and object that every man must first propose to himself, is to serve God, to place his soul in safety, and to gain eternal happiness. With regard to this, there is no need of reflection or deliberation, as to whether I wish to gain this end or not ; for that must be once for all firmly fixed and determined on : I will serve God, I will save my soul, I will be eternally happy. No matter what my state of life may be, I must and will serve God therein, and save my soul. No matter what it may cost, whether it be hard or easy, I must and will serve God, and save my soul. So that there is no need of my reflecting on that point, and my only consideration must be: What are the ways and means by which I shall best attain that end? In the same way, the doctor, who undertakes to cure a sick man, does not consider whether he wishes to cure him or not, for that is his duty and the object of his skill ; his only consideration is, what medicines shall he make use of in order to effect a speedy cure. A general, who is commanded by his king to take a certain fortress, does not ask himself whether he wishes to take it or not, for that is the business he has to do ; his thoughts and deliberations regard only the best ways and means to get possession of the fortress: whether he shall take it by storm, or besiege it and starve out the garrison, or get it into his power by a stratagem.

We need not ask if we wish to gain our last end, but we must reflect on the ways and means of doing so.

The ways and means, my dear brethren, to attain our end, is a certain state of life in which we intend to serve God and save our souls. Now if there were only one state in which we could gain eternal happiness, there would be no further need of deliberation, because every one should then embrace the same state. For instance, a poor man has to go to a certain town ; that is the object he has determined on. How, and in what manner is he to make the journey? He need not reflect long on this: he must go on foot, otherwise he will never get there. And why? Because that is the only means of travelling for him ; he has no other. He could certainly travel more conveniently on horseback, or in a carriage, but he does not even think of that, because he has no money, and such means of travelling are not within reach of poor people. On the other hand, a rich merchant, who has determined to go to a foreign country, since he has many different means of attaining his object, thinks and deliberates on the way in which he will travel ; and, if he acts prudently, he will select that which will bring him to his journey's end with the greatest safety, comfort,

The means to our end is a certain state of life.

and speed. I might, he thinks, go on foot, but that would be very disagreeable for me, I am so unaccustomed to it. I might go on horseback, but that would be uncomfortable in rainy weather. I can hire a carriage; it will certainly shake me about a bit, but it will protect me from wind and weather, and I can sit down at my ease and bring something to eat with me. So that is settled, I will go in the carriage. In the same way the doctor and general deliberate: the one selects among different medicines, that which will free the patient from his illness with the greatest speed and certainty, and prescribes it; the other holds a council of war to see how he can best get possession of the enemy's fortress, with the least loss of his own men, and having fixed on a plan, he carries it into execution.

Since there are many different states, we must consider which is the best for our salvation.

Now, since there are many different ways in which man can attain his last end; that is, since there are many different states of life, in which he can serve God and save his soul, his first thought and consideration must be directed to finding out the state he intends selecting for that purpose. And since eternal happiness or misery depends on it, he who wishes to act prudently, must look out for a state in which he can best perform that all-important duty of serving God and saving his soul. I can serve God, he must say to himself, in the religious state, and so save my soul; I can serve God and save my soul in a state of celibacy; I can serve God and save my soul in the married state; but which of these three is the least likely to lead me away from the service of God and from the path to Heaven? In which of these three have I the most opportunities of serving God and attending to my soul? In which of the three can I best secure my salvation? From this it follows, that I must not consider what each state is in itself, nor which is the holiest, the most perfect, the easiest, the most difficult, the most agreeable or disagreeable to the senses; but rather, whether, and how far, that holiness, perfection, ease, difficulty, agreeableness, or disagreeableness will help me to my last end; that is, whether that state, no matter what it may be in itself, will certainly help me to serve God better and to make my salvation more secure. Whether the medicine is cheap or costly in itself, sweet or bitter, agreeable or not, makes no matter to the doctor who prescribes it, nor to the sick man who has to take it: the question is whether the medicine, let it be dear or cheap, sweet or bitter, pleasant or disagreeable, has power to restore the sick man thoroughly to health. If I gave to a man suffering from fever, a glass of wine excellent in color, taste, and flavor, the

thirsty man would have a great desire to drink it, but it would increase his fever and make him worse; and if I held in the other hand a glass of bitter, ill-smelling medicine, the very sight of it would make the poor man shudder, but it has the power of cooling down the fever and restoring health. Which do you think ought the sick man to choose? Certainly, if he acted prudently and wished to save his life, he would let the wine alone, and would drink up the glass of medicine, although he dislikes it. And why so? The wine is better and more agreeable. That is true, but the medicine, bitter as it is, is more profitable for him and more able to help him to attain his end—the recovery of his health. The same thing holds good, my dear brethren, in the deliberation and choice of a state of life. Our last end must always be the first thing in our thoughts. Whatever state seems to us best suited to that, is the best and safest for us, and consequently it must be selected by every one who wishes to act prudently and save his soul. That is one point settled.

Having thus far considered the matter, have I done enough, and can I make my choice at once? For instance, after full deliberation, I find that the religious life in this or that well-ordered convent, is the surest means of serving God and going to Heaven. Must I, then, at once come to a conclusion, without further reflection, and say: I will become a religious? By no means; I have not reflected half enough yet. And what more is there to do? I must see whether the religious life in a convent is better and more helpful for me and for my nature, to the service of God and the salvation of my soul; for, what is good for one man, is often bad for another, although both have the same end in view. There are different states of life, says St. Gregory Nazianzen, just as there are different kinds of food. No matter how good, savory, and agreeable a certain article of diet may be, it will not suit every stomach; what is good for one may be very injurious to another. He who has a weak stomach is more benefited by a glass of good wine and by well-cooked food, than by all the doctor's medicine; while one who suffers from fever would find the good wine and cooking highly injurious to him. "In the same way, the same state of life is not suited for all Christians."¹ These are the words of St. Gregory. So that I must consider myself, my own nature, my qualities and inclinations, in order to see whether the religious life in a convent is suited for me, or not.

Then I must see whether that state is the best for me.

¹ Ita nec Christianis omnibus unum idemque vitæ institutum convent.

And whether I have strength and ability for that state of life.

Besides, I must see whether I have strength enough for that state of life, whether I have talents and ability enough to undergo the duties of it, and do what the rules of the order require. I must see whether I have courage enough to endure its difficulties and trials, and whether I have the means and opportunities of embracing that state which will best lead me to my last end. Such is the warning that Christ gives in the Gospel of St. Luke, by a simile: "Which of you having a mind to build a tower, doth not first sit down and reckon the charges that are necessary, whether he have wherewithal to finish it?"¹ Many a one looks with admiration at the plan of a building, and has a great desire to possess such a dwelling-house; but to do so he must have money, and generally speaking, more than he is aware of at first. Therefore, if you want to build a house of that kind, you must first calculate the expense of it very carefully, or else you will run into debt or fall into poverty, and be thus obliged to leave the work unfinished, while all who see it will commence to laugh at you; because: "This man began to build and was not able to finish."² He who is ignorant of a trade and has never learnt it, must never make a profession of it. The same Evangelist, St. Luke, writes of Peter that, when he saw the Transfiguration of Christ on Mount Thabor, "not knowing what he said;"³ what did he say? "Let us make three tabernacles."⁴ How, asks Timothy of Antioch, what are you thinking of, Peter? "Will you attempt to do what you never learned? You have learned only how to make nets, and now you wish to build a tabernacle?"⁵ It is certainly a mistake for a man to undertake a duty for which he has neither ability nor knowledge.

Many parents and children err in this way, to the injury of both.

The same may be said of many thoughtless sons and daughters, when they are choosing a state of life; for, the very first idea that comes into their minds, the first opportunity that offers, whether for marriage, or for the religious life, they blindly seize upon, and make up their minds at once, without thinking what sort of a state it is, and whether they can fulfil its duties, or not. Afterwards, when it is too late, they repent of their thoughtless determination, or they suffer from continual discontent, and live in a continual martyrdom, or, if possible, they abandon that

¹ Quis enim ex vobis volens turrim ædificare, non prius sedens computat sumptus, qui necessarii sunt, si habeat ad perficiendum?—Luke xiv. 28.

² Quia hic homo cœpit ædificare, et non potuit consummare.—Ibid. 30.

³ Nesciens, quid diceret.—Luke ix. 33. ⁴ Faciamus hic tria tabernacula.—Ibid.

⁵ Quæ non didicisti facere aggredieris? Retia didicisti contexere nunc autem et tabernaculum vis ædificare?

state altogether. They did not know what they were doing. They began the building without reckoning the expense, and they are unable to finish it. They tried to build a tabernacle for themselves without having learnt the art of building. From this, many parents can learn how far more grievously they sin against God and against their children's salvation, when, as we have already seen, they usurp the office of the Almighty, and appoint certain states for their children, a benefice for the son, a convent for one daughter, marriage for another; and thus they predestine their children and spare neither advice nor exhortations, threats nor caresses, until the latter accept this vocation from them and follow it. Nor does it make any matter to them whether their children have the necessary talents or not, for the benefice, the religious life, or the married state. And the consequence of that is, as experience only too often proves, that these children do not live as becomes the ecclesiastical, the religious, or the married state; nay, that they often lose their souls.

You have often heard, without doubt, the history of that son, who was talked over by his parents into entering the religious life. After having finished his novitiate and made his profession, he grew melancholy and hopeless, and finally became so reckless as to be intolerable to his Superiors and Brothers. The Superiors could do but little, with all their exhortations and punishments, and they determined to expel him from the convent, since there was no hope of his growing better. His father brought him home, and talked for a long time to him privately, with the intention of inducing him to amend his life. How is this, my son, he said; you were so obedient, pious, and good in the world, and now in the convent you are perverse, reckless, and obstinate? What are you thinking of? The son said not a word in reply. The father continued his exhortations, and meanwhile a little dog came into the room and began to jump about and fawn upon them. The son at once put on his religious habit and began to play with the dog, but as soon as he did so, the dog flew at him angrily and tried to pull the habit off. See, father, said the son, even that dumb beast cannot bear to see me in the dress of religion. He sees that it does not suit me, and therefore tries to pull it off, and as you well know, I can bear it even less than the dog. I have never had either vocation or inclination for the religious state, nor have I had the necessary abilities for it. You have abused my goodness and worried me so long, that through filial reverence and against my will, I entered religion. What do you wish me

Proved by
an example.

to do now? With these words he ran despairingly out of the house. Such must be the case when one selects a state of life, or lets himself be persuaded into selecting it, without considering whether he has the gifts necessary to perform the duties of it. This man began to build and could not finish.¹

Finally I must see whether that state is appointed for me by God.

Suppose, now, that I know this or that state to be one in which I can more surely attain my last end, serve God, and save my soul; that I have enough strength, gifts, ability, and courage for it, and that I have the means of embracing that state, so that for me and for my nature it would be the means of more surely attaining my last end; can I, then, at last determine and make a final choice? Certainly you have done a great deal, but you have not yet done all. You have still the most important thing to consider, and that is, whether that state of life is the one appointed for you by the will of God. How you are to find that out, I will show in the

Second Part.

The merit of a good work consists not so much in its boldness, as in its conformity with God's will.

The perfection and merit of a good work, or of a pious practice, does not consist so much in the excellence and holiness of the work itself, as in its conformity with the will of God; in this, namely, that God wishes me to do or to omit that work at a certain time, or in a certain place. For instance, it is certainly a far more holy and meritorious work to come to the Church to pray or to hear Mass, than to sit idly at home. Yet, if I am so weak and delicate that the doctor orders me to stay at home, even on Easter Sunday, do I not perform a far more meritorious work and one far more pleasing to God by sitting at home than by going to the Church and hearing even ten Masses? And why? Because at that particular time God wishes me to do the one thing, and not the other. The same holds good for all pious practices. St. Paul the Hermit rendered a pleasing service to God by living alone, fasting, watching, and praying in the desert. If he had spent his time going about the world preaching and converting sinners, which is a far more meritorious work in itself, he would probably not have pleased God so well. On the other hand, the great Apostle St. Paul rendered a most pleasing service to God, by preaching the Gospel to the heathens. If he had lived in the desert he would not have pleased God so well, for he says himself: "Woe is unto me, if I preach not!"² Whence

¹ Hic homo cepit edificare, et non potuit consummare.

² Vae mihi, si non evangelizavero.—I. Cor. ix. 16.

comes this difference? From this alone, that God wished one kind of service from one Paul, and a different kind from the other.

In the same way, my salvation does not consist so much in the holiness and perfection of my state, or in the assurance of salvation which it seems to give me, as in its conformity with the will of God; namely, in this, that God wills me to serve Him in such a state and in no other. Now, it is certain that God does not wish all to serve Him in any or every state, although He earnestly desires the salvation of all; but He has decreed to bring men to Heaven in different ways. Thus, as I said in my last sermon, many are lost in the married state, who would have been saved in religion, and many are lost in religion, who would have been saved in the married state, because God decreed that state, and no other, for them. The reason of this is, that the means of attaining our last end are profitable to us, in so far as they bring us where God wishes us to be; consequently, if God does not wish me to serve Him in this or that state, I cannot find the means of my salvation therein, but rather difficulties and obstacles. Another reason, too, is, that since the divine goodness gives every man, who chooses the state pleasing to God, powerful graces to fulfil the duties of that state, if I enter a state against His will, God is, so to speak, not bound to give me strength to bear a burden that He has not placed on my shoulders. Just as a king is bound to give his general soldiers and money to carry on the war, as long as the latter obeys orders; but if the general went to the war without the king's knowledge and permission, even if he conquered the enemy, the king would not only refuse to give him soldiers and money, but would also deprive him of his favor. You may see from this, my dear brethren, that no matter how holy a state one may select, it is not the best state for him, unless it is in conformity with the will of God.

So our salvation does not consist so much in the perfection of our state as in its conformity with God's will.

Yes, you say, but who will tell me in what state God wishes me to serve Him? Listen; neither I nor any other man can tell you that. In this matter each one must consult the Father of light, who alone knows what His will is in all circumstances; and here we come back to the first point again, namely, that in the deliberation on and choice of a state of life we must consult God, and God alone. If any one asks me, How am I to consult God, so that He will make his will known to me? I will answer in the words of Christ: "Ask, and you shall receive."¹ Ask for light,

How to learn the will of God in this matter.

¹ Petite et accipietis.—John xvi. 24.

and God will certainly give it to you, for He cannot break His word. After having humbly confessed your sins, so that you may be in the state of grace, and capable and worthy of receiving the divine inspirations ("for wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins"),¹ pray humbly to your God, whom you have within you during holy communion, not to deprive you of the necessary light on account of your sins, and then place yourself in complete indifference at His disposal, between the three states, suppressing all inclination for one more than for another, with the sincere desire of selecting whichever one of them is most pleasing to Him. Say to Him with childlike confidence: Oh, my God, behold me Thy creature here before Thee, ready to do Thy holy will; my only wish and desire is to serve Thee truly in this mortal life, and in no other way than that in which Thou wishest me to serve Thee. The only object that I am now striving for, is to possess and love Thee forever in Heaven, but I do not desire to go there unless in the way that Thy providence points out to me. What that way is I know not and cannot find out, unless Thou makest it known to me; speak, then, oh, God, to my heart, let me know Thy holy will, for Thou hast said: Ask, and you shall receive. Lead me on the way and to the state in which Thou wishest me to serve Thee.

Other
means of
knowing
the will of
God.

Ask the Blessed Virgin also to be your counsellor in this important business, and beg of her to declare to you the will and pleasure of her Son, for she knows more about it than all the other saints. Pray also daily to your holy angel guardian, and ask him to be your faithful guide in this, as well as in every other thing. Offer up all your actions every day, and occasionally a voluntary mortification, that God may give you light and grace to know His holy will and to fulfil it. Above all, avoid every deliberate sin, when about to make your choice, so that you may not close the gate of grace against yourself. Ask advice from your confessor, who knows your conscience. Pray every day during the holy Mass, and often go to confession and holy communion, and make frequent ejaculatory prayers for this intention; sometimes saying with Josaphat: "As we know not what to do, we can only turn our eyes to Thee;"² sometimes with David: "Oh, Lord, teach me Thy paths;"³ sometimes with

¹ In malevolam animam non introibit sapientia, nec habitabit in corpore subdito peccatis.—Sap. 1. 4.

² Cum ignoremus, quid agere debeamus, hoc solum habemus residui, ut oculos nostros dirigamus ad te.—II. Paralip. xx. 12.

³ Doce me, Domine, vias tuas.—Ps. xxiv. 4.

the disciples of Christ, when they were in doubt whom to elect in place of the traitor Judas: "Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two Thou hast chosen;"¹ show me which of these three states you wish me to live in; and again with Jesus Christ: "Not what I will, but what Thou wilt."² Behold, I have an inclination for that state; if it is the one that Thou hast ordained for my salvation, strengthen me in my resolve and help me to carry it out; but if it is not according to Thy will, then change my inclination and my desires, and let me not embrace that state. If you act thus in earnest for a certain time, you may be certain that God will declare His will to you by an interior inspiration. He will cause you to feel a growing dislike for the state to which your sensuality hitherto most inclined you, or He will not give you the means of entering the state in which He does not wish you to be. In a word, God, who is faithful, and who gives His spirit to men of good will, will not allow you to make a wrong choice, but will surely bring you to that state which He has pre-ordained from all eternity for your salvation, and in which he will shower down all sorts of temporal and eternal blessings on you.

This it is, Christian sons and daughters, which you must carefully attend to, if you wish to act prudently in a choice of such importance. Imagine that you are on your death-bed, and about to go into eternity. Do now what you would then wish to have done, in choosing a state of life. Think that you are standing before the judgment seat of Christ, and that He is about to demand an account from you of your choice of a state of life; what answer would you like to make Him? Would it not be a consolation for you to be able to say to Him: Lord, I have done what I could. Thou knowest that I placed myself at Thy disposal long before; Thou knowest that I have often prayed to Thee to tell me what to do and that I entered that state in Thy name, with no other object but to serve Thy divine majesty and to be happy with Thee. If I have erred in my choice, the fault is not mine. See, Christian children, that is what you have to do.

Be careful not to act like the majority, who, as we have seen before, rush blindly and thoughtlessly at the first opportunity that offers, or follow their sensual inclinations, to the great danger of their souls. And woe to you, if you act like the disobedient

Exhortation to young people to seek the will of God in that way.

And to be careful not to enter a state against the divine will

¹ Tu Domine, qui corda nosti omnium, ostende, quem elegeris ex his duobus unum.—Acts 1. 24.

² Non quod ego volo, sed quod tu.—Mark xiv. 36.

and endan-
ger their
souls. Ex-
ample.

Jonas, of whom the Scripture says: "Jonas rose up to flee into Tharsis from the face of the Lord,"¹ and stop your ears against the voice of God, and enter a state of life against His will. How dearly Jonas had to pay for his disobedience! He fell into a deep melancholy, was thrown into the sea, swallowed by a whale, and thus kept for three days and nights in constant fear of death. But how will it be with you? Jonas was at last released out of his prison, but I cannot promise the same fortune to any of you. Take warning by the sad example of the canon of whom St. Anthony relates the following occurrence: A certain young man knew that he was called by God to leave the world and to live in poverty in the Order of the Seraphic Father, St. Francis; but, as often happens, he delayed following his vocation from day to day. Meanwhile he was offered a benefice, and all desire for poverty left him at once; he thought of enjoying riches, for a time at least. But it was not long before the anger of God closed the door of salvation against him, since he refused to enter it when he was called. The new canon thought he would enjoy his dignity for some time, but he was attacked by a severe fever and confined to his bed. In this he recognized the chastising hand of God, and full of melancholy and despair at having lost his vocation, he began to cry out: "Ah, wretched me, who would not hear the voice of God! It is all over with me." The people of the house advised him to send for a priest and to make his confession. "No," he said, "confession is not for me; I am lost; torment me no more; I am lost." Those who were with him thought he was raving and told him to trust in the mercy of God, to kiss the crucifix, and above all, to confess his sins. "What!" said the dying man, "I have already told you, and I tell you again, that I will not confess my sins, I cannot confess! The door of penance is closed against me; I have seen that the Lord is angry with me, and I have heard from His lips the irrevocable sentence: 'I called and you refused;' go now to the torments of hell."² Having frequently repeated those words of his sentence to eternal damnation, he gave up his soul into the hands of the devil who was waiting for it. You are horror-stricken, my dear brethren, at hearing of the terrible death of that unhappy man. But you must know that such things are not of rare occurrence in the world; and if God were pleased to reveal their final destiny to all the dying, and these latter made it known to those around them, we should see

¹ Surrexit Jonas, ut fugeret in Tharsis a facie Domini.—Jon. 1. 3.

² Vocavi et renulistis; ideo vade ad penas inferni!—Prov. 1. 24.

that, as a general rule, an unhappy death is the lot of those who neglect their vocation. Listen to the words of St. Anselm on this head. He says: "I have seen many who put off fulfilling what they promised, and who were surprised by death before they could do that by which they hindered themselves, or that which they promised."¹

Oh, woe, if such is the case! Alas, what advice can be given, then, to those who entered on their state of life without consulting God, as is the case with a great number of Christians, or who even entered on their state against the divine will, and who can easily see from circumstances that they are not as God wills them to be, although it is now too late to change? Must such people despair of salvation? By no means. I ask the first, have you hitherto led a good and Christian life, according to your state, and lived contentedly and peacefully, although sometimes you have committed faults through human frailty? If such is the case, you may comfort yourselves with the assurance that divine providence has so ordained it and has led you to this state. All the more reason have you therefore to thank the good God for having in His mercy bestowed on you what you should have asked Him for. If you are, on the other hand, discontented in your state of life, and if you do not live therein according to the divine law, then I say to you, as I say also to the second class of people who entered on their state against the divine will: What does a sailor do who is driven away by a contrary wind with all sail set, and who cannot come back? Does he fall into despair? No, he tries to regain by the oars what he lost through the wind. It costs him a good deal of labor, but in the end, and after many difficulties, he arrives in port. Again, a traveller who is in doubt which of two roads to take, and who neglected to ask the way, either through thoughtlessness or obstinacy, loses the right road and wanders about on a by-path. When he finds himself amongst rocks and mountains, far away from his journey's end, does he fall into despair and give up the journey? No, he goes on, up and down hill, tired and weary, until he at length arrives at the right road. In the same way must you act, if you wish to reach the city of eternal happiness, the heavenly Jerusalem. You began your voyage with a contrary wind, when you chose a state of life without vocation; you went astray from the right path, when you neglected to ask advice from God, the true guide.

Wholesome advice for those who enter on a state without consulting God, or against His will.

¹ Plures vidi promittentes et diferentes, quos ita mors tulit, ut nec perficerent id, quo se impediabant, nec id exequerentur, quod promittebant.

Others who consulted Him, and followed His voice, are journeying without difficulty on the right road to Heaven. They are sailing towards their port with a fair wind, while you must labor at the oars. Therefore you must work on with all the greater diligence, constantly overcoming and mortifying yourself, redoubling your prayers and good works, so that you may truly repent of your error, replace what was wanting in your vocation, and daily implore the mercy of God, to help you to accomplish your toilsome journey. There is no other advice for you.

Christian sons and daughters, avoid that error in the way I have pointed out to you; let not the ship leave the shore until the wind is fair, until a divine vocation fills the sails. Begin not your journey in doubt, nor before you have asked the true guide, the Holy Ghost, what road will lead you into the promised land, so that you may, without any mistake, reach your last end, and rejoice forever in Heaven with God who called you; a blessing I wish you all from my heart. Amen.

TWENTY-SECOND SERMON.

ON THE HAPPINESS OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE.

Subject.

In the religious state, when one lives according to it, one finds a happiness, than which there is none greater on earth.—*Preached on Septuagesima Sunday.*

Text.

Ite et vos in vineam meam.—Matth. xx. 7.
 “Go you also into my vineyard.”

Introduction.

The householder of the Gospel, as St. Gregory explains it, is the common Father of Heaven and earth. The vineyard is the true Church in which all men are called to labor during their lives, that when their task is done in the evening, that is, after their death, they may receive an eternal reward in Heaven. Now, as we see in to-day's Gospel that the work is unequally distributed, the first laborers having the longer and more difficult part to perform, the last the shorter and easier; so also God requires

different services from men, according to the different states of life which He has appointed in His Church. He requires one thing from a religious, another from a layman, another from a single man, another from a married man. Each one must work and serve God according to his state, in order to receive a reward in Heaven. Christian children, if you intend choosing a state of life, be specially careful to select that one to which your heavenly Father calls you ; as you have heard already. There are three principal states, to which all others may be referred: There is the religious state, the unmarried state and the married state. All these states are holy and are means of gaining Heaven. To whichever of these God calls you, go ¹ and work in the vineyard of the Lord according to your state. That you may know something of what you have to select, I shall give you a slight sketch of them, beginning to-day with the religious state. Children, if God calls you to that state, oh, obey the call at the first opportunity ! Parents, do not keep your children back ; help them as well as you can ! Why ? Parents, you cannot make your children happier, than by doing so ; children, you cannot find greater happiness on earth ! As I am about to show.

Plan of Discourse.

In the religious state, when one lives according to it, one finds a happiness, than which there is none greater on earth. Such is the subject of to-day's sermon. You who have not this vocation, be not therefore discontented, but be satisfied with the will of God and the vocation He gives you. Happy would I be if God would make use of my words to give even to one soul the grace of a religious vocation ! By the word soul, in this sermon I mean people of either sex.

Do Thou, oh, heavenly Father, effect by Thy grace what is impossible for me ; this we ask of Thee through the merits of Mary and through our holy angels guardian. Say, meanwhile, to those whom Thou callest : “ Go you also,” etc.

If I wished to speak only of the happiness which a voluptuous world longs for and prizes, I should represent an earthly paradise, in which nothing could be found but comfort, sensual pleasures and enjoyments, great honor and authority, immense treasures and riches, and I should say: This is the religious state to which God calls those whom He has chosen from all eternity. Oh, many a one would think, what happiness to

According to the opinion of the world, the religious state is not a happy one.

be among souls thus favored by God ! And I believe that such souls would find many companions of either sex quite ready to join them in embracing such a state. And yet, if happiness really consisted in those things, then I should be compelled to say to all those who, following the divine vocation, enter a religious order : Oh, how I pity you, poor deluded souls ; I cannot congratulate you ! What are you going to do ? Why are you throwing yourselves away so recklessly ? Will you shut yourselves up in a prison, bury yourselves alive, and give up all idea of happiness in the best years of your lives ? The treasure that you will find in that state, as you know well, is bitter and hated poverty without any hope of ever possessing the least thing ; a constant submission to others, so as to do and avoid whatever they command you, without any freedom of your own, and to this you must bind yourself by the vow of obedience. You will also find perpetual chastity, which will prevent you from enjoying the pleasures of the flesh the rest of your lives ; a rigorous solitude, strict silence, frequent vigils, severe fasts and abstinences, continual mortification of the body and the senses. These are the only honors and enjoyments that you will have to expect in that state during your whole lives. Unhappy souls, how I pity you ! So, I repeat, should I be obliged to speak. But, away with the false happiness of the world, which is only vain and transitory, and utterly incapable of contenting and satisfying a heart created for better things !

But it resembles the happiness of Heaven.

A far better and real happiness awaits those who are called by God to the religious state, and who live according to its rules. A happiness which blind owls, who measure everything by their senses, cannot appreciate. A happiness that is not derived from creatures, but from the Creator Himself, which has a share in and a likeness to the great happiness of the angels and saints in Heaven, and which, therefore, as I said in the beginning, cannot be equalled by any earthly happiness. For, to come to the matter at once, in what does the happiness of the blessed in Heaven consist ? Ask all theologians, the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, and the infallible Word of God itself, and they will all tell you that it consists in three things : in the eternal remembrance and contemplation of God, in the eternal love of God, and in the eternal joy that comes from this contemplation and love. Here you have a sketch of the state to which they are called who receive the grace of a religious vocation. It is a foretaste of Heaven, which they can enjoy in this life ; it is a state in which

the soul sees God more clearly and keeps Him more constantly in mind; a state in which the soul loves God with a better and more perfect love; a state in which the soul enjoys a more pleasing, constant and inward happiness, because it constantly thinks of God and loves Him.

With regard to the first thing, the constant intercourse with God, walking always in His presence, never leaving Him out of the thoughts, that is an easy matter, nay, almost one of necessity, for every religious. All that is left outside the convent, and all that is found in it, helps and even compels the religious to this with a kind of gentle violence. It is an unusual thing for a layman to think often of God during the day, nor do I wonder at it; for his attention is distracted by a thousand other thoughts, so that it is next to impossible for him to think deeply of God and heavenly things. If God sometimes speaks to him inwardly by inspiration, there comes a swarm of worldly and domestic cares about the children, the servants, clothing, food, and a host of troubles connected with his business, which, like a gloomy cloud, darken the light and take God away from his sight, as the cloud did which hid Jesus from His Apostles in His Ascension. The Holy Scripture says: "And a cloud received Him out of their sight?"¹ But, tell me, of what could a religious think, if not of God and heavenly things? He has by his vows renounced all worldly cares; by chastity, all care for his body; by obedience, all care for his own will; by poverty, all care for money and wealth, so that he can neither lose nor gain by such things, nor can a thief break into his cell and rob him; it is nothing to him whether bread is cheap or dear, where the stuff for his habit is bought, and whether it costs much or little; what he eats or drinks, and a hundred other things of the kind are matters of perfect indifference to him. What can and must he then occupy himself with? It is a difficult thing to think of many things at the same time, and to think of nothing at all is almost impossible for a human being who has the use of reason. Our minds must be always occupied with something, either with God and heavenly things, or with the world and temporal things, or with ourselves and our bodily wants. Now, a good religious, who has made his profession, has no more business to think of the world, or of his own bodily wants, and so it follows as a matter of course, that he is compelled to think of God. Oh, happy necessity, under which the blessed in Heaven are also placed for all eternity!

It consists in the constant remembrance and knowledge of God.

¹ Et nubes suscepit eum ab oculis eorum.—Acts 1. 9.

To which
everything
in the con-
vent helps.

Again, almost everything that one sees and hears in the bustling world, hinders communion with God; the eyes and ears should be kept constantly closed, if the thoughts are to be always turned to God. On the other hand, almost everything that one sees and hears in a well-ordered convent, helps to the recollection and remembrance of God; the eyes and ears should be kept constantly closed, if one does not wish to think at all of God. The religious habit, the general silence, the rules of the order, the pious pictures that are hung up in all the rooms and corridors, the modesty, zeal, and good example of the brethren, or of the sisters, all these things raise the mind to God. All the duties that are performed according to the daily rule, are only so many occupations performed with God: in choir the praises of God are sung, He is visited in the Blessed Sacrament, He is read about in spiritual books, nay, even during meal times there is spiritual reading; there is constant intercourse with God by frequent confession and communion, by hearing holy Mass, by the daily examen of conscience, and by the prayers that are to be said every day according to rule; all manual and other labor is done for God with a pure intention, and the ordinary occupation of a religious consists of such labor, so that he can say truly, with the Blessed Tauler: "I am surrounded by God on every side." Wherever I turn, I see nothing and find nothing but God. I will not speak of the wonderful lights and inspirations that the good God, who never allows Himself to be outdone in generosity by man, and who gives for one service rendered Him a thousand favors and graces worthy of His magnificence, without doubt often and plentifully bestows on the soul which has given itself to Him, and sacrificed for His sake, all that the world could give. Again I say, happy and heavenly state, in which the soul is always united with God, and God with the soul; God being a constant and joyful light for the soul, and the soul, so to speak, an eye to contemplate, think of, and know God, and, as a necessary consequence, a heart also filled with the love of God, which is the second advantage of the religious state.

In the per-
fect love of
God.

Just as our understanding cannot but think of something during our waking moments, so our hearts cannot be without loving something; and as the understanding is always occupied with what the heart loves, so our hearts must most love that on which our thoughts turn oftenest. "Wilt thou know what thou lovest, then see what thou thinkest,"¹ says a holy father. Is

¹ Vis scire, quid ames? attende, quid cogites!

that so? Then I have done enough to prove that the religious state is that in which God is most loved, for I have shown that it is the state in which God is most thought of. I grant that one must love God, even in the world, in every state ordained by God; I acknowledge that there are many zealous servants and friends of God in the world, so that I am covered with confusion sometimes, when I visit such people, especially the poor and afflicted, and see how resigned they are to the divine will, and how peacefully and contentedly they live in the Lord, amidst all their afflictions. But all must agree with me in one thing, that the perfect, true, and constant love of God cannot be near so easy nor so general in a state of life in which, as I have said before, the thoughts are seldom directed to God, because they are filled with worldly cares. How difficult, how rare, how almost impossible it is to love God always and God alone, where a hundred things assail the eyes, ears, and other senses daily to induce them to love something besides God; where a hundred occasions and dangers seduce one into loving things that are against God and His law! It would be a wonder to touch pitch and not be defiled; a wonder to have free intercourse with all creatures and not to have any love for them! In a word, experience shows that, if God is loved in the world, there are a thousand things loved besides God, or not on account of God; the heart is divided, and, by a great injustice, the smallest and worst part of it is generally given to God.

The pure, undivided love of God, if it can be found anywhere on earth, must surely take up its dwelling in the soul of him who, living of his own accord and through love for God, in a poor cell, away from all dangers and occasions of sin, and to whom the world is dead and forgotten, occupies himself with God alone. If he sometimes thinks of the world and its goods, he looks upon them only as things that he renounced in his profession forever, as things that he would now be prepared to renounce, if he had not done so already, as things that he daily continues to sacrifice to God by renewing his vows, as false and worthless goods which are not worth desiring, much less loving, as contemptible and despicable goods that do not deserve the love of his heart, as dangerous and deceitful goods that are capable of leading him away from God in whom his whole treasure is, and to find whom is his greatest consolation. Under such circumstances, can we believe that the religious can love the world? How is it, so to say, possible for him to love anything against

Which is found with the greatest certainty in the religious state.

God? What else can he love but God alone? And since his holy resolution grows stronger every day, and he is determined never to change it, how can he ever cease to love God? Therefore, his is a pure and constant love, by which his human heart possesses God, and God alone; it is an imitation and forerunner of the love which the angels and saints in Heaven have for God.

In the confidence and joy in God, which are not to be found in worldly goods.

What remains now but to show that, as in Heaven the constant love and contemplation of God fill the blessed with unspeakable joy, so also in the religious state on earth, the soul that is always thinking of God and loving Him, enjoys the most peaceful, sweet, and perfect happiness that can be had in this world? Perhaps, my dear brethren, if I had only men of the world here before me, many of them would laugh at me for saying this; to live in poverty, contempt, silence, solitude, watching, fasting, and prayer, and that under a severe rule, and yet to enjoy the greatest happiness, would appear as strange and incredible to them as if I tried to prove to them that black is white, sadness cheerful, pain and suffering exquisite enjoyment. And no wonder! What can a man know of what he has never tried and experienced? But you, souls devoted to God, who have obeyed the voice of God calling you to this happy state, you will certainly experience, and experience more and more every day, how you can have such spiritual consolation and joy in God, that a single drop of it is enough to make you turn away in disgust from all the joys of the world. For the heart rejects all sensual pleasures, looks upon them as worthless, and leaves them to unreasoning animals, and to other men, friends or foes, pious or wicked, it makes no difference; but spiritual joys belong only to the angels and saints in Heaven, and to devout souls on earth, whom God loves especially, and who have an especial love for Him. And such is really the case; in vain do you seek peace, pleasure, and contentment in worldly goods; even Solomon, the most fortunate of men, who possessed these goods in abundance, could not find happiness in them, but, as he says himself, vexation of spirit. On the other hand, in a good religious you would look in vain for anything that would disturb his peace, contentment, and joy, unless perchance you might sometimes find an anxious fear that he does not love God enough. Everything else brings him comfort and consolation; everything that he contemplates in God, in himself, or in the world, if he looks at it reasonably, must only increase his joy.

This joy is experienced

If the religious thinks of God, what a consolation it is to have

in Him a dear Friend, a Saviour, a Father, a Spouse, and one who will repay every service rendered Him ! If he thinks of himself, what a consolation to find himself in the house of God, in the vestibule of Heaven (as the holy Fathers call the religious state) amongst the servants of God ! What a consolation to think: God has done me the honor, in preference to so many thousands, of selecting me as one of His privileged servants, to be constantly occupied with Him, and to devote myself in a special manner to His service ; He has selected me as His spouse, by the vows of religion ! What a consolation to think that God has freed me from the many cares and anxieties of the world, and from so many dangers and occasions of sin. He has placed me in this house, as in a place of security, in which it is, humanly speaking, not possible to lose one's soul, unless one does not live according to the rule ; in a house in which I have so many brothers or sisters to encourage me by their good example, to instruct me by their good advice, and to help me in the divine service by their prayers, so that I am almost compelled to save my soul ; in a house in which Jesus Christ Himself has fixed His dwelling, for He is present in the Most Holy Sacrament, and I can visit Him as often as I will, whenever obedience allows ; I can talk with Him, ask Him for advice in doubt, and declare my wants to Him ; and that intercourse costs me no more trouble than to take a few steps from my room to the choir ; in a house in which I shall find, as long as I live, all that I wish and desire, in which, when I die, death can take nothing away from me, except the life that I have spent in the service of God, and that life will be then changed into a far better one ; a house in which no tears will be shed for me except those which flow from joy and charity. What a consolation to hear the testimony of one's own conscience assuring one that he may believe without presumption that he is serving God, as God wishes ; that all his works from morning till night, performed in obedience or according to rule, are pleasing to God ; that he is on the narrow path to Heaven ; that he loves God and is loved by God, and that it is no presumption for him to hope that he will enjoy God forever. Oh, certainly, says St. Bernard, that is a consolation that we do not understand, but let us so live that we may find it.

by the religious who considers God, or himself.

Finally, if the religious thinks of the world, and of what takes place therein, what consolation it is for him to consider: the world may do as it likes, I have nothing to hope and nothing to fear from it. Misfortunes and accidents in business, adversity

Who considers the world.

and poverty in the household, ill-health, sickness, and death of children, parents, or friends, and other countless miseries and trials which nearly all men have to undergo, and all have to fear and provide against, these miseries, which so embitter life, are nothing to me ; I need not even bestow a thought on them, much less fear them. I can sit down peacefully, like a bird in its nest, and sing a joyful hymn to my Lord and my God, by whose Fatherly hand I am fed, and allow Him to dispose of me as He pleases. Oh, what greater happiness can there be ? What consolation and satisfaction to know that one need not seek to please men, and need live so as to please Christ alone, not caring for anything else ! To know that there is no further need of parents or friends, or of people of high or low condition, that no favor or service is required of any one, and that the whole world is trampled under foot, so that it can be of neither use nor harm ! What man of the world can boast of such a quiet and contented life ? Bring here all your joys and pleasures ; I am sure that not one good religious would change with you, even if it were lawful to do so.

This joy
not dis-
turbed by
anything.

Now, is there anything that can disturb the joy and peace of such a state ? Perhaps the subjection and chastisement of the body, and the self-denial and mortification required by the religious state. Alas, how far men go astray who think that ! says St. Augustine. The very mortifications, the tears and sufferings of pious souls, are a thousand times sweeter, than all the pleasures of worldly societies and banquets. These are what they seek, and their joy is to be able to suffer and to die with their suffering Spouse. In spite of all these things, a wonderful pleasure, joy, and perfect contentment can be seen in their looks, words, and whole behavior. I must cry out with St. Bernard : "Oh, religious state, you are certainly the dwelling place of God," in which He is so well known and loved, in which He is possessed with so much joy ! "Oh, religious state, life of happiness, life of angels ! Truly, my brethren, the convent is a paradise,"¹ a state of heavenly happiness upon earth.

Conclusion
for young
people de-
liberating
on a state of
life.

My good God, what do I not owe Thee for having called me, in preference to so many others, to this state, and, as Thou knowest, for having drawn me to it, as it were, by the hair of the head ! Woe to me if I do not acknowledge that benefit, and serve Thee according to my vocation, with the greatest zeal ! Yet, that concerns myself alone. Happy souls, who will one day

¹ O religio habitaculum Dei ! O religio, vita beata, vita angelorum ! Vere claustrum fratres mei, est paradus !

have the grace of being called to this state, when that day comes, I would wish to say to you, in the words of the Archangel Raphael to Tobias' family, after he had declared to them that he was the guide who accompanied the younger Tobias on his journey: "Bless ye the God of Heaven, give glory to Him in the sight of all that live, because He hath shown His mercy to you."¹ Ah, if you should have a desire or longing for this state, do not repress it; look upon it as a scout sent out to see how your heart is towards God, and whether He can speak still further to it, without any fear of His voice being neglected. But, reflect on the matter seriously; for, as I have often told you, they alone who are called by God to that state, and who desire to live always according to its rules, enjoy the happiness that I have described. I know well that a few discontented souls find their purgatory, nay, even an eternal hell in the convent, because they did not take counsel with God in the matter, in the beginning; and hence, too, they who serve God in the unmarried state, according to their vocation, are far happier than such people. Still, to guard against this, there is the novitiate and the year of probation. Once again, I say to you, think well of the matter; first with God, by earnest, humble prayer, as I said in my last sermon; then with a pious confessor who knows your soul; and finally with your parents, who are not to be passed over if they seem not to be opposed to your vocation. At least, all of you may learn from this that you are not to expect to find a paradise of happiness in the married state alone, as is generally the opinion among young people, who look upon the first feeling of love they experience as a vocation, and rush blindly into marriage, on the first favorable opportunity. Of course, such people pay little attention to the call of God. So that we may apply here the terrible words of to-day's Gospel: "Many are called, but few are chosen."² Many are called by God to the religious state, but few are chosen for it, because they think they will find some wonderful degree of happiness in some other state, and some fearful misery in the religious state, and so they reject the call of God.

But what is this to us? So, my dear brethren, will many of you doubtless say, who are in another state of life; are we here to-day only to admire the happiness of others, of which we cannot bring any portion home with us? Would to God, my dear

*Moral lesson
for the
other
hearers.*

¹ Benedicite Deum cœli, et coram omnibus viventibus confitemini ei, quia fecit vobiscum misericordiam suam.—Tob. xii. 6.

² Multi enim sunt vocati, pauci vero electi.—Matth. xxii. 14.

Christians, that the knowledge of the real happiness of the religious state, excited a sort of holy envy in you, and made the false happiness of the world disgusting to you! It would be profit enough for our souls if we could free our hearts from worldly desires! Still, no matter who you are, you can and **must** have a share in the real happiness too. God calls all men to true happiness and to their eternal salvation, though not in the same way. Meanwhile, whatever state we are in, our principal business is to know God, to love Him, and to rejoice in Him. If your duties and occupations do not allow you to think of God constantly, at least do not forget Him. Think of Him often during the day by renewing your good intention, by which you offer up all your ordinary acts to His honor and glory. If you cannot have a constant, perfect love of God, at least love Him so constantly as never to offend Him by a deliberate mortal sin, for the sake of money, pleasure, or other creatures. If you do not feel that inward consolation and joy of the heart in God, give Him at least the consolation of knowing that you will bear patiently, through love of Him, your daily trials, difficulties, and cares. The more dangers threaten your soul in your state of life, the more careful must you be in avoiding occasions of evil, to which no evident necessity compels you. If your state of life fills you with many cares and labors about yourself, your children, and the decent maintenance of your family, at least let your greatest care be the business of your salvation, so that you may keep yourself and those under your care in the grace of God, and that you and they may attain eternal happiness. Think often: what good is everything in the world to me, if I do not go to Heaven? No, I seriously intend to save my soul. I will employ my best energies to that effect. If such is our real intention, we may now conclude, and we may all together think and say, with joy and consolation: I have chosen a happy state of life, in which God wishes me to work as in His vineyard, and for that work, if I perform it for God's sake, I shall receive my reward just as the others, when evening comes: "Call the laborers and pay them their hire;"¹ and that reward will be the eternal contemplation of God, the eternal love of God, and eternal joy in and with God in the kingdom of Heaven! Amen.

¹ *Voca operarios et redde illis mercedem.*—*Matth. xx. 8.*

*Another Introduction for the same Sermon on the Occasion of a Religious Reception or Profession :***Text.**

Hodie salus domui huic facta est.—Luke xix. 9.

“This day is salvation come to this house.”

Great salvation ! wonderful good fortune for Zacheus that he was made worthy to receive Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, into his house, and to entertain Him as a guest ! Why was this privilege conferred on him in preference to so many others ? A multitude of people were standing around Christ, but He looked only on Zacheus, and went only to his house. The origin of this salvation, of this happiness was, that Zacheus separated himself from the people, and ascended the tree in order to see Jesus better and to know more about Him. In that position he was seen and called by our Lord. He heard the voice of the Lord and descended immediately, followed by Him, and received Him into his house. If he had remained hidden in the crowd, he would not have had that happiness, in all probability. Devout souls ! and I am speaking principally to those who are now prepared to make their vows to God before this altar, or to receive the habit of religion, you are those who, in order the better to see and possess Jesus, have separated yourselves from the tumult of the world and aspired to a state of higher perfection. It is on you, in preference to so many thousand others, that Jesus has cast an eye of favor. He has called you to Himself, that he may constantly dwell with you in this holy house. I have no doubt that, if we could look into your hearts, we should find them filled with a greater joy, than if the whole world were given to you, just as it happened to Zacheus, when he received Christ : “He received Him with joy.”¹ And in truth, you have reason for this joy, for I can assure you, in the words of Christ Himself : “This day is salvation come to this house,”² that is, to your souls. It is a happiness, than which there is none greater on earth ; as I shall show you in to-day’s sermon of congratulation, to your consolation, and to the encouragement of others. I repeat then: *To-day you have chosen a state of happiness greater than any other on earth.* Such will be my subject. That we may understand this great grace, and be always thankful for it, we beg of Thee, oh, Lord, to grant us Thy light, through the intercession, etc.—*continues as before.*

¹ Exceptit illum gaudens.—Luke xix. 6. ² Hodie huic domui salus facta est.

Another Conclusion for New Religious. Follows Note 11.

I congratulate you, then, anew, pious souls, whom God now calls to this Heaven! Go on courageously and finish the sacrifice that God requires of you. Let me, in conclusion, repeat for you the words of the Archangel Raphael: "Bless the Lord of Heaven and confess to Him in the sight of all who live, because He has shown you His mercy this day."¹ During your whole lives, never lose sight of the day on which Jesus first cast His eye on you, and inspired you with your holy purpose; that day on which you first set foot in this holy house; that day on which you first put on the holy habit of religion; that day, finally, on which you made your vows to God in your profession. These four days must be real feast days for you, on which you must remember, and say with gratitude: This is the anniversary of the day of my salvation.²

TWENTY-THIRD SERMON.

ON THE GREAT GRACE OF A VOCATION TO THE RELIGIOUS STATE.

Subject.

The vocation to the religious state, when it is faithfully accepted, is a certain pledge, a sure sign of future happiness in the kingdom of God.—*Preached on Sexagesima Sunday.*

Text.

Vobis datum est nosse mysterium regni Dei.—Luke viii. 10.

"To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God."

Introduction.

To you, my disciples, who have left the little you had for my sake; to you, who still follow Me, is given, in preference to other men, something special—a special light, knowledge, grace, and hope of the kingdom of God. Thus said Christ to His apostles. To you it is given,³ I can also say, in His name, to all of you who

¹ *Benedicite Deum cœli, et coram omnibus viventibus confitemini ei, quia fecit vobiscum misericordiam suam.*

² *Hodie huic domui salus facta est.*

³ *Vobis datum est.*

are called by God to the religious state, and who obey the call. To you also a special grace is given to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of God, and to have, even in this life, a foretaste of the happiness that awaits you in that kingdom; as I proved in my last sermon. But how? you ask. Can we have Heaven twice—here in this life, and in eternity also? No, that cannot be. The word of God, by the Apostle St. Paul says: “Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.”¹ All must travel by the rough and difficult way of the Cross in order to get there. That is true, my dear brethren. But if, in the midst of these tribulations, crosses, and sufferings, God can give to the souls that love Him such sweet consolation that Heaven is opened to them, as is also true, then I must say, yes, a religious who lives according to his rule in a well-ordered convent, has two heavens: one in this life, by the constant contemplation, love, and enjoyment of God, as I showed before; and another in eternity, which according to the divine promises, must necessarily follow the first; as I shall now prove for the greater enlightenment of those who are actually called, as well as of those who are to be called by God to the religious state.

Plan of Discourse.

The vocation to the religious state, when it is faithfully accepted, is a certain pledge, a sure sign of future happiness in the kingdom of God. Such is the subject. Parents, rejoice if that great happiness is given to your children. Children, do not reject this grace, if God offers it to you! Such will be the conclusion.

To this end, grant us Thy light, oh God, through the intercession of Mary and our holy angels guardian.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is really the kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are the pure of heart, for they will certainly see God. Blessed are those who mourn and weep for their own sins and the sins of others, for they will be comforted for all eternity. Blessed are the peace-makers, for they are children of God, who will attain eternal peace. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after piety and justice, for they shall be filled eternally. Blessed are they who hear the Word and the voice of God, and keep it, for they belong to the elect of the fold of Christ. Blessed are they who suffer much for the honor of God and for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. All these words pro-

The grace of religious vocation contains all the signs of eternal grace.

¹ Per multas tribulationes oportet nos intrare in regnum Dei.—Acts xiv. 21.

ceed from the infallible lips of Christ, whose words and promises cannot fail or deceive. Yet, I have not said half enough, for I have undertaken to show that the religious vocation is a sign of salvation. I should have mentioned one circumstance of that over-happy state, which includes every sign of eternal salvation. For where, as a general rule, does one live with a purer heart and conscience, than in religious solitude? St. Bernard calls it: "A holy, pure, and immaculate state, in which one lives more purely, falls more seldom, repents more quickly, and advances more cautiously."¹ To commit a deliberate mortal sin; my God! what a terrible monster that would be for a soul devoted to Thee! The very thought and idea of it makes one tremble. A perfect poverty, freely chosen for the love of God and Heaven alone, a complete subjection of the spirit, a constant sighing and weeping, that is, a continued repentance even for trifling daily faults, an imperturbable peace, love, and unity with each other, a keen hunger and thirst to increase in piety, to know and to fulfil every indication of God's will, and to please Him more and more every day, an unalterable contentment with the divine arrangements, patience and joy in suffering and adversity, and still more—where could all these things be found, if not amongst religious who live according to their vocation and the rules of their order? Even one who would be accused of tepidity, in the convent, might be set before many in the world as a model of virtue. Truly, the religious life in a well-ordered convent is an epitome of all the signs of eternal salvation. Therefore St. Ephraim and Theodoretus call it a harbor and sure port of everlasting life.² But I do not want all this to prove my subject.

The life of a religious is looked upon as martyrdom, as far as its mortifications are concerned.

One thing alone, that the holy Fathers say, is more than enough for me, for they compare it to martyrdom. He who dies as a true martyr for the faith, or for some other virtue, is so certain of his salvation that it is not allowed to pray for him. Now, the religious life is a martyrdom, and, as St. Athanasius says, a far more difficult and daily martyrdom of body and soul, to keep the faith and one's conscience pure.³ Almost everything that martyrs have to suffer, and almost everything that they have to console them, the religious has to suffer and to enjoy. See now if that is the case. As far as the sufferings of the martyrs of Christ are concerned, they have four things to undergo: they are de-

¹ Sancta, pura et Immaculata, in quo homo vivit purius, cadit rarius, surgit veletus, incedit cautius.—Theodoretus.

² Religio portus quidam est publicus salutis.

³ Quotidianum fidei ac conscientie martyrrium.

prived of all their temporal wealth, they are dragged away from house and home and from all their friends, even the nearest and dearest, their bodies are tortured in various ways, and finally they are deprived of life. There you have a sketch of the seeming cruelty with which the love of God treats a religious. In the first place, what is the vow of poverty, but an innocent thief, who, as St. Serapion said long ago of his book of the Gospels, robs him at once of all his property and leaves him only enough to buy a small room, as his prison during life, and a grave after death. And not only does it take away everything from him that he really possessed, but it does what no other thief could do, and deprives him of everything that he could inherit, and leaves him no hope of ever possessing anything. Again, the religious is driven out of house and home into poverty, he is torn away from all he loved on earth, from all who loved him in the world, from friends and acquaintances, from brothers and sisters, from father and mother, and that forever. If he is occasionally allowed to see one of them, which, however, he must not desire to do, as far as in him lies, he is then like St. Alexius, who lived concealed as a poor stranger, under the steps of his father's house; he can see his parents for a short time, but he has no longer a mere natural love of flesh and blood for them, for his love is now supernatural and directed to God alone. Again; to watch while others are sleeping, to fast and abstain when others are eating and drinking, to treat the body as an enemy, with the greatest severity, always to resist sensuality, to renounce all the comforts and delights of the flesh, to desire and seek for nothing but crosses and sufferings with his crucified Redeemer, is not that a protracted martyrdom, by which the body is tortured? The mere inclination and desire of even an innocent pleasure is enough to make him reject that pleasure altogether through love for God; the bare dislike and disinclination for a thing is enough to make him accept it even against his will. The holy Abbot Paphnutius once fell into the hands of a cruel tyrant, who threatened him with all sorts of tortures to make him deny the faith; but the pious old man began to laugh, and said to him: Is that all you can do? Have you no other torments for me? If not, I must laugh at you, for you must know that the life of a religious, such as I have led for sixty years, has far more numerous and severe torments than these; yet they have not been able to frighten me away from my God and my faith, and neither will the tortures with which you threaten me.

As far as
death is
concerned.

Finally, the principal and most necessary part of martyrdom is death. In the same way the principal and most necessary part of the religious state is death. The religious can truly say with St. Paul : " For we who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal flesh." ¹ And what is, in reality, the religious profession of poverty, chastity, and obedience, if not a kind of death by which a man dies to all the wealth, honors, and joys of the world, and to himself and his own freedom, by which, too, he buries himself between the four walls of his cell, so as not to live henceforth for any creature, but for Jesus Christ, whom he has selected as his Spouse? Therefore there is a great difference between a temporal and a spiritual marriage. When the eldest daughter of a family is married, how great is the pleasure, joy, and exultation of all ! If another daughter espouses God by the religious profession, her father, mother, and other relatives cannot, as a general rule, refrain from weeping ; the spiritual bride alone has joy and consolation in her heart, and tears of happiness in her eyes. And whence comes that difference ? Is not your eldest daughter as dear to you, oh, parents, as the younger one ? Will not her husband bring her to a strange house, and often to a foreign land, away from you ? Why then do you laugh at her marriage and weep at that of the other ? It is natural to do so, for the first is brought away to live in the usual way of the world, while the second is led away to death, and once she enters the convent, she is looked upon as dead and lost. A dead body feels nothing, sees and hears nothing ; it allows itself to be turned and twisted and thrown away at pleasure ; place it in a splendid bed, be most attentive to it ; or throw it on a heap of straw, or on the bare earth, and it will not feel one more than the other, for it is devoid of life. In the same way the spiritual bride is affected, according to the rule of her order, by the world and its empty vanities ; she has lost eyes, ears, memory, understanding, and feeling for such things. No matter what happens in the world, whether men laugh or weep, live or die, she does not concern herself in the least, she hears and sees nothing of all that. It is a matter of indifference to her whether the world hates or loves her, honors or despises her, for she does not belong to the world, nor does the world belong to her. She is virtually dead, and lives only for God, she allows herself to be turned and twisted and used in any way that obedience requires.

¹ Semper nos, qui vivimus, in mortem tradimur propter Jesum, ut et vita Jesu manifestetur in carne nostra mortali.—II. Cor. iv. 11.

I have said already, with St. Athanasius, that the religious state is a more difficult martyrdom, for martyrs offer up their lives but once ; they can suffer only one death : a lance thrust through the heart, a rope round the neck, a blow of a sword, drowning by water or burning by fire, and it is all over, there is no more dying. Many martyrs survived their torments, but no one was ever known to arise from the dead and offer himself again to the torturer. But a true religious must offer up his life a thousand times to the same death ; as long as it pleases God, he must live so as to die every day, and daily to offer himself as a holocaust. If the torturers used violence towards the bodies of the martyrs, they could not touch their souls, nor torture them ; nay, they rather placed them at liberty by freeing them from the prison of the body. But the religious state does not leave even the soul without torture ; it tortures the body by poverty and chastity, and leaves the soul no freedom, for it binds it in a long servitude by the vow of obedience. "Obedience," says St. Bernard, "is a noble martyrdom ; it cuts off the head of one's own will,"¹ and places it at the feet of another's will. If martyrs have to suffer a painful death, they do not at least kill themselves ; they await death from the cruelty of a tyrant or executioner. But a religious must, so to say, be his own tyrant, his own executioner. He must seize hold of himself, accuse and condemn himself, and execute his own sentence on himself. The martyrs in the midst of their torments could almost grasp their eternal crown, for the end of their sufferings was not far off. But in the austerities of the religious life, the crown of eternal life is seen only at a distance ; it must be striven for, and suffered for, and no one knows how long.

It is a very difficult martyrdom, both of soul and body.

Christian sons and daughters, what think you of all this? What do your hearts say to you? Does it not seem as if I described the religious state in such vivid colors, with the intention of frightening you away from it, and of depriving you of all inclination and courage for it, instead of urging and exhorting you to it? Oh, no ; such is not my intention ; but I must tell you candidly what that state is in itself, so that each one who feels that he is called to it by God, may know what he has to choose. Still, for one who is really determined to follow the call of God, I am not afraid that he will be in the least frightened. Conceal as well as you can, from wretches condemned to death, the instruments of torture that await them, for such people are poor sinners who meet a violent death unwillingly. But in the case of one who, in-

Which the religious chooses and willingly undergoes.

¹ Obedientia nobile genus martyrii, decollat propriæ voluntatis caput.

flamed by the love of God, desires nothing but to resemble his poor, humble, and suffering Saviour, and to be crucified with Him, you must place openly before his eyes the thorns, nails, cross, and other instruments of torture, and not only will the sight of them not cool his zeal, but it will even encourage him; instead of becoming troubled and afraid, he will find therein his greatest consolation and joy, for he will find what he seeks and desires. If I wished to persuade a merchant to undertake a journey to Brazil or to India, Peru or Japan, I must tell him of the great treasures and riches that are to be found there; but if I had to deal with a servant of God, a zealous missionary, I should bring forward far different motives to urge him. Then to induce him to go I should represent the difficulties and dangers of the toilsome journey, the trials, tribulations, persecutions, chains and imprisonment, torture, fire and sword, that await him there, to the glory of God and the salvation of souls. And that would be the right way to urge him, for his heart would at once bound with joy and desire. This is the reason why, up to the present day, so many hundred religious have gone to those countries and sacrificed all the comforts of Europe to live amongst savages. In the same way I know what a soul wants that is determined to follow the divine vocation: the greatest austerities cannot frighten one away, because it is not a comfortable, easy, and pleasant life that is sought by him who intends to enter religion. Otherwise it would be better for him not to do so. To suffer for God, to deny and mortify one's self, to get to Heaven by the rough and narrow way of the cross, that is the object of his desires. The more there is of the cross, the greater the desire for it in a soul that loves God, in order to give proof of his love and fidelity for his heavenly Spouse. It is a special grace and happiness for one who is selected by God for such a high state, in which a great deal more may be done for God.

And meanwhile the religious has his consolation and joy like the martyrs.

Meanwhile, they who receive that grace, experience that the religious life, which has its share of the torments of the martyrs, has also its share of their unspeakable consolations and joys. We sometimes shudder with horror when we think of how terribly some of them were slowly tortured to death; but if we could have beheld them in their sufferings and asked what they thought, then should we see even tender youths and young children rush to the torture with as much joy as if they were going to a marriage feast; we should see them, like St. Ignatius, exciting the lions and wild beasts to attack them more fiercely; or with St. Law-

rence, laughing on the glowing gridiron, as if they had lost all feeling. We should hear them say that they find it more difficult to bear the great consolation and inward joy they experience, than the torments inflicted on them. Oh, how sweet it is, writes that great servant of God, Father Charles Spinola, of the Society of Jesus, from Japan, a short time before he was burned to death over a slow fire; how sweet it is merely to think of my happiness! To know that I am to die for my Saviour! What joy it will be for me when I am actually in the midst of the flames! For the thought of being burnt alive is a sweet one for me!

In the same way, they who love the vain world, who are inexperienced in the path of virtue, and who have never found out how sweet the Lord is, have a fearful idea of the religious life when they hear of its austerities, and imagine all sorts of things about it. How great a mistake they make! Look at religious themselves and ask them about it, and they will not be able to conceal their contentment, and their inward joy and peace, if they are good religious. Nor do I wonder at it; that glorious, generous, and merciful God, who can make the sufferings of the martyrs sweet to them, who even grants pleasures to sinners, His sworn enemies, can He not also fill with exquisite sweetness far surpassing all worldly delights, the hearts of His dearest children, who, through love of Him, have left all the pleasures and joys of earth, and who care for nothing but to love Him properly and to do something to please Him? Certainly, He can do so! But if He can do it, He will do it, for He will never allow His creatures to surpass Him in generosity; He will never permit those who most eagerly desire to love and serve Him, to be without consolation and joy, for His goodness impels Him to make all reasoning creatures happy. In the beautiful words of St. Bernard: "Men of the world see our sufferings and austerities; but they do not see our consolations,"¹ because these latter are in the depths of our hearts; if they could see them and experience them only for an hour, they would feel, not pity, but rather a holy envy of our state of life. The words of the Psalmist are literally true: "Better is one day in Thy courts, above thousands."² Better and more pleasant is one day in Thy house, oh, Lord, amongst the children devoted to Thee, than a thousand years in the tumult and false happiness of the world!

In the same way, a true religious finds joy in austerities.

Let religious themselves speak, and say what sweetness they

Without once com-

¹ Cruces nostras vident, unctiones nostras non vident.

² Mellior est dies una in atribus tuis super ~~millia~~ *Ps. lxxxiii. 11*

plainting of
them, as
worldly peo-
ple do.

have hitherto tasted in God. Consider them, and ask them, I say again, how it is with them. With a modest humility, but with cheerful, joyful countenances, they will answer: Thanks be to God, it is well with me; I am contented; I could not desire anything better. I would not change my happiness with that of an emperor or a queen! Now go into the world, amongst those who seem to have the greater share of worldly happiness—how differently they will speak of themselves, even before they are asked to do so. If intimate friends are speaking about their trials and difficulties, how one laments and mourns the losses he has suffered, another complains of his children, a third of his family; one requires this, another that. Many are ashamed to complain openly, but their long faces and smothered sighs give you clearly enough to understand that they have a secret pain and anguish gnawing at the heart. Show me one like that amongst true religious, even in the strictest orders. I know well that now and then you can find a discontented person in religion, who is always complaining; but why? Because such a one is either forced to become a religious, or he has not been called by God, or he is an imperfect, sensual, and tepid religious. What wonder is it that God withdraws His sweetness from those who are untrue to, and do not fully observe the promise they made, according to the rules of their order? Or there may be sometimes some who are tempted by the devil, and have no experienced guide to give them advice. Besides that, there is a great difference between one order and another, nay, even between one convent and another. I am speaking of good religious in well-ordered convents; visit them, and visit them a hundred times, and see whether you will find anything amongst them but a rare contentment, a wonderful inward and outward cheerfulness. None of them will say, although he may have spent twenty, thirty, forty years, and more in the convent, that he is tired of it; many of them will complain, as I myself lately heard one complain, that they have too much happiness and contentment, and that they are afraid on that account lest they should not get to Heaven; so that they must be comforted by being reminded of the hundredfold that Christ has promised them, even during this life. A certain sign, oh, Lord, of Thy favor and generosity, by which Thou knowest how to inundate with sweet joys, even in the midst of trials, Thy servants and handmaids, who seek nothing but Thy cross! But they perhaps conceal their holy sorrow, and hide it under an assumed cheerfulness? What would be the

good of such a disguise? And how could they keep it up long, without sometimes making known their griefs to their friends or parents who visit them? I should look upon such a disguise, kept up even for a short time, as a greater wonder than to feel excessive joy in the midst of martyrdom. No, oh Lord, I must say it again, it is an undeniable proof that Thy burden is really light, and Thy yoke sweet; since Thou art always "a God of all consolation,"¹ to Thy children who love Thee!

There is no doubt, then, that the religious state is a martyrdom, in its austerities, as well as in its consolations; consequently, it must be a sure sign of eternal salvation. What reasoning do we require? Thy promise, oh, most faithful God, cannot fail. Thou hast clearly spoken and made us this promise by Thy Evangelist, St. Matthew: "Amen, I say to you. . . . Every one that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name's sake:"—each one, whoever he may be; what reward will he have? Praise be to Thee, oh, Lord!—"he shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall possess life everlasting."² And therefore, in some orders, when the religious, making his vows, says the words: I promise³ to God Almighty, perpetual chastity, poverty, and obedience; the Superior who receives the profession, answers: "And I, in the name of God, promise thee eternal life."⁴

Oh, certainly, then, they are more than fortunate who are called to that state by God, and who live according to it! What happiness thus to have a foretaste of heavenly joys by the complete contentment felt in God! And what happiness and consolation at the end of this life, when all labor and trouble is at an end, to enter into eternity with a pledge of salvation in the hand, and to be able to say to God with full confidence: "I have done, oh Lord, what Thou hast ordered; give me now what Thou hast promised."⁵ For Thy name's sake I have left house and home, father and mother, sisters and brothers, and everything in the world; I have received the hundred-fold already, now I expect eternal life from Thee. Oh, what happiness and consolation, I repeat, to die with that certainty; while on the other hand, the man of the world, who sought happiness in vain and transitory goods and in earthly pleasures, must leave all in the world and

Therefore the religious vocation is a certain sign of salvation through the divine promise.

Hence they are fortunate who are called to that state and live according to it.

¹ Deus totius consolationis.

² Amen dico vobis: . . . Omnis qui reliquerit domum, vel fratres aut sorores, aut patrem, aut matrem, aut uxorem, aut filios, aut agros propter nomen meum; centuplum accipiet, et vitam æternam possidebit.—Matth. xix. 28, 29.

³ Promitto. ⁴ Et ego tibi promitto vitam æternam.

⁵ Ecce, quod jussisti; redde, quod promissisti!

depart into eternity empty-handed. In the year 1656, as Aldrovandus writes, there were seen in Hungary two young men in the air, apparently fighting with each other. One of them was heard to say in a plaintive voice : “ Alas, my kingdom is at an end,”¹ while the other cried out in tones of exultation: “ My kingdom is about to commence.”² A striking image, my dear brethren, of two brothers or sisters, one of whom enjoys the luxuries and sinful pleasures of the world, while the other leaves all, to serve God alone in the religious state. Both must die, but how different their deaths ! The luxurious worldling who enjoyed all pleasures without restraint, must now exclaim full of sorrow: “ Alas, my kingdom is at an end.” All joys are done for me, and where am I going to now ? But the servant of God, who despised all earthly things, and disregards what death can deprive him of, will cry out : “ My kingdom is about to commence !” Through love of my Saviour I have preferred to be poor, rejected, and despised ; now my sufferings are at an end ; He is calling me to His kingdom ; I will now begin to reign² with Him in Heaven, and no one will be able to take my reward from me. I will reign² and of my kingdom there will be no end. Ah, my dear brethren, who would not wish to die a death like this ?

Exhortation to parents.

Think well on this, you, especially, Christian parents ! For God’s sake do not be troubled nor disturbed, as is often the case, if one of your children, even the dearest, or the only one, is called by God to that high state. Rejoice, rather, that you can give and sacrifice your child to God, and thus insure his temporal and eternal happiness. Rejoice that you can place your child where he can best pray for his own salvation and yours. Learn from the beautiful example of that father, of whom our Father Cæsar Calini writes in his book called the “ Young Joseph” : There was in Italy, in the year 1715, a nobleman, whose eldest son disclosed to him (as a good child ought), in several letters, the fact that God had called him to the religious state. The nobleman sent an answer to his son, of which the following is a short extract: “ My dear son: I did not determine to give my consent to your request at once, because I thought it necessary to prove your resolution, and to know what moved you to it. But now, since your letters prove it, I cast myself at the feet of Jesus Christ, and give my hearty consent to your request, and, in the name of God, I bestow on you my fatherly blessing. You have received a great and special grace from the divine mercy. I heartily rejoice that

¹Regnavi.

²Regnabo I

nothing in the world can become your master, and that you have so soon heard the divine inspirations that so lovingly call you to the religious state. Oh, what a grace for you, that God selects you in preference to so many others, for His service! I know that you are leaving a noble house, but I am certain that if you had to abandon a throne, you would do so, fully persuaded that it is better to serve God than to reign, and far more preferable to live despised and unknown in His house, than to enjoy the false happiness and honors of the world. Eternal thanks be to the Almighty, that you are not one of those children who contend against the providence of God, and who embrace a state of life from other motives, without consulting Him. Therefore, hasten to enter that holy state, to which nothing but the pure love of God has called you, and in which, if you perform your duty properly, you will certainly save your soul. Go on, then, my son! Do not allow any earthly thing to come between you and your God! It is my duty to remind you of this, it is yours to fulfil it. Forget me, and all belonging to you; God will think little of our sacrifice, if I do not give you up altogether, and if you do not abandon yourself to Him completely. This is my desire, and I beg of you to ask of God daily, that you may know and fulfil His will. Obtain for me, by your prayers, that I may labor for the end for which I was created, and by a virtuous life, may attain eternal happiness. Rest in peace, my son. I resign you into the loving hands of your heavenly Father. Although the separation costs me many tears, yet I shed them on account of the unspeakable joy I feel in seeing that you are chosen by the Holy Ghost for such great happiness. Therefore, my son, take leave of me and all belonging to you, for the last time. God bless you! 'Bless the Lord, live joyfully; and because thou hast heard the voice of thy God, all blessings shall come upon thee.'¹ Such was that father's answer. Which plainly proves that he was influenced, not by flesh and blood, nor by the false maxims of the vain world, but by the Spirit of God. Christian parents, what think you of this? Have you the same dispositions? Oh, if all fathers and mothers were thus well-disposed towards God and the salvation of their children, how many sons and daughters would be called to that happy state by the voice of God?

But you, oh, children, to whom that great grace is offered by an interior inspiration from God, rejoice in the Lord with all

To children about choosing a state.

¹ Benedic Dominum; age dies lætitiæ, et quia audisti vocem Dei tui, venient super te univærsæ benedictiones.

your hearts, and do not reject the proffered grace, or incur the danger of losing temporal as well as eternal happiness. Be careful, especially when you are deliberating about a state of life, not to make yourselves unworthy of such a grace, by imitating the vanities of the world, by associating with persons of the opposite sex, or by consenting to grievous sin; and do not allow that grace to be taken away from you through want of opportunity to correspond with it; but prepare your hearts by the practice of virtue, and chiefly of Christian humility and modesty, that you may all the better hear and obey the call of God. You are bound to honor father and mother, and to show them the most humble love and obedience; that is true; but if your parents, knowing that you are called to the religious life, and after you have declared your holy purpose to them, and when you have the opportunity of carrying it into effect, they not requiring your help for their support, if they, in any way, try to hinder you, then obedience to them would not be obedience to God, and with all child-like respect you must absolutely refuse to do what they ask of you. If they use caresses or threats to prevent you, stop your ears and do not let yourself depart a hair's breadth from your intention. Remember how David acted when he went to fight the giant Goliath. How many reasons were brought forward to deter him from his purpose! One of his brothers accused him of putting forward this as a pretext for leaving home and gratifying his curiosity by seeing what was going on in the camp: "I know thy pride and the wickedness of thy heart, that thou art come down to see the battle."¹ When he presented himself to Saul, and said: "I thy servant will go, and will fight against the Philistine,"² he was laughed at, for he appeared too young and weak: "Thou art not able to withstand this Philistine, nor to fight against him, for thou art but a boy,"³ said Saul. Nevertheless David repeated: "I will go."⁴ And so he went against the giant, with his staff in his hand, trusting in God, in whose name he attacked Goliath, slew him and returned victorious. Christian sons and daughters, in the same way your friends and acquaintances, your brothers and sisters, your fathers and mothers may perhaps try to keep you from entering religion. They will say to you: "I know well your pride and wickedness, etc."⁵ I know well what you want: it is only a plan

¹ Ego novi superbiam tuam, et nequitiam cordis tui, quia ut videres prælium descendisti.—I. Kings xvii. 28.

² Ego servus tuus vadam, et pugnabo adversus Philistæum.—Ibid. 32.

³ Non vales resistere Philistæo, nec pugnare adversus eum, quia puer es.—Ibid. 33.

⁴ Ego vadam.

⁵ Novi superbiam tuam, et nequitiam etc.

of yours to escape the obedience you owe your parents, it is a wicked scheme to enjoy an independent life. You have no vocation, but only curiosity to see what is going on in the convent. Sometimes they will express pity for your youth ! What are you thinking of ? You are only a child ; you have not strength enough for such a life, etc. ¹ Sometimes they will try to frighten you with the difficulties and trials of the religious life ; but do not mind their empty talk, say boldly: I will go. ² God calls me, I will go. ³ He who places the burden on my shoulders will also give me strength to bear it. My mind is made up ; I will go ² and follow the call of God. Even if your parents and the whole family are filled with sorrow, and beg of you on their knees, and with tears in their eyes, to remain with them, pay no attention to them ; remind them of the words of our Lord in the Gospel: “ If any man come to Me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, . . . he cannot be my disciple.” ³ St. Gregory remarks on this passage that a child should no more allow his father or mother to keep him away from the service of God, than if he hated them. Yea, adds St. Jerome, if your father and mother were to place themselves across the threshold of the door, so that you could not leave the house to follow the call of God, without stepping on them, then you must do so. ⁴ Hesitate not, step out boldly and follow the voice of God to the standard of the cross, for His holy will must be preferred to the authority of your father or mother.

Finally, you who, knowing the will of God, have really determined to enter religion, think and say with joy, what Samuel said to the High Priest: Thou hast called me, oh, Lord, behold me ! ⁵ I know whereto and wherefore Thou callest me to a state of humility, poverty, crosses, and mortification. But that is the very state that I willingly embrace, in order to become more like to my poor, humble, crucified Redeemer. I desire no other reward but thee, oh, God ; no other treasure but Thee ; no consolation or happiness but in Thee alone ! If the hundred-fold reward promised in this life should fail, yet Thy word cannot fail ; therefore I desire nothing more than to possess Thee, oh, God of my heart, according to Thy assurance, in eternal life. Amen.

To those who have already resolved to enter religion.

¹ Non vales resistere, quia puer est. ² Ego vadam.

³ Si quis venit ad me, et non odit patrem suum et matrem . . . et fratres et sorores . . . non potest esse meus discipulus.—Luke xiv. 26.

⁴ Per calcatum vade patrem, per calcatum perge matrem, ad crucis signis evola!

⁵ Ecce ego, quia vocasti me.—I. Kings iii. 6.

*Another Introduction for the same Sermon on the Occasion of a Religious Reception or Profession :***Text.***Hodie salus domui huic facta est.*—Luke xix. 9.

“This day is salvation come to this house.”

How ! did such good fortune fall to the lot of Zacheus because he quickly obeyed the call of the Lord ? Because he restored unjustly acquired property ? Because he gave the half of his goods to the poor ? If so, may I not ask, oh, Lord, what good fortune, what happiness will be the lot of those two, who are now before Thy altar ? They have obeyed Thy call as quickly as Zacheus. Not only have they given away half their goods, but all they had, or could have in the world, for Thy sake ; not only have they given their goods, but themselves also, body and soul, to Thy service, and that forever, by the vows of religion which they are about to make. Hear what the Lord Himself answers in the Gospel of St. Matthew, when Peter asked Him a similar question: “Behold, we have left all things and have followed Thee; what, therefore, shall we have?”¹ “Amen, I say to you,” answers Christ, “. . . every one that hath left house, or father, or mother, . . . or brethren, or sisters. . . for my name’s sake; shall receive an hundredfold, and shall possess life everlasting.”² Have you understood me, pious souls ? Be glad and rejoice, for the Lord God makes the same promise to you to-day. Oh, what a happy day for you ! To-day, you will be assured of your eternal salvation, as far as we can be sure of any future event ; as I shall prove with many arguments, to your consolation, and by way of congratulating you. The religious profession, which you are about to make, is a sure pledge and certain sign of eternal salvation. There you have the whole subject ; for I repeat and will prove: “This day is salvation come to this house,” etc.—*continues as before.*

Another Conclusion for New Religious. Follows Note 10.

There is nothing more for me to do now, than to congratulate you, pious souls, with my whole heart, on the holy resolution that you have to-day carried into effect. Your sisters in religion unite with me in this; your parents and friends who are present, in

¹ *Ecce nos reliquitmus omnia et secuti sumus te; quid ergo erit nobis?*—*Matth. xix. 27.*² *Amen dico vobis: . . . Omnis, qui reliquerit domum . . . centuplum accipiet et vitam eternam possidebit.*—*Ibid. 28, 29.*

order to resign forever into the hands of God the natural rights they have had over you hitherto, also congratulate you. Meanwhile, you, whom I may call predestined to Heaven, go up courageously to the altar to take the last step and complete your union with your heavenly Spouse, by those vows which you have long desired to make. Both of you may say with joy, like Samuel: Thou, oh Lord, hast called me, behold, here I am ' to answer Thee. Thou wishest me to embrace a state of poverty, chastity, obedience, mortification, crosses, and sufferings; I accept it with my whole heart, nay, it is the very thing I desire. If that state were less poor, less humble, less austere, it could not so well satisfy the love and desire that draw me to it, in order to become more like my poor, humble, crucified Redeemer. I shall say with Joab, when Banaias, at the order of King Solomon, tried to entice him to leave the temple by saying: "Come forth,"¹ and Joab answered: I will not come forth, but here I will die.² Let the world do what it will, let it try every means to entice me back again, let it say: "Come forth" a thousand times, and promise me a pleasant life, I shall answer: "I will not come forth, but here I will die." If my parents and relations tried to drag me away from the altar, and said to me: "Come forth," come back to us, beloved daughter, we will give you a rich inheritance. With you "I will not come forth; but here I will die." Even if the wicked spirit himself, with all his legion, were to whisper into my ear, "Come forth;" you will not be able to bear the austerities of the order; what you are doing is useless, you will be lost in spite of it: I will not come forth, I will die here, shall be my final resolution. Away with you! I here promise and vow to Thee, oh, God, before Heaven and earth, perpetual poverty, chastity, and obedience. I desire no other reward but Thee, oh, God, etc.—*continues as before.*

¹ Ecce ego quia vocasti me.

² Egredere!

³ Non egrediar, sed hic moriar.—III. Kings ii. 30.

TWENTY-FOURTH SERMON.

ON THE HAPPINESS OF THE UNMARRIED STATE.

Subject.

One of the most excellent and happiest states is the unmarried state; therefore, they who are called to it, should readily obey the voice of God.—*Preached on the first Sunday in Lent.*

Text.

Dominum Deum tuum adorabis, et illi soli servies.—Matth. iv. 10.

“The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve.”

Introduction.

These words are for each and every one of us; therefore we are in the world. In this is our last end, to this all our thoughts, words, and actions must tend; namely, to adore the great God, and serve Him alone. Now, my dear brethren, as we have seen recently, although God wishes to be adored and served by all men, yet not by all in the same manner, nor in the same state of life; for each one must serve Him in that state to which he is called. In the last two sermons I have treated of the excellence of the religious state, and the happiness of those who, being called to it, live according to its rules. To-day I will speak of those who live in the world in the unmarried state, to which, due proportion being observed, the secular clergy also belong. So that those children who are still deliberating about a state of life, may know something about this, and see what they have to choose by the vocation and inspiration of God. I say therefore

Plan of Discourse.

One of the most excellent and happiest states is the unmarried state; therefore, they who are called to it should readily obey the voice of God and serve Him alone. Such is the subject to-day.

Do Thou, oh, Lord, enlighten the understandings and arouse the wills of all those whom Thou callest to serve Thee in this state; we ask this of Thee through the merits of Thy Virgin Mother Mary, and the intercession of the holy angels, who serve Thee in Heaven.

Not all un-
married

By the words “unmarried people,” I do not understand all

those who, being still free, have entered neither the religious nor the married state; otherwise I should include the greater number of people, namely, all young people not arrived at maturity, all widowers and widows, who are actually unmarried. Nor do I include those who wish to marry, but have as yet had no fit opportunity of so doing, on account of poverty, ill-health, weakness, and other hindrances, and who, therefore, have to remain unmarried against their will. These latter must remember that divine providence has so arranged matters for their greater good, and for the salvation of their souls, and that this is the state, and no other, in which God wishes them to serve Him, although they do not choose it by their free will; therefore, as many others have to do on different occasions, they must make a virtue of necessity, and, content with the divine will, they must humbly and earnestly beg of God to protect them from all the dangers and occasions of sin, and they may be certain that He will not abandon them, but will always guard them by His grace. Finally, I must also exclude those who, like weather-cocks, take a liking sometimes to one state, and sometimes to another, without ever coming to any determination, and wait blindly for the first acceptable opportunity that may present itself. All these people are certainly unmarried, but they are not in the unmarried state, which is a state fixed for life, and to which all, of both sexes, belong, who, according to the advice of the Apostle, have once for all made the resolution of not marrying, nor of entering a religious order, and of remaining as they are to the end of their lives, and that, too, with a proper motive and object.

I say with a proper motive and object; for, to remain unmarried merely to escape the burdens, trials, cares, and annoyances of the married life, and meanwhile to live without restraint, to frequent the company of the opposite sex, to go often into society of all kinds, and to give way to sensual pleasures, which marriage alone can render lawful, and to do so without restraint whenever opportunity offers; that is no vocation from God, but an evident snare and treachery of the foul fiend, and it is a state in which countless sins are certainly committed against holy purity, a virtue that it is, humanly speaking, impossible to preserve among so many dangers and opportunities. It would be better for such people to get married, and they are bound in conscience either to do so, or to amend their lives. Oh, how many there are of this class, who deceive the world by a false appearance of

people belong to the unmarried state.

Nor those who remain unmarried without a good motive.

chastity, and who make use of the glorious title of virginal purity as a cloak to conceal their abominations and impurities from the eyes of the world! Outwardly they are white as doves, but inwardly they are as black as ravens that feed on stolen offal. A raven of this kind was that girl who, being attacked by two wild boars in a forest, through which a holy religious, Bernard Astensis, was travelling, called out to the holy man for help; the latter ran up at once, but saw that he could not assist her. Alas, cried the girl, I have led a bad and immoral life. In order to indulge my passions more unrestrainedly, I refused all offers of marriage, under pretext of preserving my virginity until death. Now I am lost forever, and these wild boars are in reality devils to whom I am delivered for punishment. Woe to all of you, then, of either sex, who thus deceive the world! You will not escape the eye of God; the day will come when all your hidden abominations will be brought to light, and made known before Heaven and earth, by that Judge who, according to St. Paul, "will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts."¹

Who then
belong to
that state?

I allude, therefore, only to those unmarried people who, for a supernatural end, that is, for the love of God, that they may serve Him better, attend more carefully to their salvation, and be thus more certain of going to Heaven, voluntarily renounce the lawful joys and pleasures of the married life, either by a firm resolution, or, what is still more meritorious and certain, by a vow of perpetual chastity and virginity, and who thus live unmarried, in virginal modesty and humility, rejecting, as far as possible, all society with persons of the opposite sex, and avoiding every occasion that might excite to sensuality. Such is the unmarried state in which one serves God, and God alone.

This is one
of the hap-
piest states.
How the
holy Fathers
praise it.

I must exclaim with the Wise Man: "Oh, how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory: for the memory thereof is immortal; because it is known both with God and with men."² Oh, how glorious, noble, and happy is the state of those servants and handmaids of God, as long as they live according to it! Here I may mention some of the eulogies pronounced on it by the holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church. St. Cyprian calls it: "The nobler part of the fold of Christ,"³ which, on account of its unsullied purity, and greater likeness to Him, is more dear to Him.

¹ Qui et illuminabit abscondita tenebrarum, et manifestabit consilia cordium.—I. Cor. iv. 5.

² O quam pulchra est casta generatio cum claritate; immortalis est enim memoria illius, quoniam et apud Deum nota est, et apud homines.—Sap. iv. 1.

³ Illustrior portio gregis Christi.

The holy Martyr Ignatius, who lived just after the time of the Apostles, places this state, as to dignity, in the same rank as anointed priests; for he writes thus to the Christians of Tharsis: "Honor those who live in virginity, as you honor the priests of Christ."¹ They are really children of Jesus Christ, says St. Ambrose, for Christ is the Father and the Source of true virginity; because, when it was unknown and despised in the world, He chose to be born of a Virgin, in order to bring it from Heaven down on earth and to introduce it there. "Earthly angels of Jesus Christ," so they are called by St. John Chrysostom, St. Augustine, St. Jerome, and many others, according to the words of our Lord in the Gospel of St. Matthew, when he speaks of the glorified bodies of the elect: "In the resurrection they shall neither marry nor be married, but shall be as the angels of God in Heaven."² Nay, more than that, St. Bernard, following St. John Chrysostom, does not hesitate to place them, to a certain extent, above the angels. He says: "There is indeed a difference between a chaste man and an angel, but it is a difference of happiness, not of virtue."³ It is natural for the angels to be chaste, because they have no carnal desires; but for a man with a mortal body to observe chastity, in the midst of dangers, temptations, and natural evil inclinations, is, indeed, a great virtue. The angels are chaste without difficulty; men, on the other hand, must combat and often do themselves violence, and therefore their chastity is more to be wondered at than that of the angels. They are the most intimate servants of Jesus Christ, who stand round His throne, and sing to Him that canticle which no others can sing, as St. John says in the Apocalypse: "And no man could say the canticle, but those hundred forty-four thousand, who were purchased from the earth. These are they who were not defiled with women: for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth."⁴ Oh, certainly a sublime and happy state!

But, my dear brethren, no matter how highly all those eulogies extol the unmarried state, they are all surpassed by one title of honor, which is, that that state is one of spiritual marriage with Jesus Christ, who is the Lover and true Spouse of chaste

Virgins in the unmarried state are spouses of Christ; what a great happiness!

¹ *Fas, quæ in virginitate degunt, in pretio habete, velut Christi sacerdotes.*

² *In resurrectione neque nubent, neque nubentur, sed erunt sicut angeli Dei in caelo.—Matt. xxii. 30.*

³ *Differunt quidem inter se homo pudicus et angelus, sed felicitate non virtute.*

⁴ *Et nemo poterat dicere canticum, nisi illa centum quadragintaquatuor millia, qui empti sunt de terra. Hi sunt, qui cum mulieribus non sunt coinquinati; virgines enim sunt. Hi sequuntur Agnum, quocumque lerit.—Apoc. xiv. 3, 4.*

souls. "Rejoice," says St. Augustine, "virgins consecrated to God;"—words that may be also applied to all who are resolved to preserve their virginal purity intact till death—"what honor and happiness for you! You have, as your Bridegroom, Him whom the most pure Queen of Virgins alone merited to have as her Son. Although He does not honor you as He does His Mother, yet He loves you"—as long as you remain true to Him—"as His spouses." Could any one have a greater happiness or dignity in this mortal life? We sometimes hear people say, when a rich man marries a poor maiden: How fortunate that person is! If a peasant girl is desired in marriage by a king, on account of her beauty, how the world wonders! How can the poor maiden behave in accordance with her newly-acquired dignity? For she is now raised above her former position, she is seated on a throne, and is honored as the first lady of the land. Rejoice, ye souls consecrated to God! It is to One incomparably greater than any king on earth, that you are espoused, by the promise and observance of perpetual chastity! In the holy state of matrimony on earth, no matter how happy it is, he who is called to it by God receives only a mortal woman as his bride, even if she is a queen; and, although he may be an emperor, yet he is only a mortal man. Your Bridegroom, who is espoused to you, is the greatest of men, and is true God as well.

Shown by
an example.

St. Ambrose tells of a noble maiden, whom her parents tried to force, against her will, into a marriage which the world would call a happy one. When she could no longer resist their violence, she ran to the church, clasped the altar in both arms, and said to her parents, who followed her: What do you want from me? What is it that you desire? That I should marry? Very well; be it so; but you must give me a bridegroom who is pleasing to me; otherwise I will not accept him. You must know that I desire one who has not his equal in nobility in all the world; I desire one who surpasses all others in knowledge and ability; one whose magnificence excels that of all men; whose treasures and riches are so great that I might buy the whole world with them; one who is the most beautiful of all, whose beauty never fades; one who will give me all kinds of joys and pleasures, without the least annoyance; one who will love me always, and who will certainly be always true to me; one who, in addition to all these things, can never die. Father, mother, can you find a bridegroom of that kind for me? If you can, I will obey you, and will give him my hand at once. But if he is wanting in a single one of

these qualities, then I do not care for him, I will not have him; you must not trouble me about him. You should rather rejoice and congratulate me; for see, I have already found the Bridegroom whom I desire: Jesus Christ, the Son of the King of glory, who is here really present on the altar. To Him I now vow, in your presence, perpetual chastity, and I take you as witnesses of my vow. At last I have what I so much longed for and desired.

The very same thing, my dear brethren, may be said, to their great joy and consolation, by all those who serve their God in perpetual chastity, in the unmarried state. Away with all who can love me in the world! Away with all whom I could love in the world! I have chosen another Lover and Spouse, who has said to me by the Prophet Osee: "And I will betroth thee to me forever."¹ A Spouse who has none like Him in Heaven, and much less on earth, in nobility, wisdom, power, riches, beauty, happiness, love, and fidelity, and He is that Lord who not only descends from all the Jewish kings, and is the successor and heir of David and Solomon, but He is also the Son of an Eternal Father, the substantial image of all the divine perfections, the Son of God, equal to God, God Himself; and hence, too, the Creator of all things, the Lord and Judge, on the hem of whose garment is written, as St. John says in the Apocalypse: "King of kings, and Lord of lords,"² at the bare mention of whose name, the angels bow down in Heaven, crowned heads bow down on earth, and even the devils in hell tremble. He is the Lord, from whose eye the dark night can conceal nothing; without whose will and permission not a hair falls from my head, not a leaf from a tree, not a flake of snow or a drop of water out of the air. He is that Lord whose might and power are irresistible; who makes laws for kings and emperors; who calms the sea with a word, and places bounds to it that it cannot pass; who calls to the stars and they answer, "Here we are,"³ what is Thy wish? Who has a thousand times a thousand about Him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand to wait on Him. He is that Lord, whose riches are inexhaustible; from whose hands all goods and treasures come; who is never in need of any creature; who, although He is most generous to all, yet has much for Himself and is none the poorer. He is that Lord before whose glory and beauty the sun and moon hide themselves for shame; who, even in a mortal body, could be called: "Beautiful in form

They have
the great
King of
Heaven and
earth as
their
Spouse.

¹ Sponsabo te mihi in sempiternum.—Osee ii. 19.

² Rex regum, et Dominus dominantium.—Apoc. xix. 16.

³ Adsumus!

above the sons of men;”¹ whose beauty is not dimmed by age; whose countenance is the eternal joy of the elect in Heaven. He is the Lord who loves me with the tenderest love, when and as long as I wish; whose tenderness for me is not lessened by the most loathsome illness, who will never be untrue to me if I do not first banish Him violently from my heart. He is the Lord of death itself; death can never take Him from me; in and with Him I may expect eternal joys. Such is the Bridegroom that I have chosen, Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God. I ask again, is it possible for any mortal in this life to attain to greater happiness and dignity?

They will have eternal joy in this Spouse in the next life.

But, some will think, it is, after all, an unenviable happiness. Such a rich, noble, and loving Spouse ought to bring something to the soul who thus chooses Him. What marriage gift does He bring? His bride ought certainly to share in His riches. But if she has nothing of her own, nor from her parents, she will certainly not grow richer by remaining in the unmarried state. Experience teaches that many such people barely manage to live. Instead of such a bride living with her Bridegroom in joy and pleasure, all means of sensual pleasures, such as she could lawfully enjoy in the married state, are cut off from her, and hopelessly too. Is not that a miserable kind of happiness? Yes, truly it is so, if we must judge of it by the senses alone; but Christ has said before now, when He was urging His disciples to perfection: “Not all understand this word.”² Our Bridegroom, they can answer, has said of Himself: “I am not of this world.”³ So also the treasures and riches, the joys and pleasures, the honor and happiness we expect from Him, “are not of this world;”⁴ although they are given to us already a hundredfold in this life by the inward peace of heart and conscience, and by the merits and treasures that we can amass for our souls in our state of life. Our real happiness is on high, where our Bridegroom holds His royal court.

And also even in this life.

Meanwhile, if all carnal pleasures are forbidden to us forever, that is what we desire; because we can thus keep our hearts more free from creatures and can more easily give them altogether to God and to divine things, as St. Paul says, when praising the unmarried state: “The virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord.”⁵ While others, who are bound by matrimony, are in servitude, and

¹ Spectosus forma præ filiis hominum.—Ps. xlv. 3.

² Non omnes capiunt verbum hoc.

³ Ego non sum de hoc mundo.—John viii. 23.

⁴ Non sunt de hoc mundo.

⁵ Virgo cogitat quæ Domini sunt.—1. Cor. vii. 34.

have all sorts of cares and troubles, the virgin lives in freedom, and beyond the trouble of supporting herself decently, she has no other care, no other thought except to serve God in peace, and attend to the salvation of her soul. While others must adorn themselves to please the eye of a mortal man, we have time to adorn our souls with virtues, so as to please the God of all beauties alone. While others, if their marriage is in the least degree unfortunate, are tormented by a hundred different trials, and lament too late the loss of their freedom, we have nothing of the kind to fear. Others, even if they have everything they wish, lose their bridegroom by death, and are left in sorrow, and often in poverty with their children: we need never fear that, for our Bridegroom can never be taken from us. Others, again, are separated from their bridegroom and from all they love, by death: we, when the hour of death comes, shall be eternally united to ours; that is what we expect and long for. Oh, what a glorious and happy state is that of the chaste servants and handmaids of God! ¹ Well hast thou written, oh, holy Apostle St. Paul, in thy Epistle to the Corinthians: “But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they so continue, even as I.” ² “Therefore, both he that giveth his virgin in marriage, doth well; and he that giveth her not, doth better.” ³ “Every one hath his proper gift from God, one after this manner, and another after that.” ⁴ One is called by God to one state, and another to a different state. Let each one only lead a pious and Christian life, in the exact fulfilment of the duties of the state to which he is called.

Here I must condemn the reckless conduct of those boys and girls who throw away in their youth the treasure of their chastity—which is so precious in the sight of God, and so dear to Jesus Christ—at the first opportunity that offers, and even after having deliberately sought out an opportunity of satisfying their beastly passions. Nay, they even rejoice and look upon it as a piece of good luck when they have a chance of losing this noble treasure, which once lost, can never be recovered for all eternity. Foolish virgins! Unhappy souls! How I pity you! For you allow yourselves to be deceived by the flattering tongue and false words

Folly of those who lose their purity in their youth.

¹ O quam pulchra est casta generatio cum claritate.

² Dico autem non nuptis et viduis: bonum est illis, si sic permaneant, sicut et ego.—I. Cor. vii. 8.

³ Igitur et qui matrimonio jungit virginem suam, bene facit, et qui non jungit melius facit.

—Ibid. 38.

⁴ Sed unusquisque proprium donum habet ex Deo, alius quidem sic, alius vero sic.—

Ibid. 7.

of some bird of prey, who after he has deprived you of your best treasure, goes his way, and leaves you dishonored in the sight of God, and often in the sight of men too ! The world still wonders at the foolish gluttony of Queen Cleopatra, who, in order to say that she had eaten something costly, caused a pearl worth two hundred thousand crowns to be dissolved in vinegar, and swallowed it. Agrippina, that she might induce her spendthrift son, Nero, to amend his ways (after he had once given eight hundred thousand Roman crowns to a man who pleased him and who had no other merit), caused vast sums of money to be heaped together, and showed them to her son. Look, my son, she said, at the trifle that you gave away yesterday ! Christian youths and maidens ! Your foolish extravagance is much more to be wondered at, or, to speak better, much more to be deplored. If it were possible to lay before you the treasure that you squander in a few moments, when you lose your virginal purity, you would see that it is not like Cleopatra's pearl, or Nero's treasure, but that it surpasses all the wealth of the world; for, to preserve it, many saints have shed every drop of blood in their veins with pleasure, while you so foolishly sacrifice it for a short-lived gratification.

Examples to
prove the
great treas-
ures they
lose.

If you wish to know how you should prize your virginity, ask that young man Nicætas, of whom St. Jerome writes, that being tied hand and foot, and delivered over to the insults of a shameless woman, and having no means of defending himself, he bit off his tongue and spat it with his blood into her face. Ask that heroic virgin who, according to Cardinal de Vitriaco, plucked out her eyes with her own hands and sent them to one who was plotting against her chastity. Another, in similar circumstances, cut off her lips and nose, so that being thus deformed, she might be in no danger of being loved by any one and thus losing her virginal purity. Still more wonderful is what we read in the lives of the Saints, of the holy virgin Euphrasia : Through hatred of the Christian faith, she was given over to a soldier to be dishonored. All her prayers and tears were of no avail, when suddenly she thought of a plan, through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost; throwing herself down at the soldier's feet, she said: If you spare me, I will teach you an art that will be worth more than money to you, for it will make you completely invulnerable in war, and you may first try the success of the art on me. The soldier was delighted to hear this, and promised to be her protector if what she said turned out true. Euphrasia, secretly rejoicing, made a pretence of culling different herbs here and there, as if

they contained some wonderful power; she then pressed the juice out of them between two stones, applied it to her neck in the soldier's presence, and kneeling down, said to him: Now you can see whether my art is good or not; draw your sword and strike as hard as you can; I assure you that my neck will not be in the least injured. The soldier, suspecting nothing, drew his sword and struck so hard that her head fell off at one blow. It was what the courageous virgin wished for by her pious stratagem, for she thus preserved her virginal purity intact. What think you of this, sensual and thoughtless young people? You who so lightly squander away such a precious treasure! What do they think of it, who are not content with what God has given them, but try to please others and gain their love by painting their faces and curling their hair, and by immodesty in dress also?

And you, wicked agents of the devil (oh, I could go mad when I think of it), you traitors and defilers of youth, who by your immodest language and stories, wicked teaching, provocation, caresses, invitations and conversation, betray so many innocent souls to impurity! Should you not be afraid when you think that you have taken away from God that precious treasure, not only in yourselves, but in others also, and that you have given it over to the devil! What shameless audacity it would be to insult or dishonor a queen in the very presence of the king! But you are far more shameless and insolent, for you dare to do that to one who, as long as she is pure, is espoused to Jesus Christ, the King of kings: and you do it before the God who sees all things. Woe to you, if that jealous Bridegroom, who cannot even allow His spouses to bring Him a divided affection, has to judge you for your sins after your death!

The wickedness of those who betray the innocent.

Finally, I speak again to you, Christian sons and daughters, whom God has called to the unmarried state. Acknowledge thankfully and humbly your great happiness, which the Lord has given to you in preference to so many others; but be careful to serve Him according to your state. You have kept your freedom, not to live more freely, but to be able all the better to attend to the salvation of your soul. You have given up all idea of marriage and sensual love, and you have thereby received Jesus Christ as your Bridegroom; He will henceforth take possession of your hearts and keep them for Himself alone. You are free from many domestic cares, therefore direct all your thoughts and desires to God and heavenly things. You have either vowed, or promised for God's sake, perpetual chastity; see that you keep

Conclusion and exhortation to the unmarried.

your resolution in the midst of the dangers and temptations of the world, and to that end, and that you may be always faithful to your Bridegroom, you must lead careful, retired, modest, and humble lives. If you are determined to do so, then I congratulate you; resolve and say with the Spouse of the Canticles: "I found Him whom my soul loveth, I held Him, and I will not let Him go."¹ Wretched pleasures of sense, good-bye forever! I have found in the Author of all happiness a consolation which enlivens my soul. To Thee alone, oh, God, do I belong; Thee alone I must and will adore and serve; Thee alone will I love with my whole heart; for Thee alone will I live and die, that I may be Thine in eternity. Amen.

TWENTY-FIFTH SERMON.

ON THE DANGERS AND GRACES OF THE UNMARRIED STATE.

Subject.

1st. The unmarried state is full of dangers and temptations.
2d. It is also full of graces and helps.—*Preached on the second Sunday in Lent.*

Text.

Domine, bonum est nos hic esse.—Matt. xvii. 4.
"Lord, it is good for us to be here."

Introduction.

Yes! I quite believe that it is good to be here, as Peter said, when he saw our Lord in snow-white garments, and had a foretaste of his future glory in Heaven. But while Christ was speaking with Moses and Elias about His future passion and death, Peter and the other two disciples, terrified at hearing the voice of the Heavenly Father saying: "Hear ye Him,"² and imitate Him, fell on their faces, sore afraid. Hitherto, my dear brethren, I have described the happiness of the religious and the unmarried states; and some of you might say with Peter: "Lord, it is good for us to be here;"³ let us build tabernacles in the unmarried state. Yes, that is true; and would that all who are called by God to that

¹ Inveni, quem diligit anima mea; tenui eum, nec dimittam.—Cant. iii. 4.

² Ipsum audite!—Matt. xvii. 5.

³ Domine, bonum est nos hic esse.

state, so understood it! But there is one thing that they must not forget, lest, like Peter, a too late repentance may fill them with dread. Each state has its own joys, which attract us to it, but each one has also its difficulties and trials, which might frighten one away. And such is especially the case with the unmarried state, the happiness of which I described in my last sermon. I do not say this, Christian sons and daughters, to give you a dislike to that state; God forbid! With St. Paul, I rather advise you to embrace it, for it is good for you to remain as you are. My intention is simply to tell you what this state is in itself, and to show you how you may remain in it constantly. I say then—

Plan of Discourse.

1st. The unmarried state is full of dangers and temptations. The first part. But be not afraid, for—2d. It is also full of graces and helps. The second part. And if you use those graces and helps, you can fearlessly and confidently say with Peter: "Lord, it is good for us to be here." This subject will be found useful to all, no matter what state they are in, as we shall see in the course of the sermon.

To this end, oh, Holy Ghost, we beg Thy help and inspiration, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and our holy angels guardian.

These are the well-known words of the Prophet Job, and daily experience proves their truth: "The life of man upon earth is a warfare,"¹ in which we have to contend with all kinds of enemies, and in which we are always surrounded by hundreds of dangers and temptations, through which we must bring our souls unharmed. This holds good for all, whatever may be their state, age, and sex. The pious, who really wish to serve God faithfully, are warned by the Wise Sirach, to be always prepared and ready for combat: "Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice, and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation,"² which will certainly not be long in coming. This I say for all the pious and just servants and handmaids of God, of whatever age or condition they may be.

All men suffer temptations and dangers.

But it seems to me that it is true of none more than of you, Christian sons and daughters, who are espoused to Jesus Christ, in the state of perpetual chastity. For, the more precious the

¹ Domine, bonum est nos hic esse. ² Militia est vita hominis super terram.—Job ii. 1.

³ Fili, accedens ad servitutem Dei, sta in justitia, et in timore et prepara animam tuam ad tentationem.—Eccl. ii. 1.

treasure that you have to guard, and to bring with you to the grave, the more thieves you will find who, attracted by it, will be always on the look-out to deprive you of it. You are the snow-white lambs of the flock of Christ, as I proved to you before from the holy Fathers; and on that very account, you have to guard yourselves all the more carefully from the attacks of the hungry wolves, who will be attracted by your whiteness. As far as purity is concerned, you are compared, by the holy Fathers, to the angels. But do not, therefore, be too confident; remember that even the angels in Heaven were not safe, and that millions of them fell, through pride, into the abyss of hell. You are the most intimate servants of Jesus Christ, who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth; but for that very reason, as is also the case in worldly courts, you will have many to envy you, who will try to deprive you of your Master's favor by every means in their power. The enemies who divide their forces when attacking other souls, will unite together to make common cause against you. Some souls are attacked by the devil, others by the corrupt world, and others again are fiercely combated, and led into sin by their own flesh. You will not be free from any of these: the three together, the devil, the world, and the flesh, will declare war on you, without truce or intermission.

From the
tevil.

The devil, whom the Scripture calls the unclean spirit,¹ and the sworn foe of purity, is filled with rage when he sees young boys and girls, who are apparently the weakest, courageously opposing his suggestions, and leading a chaste life; and because he has a bitter hatred against Jesus Christ, who destroyed his kingdom, and knows that God has selected you as His spouses and keeps you for Himself, therefore the wicked spirit employs all the means in his power, and all his hellish craft, if not to deprive you altogether of your purity, at least to sully it and to make you unfaithful to your heavenly Bridegroom. It is he of whom the Gospel of next Sunday says: "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man. . . ." (and you have driven him away from you by embracing the unmarried state), "he saith: I will return into my house, whence I came out. And when he is come, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then he goeth and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and entering in, they dwell there,"—and do not allow themselves to be banished so quickly—"And the last state of that man becomes worse than

¹ *Spiritus immundus.*

the first.”¹ Therefore, Christian virgins, St. Peter warns you, above all, to be cautious and vigilant: “Be sober and watch: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour.”²

The other enemy who unites with the devil to hinder your holy purpose, is the vain and perverse world, whose maxims, usages, and teaching are almost always opposed to the life of Jesus Christ and to the teaching of His Gospel. I mean the worldly people among whom you have to live, whose society and companionship you cannot always avoid, and who will often put temptations in your way; for they will cajole you, laugh at, flatter, and caress you; they will lead you into places, occasions, and circumstances, in which the purity of the heart, at least, is in great danger of succumbing before long. You will see many things in them, and hear much from them, which, if you do not overcome, will soon deprive you of your precious treasure. If they can do nothing else, they will try to make you imitate their vain and apparently not unlawful usages, by which the spirit of the world will soon find a place in your heart, and the spirit of Jesus Christ, which cannot endure the world, will be driven out, little by little; and thus you will lose the special favor and affection of your heavenly Bridegroom, and, as a matter of course, you will give way to the first temptation that assails you.

From the corrupt world.

The third, and most formidable enemy, whom you can avoid least of all, and who is with you day and night, wherever you are, is your own flesh, the innate carnal desires of your nature, that wretched consequence of original sin that is found in all men, of which St. Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, the vessel of election of Jesus Christ, says with fear and trembling: “But I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is, in my members.”³ His meaning is: I constantly feel wicked desires that obstinately contend against the knowledge that I have, for they cannot bear to have the flesh so curbed that it can never enjoy forbidden pleasure. “Unhappy man that I am; who shall deliver me

From their own flesh.

¹ Cum immundus spiritus exierit de homine. . . dicit: revertar in domum meam, unde exiit. Et cum venerit, invenit eam scopis mundatam et ornatam, tunc vadit et assumit septem alios spiritus nequiores se, et ingressi habitant ibi. Et fiunt novissima hominis illius pejora prioribus.—Luke xi. 24-26.

² Sobrii estote et vigilate: quia adversarius vester diabolus tanquam leo rugiens circuit, querens quem devoret.—I. Petr. v. 8.

³ Video autem aliam legem in membris meis, repugnantem legi mentis mee, et captivantem me in lege peccati, quæ est in membris meis.—Rom. vii. 23.

from the body of this death?"¹ Oh, holy Apostle, art thou, too, afraid of thy enemy, the flesh? And we poor mortals, what have we not to fear? True, indeed, is what thou sayest elsewhere: "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels;"² we have a great treasure in the purity that we observe for the love of God, but, alas! in very weak and frail vessels,³ of which we must be as careful as if they were made of glass, or they will be broken and we shall lose our treasure. So you see that everything is in arms against perpetual chastity: it is attacked on all sides by crafty enemies; earth and hell have united against it. But why do I speak so? It seems as if I wish to unsay what I said in my last sermon. I have represented to you the unmarried state as one full of beauty, glory, dignity, and happiness, so as to give you all a desire for it; and now do I recall my words, by representing it as so full of temptations and dangers, that you might be easily made afraid of it? Not so, my dear brethren; such is not my meaning; for, with the holy Apostle, St. Paul, I exhort you to embrace that state of happiness and perfection, if God calls you to it; but I wish also to warn and advise you to live according to your holy state, by the aid of the necessary helps that your heavenly Spouse will not fail to give you, as He has promised.

Still they --
have help
and protec-
tion enough.

It is true, Christian virgins, that you have powerful enemies, against whom you must fight almost daily; but you have also still more powerful protectors, who are always ready to fight on your side, and, if you wish, to gain the victory for you. I say again, that it is very difficult to keep one's purity untarnished amidst so many attacks; but the difficulty arises from the weakness of our nature, which supernatural grace can easily overcome. It is true that, in the world, you are exposed to many dangers of losing your chastity, but you must have confidence in Him, who wishes to encourage you by saying to you: "Have confidence, I have overcome the world,"⁴ and placed it under my feet. He who has called you to this state and given you the will to follow His call, will also enable you, if you desire it, to fulfil what you have vowed or promised to Him. The devil is an enraged dog, who can bark but cannot bite any one who does not wish to be bitten. The vain world is a decoy, that can charm and attract, but can draw no one into its net that does not wish to follow its usages. The flesh is a shameless and un-

¹ *Infelix ego homo! Quis me liberabit de corpore mortis hujus?*—Rom. vii. 24.

² *Habemus autem thesaurum istum in vasibus fictilibus.*—II. Cor. iv. 7.

³ *In vasibus fictilibus.*

⁴ *Confidite, ego vici mundum.*—John xvi. 33.

tamed beast ; it can rise up insolently against the will and right reason, and thus trouble the spirit, but it cannot force any one to sin who does not deliberately submit to it. In a word, the unmarried state is full of temptations and dangers, but it is also full of graces and helps, by which one can easily overcome the former ; as I shall prove in the

Second Part.

Nothing gives more concern to a bridegroom than to see strangers courting the love of the spouse whom he loves, and whose love he desires. Even an outward mark of friendliness shown to her, although it may not be dangerous, causes him pain and uneasiness ; because his jealous love makes him afraid that she, whose whole heart he desires to possess, may feel an inclination for some one else. When this jealousy becomes excessive amongst married people, what misery it causes, and what misunderstandings, hatred, and enmity between friends and neighbors ! So that sometimes the husband does not trust his wife, nor the wife her husband, and a feeling of bitterness is excited, when one speaks with the other, visits a friend, or is visited. But I need say no more of this ; only I can conclude from it that, if a bridegroom is so jealous as to feel uneasy and troubled when a stranger shows his bride any mark of friendliness, because he thinks it might lessen her love for him, how much less could he suffer her to be made the object of an impure love, in his very presence ? How could he look on and see violence offered to his beloved spouse, without doing all in his power to save her ? Oh, certainly, he would willingly expose his own life to danger, in order to rescue his spouse from dishonor. Your Bridegroom, Christian sons and daughters, to whom you have promised perpetual chastity, love, and fidelity, is Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, the Almighty God, whom nothing can withstand ; as I have shown in my last sermon. He is a tender lover of chaste souls, who shed every drop of His Blood for you ; He is the jealous and loving Bridegroom of your purity, in which He cannot bear to see the least spot, who wishes to have your hearts, and your whole hearts, for Himself alone. Do you then think that He can look on when you are tempted and excited to unfaithfulness by His sworn enemies, without doing anything to help you ? Can you imagine that He would allow that treasure, which He values so highly, and which you have resolved to keep forever through love of Him, to be stolen from you by violence.

From Christ
their
Spouse.

and that He would not assist you in your necessity and save you from danger? Oh, no, be not afraid! Let the dangers and temptations be what they will, Jesus Christ will not leave you without help. His own honor is concerned; He will not permit your purity to become the prey of robbers, as long as you—and attend to what I am now saying—are not wanting in anything that your state requires of you.

One of the means of preserving purity is true humility.

And what is that? I answer: true humility, modesty, and trustful prayer. If you attend to these three things, you can defy all your enemies, and need never fear them. Humility will drive away the devil and his inspirations; modesty will put to shame the world and the seductions of the children of the world; prayer will subdue the flesh, and keep its unruly desires in check. If you fail in any of these three things, then you will soon lose the treasure of your purity. First, then, as to humility. Although that virtue is necessary to all men who wish to save their souls, inasmuch as we serve a God, “who resisteth the proud, but to the humble He giveth grace;”¹ a Lord who, to give us an example, emptied Himself and humbled Himself even to the death of the cross; and since we publicly acknowledge a law and a Gospel, the fundamental doctrine of which is humility and self-abasement; and adore a Teacher who said: “Amen, I say to you; unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven;”² although, I repeat, humility is necessary for all men, as a means of salvation, it is absolutely necessary, above all, to those who wish to preserve their virginal purity intact. Does any one, says St. Augustine, wish to exhort the faithful to perpetual chastity, according to the advice of St. Paul? Then he must not merely describe the excellence and dignity of virginity, so as to excite a desire for it, but also he must exhort and warn those who embrace that state, not to think anything more of themselves on that account.³ Married people, although they do not live in a state of perfection, like virgins, if they are humble, will follow the Lamb of God better than the virgin who is proud; nay, the latter is very far, on account of her pride, from Him who says: “I am meek and humble of heart.”⁴ Almost the same words are used by St. Bernard, when speaking of the most glorious and most humble

¹ Qui superbis resistit, humilibus autem dat gratiam.—I. Pet. v. 5.

² Amen dico vobis; nisi conversi fueritis, et efficiamini sicut parvuli, non intrabitis in regnum cœlorum.—Matth. xviii. 3.

³ Non solum prædicanda est virginitas, ut ametur, verum etiam monenda, ne infletur.

⁴ Mitis sum et humilis corde.—Matth. xi. 29.

Virgin Mary, the Mother of God : "If you cannot, or will not," he says, "imitate the purity of Mary, at least imitate her humility, and you will have done enough." "You can be saved without virginity, but not without humility."¹ The humble soul that laments the loss of purity, can please God ; but without humility, not even Mary, the Queen of virgins, could please Him.

And not only does virginity without humility fail to please God, but also, if you are not humble, no matter how chaste you are, you will certainly not long remain a pure virgin, says St. Gregory. You are like a tall tree that has not deep roots, which the first storm blows down. You are like a magnificent edifice, the foundations of which are not deep enough, and are built on sand, and which the first floods will carry away. Pride is, generally speaking, the forerunner and the chief cause of unchastity; and the justice of God generally permits the proud to fall into that degrading vice, so that they may learn to know their weakness and misery, and thus become humble. And sometimes, too, when the purest souls are tormented by foul temptations, thoughts, and desires, and when the flesh rises in rebellion against the will, if they wish to seek the cause of that, they will find that it comes either from some secret pride, or vanity, or self-conceit that they have; or that God permits those temptations to teach them humility, and to show them that they can do nothing of themselves; and they are miserable, indeed, without the protection of God, as St. Paul says of himself, after having described how he was rapt up to heaven and saw there wonderful things, that man may not speak of: "And lest the greatness of the revelations should exalt me, there was given me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan, to buffet me,"² to disquiet me, and torment me always, so that I might know that I am a poor mortal. Therefore, the crafty tempter, when he wishes to lead a soul into impurity, does not at once assail it with filthy temptations, for he knows well that they would have no effect on souls who fear God. What does he do then? He attacks the spirit first, suggests vain thoughts and self-conceit on account of the purity preserved for such a long time, and makes that soul look upon itself as better, more pious, and more perfect than others. If he succeeds in finding room for these thoughts, he will not have much trouble

Without humility, purity cannot last long.

¹ *Sine virginitate salvari potes, sine humilitate non potes.*

² *Et ne magnitudo revelationum extollat me, datus est mihi stimulus carnis mee, angelus Satanae, qui me colaphizet.—II. Cor. xii. 7.*

in destroying purity; for he knows that it must fall when pride enters the heart. But if, with all his craft, he cannot destroy humility in that soul, then he despairs of effecting anything and must take to flight. Therefore, I say again, Christian sons and daughters, if you wish to be and to remain pure virgins, be humble of heart, so that, always recognizing your own frailty, you may attribute the safeguard of the great treasure of your purity, not to yourselves, but to God.

Modesty.

From this humility of the heart must spring the outward humility of the body, or that modesty and reserve which is another necessary means of conquering the second enemy of your purity, namely, the allurements and seductions of the world. Modesty is a virtue which restrains all the senses and keeps guard over our behavior, conduct, eating, drinking, and dress; it is the great ornament of all who practise it, but especially of the female sex. To gratify every curiosity of the eyes, and to allow them to roam about everywhere; to listen eagerly to what is going on in town; to allow liberties to be taken with one's self and to take them also with others, although they may be apparently harmless; to go about laughing and joking with persons of the opposite sex, although they may be near relations; to be anxious to see and be seen; to pay and receive many visits; to mix up with all sorts of company; to be vain and frivolous in dress; all that is unbecoming even in one who intends to be married; such a person is contemptible even in the eyes of the world, and although the world may flatter those who act thus, yet it ridicules them behind their backs. Much less, then, would that unrestrained freedom suit a spouse of Jesus Christ, who intends to preserve perpetual chastity.

Where this is wanting, chastity runs great danger.

What nonsense, some will think; I can be pure at heart, although I mix with people after the manner of the world; I need not sit like an owl at home; I intend to remain unmarried, and to preserve my purity, but I do not want to be called a devotee; I can best deceive the world by joining in its gayeties and conforming to its fashions and modes of life. Yes, you may deceive it, but take care that it does not deceive you first. Think and say what you will, from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, as the proverb says. The outward behavior is an index of the dispositions of the heart. I, at least, would not give much for such purity, for it must necessarily be exposed to countless temptations and dangers. If I see a man showing his money on a road beset by robbers, I should think him very im-

prudent, and indifferent as to whether he is robbed or not. That is the comparison that St. Gregory makes use of. "In this life," he says, "we are, as it were, on the road leading to our country. But the wicked spirits, like robbers, beset the road. He, therefore, who carries his treasure openly, wishes to be robbed."¹ It is certain that by such worldly conduct, one can have no knowledge of one's own weakness and frailty, consequently no true humility, and as a matter of course, there will soon be an end of perpetual chastity. Hence, as St. Ambrose says: "The property of true chastity is to tremble and fear at the very sight and voice of one of the opposite sex. Holy virginity is such a delicate flower, that not alone the least touch, but even a look would cause it to wither."² The proper place to preserve that flower is at home, alone in one's room, occupied with some suitable labor, unless one is obliged to go to church, to visit the sick, or to perform some other work of Christian charity and mercy which renders it necessary to go out of the house. "Live in such a way," writes Pope Liberius to the holy virgin Marcellina, "that all who do not yet know what your state of life is, may learn it from your outward modesty and humility, from your simplicity in dress, from your gait and speech, from your solitude and reserve, and may thus be able to say at once that you are a pure virgin and a spouse of Jesus Christ, and that thus no one may dare to do or say anything unbecoming in your presence. Live so seriously and regularly that the most reckless must be ashamed of themselves when they see you, and must think: Here our flatteries are of no use. Think, when dressing, of your Bridegroom, who for your sake was covered with His own Blood, as with a garment, on the cross, and who was crowned with thorns; and then, if you wish to resemble Him, you will be ashamed of the idle vanity of the world, etc." Certainly a beautiful lesson! Christian virgins, it concerns all of you!

The third and last means of preserving perpetual chastity, in spite of the attacks of our worst enemy, the rebellious flesh, is earnest and hopeful prayer to God and the saints. It is an undoubted fact, that perfect purity is a gift of God, and a most special gift too, if we consider that the vast majority of men do not receive it. When Christ had explained to His disciples the

Earnest
prayer.

¹ In presenti vita, quasi in via sumus, qua ad patriam pergimus. Maligni autem spiritus iter nostrum quasi quidam latrunculi obsident. Deprædari ergo desiderat, qui thesaurum publice portat in via.

² Trepidare virginum est, et ad omnes viri ingressus pavere, omnes viri affatus vereri. Sancta virginitas non solum tactu, sed adspectu etiam violatur.

indissolubility of the marriage tie and they wondered at it, as an unheard-of thing, and said: "If the case of a man with his wife be so, it is not expedient to marry;"¹ He added: "All men take not this word, but they to whom it is given."² And immediately after, when He had spoken of the state of virginity, He said: "He that can take, let him take it."³ It is certain, also, that no one, in the midst of so many dangerous temptations and carnal desires, can preserve this great gift by his own strength, without a special help from God, as Solomon says of himself while he was still innocent, in the Book of Wisdom: "And as I knew that I could not otherwise be continent, except God gave it, and this also was a point of wisdom, to know whose gift it was: I went to the Lord, and besought Him, and said with my whole heart, etc."⁴ This is what the Apostle meant when he wrote: "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels," for he adds immediately after: "that the excellency may be of the power of God, and not of us."⁵ That is to say, that we may acknowledge the safeguard of the great treasure of virginity to be the working of the almighty power of God and that we could not have it of ourselves. Now, as we have seen already, according to the present arrangements of His providence, God does not generally give His gifts and graces unless to those who pray to Him, and He has promised to grant everything to prayer; His wish is that we should humbly and constantly acknowledge before Him, that we always stand in need of His help.

Therefore they must frequently and confidently call on God for help.

Pray then, my dear brethren, pray constantly, nay, according to the advice of St. Paul, let your minds be always united to God. For you, especially, who have determined to observe perpetual chastity, it is necessary to follow this advice. Say daily to God, in the words of the Wise Man: I acknowledge, oh, Lord, and Thou knowest it, that I cannot live chastely, unless Thou helpest me;⁶ therefore I fly to Thee, as to my only Helper and Protector, in the dangerous combat that I have to sustain against the desires of the flesh; I cast myself upon Thy Fatherly mercy, I give my purity to Thee; when my strength fails, be Thou my

¹ Si ita est causa hominis cum uxore, non expedit nubere.—Matth. xix. 10.

² Non omnes capiunt verbum istud, sed quibus datum est.—Ibid. 11.

³ Qui potest capere, capiat.—Ibid. 12.

⁴ Ut scivi, quoniam aliter non possem esse continens, nisi Deus det, et hoc ipsum erat sapientia, scire, cujus esse hoc donum: adil Dominum, et deprecatus sum illum, et dixi ex totis precordis meis, etc.—Sap. viii. 21.

⁵ Habemus autem thesaurum istum in vasis fictilibus: ut sublimitas sit virtutis Dei, et non ex nobis.—II. Cor. iv. 7.

⁶ Ut scivi, quoniam aliter non possem esse continens, nisi Deus det.

helper and do not abandon me.¹ If Thou leavest me to my own strength, oh, then, I shall certainly lose the treasure that I wished to keep for love of Thee. My only consolation, on account of which, too, I need not fear, is that Thou dost not reject, nor refuse Thy help to those who, with childlike confidence, trust in Thee. And when the moment of temptation comes, say with the heart, rather than with the mouth (so that the devil, who, perhaps, excites the temptation, may not know what is passing in your mind) to your Bridegroom: "Oh, Lord, Thou art our Protector; see what the crafty enemy is doing,"² etc. Behold, oh, Lord, Thy enemies and mine are tormenting me, they are trying to make me unfaithful to Thee: "Lord, save us, we perish."³ Thy honor and my soul are concerned in it; do not allow Thy enemies to boast of having dishonored Thy spouse. Having made these ejaculations with all possible fervor, you may confidently trust that you will not yield to the temptation, nor suffer the least injury from it; just as a little child does not fear, as long as it is in its mother's lap.

Pray also every day to the most pure Virgin, and to your holy angel guardian. Trustful prayer to the Blessed Virgin gives great strength to resist temptations of the flesh, as, amongst many others, and according to daily experience, that young nobleman found out, of whom our Father Nicholas Zucchi, a man celebrated for his zeal for souls and holiness of life, writes. This young man was for years addicted to the shameful vice of impurity, which he learned in his travels in foreign lands, and brought with him to Rome. (Mark this, Christian parents, who, for the sake of the vain usages of the world, send your sons and daughters away to foreign countries; what they bring back with them when they come home, cannot be read on their foreheads, but it can be seen in their manners.) The evil habit was so deeply rooted in him, that he thought it impossible ever to get rid of it. After going often to confession, and using the means prescribed by his confessor, who was Father Zucchi, he still came back again with the same sins. The pious Father was greatly concerned, and as a last resource, resolved to leave his penitent entirely to the Blessed Virgin. When the unhappy young man returned to confession, and told his sins, the confessor said to him: My son, in place of imposing a penance on you, all I ask of

The Mother of God also. Power of prayer to her shown by an example.

¹ Cum defecerit virtus mea, adjutor meus esto, ne derelinquas me.—Ps. lxx. 9.

² Defensor noster, aspice; insidiantes reprime, etc.

³ Domine, salva nos, perimus!—Matth. viii. 25.

you is to choose the Blessed Virgin as your Queen and Mother, and every morning when you get up, say the Hail Mary in honor of her most pure virginity, and also the following prayer: "Oh, my Queen and Mother Mary, as a sign of my fidelity and submission, I offer thee this day my eyes, ears, tongue, heart, and my whole self; so that during the day I may be wholly thine. Keep me, then, and preserve me as thy property." Repeat the same prayer in the evening, kissing the ground three times. As often as a temptation comes to you by day or night, say at once: "Oh, Mary, remember that I am thine, protect me as thy property."¹ The young man followed the advice, and with the happy result that, although often tempted, he was never overcome afterwards. For, after the lapse of four years, having again returned to Rome, and declared his sins to the same confessor, the latter could hardly contain his astonishment, for, as he writes: "It seemed to me that I was hearing the confession of a holy and an innocent man."² And he asked the young man, how was it he was so much changed. Whereupon the latter answered with tears of joy: The devotion to the Mother of God, that you told me to practise four years ago, and which I have always observed, has worked this change in me. As often as I called on my Mother, in temptations, I found myself strengthened against temptation, and saved from sin.

Proved by
another
example.

When that story of Father Zucchi was once told in a sermon, many of those present, who practised the devotion afterwards, found that it helped them wonderfully. Amongst others there was an officer who had been living in concubinage; after a very few days, he and his partner in guilt repented and separated. When he wished to visit her some time after, not to commit sin, but to see whether she still remained good, as soon as he reached the door of her house, he felt a shudder creeping over him, and seeing the danger he was in, he cried out at once in his mind to Mary for help: "Oh, Lady, help me, for I am tempted!"³ and he at once felt himself pushed away by an invisible hand, and found himself at his own house. Not long after, the mother of another young man who used the same means, came to the College to thank the Father for having changed her son from a devil into an angel. Ah, my dear brethren, would that I were so happy as to impress this devotion and childlike confidence in

¹ Domina, recordare, quod tuus sim; tuere me tanquam rem tuam propriam.

² Videbar mihi audire confessionem sancti et innocentis hominis.

³ Domina, adjuva me, quia tentatus sum!

the Blessed Mother of God, on so many young boys and girls, who are often instructed in wickedness of which they knew nothing before, but which they with difficulty relinquish afterwards, by impious agents of the devil who betray young people. And the unfortunate boys and girls continue their bad habits even in their old age, until they sink into the abyss of hell! This devotion would help many of them. I beg of you all at least to honor Mary as your Mother, with constant and childlike love.

Christian sons and daughters, who are called by God to the unmarried state, you have powerful weapons to repel the attacks of the enemies of your chastity, in true humility, inward and outward modesty, and fervent prayer. Use these weapons constantly, and you may say boldly with the Apostle Peter: Lord, it is good for us to be here;¹ we will live in this state until death! I rejoice, then, at the happiness that the Lord gives you on earth, and at that which you will possess, when you will follow the pure Lamb of God, whithersoever He goeth, in Heaven. Amen.

¹ Domine, bonum est nos hic esse.

ON THE MARRIED STATE.

TWENTY-SIXTH SERMON.

ON THE COURSE TO BE ADOPTED BY THOSE WHO INTEND EMBRACING THE MARRIED STATE.

Subject.

If the marriage is to be a happy one, Jesus must be invited to the wedding.—*Preached on the second Sunday after Epiphany.*

Text.

Vocatus est autem et Jesus, et discipuli ejus ad nuptias.—John ii. 2.

“And Jesus also was invited, and His disciples, to the marriage.”

Introduction.

Happy people, who had the great honor of having Jesus at their marriage feast! What a blessing must follow the presence of such a Guest! My dear brethren, all married people can have the same honor and happiness, morally speaking, in our days, if they only invite Jesus. He is willing to be present at every marriage, but He will not come uninvited. That invitation is absolutely necessary for the happiness of the married state; but, alas, the majority neglect it, to their own great loss. To remedy this neglect, is the object of my present sermon, since the greater number of marriages take place at this time. If the marriage is to be a happy one, Jesus must be invited to the wedding. If the marriage is to be happy, Jesus must be really present at it. If the marriage is to be happy, Jesus must remain with the married couple during their lives. Such is the division of my subject. It is a very important one, which will serve for the instruction of the single as well as the married, and will be of use to all. But it cannot be all treated of in one hour, so that I will now consider only the first point, and I repeat—

Plan of Discourse.

If the marriage is to be a happy one, Jesus must be invited to the wedding. That is the whole subject.

Christ Jesus, the true Lover and Bridegroom of souls, Thou didst not refuse the invitation to the wedding of old, but went thereto with Thy Mother and Thy disciples; do not refuse to listen to our prayers to-day, but come into our midst by Thy help and grace, with Thy Mother and Thy holy angels, so that all here present may, according to their different states in life, derive fruit from what I am about to say to them in Thy name.

When one is invited by a stranger to dine, the invitation is not generally given on the day of the banquet, and much less when the meal is on the point of commencing. No; for such an invitation would cause the guest annoyance, instead of honoring him. For he would think: My meal is already prepared for me; I see clearly that this invitation is not for my sake; it seems that one of the invited guests did not come and that I am expected to fill the empty chair. That will not do; if this invitation was honorably meant, I should have got it yesterday. This is especially the case when some great man is invited. Intimate friends do not stand so much on ceremony; if they meet each other in the street, the invitation is given and accepted without more ado. But that is not the proper way to act with a great man: he must be invited with becoming politeness, one, two, and even several days beforehand.

Great men are generally invited to a banquet some days beforehand.

Christian sons and daughters, if any of you here present intend entering the holy state of matrimony, is it not your wish to have a marriage feast? And you hope also to have blessings and happiness in your marriage? Without doubt you do. But from whom do you expect it? Certainly from Him who alone can give it. And who is that? Is it not Jesus, your God, from whom all blessings must come? You do not wish, then, to exclude Him from your wedding? I am quite sure you do not. Very well, so far, but you must invite Him. And when? When the bridal-dress is ready, when you are about to go to church, or when the marriage feast is already prepared? Oh, no, that would be too late altogether; it would be very impolite conduct toward such a great Lord, and a Guest who is so necessary, so gracious, and so good. He must be invited long beforehand.

In the same way must Jesus be invited by those about to marry.

Now what do I mean by this? As soon as the first thought of marriage comes, Jesus must be invited first of all, before any one

That is, to ask Him for advice.

else; that is, by frequent, constant, humble, and fervent prayer, and by the practise of virtue. He must be asked for light and grace to know if that is the state in which God wishes you to be; whether it is the state in which, according to His will, you can best serve Him, and save your souls, which, as we have often heard, is our greatest, most weighty and only business in this world. Jesus must be consulted to know whether the partner you have chosen is the one that He, in His inscrutable decrees, has determined for you from all eternity.

This deliberation is necessary for all, no matter what state they embrace.

This prayer and deliberation with God is most necessary for all, in the choice of a state of life, no matter what it may be; because, generally speaking, our eternal happiness or misery depends thereon. It is true that one may save his soul in any state; but it is not true that each one may save his soul in every state; and it is an undoubted fact that one cannot save his soul in a state to which he is not called by God, unless with great difficulty. God and God alone knows what our state must be. He has reserved to Himself, as the only Father of our souls, the right of determining what state is the best for the spiritual welfare of each one of us. It is to God, and God alone that men ought to appeal for guidance in this matter, and therefore, His advice must be asked first of all. And how could any one reasonably hope for or expect the assistance of special helps and graces in a state to which God has not called him, and which he embraced of his own accord against the divine will; even if that state were the holiest in the world? Would a prince continue his favor and give a yearly salary to a servant of his, who would undertake all kinds of business without the prince's knowledge and consent? Would he not rather punish that man for his presumption? Therefore, the will of our Lord is that we consult Him first, and ask His advice by prayer; as I have more fully proved in another sermon, when speaking of the choice of a state of life in general.

Especially for those who intend marrying, on account of the great difficulties of the married state.

Now all agree without difficulty that this is necessary in the choice of more perfect states, or of the higher offices and dignities of Church or State. It certainly would be presumption to engage in any of these without asking counsel from God. But there are few who say the same of the married state. Most people think their own will is a sufficiently good counsellor in that matter. But I maintain the direct contrary, and I say, that if there is any state in the world in which the divine inspiration and vocation are necessary, in order to obtain the divine blessing and to save one's soul therein, it is the married state. Why do I say so?

On account of the many obligations imposed on married people by their state, which cannot be fulfilled without a special assistance from God; on account of the many difficulties of this state, which cannot be borne without a special grace from God; and on account of the many dangers of this state, which cannot be overcome without the special help of God. I shall speak now only of the difficulties. Generally speaking, young people think that when their wedding day comes, they are about to enter into a paradise of joy and pleasure. No doubt it is so too, for the first day; but there are many other days to come, when you will both be old together; wait a few years, and you will feel what the Apostle, St. Paul, says to you: "If thou take a wife, thou hast not sinned. And if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned; nevertheless, such shall have tribulation of the flesh."¹ Oh, holy Apostle, if there were only married people present, thou needest not tell them that twice; for most of them, convinced by their own experience, must agree that it is true, and with bitter sorrow they must acknowledge that the roses which seemed so beautiful at first, are full of sharp thorns, and that the few pleasures which their state allows are embittered by countless difficulties and annoyances that they have to contend with every hour and minute of the day. Nor can it well be otherwise.

For the married state, which is, in the Christian law, the indissoluble union of husband and wife, what is it but a servitude, in which one party deliberately gives up all personal freedom for life to the other! And that servitude must last as long as both parties live, no matter how anxious they may be for it to come to an end, nor can it be dissolved except by the death of either. Once the word is spoken, you have given yourself over to another till death, without knowing how he will behave to you in the future, or how things will be with yourself; you give yourself to one who, before, had no right whatever over you, and who will now have an incontestable right over your person forever. It is a servitude that one selects freely, but which, I think, although I have not experienced it, must very often, in the long run, become galling. Certainly, by my ordination and priesthood, I have partially given up my freedom and placed myself in servitude, but only to God and to myself; to God my Supreme Lord, to whom I must belong altogether in any case; and to myself, whom I must in any case command; to God, whose yoke is sweet, and

The married state is one of servitude.

¹ Si acceperis uxorem, non peccasti. Et si nupserit virgo, non peccavit: tribulationem tamen carnis habebunt hujusmodi.—I. Cor. vii. 28.

whose burden light, from whom I have nothing to fear like anger, ill-will, or bitterness, unless I first commence to quarrel with Him; for I know that He is always the same,—infinite, unchanging, most beautiful and most amiable. You, on the contrary, by the marriage tie, have, in addition to the service you owe to God, given up the right and authority you had over yourself to another person, to a stranger, who is in one mood to-day and in another to-morrow, and is as changeable as the moon in disposition, humor, inclination, and bodily health. Him you are now bound to obey in many things, not always as you will, but as he wills, and you are bound to do many things or to omit them, according to his wishes. By the vows of religion that I made in my profession, I have bound myself to obey another man; but at the same time I gave up all the burden and care of looking after my food, clothing, and support; for those things do not concern me. Your subjection in the married state does not free you from this care; but rather makes it greater for you than it was when you were living with your parents. My obedience does not place me irrevocably under a certain Superior, whom alone I have to obey. Sometimes I have one Superior, sometimes another; at one time I am living here, at another, elsewhere; and these changes certainly make the yoke of obedience very light, if there is any difficulty in it; you, on the contrary, by the sacramental contract, are always bound to obey the same person, as long as both of you live. If that person is exactly suited to your disposition, temperament, and inclination, and always remains so, that is indeed a great happiness; but it is a rare happiness. You must certainly have taken counsel from God. But if, as more frequently happens, the husband, after a time, begins to dislike his wife, or the wife her husband, what is then to be done? Ah, poor souls! there is no help for you; you are not less bound to each other on that account.

And without any time of probation.

If you had only known that beforehand! But that could not be. And here again there is a remarkable difference between my servitude and yours; for, when I made choice of the religious state, I had to go through my novitiate and years of probation, in which I could examine all the rules, have some experience of the difficulties of the state, and think long and leisurely over the whole matter, to see whether that state would not be too difficult for me, and whether it was suited to me, and I had the power of remaining in it, or of leaving it. What a great thing it would be, if there was a novitiate for the married life! There are

many who would not wait to finish the year, but would leave at the expiration of a few months. But there can be no such thing; the final step must be taken at once; if things go well, so much the better; if not, it cannot be helped. Once the marriage knot is tied you belong to another with whom you must live always; and no matter how bitterly you may afterwards repent the step you have taken, you cannot recall your words or free yourself. You have given yourself over to another, without knowing much about him, or his disposition. At first, when he was seeking your hand, he was all amiability, good-humor, and friendliness; nothing was to be seen but gifts and presents and most respectful bows; nothing to be heard but sweet words and flatteries. You thought, no doubt, what an easy time you would have after your marriage. At first, your blind love would not let you see anything but what was good and amiable in the person of your future partner, and you thought that you were about to wed an angel of modesty, mildness, and love. But afterwards, when the first love was somewhat cooled down, and you learned to know each other better in the daily intimacy of your lives, you may have found an obstinate, passionate, and jealous man, in him whom you first looked upon as so amiable; or a peevish, disagreeable, and headstrong woman in her whom you used to consider an angel of modesty and amiability. If that is the case, what are you to do? You did not think of that before, and now you must remain as you are, whether you like or not. There is no novitiate for you.

What a trial, what a martyrdom it is for married people to have to live together, when their dispositions, opinions, and habits are not suited to each other! When an intelligent, prudent, and quiet man has to live with a vain, conceited, and frivolous woman; or a moral, modest, pious, and virtuous wife, with a wicked, unruly, and quarrelsome husband; or a sparing, industrious, and diligent husband, who works day and night for his family, with a sensual, luxurious, indolent, and spendthrift wife, who makes away with her husband's hard-earned money, in idleness, frivolity, visits, gaming, amusements, tea parties, and unnecessary luxury in dress; or a careful and prudent wife, who often takes the bread out of her own mouth for her children's sake, that she may support and bring them up decently, with a foolish husband who spends everything in useless entertainments, and in eating and drinking, and if his poor wife dares to utter a word of complaint, he storms at and abuses, or even beats her!

No hope of freedom, no matter how married people get on together.

What a hell it is, when the two are like furies with each other, so that what the one desires, the other hates; one says yes, and the other no; while both are constantly quarrelling and finding fault with each other, and spend their time in cursing and fighting, and instead of one giving way to the other, and bearing each other's faults patiently, as St. Bernard says, they nourish bitter hatred against each other, so that they go from their hell in this life to the eternal hell in the next. Would to God that such unhappy marriages were rare in the world! And if a marriage turns out that way, what is to be done, I ask? Ah, poor souls, I repeat again that you must bear your burden; the knot is tied, and cannot be loosed. Any vow made to God, even the vows of religion, may be dispensed with by the Catholic Church, where circumstances require; but not even the Church can interfere with the bond of marriage; there is no dispensation from that. Such is the command of Christ regarding marriage: "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder,"¹ even if the prosperity or ruin of the whole Roman empire depended on it. This bond seemed such a hard thing to the Apostles, that they all determined it was better for a man to remain unmarried. Then His disciples said to Him: "If the case of a man with his wife be so, it is not expedient to marry."² Certainly, answered Christ, foreseeing that the burden would be too great for the majority of them: "All men take not this word, but they to whom it is given."³

It is a state full of troubles, especially in the rearing of children.

Here I do not intend to allude to different troubles and difficulties which the married state brings with it, though not always, yet so generally, that even kings and princes are not free from them. If husband and wife love each other as they should, if their dispositions and inclinations are always in accord, certainly that is a rare happiness, and they who enjoy it should daily thank God in deep humility. But what anxiety, sorrow, and trouble it is for the other, if one should fall sick, or die! If the married couple have enough to live on, what constant trouble they have to preserve a decent competence or to increase their wealth! If they are poor, what trials they must undergo to earn their bread honestly! If they have nothing else to annoy them, what trouble they have with servants, neighbors, friends, and acquaintances; and especially in the rearing of their children, which is

¹ Quod Deus conjunxit, homo non separet.—Matth. xix. 6.

² Si ita est causa hominis cum uxore, non expedit nubere.—Ibid. 10.

³ Non omnes capiunt verbum istud, sed quibus datum est.—Ibid. 11.

the chief end of marriage! How many difficulties they have, with their own likes and dislikes, with bodily sufferings, headaches, heartaches, weakness, and all the pains attendant on and consequent to childbirth. If the new-born infant is strong and healthy, what trouble the parents have with it! They must make themselves children again, they must laugh when their child laughs, cry when it cries, often lose their night's rest, etc. If there are four or five children in the family, they make such noise and trouble that the house seems too small for them; they are like a swarm of bees, perpetually buzzing around everywhere. One shouts out here, another there; one falls into the fire, another out of the open window; the third gets into danger on the staircase, the fourth runs the risk of wounding himself with a knife; one breaks a glass, another tears a book, the rest set to fighting with each other; the one wants something to eat, the other to drink; there is such a constant shouting and clamor going on, that the father and mother would require a hundred eyes and hands to attend sufficiently to everything. Even mothers who can afford to keep a nurse-maid to help them, are not free from such troubles. How must it then be for a poor woman who has to attend to everything herself, and who must trust to her own eyes and hands for everything? What must it be, when she sometimes has not bread for her children to eat, nor clothes to cover them? When her husband gets sick, or dies, and she thus loses the only support of herself and her children? Oh, misery and wretchedness!

If the sons and daughters are grown up, what happens then? Of grown children. The Wise Man says: A wise, good, and obedient son, is the joy of his father; but a wilful, stupid, and disobedient son grieves his mother.¹ I say besides, that no matter of what kind children are, they are a trouble to their parents. For if they grow up to be all that can be desired, so also does their parents' care to keep them so increase, so that they may be happily settled in life. If the means of securing this latter object are wanting, what trouble the parents must undergo to find patrons and helpers! What a sorrow it is for them, if their beloved son or daughter, in whom they have centered all their hopes, dies in the bloom of youth! And how many other troubles parents have, that they can best speak of themselves. If the children are, on the other hand, so stupid as not to be able to learn anything, or so frail and delicate that they can do nothing for themselves, or so abandoned

¹ *Filius sapiens lætificat patrem, filius vero stultus mœstitia est matris suæ.*—Prov. x. 1.

and vicious that they cannot be governed nor induced to amend; if they are obstinate, disobedient, ungrateful, and insolent to their parents, so that the latter have only trouble and sorrow with them, what a trial, what grief, what desperation is theirs!

Many parents have to endure this great trial.

How many such unhappy parents do we not hear crying out with Rebecca, the mother of Jacob and Esau: "If it were to be so with me, what need was there to conceive?"¹ If these are the bitter fruits of marriage, it would have been better for me not to have thought of it, and to have remained as I was! I should then have no care nor trouble but for myself and my God. In a word, wherever we turn, we see troubles and difficulties, which it requires an iron patience, a special grace and help of God to overcome. When I think of all this, I am inclined to believe what Theophilus Rainaudus says in his Book of the Martyrs: "I look upon it as certain, and my own experience induces me to believe that most of the martyrs of Christ suffered fewer torments and had less pain than most married people."² Would to God that the latter bore their trials with patience and a right intention, as the martyrs suffered for Jesus Christ; then, indeed, would the angels hardly find palms enough to give them!

Therefore, if that state is to be happy, Jesus must first be asked for advice.

Why have I given such a long description of these trials, my dear brethren? Is it to make married people sorry for having chosen that state; or to make single people loathe it? God forbid that such should be my intention! The state is a holy one, and when one lives therein as becomes a Christian, it is a meritorious one and conducive to salvation, as I shall show afterwards; therefore I say with the Apostle: "Let her marry to whom she will, only in the Lord."³ I wish every one of you happiness in that state. My only object in speaking to you of the difficulties of the married life, of which reason alone has sufficed to teach me a little, was to show you how necessary it is to have the grace of a special vocation to this state, and to be helped by God to surmount its difficulties; hence, too, I conclude, that it is necessary to invite Jesus to the marriage feast a long time beforehand, to pray to Him and seek counsel from Him. Is it Jesus who advised you to marry? Is it Jesus who called you to that state of life? Is it after long and earnest prayer, and through divine inspiration, that you have chosen that person as your companion through life? Oh, if that is the case, be comforted! No matter how things may go with

¹ *Si sic mihi futurum erat, quid necesse fuit concipere?*—Gen. xxv. 22.

² *Exploratum duco, plurimos Christi martyres minora passos, et minus ærumnosos fuisse quam plerique sint in conjugio.*

³ *Qui vult nubat, tantum in Domino.*

you, your marriage will be a happy one as far as your salvation is concerned. Divine providence will always accompany you and arrange everything for the best, as long as you are not unfaithful to God. The grace of vocation will influence your words and actions and your whole conduct, so that you can, little by little, overcome the bad temper of your husband or wife, and win his or her affections! The grace of vocation will lighten your burden, so that you can bear it; it will give you strength to overcome difficulties, and to bear patiently with crosses and trials, no matter how numerous they may be, and it will teach you to be resigned to the will of God, to heap up merits for your soul, and to gain a great reward in Heaven. The grace of vocation will replace earthly consolation and happiness, if those are wanting to you, by the inward peace of the soul; and there are many married people who hardly feel the difficulties of their state, and who live in continual contentment, on account of the grace of vocation. In a word, it is a happy and blessed marriage which results from the call of God.

But, alas! how few there are who look at the matter in this light! ^{Very few de}
How few Christians, even, who invite Jesus a long time beforehand to their wedding! How few who first ask advice from God by prayer! They ask for advice, as we have seen already, but from what? Their own animal appetites: Can I satisfy my inclinations in a lawful manner by marriage? Very well, then, I will marry; I need not deliberate any longer about it. They ask for advice; but from what? Their eyes and outward senses: Is that young man or that young woman beautiful enough? If so I require no more; I will marry. They ask advice, too, from the covetous and transitory world: Is that young man or woman rich and well off? Has he or she any hopes of inheriting property? Is that person of a high family? Can I, by such a marriage, obtain a high office or a good appointment? Such are the things people seek after. They ask advice, but from whom? From their parents, and quite right too: but they must not ask their parents alone, nor first of all: "House and riches are given by parents," says the Wise Man, "but a prudent wife is properly from the Lord."¹ And meanwhile, whatever their thoughts, desires, or deliberations may be, they seldom or never think of God beforehand; they concern themselves little about His will or vocation. Sometimes, indeed, they practise certain devotions to obtain hap-

¹ Domus et divitiæ dantur a parentibus, a Domino autem proprie uxor prudens.—Prov. xix.

piness in the married state, but when? When the matter is already settled, and the engagement entered on.

Hence so many unhappy marriages.

What wonder is it, then, that continual happiness in the married state is such a rare thing in the world? What wonder is it that unhappy marriages are the rule? Listen to that man or that woman wailing and lamenting like a poor soul in purgatory, if not cursing and raving like a lost soul in hell; or if they do not show their grief outwardly, moaning and sighing in their hearts: God help me, what a miserable state I am in! Would that I had never seen that person! Unhappy day on which we first became acquainted! How much better it would be for me to have remained as I was! At least I may complain to God, who gave me that husband, or that wife! But what are you saying? How can you complain to God? He can say to you: Have I given you your husband, or your wife? You never consulted Me, nor spoke to Me, and how can you now expect consolation and help from Me? "What have I to do with you?"¹ The state you are in is your own work; you selected it blindly, without waiting for a vocation from Me. Unhappy is the marriage to which Jesus is not invited beforehand!

Conclusion and exhortation to the unmarried.

Unmarried sons and daughters, to you especially do I address these words of warning, for you can still prevent future misery and a useless repentance; think, and think well, before you undertake a matter on which principally depend your whole future life, your temporal happiness, the salvation of your soul and your eternity in Heaven or in hell. Remember, as I have often told you, that your only business in this world is to serve God and to save your souls, and that you must therefore choose that state of life in which you think that you will best be able, according to the divine will, to accomplish this one important business. But first of all, invite Jesus to assist you in your deliberation; think of the matter before God; ask Him for advice, since He knows best what is most suited for your temporal and eternal welfare. Pray, and pray daily to the Most High to show you in what state He wishes you to serve Him and save your souls. If then you are happy in the state you choose, you have a two-fold happiness; if not, you can at least have the consolation and comfort of knowing that you did not act through self-will, but in obedience to the divine vocation, and you have only to bear the trials and contradictions that God wishes you to bear. And that is consolation enough for a soul that seeks to please God.

¹ Quid mihi et tibi?

Ah, some will perhaps say—who are in the married state, and who groan under its yoke, because they heeded not the divine vocation, nor asked advice from Jesus—what have you to say to me? Have I no consolation to hope for, either from God, or from the world, so that I must despair? No; hear what you have to do: you must act as Esau did when Jacob deprived him of his father's blessing; he cried out with tears in his eyes and trouble in his heart: “Hast thou only one blessing, father? I beseech thee, bless me also.”¹ Hast thou only one blessing, so that because I come too late, thou canst not bless me? I beseech thee, bless me also.² In the same way you, too, Christian married people, can and must ask your heavenly Father for a second blessing, with all the greater humility, repentance, and patience in bearing your trials, since you have neglected the first grace. Heavenly Father, hast Thou, then, no blessing left for me? The treasures of Thy grace are inexhaustible; no one comes too late, who appeals to Thy generosity and mercy; I acknowledge that I have done wrong, oh, Lord, in thinking so little of Thee, and neglecting Thee in the choice of a state that now presses heavily on me! I am sorry for it from my heart! Do not turn away Thy merciful eyes from me; abandon me not to my own weakness and frailty! I do not refuse to suffer, for I know that I deserve it, and therefore I willingly resign myself to Thy fatherly decrees. One only request I make of Thee: give me, too, Thy divine blessing; that is, strength to bear the difficulties and trials of my state with Christian patience, through love of Thee, so that I may not lose my soul, and that by temporal sufferings I may gain eternal joys. Pray thus with childlike confidence, and you will move the God of mercy to bless you, as Isaac blessed the weeping Esau: “And when he wept with a loud cry, Isaac, being moved, said to him: In the fat of the earth and in the dew of Heaven from above, shall thy blessing be.”³ The same I wish to you, from my heart: the fat of the earth,⁴ that is, inward consolation in your difficulties on this earth; the dew of heaven,⁵ that is, when those difficulties are passed, an eternal reward in the kingdom of Heaven. Amen.

For married people who did not ask Jesus for advice.

¹ Nam unam tantum benedictionem habes pater? Mihi quoque obsecro, ut benedicas.—Gen. xxvii. 38.

² Mihi quoque, obsecro, ut benedicas.

³ Cumque ejulato magno fletu, motus Isaac dixit ad eum, In pinguedine terræ, et in rore cæli desuper erit benedictio tua.—Gen. xxvii. 38-40.

⁴ Pinguedinem terræ. ⁵ Rorem cæli.

TWENTY-SEVENTH SERMON.

**ON THE DISPOSITIONS OF THOSE WHO RECEIVE THE
SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY.**

Subject.

If the marriage is to be a happy one, Jesus must come to it. 1st. In purity of conscience. 2d. In purity of intention. 3d. In the pure love that the new-married couple must have.—*Preached on the third Sunday after Epiphany.*

Text.

Ait illi Jesus: Ego veniam.—Matth. viii. 7.
“Jesus saith to him: I will come.”

Introduction.

What goodness and benevolence on the part of our loving Saviour! He promised to be present even when He was not asked to come. For, as we read in to-day's Gospel, the Centurion did not ask Christ to come to his house, since he thought himself unworthy of that honor; he said, with the greatest reverence: “Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof.”¹ He merely represented briefly to our Lord the illness of his servant: “Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, and is grievously tormented.”² And Jesus was ready at once: I will come.³ How much more ready, my dear brethren, will He not be to go where He is invited and pressed to go, by humble and fervent prayer? Those who heard the sermon of last Sunday will understand what I mean, although I did not then treat of all the subject matter. My subject then was, that if a marriage is to be happy, Jesus must be invited to it beforehand. That is to say: long before any one intends embracing the married state, he must pray to God for light, and take counsel from Him, to know if that is the state in which, according to the divine vocation, he can best attain his last end; and that, especially, on account of the many difficulties of this state, which cannot be overcome without special grace and help from God. Christians who are about to get married, if you invite Jesus in

¹ Domine, non sum dignus ut intres sub tectum meum.—Matth. viii. 8.

² Domine, puer meus jacet in domo paralyticus, et male torquetur.—Ibid. 7.

³ Ego veniam.—Ibid. 7.

that way, I can assure you that He will say to you: "I will come."¹ And this is very necessary, too, for a marriage to be happy. It is not enough to invite Jesus beforehand, because—

Plan of Discourse.

Jesus Himself must come to the marriage. This is the matter of to-day's instruction for those who intend entering on the married state, as well as for married people who had Jesus present at their wedding, to their consolation, and for those who erred in this point, that they may profit by salutary advice. And how is Jesus to come to your marriage? He must come to you in a pure conscience. The first point. In a pure intention. The second point. In a pure love. The third point.

Oh, Lord, come in that way to all marriages; or rather, Christians who are about to marry, bring Jesus with you, and your marriage will be full of happiness and blessings. Help us herein, with thy powerful intercession, oh, Mary Immaculate, Spouse of the Holy Ghost; and you, holy angels guardian, prepare the hearts of your charges for this.

Heretics, who at different times have attacked almost all the articles of faith, the sacraments and ceremonies of the Church, with their poisoned weapons, have not spared the holy sacrament of matrimony nor the married state, but have tried to degrade it as much as possible. The Manichæans and Simon the Magician called matrimony an invention of the devil, by which he hopes to fill hell with souls, and to make a new hell on earth by jealousy, quarrelling, cursing, adultery, and other vices. Martin Luther and Bucer say that it is a mere worldly contract, which one can make and dissolve at will, just as one can buy a house, and keep it if he chooses, and if not, sell it; so that the wife is free to leave her husband, and the husband his wife, and to marry again at pleasure. But these people do not deserve to have their names mentioned here, and it is as little to their honor as if I said that a robber steals and murders. SS. Epiphanius, Jerome, and Augustine say, against the first mentioned heretics: How can matrimony be an invention of the devil? Did not God Himself first appoint it in Paradise, and establish it as the means of propagating the human race? Did not Mary, the Mother of God, enter that state, since she was the true and holy spouse of St. Joseph? Did not Christ Himself approve of

False doctrine of heretics regarding marriage.

¹ Ego ventum.

and honor it, when He went with His disciples to the marriage feast at Cana in Galilee! The Catholic Church condemns the teaching of the other heretics, since, acting on the command of Christ, she looks upon the marriage-tie, when once fully contracted, as utterly indissoluble in any and every circumstance, even though the happiness of the whole world depended on its dissolution.

Matrimony
is a holy
sacrament.

In a word, and that we may not have to dispute long with heretics, matrimony is a sacred and holy bond, raised by Christ above nature: "Remember," says the Apostle St. Paul, "that marriage is honorable in all."¹ Look at it as you will, you will find it holy and sacred in all circumstances. Holy and sacred in its Founder, who is the Almighty God, the Holy of Holies, Jesus Christ. Holy and sacred in its signification, as being a figure of the union and espousals of the divine Word with human nature, and of Christ with His Church, and of the Holy Ghost with the souls of the just. Holy and sacred in its matter, which consists of human bodies that are called, by the same Apostle, temples of the Holy Ghost: "The temple of God is holy, which you are."² And again: "Know you not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you?"³ Holy and sacred in its effects, which are sanctifying grace, that is thereby increased in the soul, and actual grace, by which married people are strengthened and helped to fulfil the duties of their state. Holy and sacred in its end, which is to multiply the children of God, and to bring them to eternal salvation. Holy and sacred as a sacrament instituted by Christ, and indeed, as St. Paul says in praise of it, a great sacrament: "This is a great sacrament; but I speak in Christ and in the Church."⁴ All infallible truths, my dear brethren.

Therefore
it must be
entered on
with a pure
conscience.

And what follows from them? That, as the first part of my subject says, Jesus must come to the marriage in the pure consciences of those who are about to get married. Holy things must be treated holily. You would not take a precious diamond and throw it to the fowl on the dung-hill, nor a pearl and cast it before swine. Matrimony is a great and holy sacrament, and therefore it must be received in the state of sanctifying grace; hence it would be a grievous sacrilege and a new sin to receive it with a conscience burdened by mortal sin. All Catholics know that it

¹ *Honorable connubium in omnibus.*—Heb. xiii. 4.

² *Templum Dei sanctum est, quod estis vos.*—I. Cor. iii. 17.

³ *An nescitis, quoniam membra vestra templum sunt Spiritus Sancti, qui in vobis est?*
—*Ibid.* vi. 19.

⁴ *Sacramentum hoc magnum est, ego autem dico in Christo et in Ecclesia.*—Ephes. v. 32.

is a great crime to confess one's sins and receive absolution without sufficient sorrow and purpose of amendment, or having deliberately concealed a grievous sin. And why? Because Penance is a sacrament that gives grace. To approach the table of the Lord, and receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in the state of mortal sin, without first going to confession—that is such a grievous sin that the bare idea of it fills even the tepid Catholic with horror and dread. Yet, alas, that crime is committed often by those who remain in the proximate occasion of sin, or who retain the property of others unjustly, or who nourish hatred against their neighbor, without any sign of amendment. It is related of Judas, the traitor, that while still bent on his impious purpose, he dared to receive Holy Communion from the Hands of our Lord. Wicked wretch that he was! thinks every good Christian. In the same way we may speak of all the other sacraments. But is matrimony worthy of less respect and honor than the others? Is it not also instituted by Christ, the Saviour of the world? Has it not the same power, through the merits of His bitter passion and death, to confer sanctifying grace, like the others? May not all that can be said in praise of the other sacraments, also be said of matrimony? Therefore, due proportion being observed, this latter requires the same dispositions of the heart, the same purity of conscience, the same devotion and humility, the same inward and outward modesty and reverence.

But if I could see into the hearts and consciences of those who are preparing for this sacrament, should I always find Jesus there? How many should I not see who are far away from Jesus, and who have invited the devil to occupy the principal place at their marriage feast? For, how is this holy sacrament generally treated? How great the difference that we make in our imagination and judgment between this and the other sacraments! For the latter, people prepare more or less carefully, as for a supernatural work, while the former is looked upon as a mere natural and worldly business, the only sanctity of which consists in the ceremonies of the Church, the prayers that are read by the priest, and the blessing given by him. The conditions that are to be observed by both parties in the contract, what property each one possesses, how the wedding garments, the festivities, and the other things of that nature are to be arranged, these are the first things that are looked after, and that form the subject of many meetings and consultations; if they are satisfactorily arranged, then there is no further anxiety. Thus, there is very

They sin
against
this who
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only as a
worldly
contract.

little devotion, or reverence, or preparation of the soul for such a great sacrament. Few think of the state of justification to which God calls them; few consider the necessity of grace and special helps to be able to live according to their state; and according to the teaching of theologians, this sacrament gives grace in a greater or lesser degree, according to the degree of preparation and disposition in the soul.

Who generally disgrace their wedding day.

• And how is that day sanctified, on which such a great, holy, and sacramental mystery is accomplished? Is Jesus present at every wedding? Can He be found in the midst of abuses and licentiousness that so often take place? Can He be in the midst of impure pastimes and discourses; amid dancing and revelry; amid immoderate eating and drinking? Is there any real difference between such marriage feasts and the license of the carnival, which has come down to us from pagan times, and in which people of both sexes spend the night? Oh, just God, what canst Thou think of us in these troublous times, when we ought to be trying to avert Thy just anger, by humiliation and penance! But enough of this for the present, my dear brethren. I am filled with confusion when I think that the Jews in the Old Testament, when matrimony was not a sacrament, as it is now, put to shame the majority of Christians in this respect. We read in the eighth Chapter of the Book of Tobias, that the younger Tobias, on the day of his marriage, said to Sara his bride: “Arise, and let us pray to God to-day, and to-morrow, and the next day: because for these three nights we are joined to God. . . . For we are children of the saints, and we must not be joined together like heathens that know not God. So they both arose, and prayed earnestly both together.”¹ It is not forbidden to be merry and rejoice, but Jesus must be present in the pure consciences of the merry-makers. The Scripture says of the marriage of Tobias: “They went to the feast;”—but in what manner—“but the marriage feast they celebrated also with the fear of the Lord.”²

They who receive this sacrament in the state of sin.

Ah, fear of the Lord, how art thou absent from the marriages of many Christians! Would that thou wert present in their hearts, even when they actually receive that holy sacrament! Yet I doubt very much if that is often the case. Generally speaking, people go to confession beforehand, but what sort of

¹ Exsurge, et deprecamur Deum hodie et cras, et secundum cras, quia his tribus noctibus Deo iungimur. . . . Filii quippe sanctorum sumus, et non possumus ita conjungi sicut gentes, quæ ignorant Deum. Surgentes autem pariter instanter orabant ambo simul.—Tob. viii. 4-6.

² Accesserunt ad convivium; sed et cum timore Domini nuptiarum convivium exercebant.—Ibid. ix. 12.

a confession is made, especially by those who have already sinned with each other by impure desires, words, and actions; of whom we shall speak more fully in the last point? And, humanly speaking, what sort of repentance and sorrow can they have for sins that they would be inclined to repeat as before, by impure desires? And thus, having added an additional stain to their souls in confession, they receive the sacrament of matrimony, and commit thereby a twofold sin, as Navarrus and other theologians teach. And how is that? If I, in the state of mortal sin, receive Confirmation, Holy Orders, or Extreme Unction; or if I confess without sorrow and purpose of amendment, in order to get absolution, or even to receive Holy Communion, I commit a grievous sin, but it is only one sin, because I alone receive the sacrament. On the other hand, when a person gets married, he is not only the recipient of the sacrament, but its minister also, who perfects the sacrament and confers its effects. At the moment when both express their consent, in presence of the parish-priest and the witnesses, if they are not laboring under any impediment, the bridegroom effects the grace of God, not only in his own soul, but also in that of his bride, just as the priest confers sanctifying grace to the penitent in the sacred tribunal. The parish-priest, although he is present, and blesses the newly married couple, does as little towards the sacrament of matrimony as the two witnesses. He is there only as the representative of the Church; the contracting parties alone administer the sacrament to each other. Consequently, if they do so in the state of mortal sin, they are guilty of a twofold irreverence: one, because they administer the sacrament unworthily, and another, because they receive it unworthily.

How can there be any blessing or happiness in such a marriage, from which Jesus is, so to say, driven away with contempt, although He may have been invited to come and His advice asked about it beforehand; in which the first step in the married life renews and increases enmity with God; in which the married couple, instead of receiving the sacramental grace that is so necessary for the fulfilment of the duties of their state, bring down upon themselves the curse of God? No, there can be no blessing nor happiness in such a marriage; so that Jesus must come to the marriage in purity of conscience. Yet this is not enough, for He must also be there in purity of intention, as we shall see in the

Second Part.

The married state must be entered on with a pure intention.

The younger Tobias in his marriage tells me what I have to say on this head (Alas, I am again forced to ask Christians to take pattern by a Jew!): "And now, Lord, Thou knowest"—such are the words of his prayer—"that not for fleshly lust do I take my sister to wife, but only for the love of posterity, in which Thy name may be blessed forever and ever."¹ So also prayed Sara, his wife: "Thou knowest, oh, Lord, that I never coveted a husband, and have kept my soul clean from all lust. . . . But a husband I consented to take, with Thy fear, not with my lust."² Christians who are about to get married, there you see the end and object of the married life, and the pure intention you must have in entering on it. There are, indeed, other motives which are lawful and even meritorious, such as the desire of being helped in housekeeping, of having good advice in business matters, of being consoled in trials and of being looked after in sickness and old age. These motives are good and praiseworthy, and they who have them can marry, although they intend, by mutual consent, to preserve their virginity in the married state. Again, there are many who fear that, on account of their frailty, they will not be able to preserve holy purity amidst so many dangers, and who get married in order to avoid offending God. This end, too, is not a bad one in itself, and St. Paul permits it, although he does not expressly command it. He writes to the Corinthians: "But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: it is good for them if they so continue, even as I. But if they do not contain themselves, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to be burnt."³

The principal end must be the rearing of children.

But the true end and object of the married state, which ought to be first in the intention of all Christians who are called to that state by God, must be the bringing up of children, and that, too, through a supernatural motive, that they may multiply souls who can know, love, and praise God; according to the intention of Tobias: "In which Thy name may be blessed forever and ever."⁴ Therefore, the Christian bride and bridegroom must thus resolve within themselves: I will serve my God as long as I live; to this

¹ Et nunc Domine, tu scis, quia non luxuriæ causa accipio sororem meam conjugem, sed sola posteritatis dilectione, in qua benedicatur nomen tuum in sæcula sæculorum.—Tob. viii. 9.

² Tu scis Domine, quia nunquam concupivi virum; mundam servavi animam meam ab omni concupiscentia. . . . Virum autem cum timore tuo, non cum libidine mea consensi suscipere.—Ibid. iii. 16, 18.

³ Dico autem non nuptis et viduis: bonum est illis si sic permaneant, sicut et ego. Quod si non se continent, nubant. Melius est enim nubere quam uri.—I. Cor. vii. 8, 9.

⁴ In qua benedicatur nomen tuum in sæcula sæculorum.

end I am in the world; but I will not do that alone, I must have others with me to help me in the praise and service of my God, namely, my children, whom I will train and educate for that purpose, and thus by my zeal and diligence increase the glory and honor of God here on earth, even in the souls of others; my children, who, if they die in their infancy, after having received a new birth in God, by baptism, will be made friends and co-heirs of Jesus Christ in the eternal joys of Heaven, where they will bless God and pray for me; or if they live a long life, they will, after my death, serve God on earth. As David consoled himself by the hopes he had centered in his children: "My seed shall serve Him,"¹ he said. In a short time I must die, and I shall not be able to praise God in this body of mine, which must rot in the earth; therefore, I wish to leave my children after me, that they may continue the work of praising God. I hope to have sons who in the ecclesiastical or in the religious state, will sing the praises of God day and night, and labor for His honor and glory. I hope to have daughters who will preserve their virginity, and thus attain a perfection that has been denied to me. Other children, too, I hope to leave behind, who by their learning and skill in public offices and appointments, or by their talents and labor, will contribute to the general well-being, and thus fulfil the will of God. "My seed shall serve Him." This is the proper end and object of the married state, says St. Augustine: "This should be the intention of all pious married people,"² if they expect happiness and blessings. Oh, what a meritorious state you have entered, Christian married people! What good may you not do! What great things may you not effect for your own salvation and that of others, and for the honor and glory of God, if this pure intention is always uppermost in your minds!

But it is easy talking of a pure intention! Who ever thinks of it, when the thought of marriage comes into his head? How many are there who can truly say with Tobias: Lord, Thou knowest, for Thou canst see my heart, that I am not looking for any sensual gratification,³ but for the accomplishment of Thy will according to my vocation, and for Thy greater honor and glory? Alas, what else, except this sensual pleasure, have some, not to say the majority, in their minds, when they are about to marry? But it is not right to speak too much of this matter, for fear of offending chaste ears and hearts. If what the Angel Raphael said

The majority sin against this especially those who only look for sensual pleasures.

¹ Semen meum serviet ipsi.—Ps. xxi. 31.

² Hæc esse debet plorum conjugum intentio.

³ Domine, tu scis, quia non luxurise causa accipio conjugem.

is true, what sort of happiness or grace can such people expect, who receive the holy sacrament of Matrimony with an impure intention? "Hear me," said the angel to Tobias, when the latter was afraid to take Sara to wife, as the devil had already killed seven men whom she had married, "and I will show thee who they are, over whom the devil can prevail. For they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves, and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust as the horse and mule, which have not understanding, over them the devil hath power." But do thou "Take the virgin with the fear of the Lord, moved rather for love of children than for lust, that in the seed of Abraham thou mayst obtain a blessing in children."

God generally gives the devil great power over such people.

Over no state of life, my dear brethren, as a general rule, does God give the devil and wicked people more power, than over the married state, to do harm by witchcraft and sorcery, as Father Martin Delrio, who has written a book on the subject, testifies to from his own experience: "Infinite almost in number"—such are his words—"are the means used by the devil for this purpose." Sometimes he makes use of secret and unusual weaknesses and ailments, so that married people, or their children, gradually lose all strength and die out like a shadow. People think it consumption, but in reality it is witchcraft. Sometimes he interferes with childbirth, and causes premature birth, or makes the child deformed, and even kills it before it is born. In the same book, Delrio mentions the case of a woman who, being pregnant, could not be delivered for eight whole years, until the witchcraft which caused her sufferings was discovered and defeated. Sometimes he changes the dispositions of married people, so that they are either filled with an impure love for strangers, and have no rest night or day, or they both begin to hate each other and live in strife and enmity. Father Candidus says that he knew a couple who, before their marriage, loved each other so dearly, that they could not suffer to be an hour out of each other's sight, but as soon as they were married they commenced to hate each other, when together, to such an extent that they fought tooth and nail; but when they were separated, their former mutual love returned, to be changed again into hatred at

¹ Audi me, ostendam tibi, qui sunt, quibus prevalere potest dæmonium. Hi namque qui conjugium ita suscipiunt, ut Deum a se et a sua mente excludunt, et suæ libidini ita vacent, sicut equus et mulus, quibus non est intellectus; habet potestatem dæmonium super eos.—Tob. vi. 16, 17.

² Accipies virginem cum timore Domini, amore filiorum magis, quam libidine ductus, ut in semine Abrahamæ benedictionem in filiis consequaris.—Ibid. 22.

³ Modis seu formis ad hoc utitur diabolus prope infinitis.

their first meeting. A fearful torment, certainly, to hate, when present, one who is loved when absent! How is it, my dear brethren, that witchcraft of this kind, and of other kinds of which we do not always hear, is of such common occurrence in the married state, although that state is strengthened by the powerful prayers, blessings, and ceremonies of the Church? "They who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust,"¹ over these the devil has great power, through a just judgment of God. Therefore, all who are about to get married, should follow the beautiful advice of the Angel Raphael to Tobias: "Take the virgin with the fear of the Lord, moved rather for love of children," and with the intention of bringing them up for God and for Heaven, "than for lust." And then Jesus will be present at the marriage, by purity of intention. Again, if the marriage is to be happy, Jesus must be present at it by a pure love. Such is briefly the subject of the

Third Part.

Oh, my dear Redeemer—I must here cry out—how few marriages there are, at which Thou art thus present! When Thou first camest into the world there was no place for Thee in the inn.² Alas, I am afraid, that if Thou wert to go about seeking admittance to marriages, Thou wouldst find no room in very many of them! For what a multitude of sins often accompany the bride and bridegroom to church, who thus enter the holy state of matrimony after having stained their virginal purity! How many marriages are not the actual result of unchastity? How often is it not the case that lost honor compels consent to marriage? Many go even so far as to think that a mere engagement is enough to make all things lawful to them. They keep company with each other, away from the eyes of their parents; they correspond, laugh and joke together, as if they were already married. But I do not wish even to think of this any longer. Oh, terrible day of divine justice, what a mass of sins thou wilt disclose, which have been committed by thought, desire, and deed, and of which they who commit them take no account, because, they say, we are married in the sight of God. You will see that; and many parents, too, will learn what a fearful responsibility they incur, by leaving their children alone with those whom they are about to marry, and by not preventing secret meetings and company

The married state should be entered on with a pure love; in which many are wanting.

¹ *Hi namque, qui conjugium, etc.*

² *Non erat ei locus in diversorio.*—Luke ii. 7.

keeping! They will learn, too, what a strict account they must render for having too long deferred without cause the marriage of their engaged children, and for having thus left the latter in the proximate occasion of sin. In a word, as far as impure love and pleasure is concerned, not a whit more is allowed to those who are merely engaged, than to other unmarried persons.

On which account many marriages are unhappy.

You wonder sometimes, my dear brethren, why there are so many unhappy marriages. To tell the truth, I wonder that there are not more of them, which end most miserably in continual quarrelling and fighting, in jealousy and suspicions, excited by the infidelity of one or other of the parties, so that there is no rest day or night; in frequent losses sustained in business, and in losses caused by the death, sickness, infirmities, disobedience, and ill-conduct of children; in continual impatience, discontent, trouble, and despair at the trials incidental to the state; and that they thus end miserably in time and in eternity. Then the unfortunate people sigh and moan and bewail their lot, without help, or advice, or consolation, or hope. But let them think for a moment how they entered on the married state, and how they lived before their marriage. Perhaps not very well. If so, they are the cause of their own misfortunes. They have made rods to scourge themselves by their frivolity and licentiousness, and by offending and neglecting God when preparing for their marriage; their sins are, in the hidden decrees of the Almighty, the torturers who now punish them. The Lord is indeed patient and long-suffering, He does not punish a crime at once; but He knows how to mete out a just chastisement for it, when the time comes! Formerly, when the sins were committed, He allowed them to remain unpunished for a time, but now the sinners must bear the heavy weight of their wickedness. Yet they may be happy in their apparent misfortune, if they only bear the burden as they ought.

Conclusion and exhortation to married people who have sinned in this way.

The only consolation and advice that I can now give to you who have sinned in this way, is to make a virtue of necessity, to convert your present sufferings into eternal joys, and even to lighten your burden, if not to remove it altogether when you have sufficiently atoned for your fault, by thinking and saying, with the penitent David, humbly confessing your sins and resigning yourselves to the will of God: "Thou art just, oh, Lord, and Thy judgment is right."¹ It is just that I should now have so much to suffer every day, and that I must often bear my hard

¹ *Justus es Domine, et rectum judicium tuum.*—Ps. cxviii. 137.

trials in silence. I can say nothing against Thee; the punishment Thou hast inflicted on me is just, and I have well deserved it by the sins that I committed in choosing and entering on my state of life so imprudently. I should have remembered beforehand that it is not thus that Thy blessing and my happiness are to be gained! But what I have done I cannot now undo. I confess my fault. Oh, Almighty Lord, I kiss the rod that I myself have placed in Thy hands, and which Thou now usest with fatherly kindness to chastise me, that I may avoid the rigors of Thy justice hereafter! May Thy Name be always blessed! (In the same manner may all pray, who in any way have offended God by mortal sin, and who now have to suffer trials and crosses.) Christians, if you are sincere in this, you may be certain that He, of whom the Prophet David says: "A contrite and humbled heart Thou wilt not despise,"¹ although you have sinned against Him, will not allow you to remain in your misery and suffering without consolation. If there are any who, having prepared the way for their marriage by sin, yet find things prospering with them, I cannot prophesy much good for them, unless they truly repent, live more carefully, and fulfil the duties of their state exactly; as I shall explain more fully hereafter.

For you, single people, who think of getting married, the conclusion to be drawn from this instruction, as far as my duty is concerned, is evident enough. It rests with you now to profit by it. Bring Jesus to your wedding by purity of conscience and by preparing properly for such a holy sacrament. Bring Him with you by a pure intention, suited to the holy state of matrimony, and to ensure His presence, bring with you a pure and virginal love. Whenever you are assailed by an impure temptation, think to yourselves: must I then give up all the happiness and blessings of my future state, for a momentary pleasure? If you find yourselves in danger of sin, get married at once, so as to cut off the danger: "Jesus saith to him: I will come."² If you are in those dispositions, I can assure you that Jesus will also say to you: "I will come." That is to say, the happiness and blessing which I wish you from my heart, will not be wanting to you.

And now that we, who are not called to the married state, may not go away from the sermon without profiting by it, let us renew every day our resolution and our fervor that we may adorn our souls with merits and good works, and thus prepare for that marriage feast, of which St. John says in the Apocalypse:

For single persons who think of marrying.

For the other hearers.

¹ Cor contritum et humilitatum non despicias.—Ps. 1. 19. ² Att illi Jesus: Ego venturam.

“Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”¹ Blessed and more than blessed shall we be, if we can all meet there ! That such may be the case, let us all now serve God constantly, with a pure conscience, with a pure intention of directing all our works to God, and with a pure love, free from all stain and suited to our state of life. Amen.

TWENTY-EIGHTH SERMON.

ON THE NECESSITY OF MARRIED PEOPLE BEING IN THE FRIENDSHIP OF GOD, THAT THEY MAY NOT LOSE THEIR SOULS.

Subject.

If the marriage is to be a happy one, especially as regards the salvation of the soul, Jesus must always remain with the married couple, even after their wedding, on account of the great dangers of their state, which they cannot overcome without the special assistance of God.—*Preached on the fourth Sunday after Epiphany.*

Text.

Domine, salva nos, perimus.—Matth. viii. 25.
“Lord, save us, we perish.”

Introduction.

The poor disciples were in great danger of their lives ! The wind howled and moaned ; the waves of the stormy sea rose mountains high ; their little vessel was almost covered by the foaming billows ; they could do nothing but sit down and wring their hands, and await the destruction that seemed impending over them. The poor disciples were in extreme danger ! But what am I saying ? What had they to fear ? They had with them Jesus, who placed bounds to the sea, and gave the winds their power, whose least command both elements must obey at once. It is true that Jesus was asleep, but they had only to awaken Him and ask Him to help them, and they would be at once freed from all dangers, as was really the case ; for they cried out : “ Lord, save us, we perish. Then rising up He commanded the winds

¹ Beati, qui ad cœnam nuptiarum Agni vocati sunt.—Apoç. xix. 9.

and the sea, and there came a great calm.”¹ Happy the man, my dear brethren, who has Jesus at his side, and God as his Friend and Helper! Happy and secure in the worst temptations, in the greatest dangers of soul and body! But woe to him who is in danger, without the grace and friendship of Jesus! To my mind, the married state is like a tempest-tossed vessel; but do not be afraid, you married people, who have Jesus at your side! In the two last instructions I have shown, first, that if the marriage is to be happy, Jesus must be invited to the wedding, on account of the many difficulties of that state, which cannot be overcome without getting counsel and help from God; and secondly, that Jesus must come to the wedding in purity of conscience, intention, and love on the part of those who are about to be married, in order that they may receive the sacramental and helping grace, without which they cannot fulfil the obligations of their state. Now I come to the third point, and I say—

Plan of Discourse.

If the marriage is to be a happy one, especially as regards the salvation of the soul, Jesus must always remain with the married couple, even after their wedding. And why? On account of the many great dangers of their state, which they cannot overcome without the special assistance of God. Such is the whole subject of to-day's sermon.

All of you who are unmarried, may learn from it to keep God always before your eyes, and to have Him always as your Friend in spiritual dangers. Let us pray, then, all together, through the merits of Mary and the holy angels: Lord, save us, we perish!²

No state in the world is as holy and perfect as not to have its special and manifold spiritual dangers and occasions of sin. In all places, at all times, snares are laid to entrap souls. The solitude of a convent, even, is not free from them. Religious in their cells, hermits in the remotest forests, living in caves, although always engaged in prayer, meditation, fasting, and works of penance, yet had enough to do to combat the suggestions and temptations of the devil, and the desires of the flesh that all men are subject to, and to preserve their innocence unsullied. How many of them, wearied with the fight, gave way to their weakness, and allowed the enemy to overcome them! How often

There are dangers of sin in every state.

¹ Domine, salva nos, perimus. Tunc surgens imperavit ventis et mari, et facta est tranquillitas magna.—Matth. viii. 25, 26.

² Domine, salva nos, perimus.

has not the Church of God, to her great sorrow, seen those who shone like stars in her firmament, fall down in disgrace! She still mourns the loss of those whom she once fondly believed to have been written in the Book of Life. Miserable mortals are we, indeed! Not one of us can boast of being certain of salvation. Wherever we are, as long as we live, we are exposed to countless dangers; wherever we are we require the special help and assistance of God; wherever we are we must always keep Jesus before our eyes, have Him as our Friend, and cry out to Him, humbly and fervently: "Lord, save us, we perish!"¹

But greater and more numerous in the married state.

Meanwhile, it is certain that one state of life is more dangerous in itself than another; and, when I consider the unanimous testimony of the Holy Fathers, and look at the matter itself, I must say that the married state is one of the most dangerous. And do you know the reason of that? To have a true friendship and tender love for creatures, and at the same time to love God with all one's heart, soul, and strength; to be bound to work with all possible diligence for money and temporal goods, and still to preserve poverty of spirit and detachment from earthly things, these are duties of which we might say, humanly speaking, that they run counter to each other and that they cannot be performed together. Nevertheless, you married people are obliged to perform them, or you will not be among the elect in Heaven. To do so is difficult, and requires great skill, and therefore your state is a dangerous one for the soul, unless you always keep God before your eyes, unless Jesus is always present to assist and help you by His grace.

Danger of sinning against the purity of this state.

As far as the purity of state is concerned, the married state is, in its own degree, a state of continence and chastity, as well as the state of celibacy and virginity, although not in such perfection as the latter; and even on this account it is much more dangerous, since it is more difficult to moderate and restrain ourselves when we are conceded a partial satisfaction for our desires, and the occasion of them is always present, than when we keep away from such satisfaction altogether, look upon it as absolutely forbidden, and keep the occasion at a distance. St. Augustine says: "There are many who can remain altogether continent in the unmarried state, more easily than they could use matrimony with due restraint."² Not everything is allowed to you married people: there are many things which reason and conscience would

¹ Domine, salva nos, perimus!

² Multi facilius se abstinunt, ut non utantur nuptiis, quam temperanter et bene utantur.

make you reprove as vicious. If you are in doubt about such things, ask your confessor. On this head I need only remark that being constantly in the occasion increases the danger of incontinence, and that there is great danger of jealousy, suspicion, and rash judgments if there is a too inordinate sensual love amongst married people. And on the other hand, what danger they run of committing grievous sin, if they neglect fulfilling the obligations of their state through a spirit of disunion, anger, hatred, and dislike! What great danger they run in the society which their position in the world obliges them to frequent; the danger, I say, of sinning at least by wrong imaginations and desires, especially if their first love has cooled down, or what is still worse, if they live in strife and contention with each other! For we are already by nature more inclined to what is unlawful, than to what is allowed.¹

Of course the unmarried are exposed to the same danger, but it is not so great, nor so serious for them. Not so great, because we have less desire for that which we have no experience of, than for that to which we have become habituated; nor so serious, because if an unmarried person sins against purity in thought or in action, he commits but one mortal sin, unless there are other circumstances which increase his guilt; but a married person commits a twofold sin in such cases: one against purity and another against conjugal fidelity; and if these sins are committed with other married people, even by an efficacious desire, then each time a threefold guilt is contracted: one against purity, and the other two against the conjugal rights of two individuals. Oh, Christian married people, keep God as your Friend always! Pray every day humbly, acknowledging your weakness, and with childlike confidence: "Lord, save us, we perish!"² Lord, help us with Thy grace; comfort and strengthen us that we may not be overcome by so many dangers, and lose our souls!

In addition to this, there is another, and to my mind, a more common danger, and one more difficult to be overcome, which arises from the indissolubility of the marriage tie, and from the fact that married people must be always in each other's society. The effect of the bond of marriage should be such a perfect union of hearts, such a tender mutual love of the husband and wife for each other, that the one would be ready, if circumstances required it, to give up possessions, home, and property, and everything in the world, for the other's sake, and even to leave father

And more grievously than in the unmarried state.

The dangers of many sins against conjugal love.

¹ Nitimur in vetitum semper, cupimusque negata.

² Domine, salva nos, perimus!

and mother, brothers and sisters, according to the express word of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of St. Matthew: "A man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife,"¹ and that he must do with a pure and true love. "Husbands, love your wives,"² writes the Apostle to the Ephesians; whom God has given you; wives, love the husbands to whom God has joined you; and the rule you have to follow, is to love each other, "As Christ also loved the Church."³ That is to say, with a love that is true and constant even to the death of the Cross, that He endured for the Church. There, Christian married people, you have a pattern and example of the love that you must have for each other.

A love which must not interfere with the love of God.

But do not forget that a very necessary and delicate distinction must be made here between this love and the love of God; for the union of your hearts must never interfere with your union and friendship with God, and you must hate and detest whatever is asked or required from you against the law of God. In this sense are to be understood the apparently harsh words of our Lord in the Gospel of St. Luke: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."⁴ And how is that? asks St. Gregory. Must a man hate his wife? Does not the Apostle, at the command of Christ, say that he must love her tenderly? Nay, are we not commanded to love even our worst enemy? "Can we love and hate the same person?"⁵ Yes, he answers, we must do both together. We must love that person as a friend and neighbor, but we must hate and avoid him as our worst enemy if we find him hindering us in the service of God. It is right for a wife to try with all diligence to please her husband, to obey him, to follow his advice, to adapt herself to his humor, and to do his will in all lawful things; she must do so, for it is her duty and obligation. But if he desires her to do anything unlawful, to take part in immodest conversation, or to frequent dangerous company, then she must use all her courage and strength to oppose and disobey him, for such is her highest obligation.

So that one never offends God for the other's sake.

For instance, if the husband has to suffer some contempt, injury, or injustice, the wife must have compassion and sympathy

¹ Dimittet homo patrem et matrem, et adhaerebit uxori suae.—*Matth.* xix. 5.

² Viri, diligite uxores vestras.—*Ephes.* v. 25.

³ Sicut Christus dilexit Ecclesiam.—*Ibid.*

⁴ Si quis venit ad me, et non odit patrem suum, et matrem, et uxorem, et filios, et fratres, et sorores, adhuc autem et animam suam, non potest meus esse discipulus.—*Luke* xiv. 26.

⁵ An simul, et odisse possumus, et diligere?

for him, she must share his trouble and try to make it lighter as best she can. But she must not go farther than that ; she must not share his anger, hatred, or enmity ; she must not encourage him therein by her complaints, nor approve of his resentment and desire of revenge, nor join with him in cursing and vilifying his enemies. That would not at all become a Christian wife. When Christ instituted the sacrament of matrimony in His Church, He did not wish married people to share in each other's sins. In the same way, if the husband attempts to get an appointment, or to acquire property by unjust means, then it is time for the wife to act a heroic part and to oppose that injustice fearlessly and boldly. In the same way, and even still more strictly, is the husband obliged to act, if his wife endeavors to persuade him to do, or to undertake anything against the law of God ; he most sternly refuse to listen to her.

But, thinks the wife, I must obey my husband ; and, thinks the latter, I must give way to my wife. By no means ; there can be no obedience, no giving way against the law of God. But he or she will then lose all love and affection for me. That cannot be helped : the love of God must be preferred to human affection. In such circumstances it is better for you to have the hatred, than the love of husband or wife. But there is an end to peace in the house. No matter ; you will keep your peace with God, and with your conscience, and that ought to suffice for you, under the circumstances. But my husband, or wife, will give me all sorts of annoyance and trouble. Have patience, and you will have all the more merit for your soul, and all the more consolation in God. Oh, it is easy to talk of patience ; we have to live together constantly ; how can one be always patient, so as not to fail sometimes, either through love, or hatred, or fear ? True ; it will not do merely to speak of patience in such a case ; and I must thank God that my own lot is so fortunate in this respect.

But this is, after all, what I want to prove, namely, that the married state is a most dangerous one, in many respects, unless Jesus is always at hand to help with His grace. This is what St. Paul alluded to, when he wrote to the Corinthians about the happiness of the unmarried, who are not obliged to please men, and who can have God alone as their Friend : “ And the unmarried woman and the virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit.”¹ And further :

And here there is neither excuse nor exception.

That is very difficult on account of lasting so long.

¹ Et mulier inupta, et virgo cogitat quae Domini sunt, ut sit sancta corpore, et spiritu.—I. Cor. vii. 34.

“He that is without a wife, is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God.”¹ On the contrary: “But he that is with a wife, is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and he is divided. . . . But she that is married, thinketh on the things of the world, how she may please her husband.”² And still, both must retain the favor and grace of God. Both must strive to please God, as well as husband or wife; and there are hundreds of occasions on which it is impossible to please one, without displeasing the other. And that is a fruitful source of uneasiness and trouble. But the greatest danger and difficulty in this respect is that of displeasing God, for the sake of husband or wife.

Danger, on account of living together, that one will lead the other astray.

Nothing has more power over us, for good or evil, than the example of those with whom we are in daily contact. The Holy Ghost says, by the mouth of the Prophet David: “With the holy, thou wilt be holy; and with the innocent man thou wilt be innocent. And with the elect, thou wilt be elect; and with the perverse, thou wilt be perverted.”³ St. Ambrose adds: “How much more true is not that of the married state, in which two become one body and one heart?”⁴ It is certainly the case that a wife’s virtue and piety can do much to make her husband pious, and that the holy example of a good husband can help the wife to practise virtue, and in this sense we must understand the words of St. Paul to the Corinthians: “For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the believing husband.”⁵ But unfortunately, experience tends mostly in the contrary direction, and proves that we are more easily inclined to evil than to good, and that married people imitate each other’s vices far more readily than they do each other’s virtues.

The wife imitates the husband.

A young woman who has been piously brought up, and has preserved her baptismal innocence, who always lived a retired life at home with her parents, dressed modestly and becomingly in a Christian manner, frequented the Church and often heard sermons, was a weekly communicant, and was much given to prayer,

¹ Qui sine uxore est, sollicitus est, quæ Domini sunt, quomodo placeat Deo.—I. Cor. vii. 32.

² Qui autem cum uxore est, sollicitus est quæ sunt mundi, quomodo placeat uxori, divites est. . . . Quæ autem nupta est, cogitat quæ sunt mundi, quomodo placeat viro.—Ibid. 33, 34.

³ Cum sancto sanctus eris, et cum viro innocente innocens eris. Et cum electo electus eris, et cum perverso perverteris.—Ps. xvii. 26, 27.

⁴ Quanto magis in conjugio, ubi una caro et unum spiritus est?

⁵ Sanctificatus est enim vir infidelis per mulierem fidelem, et sanctificata est mulier infidelis per virum fidelem.—I. Cor. vii. 14.

meditation, and mortification ; if such a one marries a man who is totally different from her as far as piety is concerned, and who is given to pride, vanity, idleness, and all sorts of vices, who seeks for nothing but sensual gratifications, and who follows all the customs of the world in his conversations and amusements ; then, indeed, an innocent lamb is given over to a ravening wolf ! For such a man will not leave his wife any time for prayer and pious practices ; he will prevent her from going often to Church and hearing sermons ; he will not allow her to fast or mortify herself ; he will compel her to dress after the vain fashion of the world ; he talks to her of nothing but frivolous, useless, and even impure subjects ; he brings her into all kinds of dangerous company ; he compels her to pay and receive many visits, and to live like a lady of fashion, etc. What a temptation is there for a pious soul ! She requires a powerful grace and help from God to preserve her innocence, piety, and tender love of God under such circumstances. For, without that help, she would soon experience a complete change in herself : the spirit of piety, which she brought to her marriage, would grow cold little by little ; she would lose her taste for spiritual things, and, following her husband's example, which she has constantly before her, she would lead an idle, vain, careless, and unchristian life.

It would seem as if men were in little danger of being led away and perverted by the bad example of their wives, because they are the lords and masters and heads of their families, and besides, they have more courage and strength of mind to avoid the effects of bad example. But is that really the case? Adam in Paradise had all his inclinations under the full control of reason, and yet he was weak enough to give way to the solicitation of his wife ; a word of Eve's was enough to cajole and betray him, so that, to his own ruin and that of his posterity, he transgressed the divine command. Solomon was the wisest of all men, but he allowed women to befool him to such an extent, that he turned his back on the true God and bent the knee before idols. And after these and many other similar examples, of which the history of the world is full, can any man trust so far in his own courage and determination, as to say that he will not depart a hair's-breadth from the law of God to please his wife, no matter how much he loves her? A bad and unchristian woman is, to my mind, worse in a house than a wicked man, and, generally speaking, pious men are more frequently perverted by their wives, than pious wives are by their husbands. A wicked woman can more easily destroy

The husband imitates the wife.

the virtues of her husband, than a pious man can reform a wicked wife. In a word, both are in danger of sinning grievously for each other's sake. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary always to have Jesus as a Friend and Helper, if the soul's salvation is to be secured. I will say nothing of the danger of other sins, such as impatience, disunion, abusive language, cursing, swearing, etc., which are occasioned by daily annoyances in the house and in business, by ill-luck and by the disobedience of children; nor do I speak of the danger of great negligence in bringing up children for their last end, by which parents often incur the loss of their own souls, and are responsible for the loss of their children's souls also.

Warning to those who think of getting married.

You who think of getting married should learn from this how careful you must be in selecting the person with whom you intend to pass your lives. Do not consider, first of all, as most people do, whether that person is rich or beautiful, or of a good family, or experienced in the world; your first question should be, is that person pious, virtuous, and well brought up; and whether you can live with that person and serve God, save your soul, and gain Heaven without difficulty. But to find one of this kind, you must, as we have seen already, pray to God for help, for a good and prudent wife is a special gift of God.¹ To deserve that gift, you must lead a virtuous life. The Wise Sirach says: "A good wife is a good portion."² And to whom is that portion given? "She shall be given in the portion of them that fear God, to a man for his good deeds."³ Cornelius à Lapide says: "Palatius thinks that a good wife is a sign of predestination for her husband and children."⁴ But an idle, vain, wicked, and impure life is not a means of obtaining such a great favor from God.

Danger on account of the difficulty of reconciling the care of temporal things with poverty of spirit.

What shall I say of the third danger, which arises from the cares of housekeeping and providing for children? Who does not know how difficult it is to work hard for money and temporal goods, and still to remain poor in spirit, and to fulfil those two duties without exceeding in either? According to the law of the Gospel, you married people, if you neglect your housekeeping, and do not work with all possible diligence to feed your children and educate them according to your condition, will be held responsible for your negligence and will be punished for it at the judgment-seat of God. According to the law of the same Gos-

¹ *A Domino proprie uxor prudens.*—Prov. xix. 14.

² *Pars bona, mulier bona.*—Eccl. xxvi. 3.

³ *In parte bona timentium Deum, dabitur viro pro factis bonis.*

⁴ *Palatius censet, bonam uxorem signum esse predestinationis viri et filiorum.*

pel, if you allow yourselves to be too much taken up with worldly things, for your children's sake, you will fall a prey to the devil and will lose your souls. These are the words of the Apostle St. Paul: "They that will become rich, fall into the snare of the devil."¹ It is not allowed for you who are in the married state, as it is for me and other unmarried persons, to follow the counsel that Jesus Christ gave to the young man who wanted to know what he must do to gain Heaven: "Go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor . . . and follow me."² No, that perfection is not for you; if you have temporal goods, you must keep them, you must look after them carefully, and increase them by just means; but in the care, possession, and increasing of money and property, you must not allow your hearts to be attached to them. Hear what the Apostle says of this: "This, therefore, I say, brethren: It remaineth, that they also who have wives, be as if they had none."³ They must keep their hearts and minds as free as if they were completely their own masters. "And they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as if they used it not."⁴ And why? Because the care that you can and must have for worldly goods, does not dispense you altogether, nor except you from the general law of Christ, in the Gospel of St. Luke: "Every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be my disciple."⁵

This law is for all, without exception: "Every one of you."⁶ It was not for the Apostles alone that it was made, but for the crowd of people of all sorts who were following our Lord. The Scripture says in the same chapter: "And there went great multitudes with Him, and turning, He said to them: Every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be my disciple,"⁷ nor be of the number of my friends. But, as St. John Chrysostom says, we must not understand that of the real abandonment of all worldly goods, for otherwise every one would be really poor; but of the inward detachment of the heart and will; namely, that each one who possesses or works for earthly goods, must be as ready and

Which poverty is required of married people.

¹ Qui volunt divites fieri, incidunt in laqueum diaboli.—I. Tim. vi. 9.

² Vade, vende quæ habes, et da pauperibus, . . . et sequere me.—Matth. xix. 21.

³ Hoc itaque dico, fratres: reliquum est, ut et qui habent uxores, tanquam non habentes sint.—I. Cor. vii. 29.

⁴ Et qui emunt tanquam non possidentes: et qui utuntur hoc mundo, tanquam non utantur.—Ibid. 30, 31.

⁵ Omnis ex vobis, qui non renuntiat omnibus, quæ possidet, non potest meus esse discipulus.—Luce xiv. 33.

⁶ Omnis ex vobis.

⁷ Ibant autem turbæ multæ cum eo, et conversus dicit ad illos: Omnis ex vobis, qui, etc.

willing to lose them, if it pleases God, as to keep and increase them ; and when he is enjoying them, he must have no other intention but to fulfil the divine will in the state to which he is called. So that the Gospel law of poverty is for you, married people, as well as for me ; but with this great difference, that your obligation is much more difficult and dangerous than mine, for the inward detachment from those goods, which is easy enough for me, must not hinder you from caring and working for those goods, in order to support your children and yourselves. The union of these two duties is what I call the heroic virtue of your state, and the dangerous combat of the married life.

Yet one can be good and pious amid all these dangers.

Ah, you think, is that really the case with us? How is it possible for us to save our souls and to preserve them unharmed, amid so many dangers? I give you the same answer that Jesus Himself gave to a similar question that His disciples put to Him, when He said that it is exceedingly difficult for a rich man to enter Heaven. How, they asked, in consternation: "Who then can be saved? With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible."¹ For those who enter the married state without being called to it by God, or who consider temporal things alone, or who think seldom of God, go rarely to Church and to sermons, seldom receive the sacraments, and do not concern themselves about having God as their Friend, for such as these it is difficult to escape the dangers that threaten their salvation; but for pious Christians who are zealous in the service of God, and who often ask Him for help and assistance, it is quite possible, nay, even easy. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Tobias, Job, and many others in the Old Testament, as well as numbers in the New Law, were married, as you are; they had to provide for their families, as you have; they had more riches and worldly goods than you have; and yet they conquered the dangers of their state, and became great Saints in Heaven. In our days, too, there are many Christian married people who lead an upright, pious, and holy life. The more numerous and the greater are the dangers of a state, the more frequent and powerful are the helps that God gives to men, so that the dangers may be easily overcome; but He gives these helps only to His friends, who strive to please Him.

Conclusion and exhortation to the married.

Therefore I again conclude that if the marriage is to be a happy one, as far as the soul's salvation is concerned, Jesus must be with you continually, even after the wedding. And woe to you,

¹ Quis ergo poterit salvus esse? Apud homines hoc impossibile est: apud Deum autem omnia possible sunt.—Matth. xix. 25, 26.

married people, if Jesus abandons you, or ceases to be your Friend, or leaves you to your own unaided powers! Therefore, whatever cares you may have, whatever you do, or undertake, see first that you keep God before your eyes, and that He is your Friend; do not lose His grace and favor by mortal sin, nor make yourselves unworthy of His help and assistance by a vain and tepid life! One mortal sin would open the door to many sins, and often to eternal ruin, for it would deprive you of the friendship of God, and leave you without His help, in so many dangers. The mother leads her young child about by the hand everywhere; if she leaves him alone for a moment, he falls. Call upon the Lord by a frequent reception of the sacraments, by hearing Mass daily, if possible, and by living in the constant love and fear of God. Call upon Him as the disciples did, when they were in danger of death: “Lord, save us, we perish!”¹ Thou hast called us to this state, we are in it by Thy holy will; Thou knowest how many dangers threaten our souls daily, and that our strength is unable to overcome them. Do Thou lead and guide us by Thy fatherly help, that we may so live in this state, “and so use the goods of this life, that we may not lose eternal goods.”² Come to sermons often, and bring your children with you, that you may receive fresh encouragement in the divine service. If you are tempted grievously, either against conjugal chastity, or against the reverence you owe to God, by an inordinate love for each other, or against patience under crosses and trials, fly at once to God for refuge. Cry out immediately: Lord, now is the time to help us, we perish.

And God will certainly keep the promise He so often made: “Ask and you shall receive.”³ He abandons no one who does not first abandon Him; He will command the stormy winds to be still, and will direct everything for your greater advantage and merit. Is God your Friend and Helper? oh, then be comforted! Then you may well say with the Prophet David: “For though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death”—though the greatest dangers surrounded me on all sides—“I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me,”⁴ Thou art my Helper. Therefore, oh, my God, Thou shalt always remain my Friend, and I will serve Thee zealously, and perform the duties of my state exactly. Let other

people to
keep God as
their Friend.

And God
will help
them to
overcome
all dangers

¹ Domine, salva nos, perimus!

² Et sic transeamus per bona temporalia, ut non amittamus æterna. ³ Petite et accipietis.

⁴ Et si ambulavero in medio umbræ mortis, non timebo mala, quoniam tu mecum es.—Ps

men be my enemies, even without cause; as long as Thou, O Lord, art my Friend, it is all I require. My children and dear friends may get sick and die; as long as Thou remainest with me, I have consolation enough. Temporal prosperity may desert me, my income may decrease, everything in the world may turn against me, but my first care shall be to have Thee, oh, God, as my Guide and Helper, and then I shall have nothing to fear. And I, too, shall say in the same manner, with all here present, in all the dangers that threaten my soul: Lord, help us,¹ that we may not lose Thee; help us to bring our souls to Thee, in Heaven. Amen.

TWENTY-NINTH SERMON.

ON THE NECESSITY OF FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD IN THE MARRIED STATE IN ORDER TO HAVE TEMPORAL HAPPINESS.

Subject.

For a marriage to be happy, even as far as temporal happiness and prosperity in business are concerned, the married couple must always have God as their Friend.—*Preached on the fifth Sunday after Epiphany.*

Text.

Qui seminavit bonum semen in agro suo.—Matth. xiii. 24.
“That sowed good seed in his field.”

Introduction.

Why does He sow the seed? Doubtless because he hopes to reap a rich harvest from it. But what useless and vexatious labor it is to scatter the seed and reap no profit from it, as was the case with the man in the Parable of to-day's Gospel! He sowed good seed in his field,² but during the night an enemy, who envied him, came and oversowed cockle. How much unprofitable labor of this kind do we not undertake, my dear brethren! What thoughts and ideas and laborious plans have we not to make profit out of our temporal occupations! And yet most of our labor is in vain. The chief cause of this is, in my opinion, that we do not understand nor attend sufficiently to the words of St. Paul: “I have planted, Apollo watered, but God gave the

¹ Domine, salva nos!

² Seminavit bonum semen in agro suo.

increase. Therefore, neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.”¹ So that he who plants can effect nothing, nor he who waters, but God alone who gives the increase. Such is the case, my dear brethren. If God does not help us in our business, if His influence and assistance are wanting to us, all our labor is in vain. And what wonder is it that we do not always prosper? I have proved in the last sermon, that for a marriage to be happy, as far as the soul’s salvation is concerned, the married couple must always have God as their Friend; now I have to show that—

Plan of Discourse.

For a marriage to be happy, even as far as temporal happiness and prosperity in business are concerned, the married couple must always have God as their Friend. This I will show in to-day’s sermon. The subject will be a profitable one, also, for all unmarried people, who have any kind of business to do. All may learn from it that a pious life, and constant friendship with God, is useful and necessary even for temporal prosperity.

To this end may He, who alone can give spiritual increase and fruit to sermons, give us His grace, through the merits of Mary, Queen of Heaven, and the holy angels guardian.

What must he do who intends building a great edifice? What must he think of? He must provide a number of all kinds of things that will be required. He must have money, as a matter of course, or he will be able to do nothing. But money alone is not enough; besides the ground which is to form the site of the building, he must provide stones, lime, wood, iron, glass, and all kinds of tools and instruments. And is that enough? By no means: these things are merely the materials for the building; they would lie there a long time before putting themselves in order and building a house. And what is still wanting? The architect, who must first draw a plan of the house according to the intention and desire of its owner, and then instruct the masons and laborers as to how they must begin and continue their work. He is the first who must be employed, and his advice has to be taken first of all, that he may be able, according to the principles of his profession, to calculate how much stone, wood, lime, sand, iron, and what tools, and how many workmen, will be necessary for the building. If he is wanting,

He who wishes to build, must, with many other things, have an experienced architect.

¹ Ego plantavi, Apollo rigavit, sed Deus incrementum dedit. Itaque neque qui plantat est aliquid, neque qui rigat: sed, qui incrementum dat, Deus.—1. Cor. iii. 6, 7.

all the other things will be useless. But there is no use in my telling you of such things; the world is prudent and wise enough in undertakings of that nature !

Many means are used to secure temporal prosperity.

My dear brethren, what is the object of temporal business in the world, especially in the married state? It is to keep the wealth that one has, to increase it by gaining what one has not, in order to clothe, feed and educate one's family, children, and one's self decently, and to preserve a good name before men. That is a laudable object, and when it is directed to our last end, in accordance with the divine will, it is meritorious of eternal life. To gain that object, men use different means: some make use of their trade or profession, others are merchants and shopkeepers, others employ their learning in legal matters, others fill public offices and employments, others are farmers, others lend their money at interest, others go to law to preserve their property, or to replace what they have lost; in a word, every one works as well as he can to live and keep his family according to his state in life. But for the office, the trade, the shop, the farm, or the law-suit to turn out successfully, what an amount of things are required ! Good sense and understanding, bodily health and strength must form the foundation of the building, and these are exposed to many dangers and accidents: the influence of the heavenly bodies, the changes of worldly usages, the rise and fall of the market, heat and cold, noxious insects, and a host of other things can injure or benefit our business, and they do not at all depend on our free will. To speak only of our fellow men, we very often are in want of their advice, favor, or friendship; we require their help in business ; sometimes we must try to prevent them from injuring us; in a word, we have a thousand things to take into account, to foresee, to weigh, to guard against, to fear, to love, to use, and to reject; if we make a mistake in any one of them, our business is ruined.

All these things are of no use, when the Architect, God, does not help us.

Suppose, now, that a man has all these things prepared and arranged according to his wish; what is to be done then? Has he done enough for his business to prosper? By no means; he has, so to say, nothing but the sand, lime, and stone, the mere materials and tools for the work. In addition to these, he must have an infinite wisdom to plan out the edifice, an infinite power to work at it, under the direction of infinite wisdom, if his employment, trade, business, or law-suit is to begin, continue, and end prosperously. The chief Architect is still required: I mean the great God, the Lord and Master, who rules and directs all creatures.

Without His consent, no creature can be used in the service of man; nothing will make the least movement for our advantage, until it gets the command of its Creator to do so. Without His will, no man, nor any other creature, can either do good or harm; without His help and assistance all our cares and plans, all our foresight, labor, and trouble, and all the friendship and favor of others, cannot be of the least use to us. "Except the Lord build the house," says the Psalmist David, "they labor in vain that build it."¹ The Prophet speaks here, not only of a material house of wood and stone, but rather of that which constitutes good house-keeping, namely, the temporal prosperity, happiness and good fortune of the family. You may labor and toil for this, day and night; you may strain your mind as much as you please; you may call on all men for help; if the Lord is not favorable to you, your labor is in vain: "It is in vain for you to rise before light,"² to seek your profit; unless the Lord helps you, and blesses your undertaking, you may plague yourself to death before you advance a foot towards prosperity.

He is the Lord whose infallible providence rules, moves, and restrains everything in the world, when, how and where He wills. He alone can turn and direct free, rational creatures according to His pleasure, without offering any violence to their freedom. What seems farthest away, He brings in a moment; what appears nearest at hand, He removes in an instant. He alone can, in a moment, give prosperity where it is least to be hoped for, and reduce to nothing a most successful undertaking; He can restore what is lost and take away what is won; He can give hope to the most despairing, and render the most confident quite hopeless. He has in His Almighty power endless ways and means of raising the poorest to the possession of great wealth, and of reducing the richest to beggary; He can cast down the mighty, and place the lowly on thrones. But why should I say all this to Christians? Their faith teaches them that nothing can happen in the world, except sin alone, without the knowledge, will, and providence of God. "The prosperity of man," says the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of the Wise Ecclesiasticus, "is in the hand of God."³ "Good things and evil, life and death, poverty and riches are from God."⁴ Great God! eternal praise be to Thee, since Thou alone canst

His providence orders all things according to His will.

¹ Nisi Dominus ædificaverit domum, in vanum laboraverunt, qui ædificant eam.—Ps. cxxvi. 1.

² Vanum est vobis ante lucem surgere.—Ibid. 2.

³ In manu Dei prosperitas hominis.—Ecl. x. 5.

⁴ Bona et mala, vita et mors, paupertas et honestas a Dei sunt.—Ibid. xi. 14.

know, do and govern all things ; since it is on Thee alone that we must at all times fix our eyes ! How fortunate we are, to be governed by such a wise and powerful Ruler, if we are only willing that Thou shouldst govern us !

Therefore, to secure prosperity in business, God must be our Friend.

Now, my dear brethren, if it is true that countless creatures and circumstances are necessary to the success of an undertaking, if it is true that not one of these circumstances depends on our free will or energy, if it is true that God alone can dispose of them at pleasure, according to the inscrutable decrees of His providence, then, I ask you, if your temporal business is to begin and end prosperously, whatever it may be, must you not first of all have God as your Helper, and your constant Friend ? You may judge yourselves what sort of success he can hope for who neglects God, and who, living in the state of sin, is an enemy of God.

They act foolishly who neglect God in their business.

Can there be any greater folly than that which most men are guilty of, who, in their undertakings, trust solely to their own cleverness, cunning, prudence, industry, and labor, and never ask help from God, as if they stood in no need of Him ? Who ever thinks of being reconciled with God, if he is in the state of sin, or of praying to God for help, before undertaking an important business ? Who is there who would obey a friend advising him to go and consult God first in such a case ? There is a man, whom every one looks upon as learned and skilful, who imagines that he understands all kinds of business, and that he can foresee even the least difficulty that is likely to crop up, whose principal rule is to adopt always the safest means ; tell me, would a man of that kind, according to the usual way of the world, tell another who might ask his advice about a certain undertaking, to put his conscience in order first, and to secure the friendship of God, that his undertaking might turn out prosperously ? No such thing ; the last thought of such people is to ask God to help them !

They who seek prosperity by offending God.

How many are there not in the world, who try to succeed in business by means that are directly against God and His commandments, and who hope to secure prosperity by offending and insulting Him ! Such is the case with many a statesman, who prefers the wiles of diplomacy to the law of the Gospel ; with many a courtier who owes his influence and authority to his own hypocrisy and deceit ; with many a lawyer who defends unjust and hopeless cases, and ruins others for his own profit ; with many a merchant and shopkeeper who uses false weights and

measures, mixes up old and useless wares with new ones, lies and perjures himself a hundred times a day to get a higher price for his goods, and tries to lessen his neighbor, so as to deprive him of his customers ; with many an innkeeper who shelters suspicious persons and tries to attract the impure to his house, and supplies drunkards with intoxicating drinks until they are completely bereft of sense ; with many a laborer and journeyman who works on Sundays and holy days without necessity, and keeps part of the materials given him, without the knowledge and consent of their owner ; with many a servant who robs his master ; with many a daughter who dresses immodestly, frequents dangerous company and allows others to take liberties with her, that she may get married sooner ; and this is the case, too, even with parents themselves, who give their daughters full freedom with regard to the opposite sex, that they may get a husband more easily.

What are we thinking of, Christians? How can we imagine that we can gain our object in that way? What has become of our reason? Can we hope to carry out our projects by the same means that we make use of to offend the great Ruler of all things, who alone has the power of distributing riches and property, prosperity and adversity, to whom, how and when He wills? Wilt Thou permit that, oh, Almighty God? Wilt Thou bless and approve of means which attack Thy honor and offend Thee? But it would be to support Thy enemies in their impiety, if they found as much profit and advantage in offending Thee, as if they served Thee faithfully and enjoyed Thy friendship. No, my dear brethren ; God is still the same unchangeable Being who rules the world from the beginning, who is at all times able to upset the plans and schemes of the unrighteous, and to destroy them by their own wickedness, so that all the world may know "There is no wisdom, there is no prudence, there is no counsel against the Lord."¹

Such people will have no prosperity.

Adam in Paradise thought that by disobedience he could exalt himself and make himself like to God ; and that very disobedience was the cause of unhappiness to him and his descendants. Joseph was sold by his brethren and sent to Egypt as a slave, because they feared that he would one day rule over them, and by that very means they made Joseph their ruler, and were compelled afterwards to bow down, trembling, before him. King Pharaoh wished to destroy the Israelites by hard treatment, fearing that they would grow too powerful for him: he oppressed them in all kinds of ways, but

Proved by examples from the Sacred Scriptures.

¹ Quia non est sapientia, non est prudentia, non est consilium contra Dominum.—Prov. xxi. 30.

what was the result? The more he oppressed them, the more they increased, as the Holy Scripture says: "The more they oppressed them, the more they were multiplied and increased,"¹ and Pharaoh himself and his people found temporal and eternal death in the Red Sea, when pursuing them. Saul sought to kill David, so as to preserve the crown in his own family, but all his plans and schemes resulted only in giving David more influence among the people and in placing him sooner on the throne. The Jews, wonderful to say, thought that they would lose their city of Jerusalem and their temple, if they did not put Jesus to death; and that very crime brought upon them the evil they dreaded. "There is no wisdom, no prudence, no counsel against God,"² no prosperity nor happiness without God!

And by ex-
perience.

Such, too, is the daily experience of the world. How many are there not who labor night and day, form all kinds of plans and schemes, spare no effort and even deny themselves the proper time for meals, in their eagerness to push on the work and finish the building, and yet their labor is wasted, and they know not why. The cause is generally sought for in the change of fortune, or in the opposition and envy of man. They exclaim, as in the Gospel of to-day: "An enemy has done this,"³ or they attribute it to unfavorable weather, bad seasons, etc. Certainly these things are the immediate instruments by which their prosperity is hindered, and temporal loss is entailed upon them, but who is the Master who has set these instruments in motion? How do matters stand between you and God? Are you in His friendship? or have you treated Him with carelessness, and banished Him out of your consciences? If so, what wonder is it that your business does not prosper? If the architect has not the superintendence, what sort will the building be? The Lord says, by the Prophet Aggeus: "You have looked for more, and behold, it became less, and you brought it home, and I blowed it away."⁴ "You have sowed much and brought in little."⁵ You have made something occasionally by unjust means, and I have blown it away.⁶ You thought to make some profit thereby and you have lost it and other things that you lawfully possessed along with it. "Why, saith the Lord of hosts? because my house is desolate, and

¹ Quantoque opprimebant eos, tanto magis multiplicabantur et crecebant.—Exod. 1. 12.

² Non est sapientia, non est prudentia, non est consilium contra Dominum.

³ Inimicus homo hoc fecit.

⁴ Respexistis ad amplius, et ecce factum est minus, intulistis in domum, et exsufflavi illud.—Agg. 1. 9.

⁵ Seminastis multum et intulistis parum.—Ibid. 6.

⁶ Et exsufflavi illud.

you make haste, every man to his own house;"¹ that is to say, because you labor only for temporal goods, and neglect Me, and drive Me out of your hearts. "Therefore the heavens over you were stayed from giving dew, and the earth was hindered from yielding her fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the wine, and upon the oil, and upon all that the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon beasts, and upon all the labor of the hands,"² that it may profit nothing. And how can it be otherwise? Are not hunger, thirst, poverty, war, sickness and scarcity the effects of sin alone, as the Wise Ecclesiasticus says: "Death and bloodshed, strife and the sword, oppressions, famine, and affliction and scourges, all these things are created for the wicked."³ How can we imagine, then, that sin, or the state of sin, can help us to temporal prosperity?

I am ashamed, I must confess, to have to declare this truth to a Christian congregation, since even the heathens knew that there was no happiness nor prosperity to be expected without the help of their gods; nay, even the light of reason told them that if the true believers were not in the friendship of the true God, they could not but be unfortunate. "Search," said Achior to Holofernes, when the latter wished to oppress the Jews in Bethulia, "if there be any iniquity of theirs in the sight of their God."⁴ See whether they have not offended Him by some grievous sin. "Let us go up to them, because their God will surely deliver them to thee, and they shall be brought under the yoke of thy power; but if there be no offence of this people in the sight of their God, we cannot resist them; because their God will defend them, and we shall be a reproach to the whole earth."⁵ In one word, my dear brethren, God is the Dispenser of all happiness; He it is who gives His blessing to those who are in His friendship, and therefore, if we wish to be happy, we must have God as our Friend. So that they labor in vain who neglect this Architect, and think they can finish their business satisfactorily without His help.

Even the
heathens
knew that.

¹ *Quam ob causam? dicit Dominus exercituum. Quia domus mea deserta est, et vos festinastis unusquisque in domum suam.—Agg. i. 9.*

² *Propter hoc super vos prohibiti sunt cœli, ne darent rorem; et terra prohibita est, ne daret germen suum. Et vocavi siccitatem super terram, super montes, et super triticum, et super vinum, et super oleum, et quæcumque profert humus, et super homines, et super jumenta, et super omnem laborem manuum.—Ibid. 10, 11.*

³ *Mors, sanguis, contentio, gladius, oppressiones, fames et contritio et flagella super iniquos creata sunt.—Eccl. xl. 9, 10.*

⁴ *Perquire! Perquire, si est aliqua iniquitas eorum in conspectu Dei eorum.—Jud. v. 24.*

⁵ *Ascendamus ad illos, quoniam tradens tradet illos Deus eorum tibi, et subjugati erunt sub iugo potentie tue; si vero non est offensio populi hujus coram Deo suo, non poterimus resistere illis; quoniam Deus eorum defendet illos, et erimus in opprobrium universæ terræ.—Ibid. 25.*

Not injustice, as many think, but a pious life brings prosperity.

But, you will say, perhaps, we must believe our eyes, we see and hear the contrary nowadays in the world. We know that, generally speaking, wickedness and temporal prosperity go together; many a one grows rich and amasses a fortune by usury and injustice, by scheming, lying, and deceiving, while on the other hand, the man who tries to be honest in his business, and to live a pious, God-fearing and Christian life, in all simplicity and without having any recourse to worldly trickery, is generally behindhand and makes little profit. And that is the reason why many murmur and complain against divine providence, as if God did not rule the affairs of the world properly. They say with the Prophet Jeremias: "Thou, indeed, oh, Lord, art just, if I plead with Thee, but yet I will speak what is just to Thee: Why doth the way of the wicked prosper; why is it well with all them that transgress and do wickedly? Thou hast planted them, and they have taken root; they prosper and bring forth fruit."¹ Must we conclude, then, that temporal prosperity depends little on the friendship of God, but very much on injustice and wickedness? But what an unchristian thing to say! In the first place, it is not true that temporal prosperity always accompanies wickedness, as I could easily prove by bringing forward examples from the Sacred Writings, of pious and God-fearing men on the one hand, and of wicked and impious men on the other, from the very beginning of the world. We should find that the incomparably greater number attained prosperity by being virtuous. But the prosperity of the wicked, since it is of very rare occurrence, attracts more attention.

Proved from the Sacred Scriptures.

Go through the whole of the Scriptures, which contain the infallible Word of God, and therefore cannot be doubted without blasphemy, and if you find any examples therein of people who were specially helped and protected by God in their necessities, and endowed with worldly wealth, then I will show you that they were, generally speaking, pious and holy servants of God. Achior, whom I have already mentioned, says that such was the case with the whole Jewish nation: "As long as they sinned not in the sight of their God, it was well with them."² "There was no one that triumphed over this people but when they departed from the worship of the Lord their God."³ The Wise Man says

¹ Justus quidem tu es, Domine, si disputem tecum, verumtamen justa loquar ad te. Quare via impiorum prosperatur? Bene est omnibus, qui prævaricantur et inique agunt. Plantaati eos, et radicem miserunt; proficiunt et faciunt fructum.—Jerem. xli. 1, 2.

² Usquedum non peccarent in conspectu Dei sui, erant cum illis bona.—Jud. v. 21.

³ Non fuit, qui insultaret populo isti, nisi quando recessit a cultu Domini Dei sui.—Ibid. 17.

even of heathen peoples: "Justice exalteth a nation." But if, on the other hand, you find a still greater number of people who were overwhelmed with misfortunes, temporal chastisement, and adversity, then I will show you that all these punishments were inflicted on them solely on account of their sins, and because they left God. The Wise Man says, in the same chapter: "Sin maketh nations miserable."² The Prophet Isaias writes of the wicked: "Their webs shall not be for clothing, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works are unprofitable works. . . . their thoughts are unprofitable thoughts;" and what besides? "wasting and destruction are in their ways."³

In spite of all this, granted even that the wicked are generally more prosperous and fortunate in temporal things than the pious; what follows? Are we to conclude that prosperity is little helped by friendship with God? or that sin, injustice, and impiety are a good means of gaining temporal happiness? By no means; that does not follow at all; the conclusion, as students say, does not follow from the premises. Now, do you know where the fault of the argument lies? Worldly prudence imagines that the wicked have gained their high position or their great riches by their sins and acts of injustice; but I say distinctly that such is not the case; and I maintain, on the contrary, that their prosperity is an effect and a reward of the good and virtuous works that they did when in the state of grace, or of the good and praiseworthy actions that they still occasionally perform. God is so just that as He does not allow the least sin to go unpunished, so neither does He permit the least good act to remain unrewarded. He is so generous that, although the merit of a good work is lost by mortal sin, and they who are in the state of sin are worth nothing, and are dead for all eternity, yet He gives them a reward, that no one may be able to reproach Him, hereafter, for not having acknowledged the service rendered Him. On this account He often allows the wicked to carry on their business by unjust means, and thus to attain prosperity according to their desire, because He foresees their eternal damnation in the next world, and wishes to repay them for the good they have done, at least in this life, as St. Augustine says with regard to infidels and heathens, who were blessed with greater temporal prosperity, in proportion as they showed more signs of moral virtues and natural good works.

The happiness even of the wicked comes from works of virtue.

¹ *Justitia elevat gentes.*—Prov. xiv. 34.

² *Miseros autem facit populos peccatum.*—Ibid.

³ *Telæ eorum non erunt in vestimentum, neque operientur operibus suis: opera eorum opera inutilia. . . . cogitationes eorum cogitationes inutiles; vastitas et contritio in vils eorum.*—Isai. lxx. 6, 7.

Therefore we must always keep in the friendship of God.

You see now, my dear brethren, that the objection brought forward against my statement, does not invalidate, but rather confirms it; that, namely, all happiness and prosperity in temporal things come from virtue and piety, for even the hated enemies of God, whose good works cannot merit Heaven, are rewarded for them in this life. But I do not care for such rewards: they are only the crumbs that the Lord lets fall from His table and which even the dogs may eat. He throws them out of His heavenly palace, that the wicked may enjoy them for a short time here on earth, before their souls enter eternity to suffer hunger and thirst, and learn, when it is too late, the meaning of the question: "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world," and by that gain, "suffer the loss of his immortal soul?"¹ Therefore, let worldlings say what they will, I agree with the pious Mathathias, who was promised great honors and riches if he obeyed the wicked law of King Antiochus. The king's officers said to him: "Obey the king's commandment, as all the nations have done, and the men of Juda. . . and thou, and thy sons shall be in the number of the king's friends, and enriched with gold, and silver, and many presents. Then Mathathias answered and said with a loud voice: Although all nations obey King Antiochus, so as to depart every man from the service of the law of his fathers, and consent to his commandments; I and my sons and my brethren will obey the law of our fathers. God be merciful unto us; it is not profitable for us to forsake the law and the justices of God."² May He keep us from doing such a foolish thing! And the teaching of the Apostle St. Paul should have still more force with Christians. He says, writing to his disciple Timothy: "Godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."³

How we are to behave with regard to God, in our business.

Therefore, I conclude as I have begun: do you wish, Christian married people, and all of you, my dear brethren, according to your different states, to perform your worldly business prudently, so as to profit by it? Then, first of all, you must be in the favor and grace of God. Do not be so foolish as to think that he who has

¹ Quid prodest homini, si mundum universum lucretur, animæ vero suæ detrimentum patiat?—Matth. xvi. 26.

² Fac jussum regis, sicut fecerunt omnes gentes et viri Juda . . . et eris tu, et filii tui inter amicos regis, et amplificatus auro et argento, et muneribus multis. Et respondit Mathathias, et dixit magna voce: Etsi omnes gentes regi Antiocho obediunt, ut discedat unusquisque a servitute legis patrum suorum, et consentiant mandatis ejus: ego et filii mei, et fratres mei obediemus legi patrum nostrorum. Propitius sit nobis Deus! non est nobis utile relinquere legem et justitias Dei.—I. Mach. ii. 18-21.

³ Pietas ad omnia utilis est, promissionem habens vitæ, quæ nunc est, et futuræ.—I. Tim. iv. 8.

lost God, the Supreme Good, can gain anything thereby. What profit or advantage can he hope for from all his labor and trouble, as long as he has such a powerful Enemy against him, as long as he is hated by Him from whom all blessings must come? Therefore, never begin an important business without first making sure of having God on your side. For instance, you are about to go on a journey, or to enter into partnership in business, or to try to get possession of some property, office, or employment; you are asked to carry on a lawsuit, or you must go to law to defend yourself; you are about to settle one of your children in life, either by marriage or otherwise. Whatever you are about to do, first of all take counsel with God, and if your conscience reproaches you with anything, go to confession and tell your sins; trust no one, fear all, until you are as certain as you can be that you are in the grace of God, and that you can count upon His help and assistance. If you do that you will have accomplished the most important part of your business, and may confidently make use of all lawful means to finish it, in such a way, however, that you do not trust to them so much as to God. They must be used as instruments or tools which might serve to destroy as well as to build up. The Supreme Architect must arrange everything, if any advantage is to be derived. If He keeps away from the work, then you have only built upon sand, and your labor is in vain.

Oh, if only the fourth part of all your labor and trouble and planning were thus directed to God, how much more successful would you not be! We think, sometimes, day and night upon some matter of business; that is right and necessary; but if we devoted but half an hour of the time to prayer, or to hearing Mass, that prayer and Mass, although they have apparently little to do with our business, would certainly help more to success than all our wearisome thinking. Very often you are obliged to seek friends and patrons to help you, and speak for you; do so, in God's name; it cannot be helped; but do not forget to gain over to your side the Saints in Heaven, the Blessed Virgin and your angel guardian. They will speak to God for you, and you may take my word for it that they will be able to make those men, whose help you think you require, inclined to assist you. In order to gain friends and patrons, you must make several visits, and offer them a most respectful attention. That is quite right; but do not forget also to visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and you will find that the visits you pay to men will have more fruit. You must, sometimes, in order to gain your end more quick

Natural
means will
then be able
to secure
prosperity.

ly, give presents here and there ; that also you may do, as long as you are not giving against the law of God ; but you should try also to bribe Christ our Lord ; give something to the poor and suffering, in whose persons Jesus comes to your door ; make some offering for the poor souls in purgatory, and you may say that I told you that such presents will be of greater help to you than any others. In a word, keep in the friendship of God, and say confidently with the Psalmist David : “ My help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.”¹ He builds well, who is helped by God.

Proved by
an example.

Our Father Paul Barry, in his book called the Holy Year, relates an interesting story in proof of this, and he gives it in the very words of the person concerned: “ My father,” so the story commences, “ who was rich in wealth as he was generous towards the poor, showed me once his whole stock of ready money, and said to me: ‘ My son, tell me truly what you think, which would you rather have me do ? Leave you all this money, as it is for your inheritance, or give it in trust for you to Jesus Christ?’ ‘ Oh, father,’ I answered, ‘ no one is to be preferred to Christ ; I would rather have Him, for I might lose the money, but Christ will be my constant, true, and eternal Friend.’ My father then gave almost all the money to the poor, and left me but a small sum at his death ; so that poverty itself has taught me to place my greatest hopes in Jesus Christ as my Guardian ; and I have not been deceived. For, amongst the most respectable citizens, there was one who had a very virtuous wife and an only daughter ; the mother said one day to her husband: ‘ We have an only daughter, and are very rich ; what sort of a husband shall we seek for her? If she marries a rich man who is not a man of sense and honor, she will have a miserable and unhappy life ; let us rather seek for a pious, modest man, who will love her for her own sake, and not for her money.’ ‘ You are right,’ said the husband ; ‘ if our daughter marries one as rich as she is herself, they will both wish to become great people, and will get too proud and haughty, and if her husband is richer than she, he will lord it over her, and she will be his servant; the best thing we can do is to select a good and virtuous husband for her, although he may not have much of the world’s wealth. Above all, we must ask God to help us to find one of that kind. Do you go to church early in the morning, and ask God for light and help to this end ; perhaps the first person you will see coming into the church will be the

¹ *Auxilium meum a Domino, qui fecit cœlum et terram.*—Ps. cxx. 2.

man we are looking for ; because it is a good sign of piety to see one going early to church.' The wife obeyed, and while she was praying, I entered the church before any one else. I was immediately asked all about my family, training, and character. I told everything candidly ; how my father was a rich man who, with my consent, had made himself poor through charity, and had left me Christ as my Guardian. On hearing this they thanked divine providence, and gave me their daughter to wife with a rich dowry." All you married people, and you who intend to marry, should learn from this what should be your first care in selecting a partner for life, namely, to see whether the object of your choice is pious and virtuous ; and also that piety is the best dowry. Learn, too, to be careful in training your children to virtue and piety. You will do very well, indeed, for your children, if you leave them the fear of God as their inheritance, and Jesus Christ as their Guardian. And finally, learn all of you what I wished to prove, namely, that the fear and love of God are the surest way even to temporal prosperity. He builds well who is helped by God.

Such is the case, O my Lord and my God ! Would that I had never lost sight of it ! I must acknowledge, to my shame, that in all my temporal business I thought of nothing less than of Thee and Thy friendship. Months and years have I spent away from Thee, in the state of sin ; and now I know why things did not prosper with me. I have carefully collected sand and stone, when I depended so much on the help of men ; but I neglected Thee who art the only Architect ! I have sown the seed in my field, but have reaped nothing from it, because I have forgotten Thee who alone canst give the increase ! Yes, I have been acting foolishly ! I have tried to succeed by offending Thee and by acting unjustly, as if I could not prosper until I had made Thee my Enemy ! I confess my folly ! I shall never more be guilty of it ! I shall always, O God, keep in Thy friendship ; Thy help and assistance shall I seek first of all in everything I undertake. Even if I could find prosperity here on earth without Thee, I should still be afraid that it would be the only reward for my whole life, and that there would be nothing to expect in the next life but eternal misery. Oh, no ; I do not want such prosperity ! As long as I have Thy friendship, although everything else should go wrong with me, I have prosperity enough, for I then have my Supreme Good, and my conscience tells me that I am Thy friend and will remain so for eternity. This is all I ask and desire ! Christians, keep in the friendship of God ! Amen.

Conclusion
and resolution
to remain in the
friendship
of God.

THE OBLIGATIONS OF MARRIED PEOPLE TOWARD EACH OTHER.

THIRTIETH SERMON.

ON THE LOVE OF MARRIED PEOPLE FOR, AND THEIR UNITY WITH EACH OTHER.

Subject.

The married state,—1st. Where there is constant love and unity, is a state that is happy and pleasing to God. 2d. Where love and unity are wanting, it is a miserable and an unhappy state. —*Preached on the third Sunday in Lent.*

Text.

Omne regnum, in seipsum divisum, desolabitur.—Luke xi. 17.
“Every kingdom divided against itself, shall be brought to desolation.”

Introduction.

With this one objection, Christ refuted the envious Pharisees, and showed that He did not drive out devils in the name of the devil, as they calumniously asserted: “Every kingdom divided against itself, shall be brought to desolation.”¹ If one devil drove another out of a possessed person, then they would divide their own kingdom against itself; a thing they certainly would not think of doing. Hitherto, my dear brethren, I have shown how young people are to take counsel, and how they are to follow the divine vocation when embracing the religious or the unmarried state. I have also, in four consecutive sermons, treated of the sanctity and dignity of marriage, as a sacrament instituted by Christ; when I spoke of how one should prepare himself for it, if the marriage is to be a happy one, by inviting Jesus to, and securing His presence at the wedding, and keeping always in His friendship, thus making certain of eternal as well as temporal happiness. There are still some obligations of married people to be explained, to which I barely alluded in previous sermons; this I shall now undertake to do for your instruction and consolation, and that young people

¹ *Omne regnum in seipsum divisum, desolabitur.*

who think of marrying, may know what sort of a state they are about to embrace. The first and most necessary obligation of married people, is suggested by the text: "Every kingdom divided against itself, shall be brought to desolation;"¹ namely, that there must be constant love and unity between them; and I shall show in different sermons how that unity may be preserved. I begin, therefore, to-day and say—

Plan of Discourse.

The married state, where there is constant love and unity, is a state that is happy and pleasing to God. Such will be the first part. Where love and unity are wanting, it is a miserable and an unhappy state. The second part. Therefore, married Christians, above all, be united and love each other. The conclusion.

O God of peace, give Thy grace to all married people to this end, through the intercession of Thy beloved Mother Mary, and the angels of peace.

The quiet, peace, and union of a state or community consists in the perfect harmony and uniformity of its various members, so that inferiors are subject to superiors, and each one does what his duty or office requires of him, and all live on good terms with each other. This union and harmony makes a state happy and prosperous, while without it there can be no regular government, and there will be nothing but confusion, disunion, and uneasiness. Experience teaches us also, with regard to all created things, that they find their greatest strength in union. The light of the stars is very beautiful, as long as they keep in their proper spheres, but if a star gets out of its place, or the moon comes too near the sun, darkness and confusion are the result. There are many magnificent buildings to be seen, but their magnificence depends on the union and harmony of their parts: if one of these parts is wanting, the whole edifice falls in ruins. It is very agreeable to hear good music played on fine instruments, as long as the latter are well tuned, but if there is the slightest discord the music is completely spoiled.

The happiness of everything consists in the unity and harmony of its parts.

St. Paul points to the human body as a wonderful instance of the divine power, but in what does its stature, beauty, and health consist? In the union and just proportion of its members. If these latter commenced to quarrel with each other, or to be dissatisfied with their respective positions; if the hands wished to

¹ Omne regnum in seipsum divisum, desolabitur.

take the place of the eyes, and the feet that of the hands, or if the mouth desired to be raised as high as the forehead, what a monster would not man become? The same may be said of a country, town, or community, in which many individuals must live together. It will be a happy and joyful society, if every one is contented with the duty and position assigned to him, and lives in peace and love with those around him. But if this unity is wanting, there is nothing but quarrels, divisions and dissensions between inferiors and superiors, as well as between equals among themselves. "Every kingdom divided against itself, shall be brought to desolation." What a distracted and desolate kingdom!

Hence the first care of rulers is to establish peace and unity among their subjects.

Therefore rulers make it their first care to preserve peace and unity amongst their subjects, for on that depends the prosperity of the whole country. The Emperor Basilius has left us a noteworthy example of this: when the Eastern Church was suffering from the schism of Photius, the emperor spoke the following beautiful words in presence of the bishops assembled in Council at Constantinople: "I appear in person before you, prostrate myself on the ground, and lay down my crown and sceptre at your feet! Come, then, without fear, and trample on the greatest monarch, set your feet on the head that divine providence has adorned with an imperial crown! I willingly expose myself to shame, disgrace, and insult, if by that means you may be again united, and peace be restored to the Church." St. Gregory Nazianzen acted in the same way, as we read in his *Life*, for when on one occasion a great number of bishops were assembled in the same city, and could not agree about electing a Patriarch of Constantinople, he adjured them by the Most Blessed Trinity, not to be disunited, and added that, if he were a cause of disagreement to them, they should treat him like the Prophet Jonas: "Throw me," he said, "into the sea, that the storm may be stilled, and the bark of Peter may be at rest. I will readily agree to all that you may wish to do with me: depose me from my office, banish me from the city, I will be satisfied, if peace and quiet cannot otherwise be secured. All I ask of you is to do your utmost to secure union and harmony."

The married state is indeed a small community, but for that reason.

Married Christians, if a country or town is a large family and community, your state is also a community on a small scale. The former consists of many individuals, yours only of two, the husband and wife; but for that very reason, if your state is to be happy, peace and unity are all the more necessary for you; for, if quar-

rels and dissensions arise in a large community, where there are many individuals, at least every one is not my enemy, and I can have my own friends to support and console me, so that I may avoid those who dislike me, and keep out of their way, and thus enjoy a certain amount of peace and quiet. But when two persons make up the whole community, and these two are united by a bond that death alone can dissolve, and are bound to spend their lives together, to be always in each other's company, and to keep all their affection and love for each other, how could they find peace, consolation or joy, if they were given to quarrelling and dissensions? So that almost all their peace and happiness consists in mutual love and unity, inasmuch as one is duly submissive to the other, and readily and willingly performs the duties imposed on him or her by God, while both agree by word and work in their opinions and inclinations, and have one mind, one soul, one heart, as our Lord says, in the Gospel of St. Matthew, speaking of married people: "Therefore, now they are not two, but one flesh,"¹ and one individual, as far as mind, spirit, and heart are concerned.

peace and
unity are
more neces-
sary to it.

Oh, certainly, that state is pleasing to God and man, and happy and desirable to the married couple, when man and wife thus live in constant peace and harmony! The Lord says, by the Wise Ecclesiasticus: "With three things my spirit is pleased, which are approved before God and men."² And what are these things? "The concord of brethren, and the love of neighbors, and man and wife that agree well together."³ Nor is it any wonder that God has such pleasure therein, since He says of Himself, that He is a God of peace,⁴ and recognizes as His children those who live peacefully together: "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God."⁵ St. Peter Chrysologus says: "God dwells in peace."⁶ Hence it follows that married people, who live in peace and concord, possess God Himself, and have Him dwelling in their hearts. And what a fine opportunity they have of serving God by that mutual harmony and good understanding in the exact fulfilment of the duties of their state, without which peace cannot long subsist! What an edifying example may they not give their children and servants, by never uttering the least

Where this
unity rules,
the state is a
happy one,
and pleas-
ing to God.

¹ Itaque jam non sunt duo, sed una caro.—Matth. xix. 6.

² In tribus placitum est spiritui meo, quæ sunt probata coram Deo et hominibus.—Ecclesiasticus xxv. 1.

³ Concordia fratrum, amor proximi, vir et mulier sibi bene consentientes.—Ibid. 2.

⁴ Deus pacis. ⁵ Beati pacifici, quoniam filii Dei vocabuntur.—Matth. v. 9.

⁶ Deus semper in pace est.

word of contradiction, abuse, or contempt ! How powerfully they may incite their neighbors and acquaintances to follow their example, when people say of them that they are indeed a happy couple, and as united as if they were angels.

A happy state, especially for the married couple.

But the married couple themselves derive the greatest happiness and profit therefrom, even as far as this life is concerned, for there must be prosperity and grace in their house. Just as peace causes the prosperity of a whole country, says St. John Chrysostom, so love and unity between man and wife are the source of all blessings. "Union makes small things great," says the proverb ; "while disunion makes great things small."¹ "A threefold cord is not easily broken,"² says the Wise Preacher. Plutarch tells a story of a wise father who, on the approach of death, called his sons together to exhort them, for the last time, to be united with each other. He ordered a bundle of sticks to be brought in, and said to his children: Try, now, if any one of you is strong enough to break this bundle in two. They all tried, but none of them succeeded ; he then caused the bundle to be untied, and gave them the sticks to break, one by one ; this they had no difficulty in doing. See, now, my children, said the father, what unity can do. I leave you great riches after my death ; if you wish to keep and increase them, you must be united with each other in the bonds of fraternal affection. If you disagree and quarrel, your wealth will soon be dissipated. "A threefold cord is not easily broken." By the threefold cord the Hebrews understood the bond of marriage, which unites three kinds of persons together—the husband, the wife, and the children ; the closer the union of hearts and minds among these three, the greater will be their happiness and prosperity.

They can console each other in adversity.

And what could disturb the happiness and peace of married people who love each other and live well together ? I know that they have many difficulties, annoyances, and trials to contend with daily. Sometimes the children are ill-behaved, or grow sick, or the favorite child dies an untimely death ; sometimes the servants are unfaithful, unruly, or lazy ; the neighbors may be envious and deceitful, so that there is no peace with them ; or God may allow misfortune, losses, and want to come upon the family. But if the married couple live in peace and love with each other, all these trials lose their bitterness, and half the burden is taken away from them ; one consoles the other, and they share each other's

¹ *Concordia parvæ res crescunt, discordia maximæ dilabuntur.*

² *Funiculus triplex difficile rumpitur.—Ecl. iv. 12.*

joys and sorrows. Elcana said to his wife, to console her when she was afflicted on account of her barrenness: "Anna, why weepst thou? And why dost thou not eat? And why dost thou afflict thy heart? Am I not better to thee than ten children?"¹ Oh, fortunate state, I repeat, which, instituted by God, is maintained in constant love and unity! It is the household of which the Lord prophesies: "My people shall sit in the beauty of peace!"² A household which resembles the heavenly Jerusalem, which is the house of peace, whose inhabitants are "the angels of peace;"³ it is that dwelling which we wish to the departed in the prayer: "May they rest in peace."⁴

But alas, how many can with truth boast of this? How rare such a marriage nowadays! When the first few years of wedded life are over, if for a wonder unity lasts so long, what a great change then takes place with many! The devil, the sworn enemy of peace, seizes holds of every opportunity to sow the seeds of discord. Sometimes he makes use of an obstinate, vain, idle, impatient, peevish, and disobedient wife, to torment the poor husband, at other times he makes the wife miserable by means of a savage, passionate, ill-tempered, and drunken husband, or he incites some scandal-monger to stir up dissensions between husband and wife by his wicked tongue. Now, on such occasions, if there is not Christian virtue, mildness, and patience on both sides, and if neither wishes to give in to the other, what will be the result? Certainly unhappiness and misery; as we shall see in the

Hence the devil tries in every way to disturb this unity.

Second Part.

Hell is an accursed place, where discord reigns supreme and the damned, hating each other like deadly enemies, spend a long eternity in howling, cursing and blaspheming, while they torture each other mutually. "Where no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth,"⁵ says the Prophet Job.

The misery of that state is like hell.

See, my dear brethren, what a fearful picture I make to myself of the married state, when man and wife live in strife and discord continually. And I say continually, because it is a common thing for married people to be vexed with each other now and then, even for half a day, so that one will not speak to the other—and that is particularly the case in the first years of wedded life—it

¹ Anna, cur fles, et quare non comedis, et quam ob rem affligitur cor tuum? Numquid non ego melior tibi sum, quam decem filii?—I. Kings i. 8.

² Sedebit populus meus in pulchritudine pacis.—Isai. xxxli. 18.

³ Angeli pacis. ⁴ Requiescant in pace.

⁵ Ubi nullus ordo, sed sempiternus horror habitat.—Joh x. 22.

may happen to those who are very fond of each other, nay, excessive love is often the cause of it. Meanwhile, they must acknowledge that, although their quarrel is only trifling and by no means serious, yet it causes them bitter sorrow, so that each awaits the end of it with impatience, and is quite glad to make matters right again, so as to put an end to the uneasiness and torment. If they had to live continually on such bad terms with each other, what would you think of it, married Christians who love each other? Would it not be an intolerable trial? From this you may see what a happiness it is for married people to be on good terms with each other, and what a misery it is if even the least misunderstanding comes between them. What a torment must it not then be when, not love, but hatred and dislike are the cause of disunion, when this disunion lasts, not for one or two days, but for the greater part of one's life, and is not confined to mere pouting and pettishness, but gives rise to continual quarrels, abuse, cursing, and swearing? What the husband likes, the wife detests; she wants one thing, he another; one ridicules the other's lowly birth, or poverty, or other natural defect; there is a constant storm of abuse going on on both sides: Would that I had never seen you! I wish you were dead, so that I might be rid of you! Alas, I need not tell you much about it; experience has taught you more than enough on this point! What a misery it must be when things have gone so far that curses and abuse lead daily to blows and ill-usage, so that the unfortunate couple live like cat and dog together? Who can sufficiently explain the wretchedness of such a state? Is it not a kind of hell to have to live thus in the same house and to live together till death?

Explained
by a simile.

In former times the demon inspired the tyrant Maxentius with the cruel idea of chaining a living man to a dead body until the insupportable stench should make life impossible. What more terrible torture could be thought of? The bare idea of it horrifies us: to rot away gradually, along with a putrefying corpse, is indeed a terrible thing, and is something like the stench which makes the bodies of the reprobate in hell a torment to each other. And it is a picture, too, of the married state, when two persons who are bound to live together till death, hate and detest each other. Hence come those despairing sighs that are so often heard: Oh, unhappy me, when shall I be released? When may I hope for freedom? Wherever I turn, I find nothing but contradictions; everything is against me; every word I hear is an imprecation; everything I taste is gall; everything I feel is a thorn in my side!

I cannot have one hour's peace ! A hard case, indeed, my dear brethren ; and yet it is the least of the miseries caused by discord amongst married people.

What a countless number of sins arise from this discord, to increase the torments of the eternal hell, when this temporal hell is at an end ! I could weep tears of blood when I think of it, partly through pity for so many souls who are thus ruined forever, partly through sorrow at the many insults that are thus daily offered to God. For, from this discord comes distraction, inasmuch as the wife speaks ill of the husband, and the husband of the wife, through hatred and desire of revenge, and they try to ruin each other's character amongst neighbors, friends, and acquaintances, by their constant complaints and fault-finding. Hence arises the danger of adultery and other shameless crimes. Hence comes the secret joy and satisfaction at the misfortunes of another, as well as the deliberate desire with which one wishes the death of the other, and even the desperate resolve that suggests suicide as the best means of putting an end to a misery that makes the unfortunate people curse the day on which they were born, and the day on which they entered the married state. When this discord rules supreme, housekeeping is neglected, the husband tries to forget his sorrow by frequenting drinking houses, and spending the little he has left in gambling and debauchery ; the wife, through revenge or desperation, sits idly at home and allows everything to go to ruin, or takes to gambling and drinking to be revenged on her husband. What a fearful number of sins are thus committed !

In such a household the children are not looked after, and they learn nothing good. And how could they ? What good could they hope to learn in such an accursed school, which resembles hell itself, where children hear nothing from their parents but cursing and swearing, and see nothing but quarrelling and fighting ? They will learn, indeed, but it will be to speak and act as their parents do ; they will learn to behave to each other as they see their parents behaving ; they will learn, when they grow up, to treat their father and mother with no greater respect than the latter show each other ; they will learn to lead a wicked, good-for-nothing life, and to bring up their own children as they themselves were brought up. In that way the want of unity among married people brings, not only themselves, but also their children, and often their children's children, to eternal ruin. And what a wretched example they give to their servants, and to the whole

Hence arise
countless
sins.

Others are
also led into
sin, and to
eternal
damnation
thereby.

neighborhood, which they disturb by their quarrelling and fighting ? This, too, is often the cause that, to the great scandal of the community, the husband and wife must be separated, as far as cohabitation is concerned, by ecclesiastical authority, or, what is still worse, that they separate on their own authority, which they have no right to do, in order to escape an insupportable trial. Where there is such a spirit of discord, what must become of the service of God and the salvation of the soul ? The continual quarrelling and bitterness prevent the morning and evening prayer ; they are not capable of hearing Mass on days of obligation or of going to sermons as they ought ; almost all their confessions and communions are sacrilegious and only add to their sins, because they will not give up the hatred and ill-will they bear to each other, nor will they consent to give in to one another, or to pardon each other from their hearts. And what have they then to look forward to but hell for all eternity, of which they have a foretaste already on earth ? And there their lot will be to curse each other forever, after having lived in discord during their lives on earth. Oh, miserable indeed is the married state when peace and unity are wanting !

That
misery is
caused in
different
ways, even
before
marriage.

The foundation of this misery is laid (attend to this, Christian sons and daughters !) either by two people of different birth and standing thoughtlessly getting married, when, as is generally the case, the one who is of humble birth is looked down upon by the other, after the first and often inordinate love has cooled down, and thus the seeds of discord are planted ; or, as often happens, when parents force their children, or persuade them to marry a certain person against their will. It is an old saying that an oath taken under pressure of necessity, is offensive to God ; now, where there is no love nor affection, what else can come of it but hatred, discord, and ill-will ? This misery is caused, also, by marrying a person, not for virtue's sake, but for riches or honors. In such a case, if the riches are less than they were first thought to be, if adversity comes on, there is an end to love, and discontent takes its place. Children, too, cause themselves misery by marrying without the knowledge and consent of their parents, or what is worse, by embracing the first opportunity of marriage without first consulting God, to know whether He calls them to that state ; or by making use of unjust means to get married, and thus receiving the sacrament in the state of mortal sin ; or, as is, alas ! only too common amongst those who are en-

gaged, by committing sins of impurity with each other before marriage. In all these circumstances, since they neglect God and offend Him when entering in what is in itself a holy state, what wonder is it that He does not bless them afterwards? What wonder is it that He refuses to give them the special graces which He has prepared for those who enter the married state according to His vocation and in His fear and love? And is it surprising, then, that, in the difficulties to which the married life is exposed, they should quarrel, fight, and be at variance with each other, and thus make for themselves a hell on earth, through their want of virtue?

Therefore, Christian sons and daughters who intend embracing the married state, see first of all whether God really calls you to that state, and then be careful to enter on it in a holy manner and for a holy object, that it may not turn out unhappily for you, which may God avert, as a punishment for your sins.

Conclusion and exhortation to those about to marry.

But you, unfortunate married people, who live in discord, oh, how I pity you! For God's sake put an end to your misery at once! If you have grievously offended God before, or at the time of your marriage, learn to bear your cross with humility, knowing that you well deserve it, and ought to bear it with patience. Say often to God with the elder Tobias, when he was reproached and mocked by his wife in his blindness: "Then Tobias sighed," says the Holy Scripture, "and began to pray with tears, saying: Thou art just, O Lord, and all Thy judgments are just, and all Thy ways are mercy, and truth, and judgment. And now, O Lord, think of me, and take not revenge of my sins, neither remember my offences; for we have not obeyed Thy commandments, and therefore are we delivered to spoil, and to captivity, and death; and now, O Lord, do with me according to Thy will."¹ So also, I say, must you, married people, cry out in your daily crosses: "'Thou art just, O Lord,"² and Thy judgment is right; Thou knowest how I, alas! have acted towards Thee before, and at the time of my marriage! I acknowledge that I have deserved this cross a thousand times; do with me according to Thy

To those who do not live peacefully in the married state.

¹ Tunc Tobias ingemuit, et cepit orare cum lacrimis, dicens: Justus es Domine, et omnia judicia tua justa sunt, et omnes viæ tuæ misericordia, et veritas et iudicium. Et nunc Domine, memor esto mei, et ne vindictam sumas de peccatis meis, neque reminiscaris delicta mea. Quoniam non obedivimus præceptis tuis, ideo traditi sumus in direptionem et captivitatem et mortem. Et nunc Domine secundum voluntatem tuam fac mecum.—Tob. iii. 1-6.

² Justus es, Domine.

will, to which I now willingly resign myself ; only give me patience and meekness to bear this heavy cross, which I so well deserve, as an atonement for my sins, and to bear it to the end for the sake of my soul's salvation. Whatever has been the cause of discord to you, learn to give way to each other, to curb your anger, to forgive from your hearts, and to beg of God by earnest prayer to restore peace and harmony to you. Do you know what you must do ? Go both of you and make a general confession, at least of that part of your lives which you have spent in discord ; do not forget to accuse yourselves of all the confessions and communions that you made while in that state, for they may have all been bad, on account of the want of true sorrow and purpose of amendment, since there was no sign of improvement in you after them, and then take each other's hand and renew your consent to your marriage. You must also ask each other's pardon for the many injuries and annoyances you have mutually caused, and make a firm resolution to forget the past, and to love each other truly, as if you were just married ; with this resolution go to the table of the Lord, and humbly ask your Lord and God, who is present within you, to ratify your resolution and to keep you united in love until death. Follow my advice, if you do not wish to go from a temporal to an eternal hell !

To other
married
people.

I pray and exhort all other married people, in the words of St. Paul to the Ephesians : Dear Christians, " be careful to keep the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace ; one body and one Spirit, as you are called in one hope of your calling,"¹ in which you must be one heart and one body. Remember that you must live together till death, and have a great desire of seeing each other in Heaven. If some little misunderstanding comes between you now and then, as must be the case in every family, " Let not the sun go down upon your anger,"² before you are reconciled with each other in the Lord. Fear and love your God ; for every love that is not founded on the love of God, is a carnal and natural love, which is very changeable and cannot last long ; but if you love each other because it is God's will, then no accident, nor old age, nor ill-humor, nor suffering, nor trial, will disturb your love. Pray also daily to the God of peace to preserve you in constant peace and true conjugal love and unity. I wish

¹ Solliciti servare unitatem Spiritus in vinculo pacis unum corpus, et unus Spiritus, atque vocati estis in una spe vocationis vestre.—Ephes. iv. 3, 4.

² Sol non occidat super iracundiam vestram.—Ibid. 26.

you from my heart, with St. Paul : “ Now, the God of patience and of comfort,” in His infinite goodness, “ grant you to be of one mind one towards another, according to Jesus Christ: That with one mind and with one mouth you may glorify God and the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ,”¹ so that no discord nor disunion may have place in your hearts. Amen.

THIRTY-FIRST SERMON.

ON THE DUTY OF HUSBANDS TO THEIR WIVES.

Subject.

1st. Explanation of the duty of husbands to their wives. 2d. Because that duty is not properly fulfilled, much disunion is caused in the married state, and just reason for complaint is given to wives.—*Preached on the fourth Sunday in Lent.*

Text.

Ipse enim sciebat quid esset factururus.—John vi. 6.

“ For He himself knew what He would do.”

Introduction.

If married people always knew the duties of their state, and all, husbands as well as wives, fulfilled them properly, what a blessing that would be ! There would be then constant peace and unity, and temporal and spiritual prosperity in that state. But if one of the married couple is wanting in these duties, the foundation of contention and discord is already laid; just as in an organ, when one of the pipes is out of tune, the whole instrument is spoiled. If I were to ask the cause of the strife that reigns in many a household, what answer should I get? I know it already: the husband would angrily throw the whole blame on the wife; the wife, if I ask her about it, would declare herself as innocent as an angel, and would accuse her husband of being the only disturber of peace, so that I should be no wiser than before. My opinion is that they should both take part of the blame to themselves, for they either do not know their duty, or knowing it, they do not fulfil it as they ought. We shall begin with

¹ *Deus autem patientiæ et solatii det vobis idipsum sapere in alterutrum secundum Jesum Christum : ut unanimes, uno ore honorificetis Deum, et patrem Domini nostri Jesu Christi.*—Rom. xv. 5, 6.

the duty of husbands, since they ought to have more sense and prudence, and are more frequently to be blamed for the want of harmony in the married state.

Plan of Discourse.

The explanation of the duty of husbands to their wives will form the first part. Because that duty is not always properly fulfilled, much disunion is caused in the married state, and just reason for complaint is given to wives. Such will be the second part.

A speedy and earnest amendment is much to be desired, in order to reunite the divided hearts in the bond of love. Oh, God of peace, we beg this of Thee, through the merits of Thy Virgin Mother Mary and the intercession of the holy angels guardian.

The authority of the husband over the wife must be one of love.

It is true that the husband is the head of the wife. St. Paul says to the Ephesians, in the 5th chapter, which furnishes me with almost the whole matter of this first part: "The husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church."¹ It is true that the husband is the master of the house: "Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord."² Yet, it must be well understood that if the husband is the head, the wife is not therefore to be trodden under foot, as is, unfortunately, only too often the case! Eve, our first mother, as the holy Fathers wisely remark, was formed by God from the body of her future husband Adam; but from what part of his body? Not from the head, lest she should assume authority over him; nor from the feet, lest he should treat her in an unbecoming manner; but from a rib which is situated in the center of the body, near the heart, to signify that he should love his wife as his helper and companion. The husband is certainly master in the house, but the wife is not, therefore, his servant, on whom he can impose all sorts of degrading offices at will; much less is she to be treated tyrannically, as if she were a slave, which is, alas! only too often the case with wives! The authority of the husband over his wife, says St. Augustine, does not consist in treating her haughtily and arrogantly as an inferior, but in caring for her with mildness and tenderness.³ It is not an authority of cruelty, but of love, and of the same kind of love as that with which the soul governs the

¹ Vir caput est mulieris, sicut Christus caput est Ecclesie.—Ephes. v. 23.

² Mulieres viris suis subditæ sint, sicut Domino.—Ibid. 22.

³ Non principandi superbia, sed providendi misericordia.

body. In the words of St. Paul: "Men ought to love their wives as their own bodies."¹

Take notice, married men; you must love your wives as your souls love your bodies. And how is that love shown? In the mildest and most amiable manner. In the first place, the soul lays no command on the body, without helping the latter to fulfil it. For instance, it desires to go out of the house, and commands the feet to set themselves in motion and to go to the appointed place; it wishes to gain some knowledge, and commands the eyes to see, the ears to hear, the tongue to speak and ask questions. The feet, eyes, ears, and tongue obey, but they have not all the work to do; the soul helps in it and even takes the greater part of the labor on itself; it sees with the eyes, hears with the ears, speaks with the tongue, and walks with the feet, and without its assistance, not one of those organs could make the least movement; they would be like the members of a dead body, which can neither hear, see, speak or move itself. If the feet, eyes, or ears cannot do their duty, or fulfil the command, through weariness or illness, the soul is not angry on that account, nor does it cry out: Wretched eye, why wilt thou not see! Useless foot, why dost thou not walk? It is rather full of pity for them, and does all in its power to give them rest and repose.

As the soul loves the body.

Such, oh, married people, is the authority that must obtain among you: "Men ought to love their wives as their own bodies." "He that loveth his wife, loveth himself."² And if men act against that love, have not wives a right to complain, and to ask meekly: Husband, is that the way you treat your own body? Are you so cruel to your own members? Is that the way in which you curse and swear against yourself? For I must tell you, in God's name, that according to St. Paul, you must treat me as you treat your own body. "For no man ever hated his own flesh,"³ or persecuted it. You must love me as you love yourself. "Let every one of you in particular love his wife as himself."⁴ If you tell me to do anything, I must obey; but you must command me as the soul commands the body; that is to say, mildly and lovingly, and with a sincere desire to help me. You should not forget these words: "No man ever hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it."⁵ With what great care does not the soul

In the same way a man should love his wife.

¹ Viri debent diligere uxores suas, ut corpora sua.—Ephes. v. 28.

² Qui suam uxorem diligit, seipsum diligit.—Ibid.

³ Nemo enim unquam carnem suam odio habuit.—Ibid. 29.

⁴ Unusquisque uxorem suam, sicut seipsum diligit.—Ibid. 33.

⁵ Nemo unquam carnem suam odio habuit, sed nutrit et fovet eam.—Ibid. 29.

look after the body, and provide it with everything necessary for nourishment, clothing, pleasure, and delight, so that it may eat, drink, sleep, and be clothed well? The mouth, at the command of the soul, since no member of the body can move otherwise, sends the food into the stomach, that it may be distributed over the whole body, which is thus strengthened and comforted. Does the body suffer an injury? How the soul is troubled thereat and how it strives to ward off all hurt from the body and to protect it in every way! How rejoiced it is, on the contrary, if the body is in good health! In the same way must men love their wives. The latter must indeed contribute their share to the support of both; but that is principally the duty of the husband, who is bound to feed and clothe his wife and children decently. Adam alone, in punishment of his sin, received from God the command: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread."¹ As a general rule, it is only the wife who, on her marriage, must leave her home, and sometimes her country, and must sacrifice her beloved parents, brothers, and sisters, in order to follow her husband; so that she gives herself up altogether to his love and care as long as she lives. Is it not then your bounden duty (as St. John Chrysostom writes to a married man) to be to her as father, mother, brother, and sister; to care for her as a father, to replace by a fatherly tenderness the loving care of her parents whom she abandoned for your sake, to rejoice with her in prosperity, to protect her from evil, and to care for her as you do for yourself? "Men ought to love their wives as their own bodies."² Again, how does the soul act with the body? It loves and cherishes, and tries to do good to it in every possible way; and that constantly, although the latter may have lost its beauty; although it be sick, blind, and deaf; although it be incapable of using the reason that the soul communicates to it. The soul loves the body with a constant love, and leaves it not until death dissolves the bond that unites them both together, and forces them violently from each other; nay, even after that separation, the soul still longs for the day of judgment, that it may again be united to its body and be its companion for eternity. You, oh, Christian married people, should have for each other a love as constant as this, which no circumstance can change, and which lasts till death.

As Christ
loves His
Church.

St. Paul makes another beautiful comparison in the same chapter, when he says: "The husband is the head of the wife,

¹ In sudore vultus tui vesceris pane tuo.—Gen. iii. 19.

² Viri debent diligere uxores suas, ut corpora sua.

as Christ is the head of the Church.”¹ And he adds: “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church and delivered Himself up for it.”² Oh, what a perfect pattern of conjugal love! All the figures and symbols that the Prophets use in Holy Writ to denote Jesus Christ, represent Him to us as a mild, patient, merciful, peaceful, and loving Master, “whose yoke is sweet, and whose burden light.” During His life on earth, how friendly and amiable He was with all! While living in Nazareth with His Mother Mary and His foster father St. Joseph, the people of the town (as we learn from an ancient tradition) used to say, when they were troubled or annoyed about anything: “Let us go to the Son of Mary,”³ that he may console us! How mild and patient He was with His Apostles, when they were ignorant and rude fishermen; how He bore with their manifold faults and failings! With what love and even trustfulness He treated the wicked and sinful; so that the envious Pharisees who were eagerly looking for an opportunity of finding fault with Him, could discover nothing to condemn in Him, but that He was a friend and companion of sinners! And they tried thereby to render Him contemptible in the eyes of the people, saying: “This man receives sinners, and eats with them.”⁴ With what sweet words He addressed even His tormentors, while they were scourging Him, crowning Him with thorns, mocking at and blaspheming Him and nailing Him to the Cross! How fervently He prayed in His death-agony to His heavenly Father to forgive them! Nor has this love for His spouse, His Church on earth, grown cold since His death, now that He is seated at the right hand of His Father in the glory of Heaven. The Church of Christ, my dear brethren, is a moral body, or congregation of all faithful Christians, and not merely of those who are in the state of grace, as, amongst other heretics, the Jansenists, who spread their false doctrines under the appearance of piety, taught; but the Church is the congregation of all men who, having received holy Baptism, adore Jesus Christ as true God, and acknowledge as Visible Head, His Vicar on earth. But alas, how few there are in this congregation who by their holiness and piety live in accordance with the faith and religion they profess! How many who are Catholics only in word and outward appearance, but heathens indeed and in reality! And amongst the few who

¹ *Vir caput est mulieris, sicut Christus caput est Ecclesiæ.*

² *Viri diligite uxores vestras, sicut et Christus dilexit Ecclesiam, et seipsum tradidit pro ea.*
—Ephes. v. 25.

³ *Eamus ad filium Mariæ.*

⁴ *Hic peccatores suscipit, et manducat cum illis.*

are looked upon as good and pious, how many there are who now and then violate their fidelity to their Spouse Jesus Christ by a mortal sin; who love the vain world and its laws, more than the Gospel of Christ! And yet, in spite of all this, Christ continues to love the Church as His spouse, to bear patiently and meekly with perjured adulterers, that is, with wicked sinners; to pray to His heavenly Father for them, and to give them daily Himself in the Holy Mass, as a means of atoning for their past sins and obtaining the grace of repentance, and as a sacrifice and victim of expiation. This love of Christ for His Church will never cease, but last to the end of the world, as He Himself says: "Behold, I am with you to the consummation of the world,"¹ by my favor and benevolence, by my help and assistance.

So, too,
should the
husband
love his
wife.

Married men, there you have a pattern of the love you should have for your wives: you must love them as Christ loves His Spouse, the Church;² that is to say, not merely as long as they are young and beautiful, but also when they are old and feeble; not merely when they are strong and healthy, but also when they are sickly and decrepit; not merely when they are agreeable and pleasing in their manners, but also when they are ill-tempered, peevish, and subject to many faults; not merely when they are ready to obey the least word, but also when they are obstinate and stiff-necked and cause you much annoyance. Nor must you love them as some do, who say: "I have had two pleasant days in the married state: the first was my wedding-day, and the second the day on which I lost my wife by death." You must love your wives constantly, till death, bearing their faults and shortcomings with mildness and patience; you must have a paternal care for them, and help them in all their necessities; in a word, you must love them, "as Christ also loved the Church."³ Oh, if all husbands were exact in fulfilling this duty, what would you wives then think? Would not many of you be better off than you are now? Would there not be more peace, union, and contentment in the married state, than there now is? But, alas! it seems to me that I hear some, and perhaps many of you, sighing and lamenting to yourselves, and that, if it were allowed to do so, you would long since have interrupted me with your complaints! But patience! We shall hear those complaints in the

¹ Ecce, ego vobiscum sum usque ad consummationem sæculi.—Matth. xxviii. 20.

² Viri, diligite uxores vestras, sicut et Christus dilexit Ecclesiam.

³ Sicut Christus dilexit Ecclesiam.

Second Part.

And what are they? Oh, God help me, if you were only in my house for a day (think some) and saw how my husband treats me! It is all very well to talk of the love that Christ has for His Church, and of His patience, mildness, and amiability! There is not a more cruel, harsh, and ill-tempered man to be found anywhere than my husband. How nice he was to me at first, before our marriage! I thought him an angel! But now I know him better; he has neither a friendly word nor a kind look for me the whole day long. If I say a word, he tells me at once to hold my tongue, and if I continue speaking, he storms at and curses me. If anything goes wrong with him outside, I must bear the brunt of his ill-humor when he comes home; if any mishap occurs at home, I alone am to blame for it. If I sometimes commit a fault through carelessness or human frailty, he makes a terrible to-do about it! In fact, I do not know what to do, nor how I am to please him. The only return he makes for the services I try to render him, is grumbling, abuse, and scolding. If I give way to tears and show how distressed I am, he treats me like a dog that barks at him in the street; nor is he satisfied if I laugh and enjoy myself. What am I to do? Ah, wretched me, in what a miserable state I am! How can we live in peace and union with each other? How can I have a proper love for such a man?

Many husbands sin against this, by treating their wives harshly and angrily.

It is easy to talk of the love and care that the soul has for the body (says another)! My husband is a regular miser; he never gives me a penny to buy anything for the house; I have not decent clothes to wear; he hardly gives me and the children enough to eat. My husband, says a third, is a confirmed idler, who never does anything; he is a good-for-nothing who will not work; I have to support him, instead of being supported by him; I must provide him with food and clothing, which he ought to be able to provide me with. If I did not work so hard and had not the children's earnings to help me, we might all starve. Even that is not so bad, says a fourth; I have a spendthrift, drunken husband, who not only brings neither food nor money into the house, nor supplies us with proper clothing, but even makes away with what I try to save for the children from my dowry: what we earn during the week, he brings to the drinking-house on Sundays and holy days, and leaves me and the children to suffer hunger and thirst and to pine away in misery. When he comes home drunk, he makes such a row in the house that we are all disgraced

By not giving them proper nourishment.

before the neighbors. How can there be any love and union under such circumstances ?

By treating
them as ser-
vants, or
beating
them un-
mercifully.

It is easy to talk of loving as one's self, says a fifth. My husband does not treat me like a wife, but like a servant-maid, or like a worthless rag that is trodden under foot ! I am not allowed to say anything either to the servants or the children in the house; if I tell them to do something, he at once gives them a contrary order, and I have to hold my tongue ; he thus makes me quite contemptible before the servants, nay, even before my own sons and daughters, who can see for themselves every day that I have nothing to say in the house, so that they can do as they please without minding me at all. Alas, how could I love such a man, as I ought ! It is easy to speak of love, says a sixth, when you have, not a mild and patient master, but a cruel and overbearing tyrant, for a husband ! It is an every-day occurrence for me to be beaten and kicked and dragged about by the hair. If I remain quiet under such treatment, hoping thereby to move him to pity, he thinks I despise him and becomes still more ferocious ; if I cry out and weep, he beats me still worse, so that the neighbors are often afraid that he will kill me ; it seems, indeed, as if he were tired of me, and that he will not be easy until I am dead. May God help me !

By hating
them and
loving
others.

It is easy to speak of love, thinks a seventh, for she dare not say it. My husband hates me and cannot bear the sight of me, although he likes others well enough. Would that I were esteemed even as much as my servant-maid. She has a great deal more to say in the house than I have, and many an insult I have to suffer that I must keep locked up in my breast. Can there be any trial greater than this? - Is it possible for true love and harmony to exist under such circumstances?

By wickedly
preventing
them from
practising
their
religion.

It is easy to talk, says another, of loving one's wife as Christ loves the Church ! I have a wicked, vicious husband, whom I cannot induce to practise his religion; he never goes to Church or to a sermon; I never see him say an Our Father ; he will never listen to anything good. God knows whether he ever goes to confession and communion, even at Easter ! If he would only allow me to serve God as I wish ! He cannot bear to see me pious ; he keeps me and the children from practising devotion; with the exception of Sundays and holy days, he will not allow me to go to Church. If I wish to say my morning and evening prayers at home, as is the custom with Christians, I must do so stealthily, or he will snatch the prayer-book or the rosary out of my hands ! I am

strictly forbidden to give alms, although we can well afford it, and ought to do so, according to the Christian law ; he curses and swears so fearfully, that even the children are horrified and expostulate with him. He buys lost and stolen goods, and cares not whether it is right or wrong to do so ; I must look on at that and dare not hope that I shall ever be allowed to make any restitution. I am afraid that he will thus drag me and the children down to hell with him. What sort of peace or quiet can I have with a man like that? It is easy to talk of love oh, leave it so now, or we shall never come to an end! But how can conjugal love and union be preserved in such cases?

I acknowledge that, if what you say is true, and your husbands alone are to blame for it—and I must believe you until I know something to the contrary—you are indeed very badly off, and I pity your miserable condition from my heart. How you are to act in such circumstances, and how you can at least perform your duty as far as peace, contentment, and union are concerned, I will tell you for your consolation, in next Sunday's sermon. Meanwhile, have patience! Seek consolation from God and from Heaven. Offer up your trials daily with a pure intention to God, who intends and arranges everything for your greater good, so that you may not bear them in vain (I know that they are very heavy) and may not lose the eternal joys of Heaven.

Wives complain justly.

But woe to you, wicked husbands, who thus ill-treat your wives; who thus renounce the love that God so emphatically commands you to have for them ; who make their lives so hard and so despairing! You burden yourselves with countless, terrible sins, and as we saw in the last sermon, make your houses dwelling-places of the devil, and turn the holy state of marriage, which should be a symbol of the loving union between Jesus Christ and His Church, into a hell of confusion and despair! You should act the part of a tender father to your wives, who for you left house and home, father and mother, brothers and sisters, and you treat them like galley-slaves who are driven with blows to their daily labor! They have given themselves up to you by the bond of marriage, that they may find help, comfort, and joy in your company during life, and now (like the unhappy man in the Gospel who was travelling to Jericho) they find that they have fallen into the hands of murderers, who, if they do not kill them, at least embitter their lives and torture them daily, nor can any good Samaritan come to their assistance! God has placed you as head over your wives, that you may support, comfort, and assist them, and you

How unjust and wicked is the conduct of such husbands!

are, instead of that, their butchers who try to take away their lives! For what difference does it make whether you put them to death at once by the sword or by poison, or wear away their lives by continual persecution, so that they are forced to long for death as a relief from their sufferings? You are joined together that you may help each other in the service of God, and bear the trials of your state so as to attain your last end, the kingdom of Heaven, but you act the part of devils to your wives, and try to bring them along with you from a temporal to an eternal hell! I heard once of a general who was so very severe and cruel to his soldiers if they committed the least fault, that whenever he was asked for mercy, he used to say in French: "Thanks be to God, that He has created me without pity and mercy!" so that he actually gloried in his cruelty. In the same way you, married men, who thus ill-treat your wives, appear to be glad of the suffering you cause them!

Woe to
them from
God.

But woe to you! I repeat. How hateful and unbearable you make yourselves to the Lord God! He is a God of mildness and patience, a God of love and mercy, who has commanded us to love even our worst enemies and to treat them with mildness and kindness. How much more does He not command a husband thus to treat the wife that is given him by the Church, a wife that he takes with the promise to look upon her, not as a servant or a slave, but as the companion of his life, whom he is to love sincerely! Woe to you again, I say, in the words of the Holy Ghost in Ecclesiasticus: "A hard heart shall fare evil at the last."¹ And if, according to the words of Christ, the meek, the peaceful, the merciful are blessed: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy;"² then there is no surer sign of reprobation than to give way to a hard-hearted and cruel nature. The sentence is already pronounced by the Judge against such people: "Judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy."³ If this is true of all those who do not perform the works of charity and Christian mercy to their neighbor, although the latter may not be in any way connected with them, how will it be with those who are hard and cruel to their own wives, with whom they ought to have one body, one spirit, one heart?

They are
not to be
excused.

Let no one try to excuse himself by saying he cannot bear with his wife's peevish humor, or that he is forced to treat her harshly on account of her bad conduct. If you are not pleased

¹ Cor durum habebit male in novissimo.—Ecccl. iii. 27.

² Beati misericordes, quoniam ipsi misericordiam consequentur.—Matth. v. 7.

³ Judicium sine misericordia illi, qui non fecit misericordiam.—James ii. 13.

to adapt yourself to her humor, why did you marry her? If you are so very sensitive that you cannot bear the least annoyance, why did you enter the married state? For as a matter of course, something must now and then occur in that state which requires patience and meekness to be borne with. If your head is made of wax, you must not stand in the sun. I do not say that you must pass over all your wife's faults in silence, nor let her rule over you as she pleases; by no means; that would be another great fault on your side! And I can well imagine, too, that the husband is not always to have the whole blame, as I said in the beginning, but that the wife must have her share also, in causing strife and disunion. It may often occur that she has to be warned and corrected; but the husband must correct his beloved wife in the proper manner; not with shouting and roaring, not with abuse and foul language, nor with cursing and swearing, much less should he have recourse to beating and striking, unless in a case of absolute necessity. If he corrected his wife in that way, it would be like dipping his hand in the mud, in order to wash the face of another therewith. The correction must come from conjugal love and meekness, and not from anger, hatred, and aversion.

Such, then, in the oft-quoted words of St. Paul, must be your conclusion: "Husbands, love your wives;"¹ love them, "as your own bodies;"² which you are afraid to injure in the least, and which you care for and look after most diligently. Love them, "as Christ loves His spouse the Church,"³ that is, at all times, in all circumstances, in sickness and health, in youth and old age, in riches and poverty, in fruitfulness and sterility, in prosperity and adversity, in constant peace and union with each other. If some of you have been hitherto harsh, cruel, and unmerciful to them, and are now ready to atone by a true and worthy reception of the sacrament of Penance, for the sins you have committed in a most inexcusable manner, against the express command of God, they are now ready to pardon you and forgive you from their hearts. Be reconciled again to each other, and do you replace your former harshness by a greater mildness, amiability, and love. Thus, Christian married people, must you love one another, until death separates you, and when you have both left this life, an indissoluble bond of love will unite you again in the land of the living, where peace, repose, and union reign without disturbance. Amen.

Conclusion
and exhortation.

¹ Viri diligite uxores vestras. ² Ut corpora vestra. ³ Sicut Christus dilexit Ecclesiam.

THIRTY-SECOND SERMON.

ON THE CONDUCT OF WIVES WHOSE HUSBANDS GIVE THEM
CAUSE FOR DISUNION.

Subject.

Instruction: how wives are to behave in such circumstances, and how they are to act so as to preserve peace and quiet.—*Preached on the fifth Sunday in Lent.*

Text.

Tulerunt ergo lapides ut jacerent in eum. Jesus autem abscondit se.—John viii. 59.

“They took up stones therefore to cast at Him. But Jesus hid Himself.”

Introduction.

See the unreasonable anger and rage of the Jews on one side, and the wonderful mildness and patience of Jesus Christ on the other! They accuse Him of having a devil! “Thou hast a devil.”¹ He answers meekly: “I have not a devil.”² They prepare to stone Him to death, and He, the Almighty God, who with a word could reduce them to nothing, gives way humbly before their rage and resentment, and hides Himself.³

Now, my dear brethren, in the Jews you have an example of the injustice of many husbands, who, as we have seen in the last sermon, treat their wives contrary to the law of Christian charity. Poor wives! what advice can be given to you in such circumstances? Are you to answer your husbands in an unchristian manner, and say to them: “Thou hast a devil,” or abuse and revile them, saying: Our husbands are worse than demons? Oh, no; you would not do yourselves any good by such conduct! And what are you to do, then? See how Jesus Christ your Saviour acts: patience and meekness were the arms that He used against the cruel Jews. “But Jesus hid Himself.”³ If I could persuade you to follow the same course, then in a short time, peace and union would be restored to you, or at least you would find your cross much easier to bear. At all events, I will now tell you—

¹ *Dæmonium habes.*—John viii. 48. ² *Ego dæmonium non habes.*—*Ibid.* 49.

³ *Jesus autem abscondit se.*

Plan of Discourse.

How wives in such circumstances must behave, how they are to act, so as to preserve peace and quiet. Such will be the whole matter of my instruction.

That this advice may be followed, help us, oh, Ruler of hearts, with Thy powerful grace, through the intercession of Thy beloved Mother and the holy angels guardian.

I know that it is a great trial for a wife (I am resuming the order of the complaints brought forward in the last sermon) to live continually with a passionate, angry, coarse, quarrelsome, and cruel husband. It is a great trial when, through avarice, he does not give her proper food, clothing, or care; or when, through idleness and laziness, he is unwilling to work, or spends everything in drinking and gambling. It is a great trial to live with a husband who, through hatred and aversion, does not allow her to say a word in the house, or to give any command, and so makes her contemptible in the eyes of the servants and children. A great trial when, in addition, she is ill-treated and beaten by him. A great trial to live with one who forgets conjugal fidelity, leads an impure life, and gives his love to strangers. A great trial to have an irreligious husband, who will not allow her to attend to her soul. And I must also confess that it requires great and rare skill, in such circumstances, to preserve peace and union with each other, or at least to keep one's own peace of heart and contentment! Yet the knot is tied which no one can loose; the heavy burden of the married state must be borne, and what cannot be amended must be recommended to God in patience. Plutarch writes that, formerly, it was the custom in Africa for a bride to go, on the day after her wedding, to her mother-in-law to ask for a dish-cloth, which was refused her with much scolding and abuse. And why was this, my dear brethren? In order that the bride, at the very beginning of her wedded life, might learn to bear the trials and annoyances of her state, and thus not be so easily put out if her husband said or did anything disagreeable to her; for, as it would not be the first annoyance she had to bear, so it would not be the last. With the same thought, Christian wives, must you arm yourselves, as often as your husbands give you trouble. You must summon up all your patience and think: What am I to do? I must bear the yoke for life; this is certainly not the last trial that I will have to bear. As we grow old together, the crosses will probably increase, so that I

Patience is the best thing for all wives who have to suffer annoyances from their husbands.

must humbly resign myself to God's holy will. St. Paul says, speaking of those who intend to marry: "Nevertheless, such shall have tribulation of the flesh."¹ And this advice is good for all wives in general. Now let each one hear how she is to act in the different trials already mentioned.

Good advice
for those
who have
ill-tempered
husbands.

You have, then, as you say, a passionate, quarrelsome husband, who gives you neither a friendly word nor a kind look; who must have his way in everything; who curses and abuses you for the least fault. What are you to do, you ask. Listen: If you wish to preserve contentment and peace of heart, you must first take the best meaning out of everything; you must not imagine that your husband's cross looks and harsh words come from hatred and aversion towards you; for there are men who are stern and serious in their manner, and harsh and unkind in their speech, yet they are not less loving at heart; nay, the harsher their words, the deeper often is their love. Think that their unkindness is caused by some bodily indisposition to which one man is more subject than another; or by some annoyance caused him elsewhere which he cannot easily forget. The master of a house has too many things to think of and to look after, to be always able to appear with a smiling face. Think that the cursing and abuse come from an evil habit, as is unfortunately the case with most people, whose mouths are constantly filled with that hellish language, and that therefore he does not mean it seriously. If this anger comes from a want of conjugal affection, and from hatred and aversion towards you, then try to find out the cause of this hatred; if you discover it in yourself, oh, do your best to remove it! There is no better way to extinguish a fire, than to remove all inflammable material: take away the cause of his anger, and his aversion will soon cease, and you will be again united in the bonds of love.

How they
must speak.

Again, no matter what is the cause of your husband's ill-temper, be careful, above all, not to answer him back angrily, or contradict him, or give him curse for curse, abuse for abuse; oh, no, that would not do any good! That would contribute as much to his amendment as blowing a bellows does to extinguishing a fire; it would only make matters worse. You must not try to stop a rushing torrent, but let it flow on unhindered, for the more you put in its way, the more it foams and rages. You must hold your tongue, and give way in everything, until his anger is over; if you make any answer, let it be in gentle words. Forget not the Proverb

¹ Tribulationem tamen carnis habebunt hujusmodi.—I. Cor. vii. 28.

of Solomon : “ A mild answer breaketh wrath, but a harsh word stirreth up fury ;”¹ and as even the meekest are aroused to impatience and anger by contradiction, so there is no nature so rough as not to be tamed where it meets nothing but patience and meekness.

Besides using loving words, show him that you have a real affection for him by doing all you can to please him, by having his food ready, looking after his clothing, and otherwise attending to his comforts as best you can. The world has before now seen fierce lions caressing like lambs those who drew a thorn out of their paws. There is no one so boorish and ill-tempered as not to be overcome and tamed at last by kind offices. Try that plan with your husband, and see whether he will not be kinder to you after a time. And if, as is very unlikely, your efforts are a failure, then have patience ! Offer up your trials to God. He is the Ruler of hearts ; if you love Him constantly, call upon Him daily with childlike confidence, and make your complaints to Him. He will know how to change your husband’s heart. Thank God, too, that you are not worse off, and that you are not like many more wives, whose husbands are not content with giving them merely harsh words.

What they must do.

What am I to do? asks another. My husband is such a miser that he never gives me a penny, nor supplies me with proper clothing, so that I am ashamed to go out and to appear amongst my equals, who are far better dressed than I. He hardly allows me sufficient food, or what he does give is of the worst quality, such as very poor people have. This is all the harder for me to bear, since I was accustomed to better things in my father’s house, and we could fare much better now, if my husband were not so mean and niggardly. The servants in other houses are better off than I and my children; I find that so hard to bear that I cannot live in peace and love with him.

For those who have avaricious husbands.

I am well aware of it ; it is a hard case enough with poor people who have to toil and labor for their daily bread; their extreme poverty makes them deserving of pity ; but it is harder still for a respectable woman to be reduced to such straits through sheer avarice, that she has barely enough to live upon. But if you cannot make matters better, what will you do? Is that a reason for destroying the peace and concord of the married life? By no means ; if you did so, you would make your cross heavier, instead of lighter. Think, therefore, in order not to lose your content-

Who do not support them decently.

¹ *Responsio mollis frangit iram. sermo durus suscitatur furorem.—Prov. xv. 1.*

ment, that it is due solely to the goodness of God that you are more wealthy than others. He could have caused you to be born of such poor parents that you would have had to beg your bread from door to door. How satisfied you would then have been with a piece of dry bread ! Only think, now, that it is on account of poverty that you are so badly fed, and you will be as satisfied as you would have been, if you were really poor ; or think that God has so arranged it, in order that you, with all your wealth, may taste a little poverty, for His sake. How many Saints have had far worse food, clothing, and bed than you, although they could have had, and deserved, far better?

Nor clothe
them prop-
erly.

As far as your clothing is concerned, if it is not according to your taste or in the fashion, your husband is perhaps wiser and more prudent than many others, who spare no expense that their wives and daughters may be able to show off before the world, while they trouble themselves little about trying to be able to leave them something in their wills. If others of your rank and condition are better dressed than you, it does not follow that their dress is suited to their station or to yours. By no means ; for how many are there who dress above their station ? It would be well for most husbands if they were far more economical in this point, and they would put a stop to excessive luxury in dress, and avert ruin from many families, nay, from whole communities ! Although your dress is not according to the fashion, still God knows you in it, and men, too, will learn to know you, perhaps all the better. You will not, on that account, be thought poorer or richer than you really are ; but by being clad in that way, you will certainly be much richer than you seem to be. Finally, as far as food and clothing are concerned, it is not always niggardliness on your husband's part if he is sparing with regard to them ; it is often a useful and necessary economy. Perhaps there are debts that he has to pay, of which he does not wish to speak to you for fear of distressing you, and he is obliged to reduce his expenditure in order to meet them. Or he may act thus through a fatherly foresight for your interest, that you and your children may have enough to live on comfortably after his death. But enough of this. There are others still to be heard.

For those
who have
idle, worth-
less hus-
bands.

How am I to act so as to preserve love and union with my husband, who is so idle and lazy that he earns nothing, or so stupid that he does not know how to earn anything ; or so old and feeble that he cannot work, and leaves the whole care of the house on my shoulders, so that I must work the whole day to support him

and the children, although it is his duty to support me? Listen: if your husband is unable to work, or knows not how to earn anything, then the difficulty solves itself; he cannot help himself and is not to be blamed. But you must never reproach him with idleness or stupidity, especially before strangers. But if he refuses to work through sheer laziness, what am I then to do? It is ill hunting with unwilling hounds; console yourself with the thought that it is better for your own and your children's eternal and perhaps temporal welfare to have only a little, than to have much. If your husband were industrious and diligent you would certainly be much better off as far as temporal wealth is concerned; but perhaps he would then force you to work harder and would be niggardly in supporting you. What would you think of that? I do not suppose you would like it very well. Or you might go to unnecessary expense through vanity, and so would have less at the end of the year than you have now, and you and your children would be less able to endure the hardships of poverty, because you would be too used to an easy and comfortable life. Meanwhile, your diligence must make up for your husband's idleness; be, therefore, more economical and sparing in dress, furniture, pleasures, etc., and you will, with God's help, have quite enough. He who draws a little water every day, and puts it into a good, strong vessel, will have more at the end of the year, than he who draws a large quantity at once and pours it into a leaky vessel, or spills it out on the ground. At least you ought to be satisfied (since a man cannot have every perfection at once), even if your husband is idle, lazy, and good-for-nothing, if he lives in peace and quiet and is always friendly and loving to you. Oh, if every wife had that good fortune! How good would they not all be to their husbands! You too must be satisfied, and see that you do not complain of your husband's idleness or worthlessness, nor cause strife or quarrelling in the house. All the rest you must leave in the hands of God, who, if you trust in Him and keep in His friendship, will not allow you or your children to starve.

Ah, says another, I wish my husband was like that; he comes home drunk every Sunday and holy day, and sometimes during the week also, and makes away with all our savings. How can I live in peace and love with him? Yes, I acknowledge that in this case a good deal of skill is required to manage things properly. The best advice I can give you, is to take every opportunity of showing how abominable and degrading the vice of drunkenness is; but you must be careful how and when you do so. Most

For those
who have
drunken
husbands.

wives do it when their husbands come home drunk at night. They abuse, revile, curse, and swear at them, and afterwards complain that all they can say is of no use, and that their husbands are growing worse and worse. And I believe it, too ; I should not be surprised if the wives gained nothing but blows by such ill-directed efforts. That is not the time for reproach or exhortation; there is no use in saying anything when you will not be listened to ; for then it is not reason but strong drink that is uppermost with your husband. While he is in that state you should only give him kind words, and be friendly with him ; say that he is quite right to amuse himself, that he wants it after his week's hard work, etc. But afterwards, you can find an occasion of expostulating with him, when you think the drunken fit is over, or when you see that he has been impressed by a sermon, and has been to confession or to communion, or when he is more friendly than usual with you. Then entreat him with kind words to give up that vice, by which he places his soul in danger of hell ; to take more care of his health, which he is ruining, and of his life, which he is shortening ; to be more mindful of his honor and reputation, for he brings disgrace on himself among his neighbors and acquaintances by his drunken habits, and to have pity on his poor children, to whom he gives such a bad example and whom he is likely to reduce to beggary—and so on. But be careful not to get vexed if he sometimes takes a drop too much at home with others who visit him, although he may spend more than you like, for it is better to bear with a lesser evil than to run the risk of a greater one. If your husband sees in you a constant patience, friendliness, and love towards himself, and you unite fervent prayer to your gentle reproaches, he will enter into himself at last, acknowledge how dreadful the vice is to which he is addicted, break himself of it more and more, and finally give it up altogether.

For those whose husbands beat them, when they give cause for it.

Still more to be pitied are those unhappy wives whose husbands beat and ill-treat them as if they were servants or slaves. How can they live in peace and quiet? Yes, they say, it is easy to talk of that ! And I pity you with all my heart ! But I must ask you one question. Are you thus ill-treated because you are obstinate or disobedient, or on account of other serious faults, or is it simply because your husband is cruel and unmerciful by nature, although you are quite innocent? If the former is the case, then you must acknowledge that you are to blame, although, as I said before, husbands are guilty of sin when they make use of such

cruel punishments, for Christian charity and conjugal love should suggest to them a milder form of chastisement and one less likely to interfere with domestic peace and harmony. Correct the fault that you know to be displeasing to your husband, although you may sometimes think you are in the right; be careful not to talk or act in such a way as to incur that ill-treatment again; try to please him and satisfy him in every way, for, as we have seen already, even the most savage beasts are tamed by kindness.

If you suffer innocently, and find that all your patience, mildness, kindness, and love cannot save you from ill-treatment, then your innocence itself will be your greatest consolation in the sight of God, if you keep in His friendship, and remember that He who is innocence itself suffered the shameful death of the cross for you, and you will be ready to suffer anything, even undeservedly, in order to be more like your crucified Redeemer. This inward consolation of the heart will more than repay you for your bodily sufferings. Christ Himself will say to you, as He said formerly to the holy Peter Martyr, when the latter was imprisoned for a supposed crime by his Superiors; kneeling before a crucifix he said: "Oh, dear Lord, what have I done to be thus miserably imprisoned? My innocence is known to Thee!" And he heard a voice from the crucifix, saying: "And what have I done, Peter, that I should be hanging on the cross?" Whereupon the servant of God was filled with confusion, and was quite resigned, nay, was full of joy and consolation in his gloomy prison. Remember that for your consolation, Christian wives, as often as you are unjustly and cruelly ill-treated by your husbands. Do not cry out or make such a noise that the whole neighborhood can hear you, for that would enrage your husbands and make them still more savage. If you know by experience when they are angry and ill-humored, then act like Christ in the Gospel, when the Jews took up stones to throw at Him: "But Jesus hid himself."² Keep out of the way, and out of the house, if you can, until the storm is over. In that manner, if you cannot have peace with your cruel husbands, you will at least have peace with yourselves, and, what is most important of all, you will be at peace with God.

When they
are Inno-
cent.

Blows hurt the body, but the wounds of the heart, about which one cannot even utter a complaint, are far more painful. Such is the secret lamentation of those whose husbands are given

For those
whose hus-
bands are
unfaithful.

¹ Et ego Petre, quid feci?

² Jesus autem abscondit se.

to impurity, forgetful of their conjugal fidelity, and seeking to gratify their brutal passions elsewhere, or what is still worse, bestowing their affections on a miserable servant in the house, who then rules over both master and mistress. Oh, what a terrible vice! Holy city of Treves, is it possible that such a thing could occur in thy midst? I hope that it is utterly unknown to thee! Yet, alas, it is not unknown in this Christian world! Unhappy wives, where that is really the case, and not merely the effect of your own groundless suspicions! I hardly know what advice to give you, for when a man arrives at that degree of wickedness, there is hardly any help for him; the eternal flames of hell are not enough to deter him from it! And must you then despair of having peace and harmony? Not at all; although, to tell the truth, I can find no other means, as long as you are not wanting in proper love and affection for your husband, and when he is well disposed, try to represent the enormity of his guilt, and get the priest or other good friends who know the circumstances, to help you therein. If all this profits nothing, then I know of no other means than to be patient and resign yourself humbly into the hands of God, who has borne with that terrible crime so patiently, awaiting the conversion of the sinner. Nor must you forget to pray earnestly and humbly for your husband's conversion. You must pity him sincerely, since he is enslaved by a terrible passion that has sometimes hurled those who appeared to be great Saints into the lowest depths of sin. You must never despair of his conversion. Let your sighs and prayers continually ascend to God with the greatest confidence; get Masses said: give generous alms and be diligent in the works of Christian charity, that God may free your husband from the chains that enslave him. The strongest iron chain may be broken with due diligence; no sinner is so hardened in wickedness that he may not at last yield to the influence of divine grace; God never closes the door of His graces against humble and fervent prayer. Augustine was freed from the same unhappy state, in which he had abandoned himself to despair, by the prayers of his holy mother, Monica, and became a great Saint. You must also be as kind and helpful to your husband as if he were most faithful to you; in that way the holy Queen Elizabeth, of Portugal, freed the king, her husband, from the same disgraceful vice, and converted him; she used even to caress his illegitimate children, and care for them as if they were her own. This loving kindness and indomitable patience at length touched the king's heart, so that, conquered by the virtue of his wife, he afterwards led a pure life.

You must also follow the same plan, in order to live in peace and quiet, who have a wicked, irreligious husband, by whom, as you say, you are kept away from your religious duties. It is true that he can now and then prevent you from the outward practice of devotion, but he can never force you against your will to give up real interior piety and the true love of God, no matter how much he may try to do so; he may keep you busy at home every day during the week, so that you cannot go to Church as you would wish, nor practise your usual devotions; but you must be satisfied; the fulfilment of the divine will does not consist in those things, and they make a great mistake who imagine that they cannot be pious nor do any good unless they spend the greater part of their time in the Church and in the outward practice of devotion. No; the real, true, and genuine piety and devotion of the Christian wife consists in working diligently at home, fulfilling her husband's wishes in all things lawful and bringing up her children in the fear and love of God; it is that which God requires of you before anything else; that is your bounden duty, and that you can do, although you are often prevented from going to Church. Your husband may hinder you from saying vocal prayers at home, or he may disturb you when saying them, but he cannot, no matter how he tries, keep you from inward prayer and union of the heart with God; he cannot hinder you from often having holy thoughts, making pious ejaculations, and often renewing your good intention; and that kind of piety is much better and more pleasing to God, than long prayers that you read out of your book in the Church. During your work, then, and while performing your domestic duties, keep yourself always in the presence of God; cry out to Him frequently: "May Thy holy will be done, oh, Lord! Give me patience under my trial!" And God will hear your prayer as well as if you made it on your knees before the altar. Every place is pleasing to God; He is always ready to give audience. He looks more to the hearts and the good will of His servants and handmaids, than to their works. Such was the way in which St. Catherine of Siena acted, when her parents kept her employed in the kitchen, in order to put a stop to her devotions; the parents lost their trouble, for Catherine, even when a kitchen-maid, advanced rapidly in piety and virtue.

For those whose husbands keep them away from their religious duties.

But if your husband tries to keep you away from pious works of obligation, or to lead you into sin, you must not and cannot obey him; you must firmly and earnestly give him the same au-

Whose husbands try to lead them into sin.

swer that St. Dorothy gave the emperor, when he told her to renounce the true God and sacrifice to idols: "What," said she, undismayed, "the Emperor of Heaven and earth has told me to serve Him alone, and I must obey Him rather than you." Such also should be your determination, Christian wives, at all times, even if your husbands raved and stormed at you like demons. In that way you will be martyrs for virtue and for the glory of God, and you will be of the number of those of whom Christ says: "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."¹ Continue in the fear of God with a child-like confidence, and love Him with all your hearts; that is the best and surest means of converting a wicked husband, and bringing him to a better mode of life; as the Apostle says: "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife."²

Conclusion
and exhortation to all
wives.

Finally, Christian wives (since I cannot advise each one of you separately), whatever trials you have to suffer from your husbands, do all you can to be peaceful and contented as far as yourselves are concerned. You will succeed in this if you only know how to give way meekly, and to bear every cross that you cannot avoid, with constant patience and resignation to the will of God. St. Augustine gives us an example of this, in his own mother, Monica: she, as he relates, was very harshly treated by Patritius, her husband, yet she never gave him a cross word nor complained of him to others, and thus she brought him over, little by little, not only to be good and kind to her, but also to abandon heathenism and become a Christian. If you are not so successful, remember, at all events, that you have a fine opportunity of increasing your merit in the sight of God. There is no art required, says St. John Chrysostom, to love those who love us, to be obedient to, pleased, and satisfied with one who is all kindness and goodness to us. But to live in peace and love with a husband who often contradicts and annoys you, is a sign of real heroic virtue. Remember that this is the ladder by which you have to ascend to Heaven. According to the words of St. Paul: "The momentary and light weight of our tribulations worketh for us an eternal weight of glory."³ Read sometimes the lives of the holy martyrs and confessors; see how they chastised and pun-

¹ Beati, qui persecutionem patiuntur propter justitiam, quoniam ipsorum est regnum cœlorum.—Matth. v. 10.

² Sanctificatus est enim vir infidelis per mulierem fidelem.—I. Cor. vii. 14.

³ Momentaneum et leve tribulationis nostræ æternum gloriæ pondus operatur in nobis.—II. Cor. iv. 17.

ished themselves, and how they allowed themselves to be beaten, flayed alive, and burnt to death by tyrants, for God's sake, and think that, as really is the case, God allows you to suffer that domestic martyrdom that you may gain Heaven. Often call to mind the sins of your youth and the eternal fire of hell that you deserved thereby, and think: This is the rod with which the divine goodness now chastises me, that I may escape eternal torments. Whenever you have anything to suffer, say in your heart with Father Eusebius of Nuremberg, when he was suffering from a painful illness: "That is not fire!"¹ The cross looks that my husband gives me are not fire; his unkind words are not fire; the blows and cuffs and ill-treatment are not fire! Happy me, if I can thereby escape eternal fire, and gain the everlasting joys of Heaven, to which we must come through many tribulations! Yes, my God, I abandon myself to Thy holy will! Let what may happen, Thou art worthy that I should suffer injustice for Thy sake; my sins deserve a greater punishment; Thy Heaven is worth a still severer martyrdom, and there I place my consolation and await its eternal delights. Do Thou, oh, God, give me constant patience and grace to that end. Amen.

THIRTY-THIRD SERMON.

ON THE DUTY OF WIVES TO THEIR HUSBANDS.

Subject.

1st. Explanation of the duty of wives to their husbands. 2d. On account of the frequent neglect of this duty, much misunderstanding and disunion are caused in the married life.—*Preached on the first Sunday after Easter.*

Text.

Pax vobis.—John xx. 20.

"Peace be with you."

Introduction.

This was the greeting of Jesus Christ to His disciples whenever He appeared to them after His Resurrection: "Peace be with you."² He knew well how much depends on peace. Christ-

¹ Non est ignis!

² Pax vobis.

ian married people, peace be with you! That is the best and most excellent thing that I can wish you. For there is nothing more necessary, especially in the married life, than peace, union, and constant love with and for each other. As we have seen already, husbands most frequently disturb this peace by not performing their duty as they ought. Nor have I any doubt that many wives were well pleased with the sermon preached on that subject, and that they wished in their hearts that their husbands were present to learn their duty and the enormity of their faults against it. There may be some, too, who, as soon as they went home, were well able to favor their husbands with an interpretation of what they had heard, and to say to them: It is a pity you were not there; the sermon would have suited you admirably. For every one is ready to listen, as long as the truth is told to others, and not to himself. But, as I have already remarked, it is not always the husbands who disturb peace, love, and union; very often the wives do that also, because they do not know their duty towards their husbands, or do not fulfil it properly. This shall be our subject to-day.

Plan of Discourse.

In the first part, I will explain the duty of wives to their husbands. In the second part, I will show that on account of the frequent neglect of this duty, much misunderstanding and disunion are caused in the married life, and further, I will explain how husbands must act in order to preserve peace in such circumstances. Peace be with you will be the conclusion as well as the beginning.

Do Thou, oh, God of peace, give Thy grace to all married people. To this end pour abundant blessings on them, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and the holy angels of peace.

Ridiculous
custom of
married
people
among the
Saciens.

Ælianus tells us, in his History, of a ridiculous, or rather, foolish custom amongst the Sacians. Amongst these people, when the bridegroom was bringing his bride home, accompanied by a great crowd, and the bridal party had arrived at the door of the house, the newly-married pair set to in real earnest, in presence of the whole crowd, fighting and contending with each other, until one succeeded in prostrating the other on the ground. If the man was beaten, he was bound to be subject to his wife, to obey her as her servant, and to wait upon her his whole life long, while the latter was led into the house triumphantly, as its mistress. If, on the other hand, the man conquered, he was to be

henceforth master of the house, while his wife was bound to wait upon him and to follow him into the house humbly and respectfully, like a poor maid-servant. If, after a long struggle, the spectators decided that it was a drawn battle, then both had equal rights, the wife having as much authority as her husband. This custom was strictly maintained, and any one who acted against it was punished juridically. Therefore the boys and girls began from their earliest youth to practise fighting, and did not mind it in the least if they sometimes got rather hard knocks, because they wished to prepare themselves for the time of their marriage, so as to secure to themselves the authority in the household.

Poor women! If the same custom obtained in our days, it would go hard enough with most of you, for you are brought up so delicately and tenderly that you could not withstand a strong man for a moment! Yet, I need not pity you on that account, no matter how weak you may be, for you can find other ways and means of usurping the authority in the house, and of compelling your husbands to give way to you, for the sake of preserving peace, quiet, and unity in the married life. But that is not right! The law and regulation laid down by St. Paul for Christian families, differ widely from that. Read the 5th chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians, and you will find there, plain enough, these words: "Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord."¹ Take notice, then, Christian wives; although your husbands owe you love and fidelity as their companions, yet they are the masters of the house, they have authority over you, and you must be subject to them. And this is the first duty toward your husband, which the married state imposes on you, namely, submissive obedience.

The reason of this obedience is twofold; it is according to the natural law, and it is a punishment of original sin. The natural subjection of the wife to the husband is founded on the superiority of the male sex over the female. It is in accordance with reason that where there is question of authority amongst two individuals, the more excellent should have it; therefore, in every kingdom of the world, the sons succeed to their fathers' throne, in preference to the daughters; nay, in some countries in the world there is a law forbidding females to reign. Besides, our first father Adam came immediately from the hands of God, who Himself formed the clay into a body and breathed the soul into it. Eve was made, as the Holy Scripture says, from a rib of

Married Christians must observe a far different rule.

Wives must be subject to their husbands.

This submission is founded on the natural law.

¹ Mulieres viris suis subditæ sint, sicut Domino.—Ephes. v. 22.

Adam. Now it is an axiom of jurists that a building belongs to the owner of the ground, as well as whatever crops the ground produces. Thirdly, as a general rule, God has given more of the wisdom, prudence, foresight, and fortitude that are necessary to govern to man than to woman (although there are many women who are much more clever than men), and this appears to be the reason why St. Paul did not allow women to preach in churches, nor would the Catholic Church ever permit that, for otherwise many errors would be the result. It is therefore natural and reasonable that, if one of the married pair is to govern the other, the weaker in understanding should submit to the stronger, and therefore the wife must obey her husband.

Such is the
law of God.

In addition to this natural law of subjection, which would also have been observed in Paradise in the state of innocence, there is still another which God imposed upon wives in punishment of original sin. Eve was the first to allow herself to be deceived by the infernal serpent and to eat the forbidden fruit in the hope of becoming like to God and of being worthy of adoration. Nor was she content therewith: by her sweet and flattering words she induced her husband to follow her example and transgress the divine command, and thereby she brought destruction on us all. Therefore God said to her: "In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children."¹ That was in punishment of her sin. And immediately afterwards she heard the words: "Thou shalt be under thy husband's power, and he shall have dominion over thee."² That was because she had led him into sin. How was that? asks Abulensis in wonderment. If Eve before the fall was subject to her husband, according to the natural law, how could the same submission be imposed upon her as a punishment for her sin? Yes, he answers, before the fall she was subject to her husband as to a gracious prince, but after it she had to obey him as her master: He shall have dominion over thee.³ So also St. Paul in the passage already quoted: "Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord."⁴ Now, what is the difference between the government of a prince and that of a master? A prince, according to the philosopher Aristotle, commands his subjects according to the general law, and in matters pertaining to the general welfare; a master commands his subjects how, when, and where he pleases. "Such is my will, such my command;"⁵ and if you

¹ *In dolore paries filios.*—Gen. iii. 16.

² *Sub viri potestate eris, et ipse dominabitur tui.*—Ibid.

³ *Ipse dominabitur tui.*

⁴ *Mulleres viris suis subditæ sint, sicut Domino.*

⁵ *Sic volo, sic jubeo.*

ask why: "My will is sufficient reason."¹ Therefore, there are two very valid reasons for wives to be subject to their husbands "as to the Lord."²

But how, in what manner, are they to obey? With fear and reverence, answers St. Paul: "Let the wife fear her husband."³ Not, indeed, with a servile fear, for, as we have seen already, when speaking of the duty of husbands, conjugal love should be the motive of all authority and of every command; but with a child-like respect, which springs from love, and in virtue of which a wife should dread contradicting her husband's will in the least thing. How far must this obedience extend? Lest I should say too much, we will hear St. Paul again: "As the Church is subject to Christ, so also let the wives be to their husbands in all things."⁴ In what? "In all things."⁵ There you have it all in a word. In all things, provided that nothing is commanded against the will of God. Otherwise there is no exception; they must obey in all things, even against their will, and in disagreeable things. If the husband wishes the wife to hold her tongue, she must obey; if he tells her to remain at home, she must obey; if he commands her to return at a fixed hour, she must obey; if he desires her to undertake a certain work, to dress in a certain manner (provided it is lawful), she must obey; in all things she must submit to the good will and pleasure of her husband. This authority of the husband is even ratified by God to such an extent, that God Himself almost yields His own right in favor of it. For instance, the wife makes a vow to go on a pilgrimage, or to have so many Masses said, or to give so much to the poor, or to fast on certain days in the week, and so forth, the husband can say: No, I will not allow it; you must remain at home; you must not have Masses said, nor give any more alms; you must eat and drink as usual. And if she gets scrupulous and says: But I have made a vow to do these things, he can answer: I release you from the vow, and free you from all such obligations. But you are not the Pope, to be able to absolve me from a vow! Although I am not the Pope, yet the sacrament of Matrimony has given me power and right to free you from your vow. And such, my dear brethren, is the general doctrine of theologians, provided that such vows are in any way disadvantageous to the married life. Such great authority has the husband over his wife!

In what
and how
they must
obey.

¹ Stat pro ratione voluntas. ² Sicut Domino.

³ Uxor autem timeat virum suum.—Ephes. v. 33.

⁴ Sicut Ecclesia subjecta est Christo, ita et mulieres viris suis in omnibus.—Ibid. 24

⁵ In omnibus.

By such obedience, wives get the upper hand of their husbands.

Ah, Christian wives, do not get angry at what I say. I am only a poor echo of the great Apostle, St. Paul, and a herald of the doctrine that he taught the whole world. Ah, I say again, if you were only constant in the practise of that obedience, you could not find a better means of having the supremacy that you perhaps long for and desire in your hearts; for in that way you would in a short time make your husbands subject to you, and rule over them as you please, so that, even if God had not commanded you to obey, and St. Paul had never said a word about it, your own advantage and profit ought to suggest it to you. Father Cornelius à Lapide, the celebrated commentator of the Holy Scriptures tells a story of a young wife, who went to an old, experienced, and clever man, to ask him how she should live in the married state so as to be always happy. The wise old man answered: "If you wish to rule over your husband, you must obey him," and do what he tells you; "for a good woman rules her husband by being obedient to him."¹

Proved by examples.

If there was ever a wife who had authority, it was Livia Augusta, who ruled Cæsar, her husband, the ruler of the world. How did she manage that? She told it herself to an intimate friend: "By being very reserved, and by doing all that Augustus wished."² In the same way Clotilde, the wife of Clovis, king of France, obtained authority over her husband and over the whole kingdom; she always obeyed the king with the greatest humility. Whenever he asked her to do anything, her answer was: "My Lord, I have left my will in my father's house; here in France I have no will but that of my husband." And then Clovis used to say: "I have a wife of great understanding and excellent memory, but she has no will." In that way she brought matters so far, that once on his return from a battle in which he had been victorious, he publicly declared himself a Christian and said: "Clovis has conquered his enemies, and Clotilde has conquered Clovis. I now renounce heathenism and embrace the religion that Clotilde has taught me by her example." Christian wives, is not that a fine way of gaining authority over your husbands? "Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord."³

They must be faithful to their husbands in domestic matters.

This first obligation brings with it a second, namely, inviolable fidelity and helpfulness in domestic management. Certainly a man is obliged to support his wife and children, but the wife is

¹ *Si vis imperare viro, pareas, bona enim mulier parendo viro imperat.*

² *Multa modestia, et quod ea, qua: placerent Augusto, facerem libenter.*

³ *Mulieres viris suis subditæ sint, sicut Domino.*

not to remain idle on that account ; she must help her husband according to his desire, and both must take their part in the duties and business of their state. Generally speaking, it is the man's duty to attend to out-door business, while the wife has to look after the house, to care for the children, and bring them up carefully in a Christian manner, to see that the servants do their work properly, to prepare her husband's meals in due time, and to look after all the other details of domestic management. If she is careless in this respect, and neglects her business, or if she buys things or gives them away, or makes and receives presents, or otherwise arranges matters according to her own will and pleasure, she would act contrary to the fidelity she owes her husband, who is alone lord and master of the house, and whom she is bound to help, by keeping his house for him as he wills and not otherwise.

Finally, as the husband is bound to love his wife from his heart, so also must she reciprocate this love ; and she must not only do so really in her heart, but also show it outwardly in her behavior. Hence she must always meet him with the greatest affection and kindness ; she must contribute as much as possible to his repose, consolation, pleasure, and enjoyment ; she must look after his health, as she would after her own ; she must attend to him, if he is weak and sickly ; she must console him in sorrow and affliction ; she must be careful of his good name, honor, and reputation, so that he can see by all her words and actions that she loves him sincerely as she loves herself. There are many examples of this conjugal affection on the part of wives related in the Sacred Scriptures : for instance, Michol, the wife of David, when she heard that the soldiers of her father Saul were seeking him, immediately let him down by a rope from a window of the house, and dressed up a wooden image and placed it in the bed so as to deceive the soldiers and give her husband more time to escape, as we read in the 19th chapter of the First Book of Kings. The same love was shown by Abigail to her husband Nabal, although, as the Holy Scripture says, he was an avaricious, drunken, foolish, and wicked man. When he, through niggardliness, refused to give David the food that the latter requested of him, and David was therefore about to punish him, Abigail came forward to save her husband. She brought many presents to David and thus appeased his anger, so that he swore solemnly : " Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who sent thee this day to meet me, and blessed be thy speech : and blessed be thou who hast kept

They must
always love
their hus-
bands.

me to-day from coming to blood, and revenging me with my own hand. Otherwise, as the Lord liveth, the God of Israel, if thou hadst not quickly come to meet me, Nabal would not have lived till the morning light." ¹

What the
Bavarian
women did.

The story of the women of Bavaria is well known. When Guelph, Duke of Bavaria, was besieged by the Emperor Conrad III., with a great force, and was on the point of having his town burnt down, the women of the town sent a petition to the emperor, and asked him to allow them, since they had nothing to do with the war, to leave the town unharmed and to bring with them whatever each one could carry. Their petition was granted. The emperor came to see them leave the town, fully believing that they would bring away nothing but their clothes and a few domestic utensils; but what was his surprise when he saw all, from the duchess down to the lowliest matron, carrying their husbands on their backs out of the town, through the camp. This sight drew tears from the emperor, so that he spared the town and offered peace and friendship to the Duke. When Lorenzo de Medici, Duke of Florence, read this story as he once lay sick in bed, he was so delighted with it that he recovered his health, although the doctors could not help him. I think, my dear brethren, that if the same chance were offered to wives in our days, under the same circumstances, many husbands would have to remain at home, or their wives would not carry them far without letting them fall, through want of proper love and affection. And, therefore, many husbands complain, with reason, that their wives do not attend to their duty, and in this way occasion a great deal of strife, quarrelling, and contention in the married life. This complaint, and how husbands must act so as to preserve peace, we shall consider in the

Second Part.

By a want
of diligence
and fidelity
in house-
keeping.

It is intolerable for an inferior to usurp authority that does not belong to him, and to try to command his superior. It is unjust when one can expect neither consolation nor help from a person who is bound to assist him in bearing his burden. And it is a most painful thing when one is despised, neglected, and hated by a person from whom he has a right to expect a tender love and affection. Such is the wretchedness and misery of many

¹ *Benedictus Dominus Deus Israel, qui misit te hodie in occursum meum, et benedictum eloquium tuum, et benedicta tu, quæ prohibuisti me hodie, ne irem ad sanguinem, et ulciscerer me manu mea. Attoquin vivit Dominus Deus Israel: nisi venisses in occursum meum, non mansisset Nabal usque ad lucem matutinam.*—I. Kings xxv. 32-34.

husbands who have bad wives. These latter, as we have seen from St. Paul, are bound to be subject to their husbands, and to obey their least sign, but to the husband's great disgrace, how often do we not hear that the wife rules the house! Sometimes this happens through the husband's cowardice and timidity, but more frequently still from the obstinacy, pride, and arrogance of the wife, who refuses to obey, and insists on having her way in everything; otherwise she fills the house with murmurs, complaints, abuse, and curses. She goes out when and wherever she likes, remains away as long as she pleases, and follows her own inclination with regard to meals and other details of housekeeping. Is not that enough to exhaust any man's patience?

If the wife stops at home, as all decent and pious women should, unless the divine will or necessity requires otherwise, she is often of no more use in housekeeping than a silver goblet that is placed for show on the side-board. Brought up idle and vain by her parents, she remains so in the married state, and brings up her daughters like herself. Her hands are too soft for her to work in the kitchen, in the garden, or in her room; these occupations are unfit for such a grand lady! She sleeps till late in the day, spends a long time before the looking-glass, receives visits and is glad of the chance to do so, goes to tea-parties, and wastes her time in idle amusements which do not bring a penny into the house. If she has none of these things to pass away the time with, she pesters her poor husband, who has serious matters to think of, with her vain and frivolous chatter, until he becomes almost distracted. St. Paul describes wives of this class in his first Epistle to Timothy, 5th chapter: "And withal being idle, they learn to go about from house to house: and are not only idle, but tattlers also, and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not."¹ These are not my words, my dear brethren, they are the words of St. Paul. Nor do I mean to say that all wives are like that; let them take it for whom it is meant. There are others who trouble themselves too much altogether about the housekeeping; they are either too sparing and economical, so that the servants, who sometimes do not get enough to eat, bring the house into disrepute by their complaints, and the husbands, who cannot always interfere, are ashamed when they go into the company of their equals; or they are so domineering and harsh with the servants that no one will stop a year with them, and the innocent husband must bear his part of that disgrace too.

Many fall therein by disobedience.

¹ *Offense discunt circuire domos: non solum otiosæ, sed et verbosæ, et curiosæ, loquentes quæ non oportet.*—I. Tim. v. 12.

By vanity
and prodigality.

There are others who are too prodigal in spending money on dress, useless furniture, gambling, and often (what a shame for a woman !) on drink. If they see others of their condition well dressed, they must be like them ; if others have new-fangled laces and ribbons, they are not easy until they have them too, and for peace' sake their husbands are obliged to give in and spend their hard-earned money, although they can ill afford it, on those useless gimcracks ; thus verifying the words of the Prophet Aggeus : " He that hath earned wages, puts them into a bag with holes,"¹ and gets no profit from them. If a prudent husband objects to this expense, and disapproves of too great luxury in dress, oh, then it is all up with mutual love ! His lady wife has neither a good word nor a kind look for him, and there is nothing but quarrelling in the house. If he tries to reason her out of her folly, he has his trouble for nothing, for there is no reasoning with that kind of vanity ; the more reasons you bring forward, even if they are founded on the words and law of Christ Himself, the more obstinate will the foolish woman grow, lest she should have to confess herself in the wrong. I must dress in the fashion, like others of my condition, she says, whereas it is her bounden duty to do as her husband tells her. That is the law imposed on her by God ; she must obey it, and not the law of the vain world.

By a want
of true love.

And what is the use of all that luxury in dress ? I am speaking to you, Christian wife ; answer me ! For whose sake do you dress in that way ? Is it for your husband's, whom alone you must try to please ? But he would be very glad if you were not so extravagant. Is it then to please others ? At least it seems so ; for when you are at home with your husband, and do not expect any visitors, you do not care how you dress. Your vain and fashionable apparel is kept for strangers whom you meet outside, or in society, in order to excite their admiration. What must your husband think of that, since he cannot bear to see you trying to attract the notice of others ? And it is another hidden thorn in his side, when he sees that you are always friendly and smiling with strangers, but gloomy and sour at home. Others who are free from this vice, are of an obstinate, quarrelsome, and disagreeable disposition. They cannot bear the least thing and must always have the last word. If their husbands make a remark, they are sure to have some snappish answer ready, and then they complain afterwards that they are ill-treated and have

¹ Qui mercedes congregavit, misit eas in sacculum pertuseum.—Agg. 1.

no peace with their husbands. Nor, indeed, am I surprised at that. Eulenspiegel says: Men cannot bear me, but I pay them in their own coin. Others, who are afraid to venture so far, since they know by experience that it would be worse for them if they did, are frequently unfriendly and sulky with their husbands, so that the latter have reason to doubt the sincerity of their affection. A very dangerous thing, indeed; wives, be careful! You may think it a light thing to trifle with your husband's love, but it is a trifling that might easily have serious consequences, and drive them away from you to seek consolation elsewhere, and thus you might have to answer for many grievous sins.

Worthy, indeed, of pity are the unfortunate men who must live with wives of that kind! It was formerly the custom of the Greeks, Romans, and Hebrews for men to purchase their wives from the parents, either by money or by long service; thus, for instance, the Patriarch Jacob had to serve Laban for fourteen years, in order to get his daughter Rachel in marriage, as we read in the 29th chapter of the Book of Genesis. David had to slay two hundred Philistines, exposing his life to great danger, before he could get Michol, Saul's daughter, in marriage. It seems also that you must dance attendance for a long time, flatter and do all kinds of service before getting your wives; but perhaps if you had foreseen what sort of a life they would lead you, many of you would have said: "I will not purchase repentance so dearly!"¹ The words of the Wise Man are true: "He that hath found a good wife, hath found a good thing."² And Ecclesiasticus says: "Happy is the husband of a good wife."³ On the other hand he bewails the misery of those who are tied to worthless wives, and devotes almost two whole chapters, the 25th and 26th, to the subject. I will quote a few passages for you: "A man will choose any plague but the plague of the heart, and any wickedness but the wickedness of a woman. . . . There is no head worse than the head of a serpent, and there is no anger above the anger of a woman. It will be more agreeable to abide with a lion and a dragon, than to dwell with a wicked woman. . . . Her husband groaned, and hearing he sighed a little. All malice is short to the malice of a woman."⁴

What a trial for husbands to have such wives!

¹ Tanti pœnitere non emo.

² Qui invenit mulierem bonam, invenit bonum.—Prov. xviii. 22.

³ Mulieris bonæ beatus vir.—Ecc. xxvi. 1.

⁴ Omnem plagam, et non plagam videbis cordis, et omnem nequitiam, et non nequitiam mulieris. . . . Non est caput nequius super caput colubri, et non est ira super iram mulieris. Commorari leoni et draconi placebit, quam habitare cum muliere nequam. . . . Invenit vir ejus et audiens suspiravit modicum. Brevis omnis malitia super malitiam mulieris.—Ibid. xxv. 18

And a great deal more to the same purpose. But, you think, it is too late now to change ; what is done is done, and I must remain by my choice ! Alas, if you have not all your wits about you now, you will have very little chance of preserving conjugal love and union.

How men
must act so
as to pre-
serve union.

And what are you to do ? I will tell you in a few words, for it is not necessary to give a long instruction on the matter, as I did before to wives. A few words, if you understand them well, will be of great help to you. Learn, then, that in all quarrels, the more sensible gives way, and the stronger yields to the weaker, according to the advice that St. Peter gives you : “ Ye husbands likewise dwelling with them according to knowledge, giving honor to the female as to the weaker vessel, and as to the co-heirs of the grace of life,” ’ so as to bear with something from them. Not, however, that you must let them rule over you (for the holy Apostle St. Paul does not allow that ; he says : I do not allow the woman to rule over her husband²), but that you may overlook their faults and failings with as much patience as you can, whenever it is lawful to do so. You must often act as if you had neither eyes nor ears, and bear patiently and silently with a fault that is not very injurious to your domestic interests, as if you had not seen it. If your wife is fond of going out into society, see what kind of people she frequents. If they are not dangerous for her, if she only visits her parents, relatives, or well-known acquaintances, then you may be quite satisfied, thinking that it is better to allow that to go on, than to cause a greater evil by trying to prevent it. When a dove flies away from the cote you do not throw stones after her, for fear lest she should not come back. But if the society is dangerous or suspicious, then it is another matter altogether ; you must absolutely forbid her to go near it, and must represent to her with kind, but earnest words the danger to her soul, and the disgrace before the people that she incurs, as well as the displeasure and trouble that you are bound to feel at her conduct. If your wife is too avaricious and miserly, think that at all events she will not make you any poorer, and do you be all the more generous to the children, the servants, the poor and needy, and you will thus atone for her fault. Is she too extravagant ? You can easily remedy that by not leaving too much in her hands, saying at the same time in a friendly manner, that

¹ Viri similiter cohabitantes secundum scientiam, quasi infirmiori vasculo muliebri impardentes honorem tanquam et coheredibus gratiæ vitæ.—1. Petr. III. 7.

² Mulieri non permitto domnari in virum.—1. Tim. II. 12.

your circumstances do not allow of such expenditure, and therefore you must put a stop to it. Is she anxious to have the upper hand and to interfere too much? Then be patient with her; tell her often that she is quite right, and afterwards you can do as you think fit. Is she disobedient and obstinate? Then do not give her any command, but politely ask her to do as you desire, and let her see that you give in to her, not through want of manly courage, but through kindness, conjugal affection, and a love of peace. Is she too fond of talking? Remember that she is a woman, and do not expect miracles from her. Is she passionate, peevish, and quarrelsome? Do not argue with her; if you stir the fire it will blaze all the brighter; be silent and laugh at her in your sleeve; she will soon stop of her own accord. Think, but do not let her know it, of her, as Job said to his wife when she was reviling him: "Thou hast spoken like one of the foolish women."¹ The philosopher Socrates says of himself that he paid no more attention to the constant scolding of his wife, Xantippe, than to the creaking of a wheel. If you wish to get the best in a dispute, keep silent. The victory is complete, says St. Valerius, when one remains silent and gives no answer to the other's abusive words. Is she sometimes sulky and cross with you? Pretend to take no notice, and let her come round of her own accord. Finally, often represent to yourself Jesus Christ our Saviour. What has He not to put up with from His spouse the Catholic Church? How cruelly most of its members insult Him! How they dishonor His Name! With what fearful sins perhaps even you have offended Him! And yet He is so patient with His spouse, and loves her so much that He feeds her with His own Body and Blood.

In the same way must you love and bear with the wife that God has given you, although she often may cause you serious annoyance. You will thus be able to increase your merit and your future glory in Heaven. Thank God, too, that your wife is no worse.

I conclude by exhorting all married people to unity in the words of St. Paul already quoted: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church."² "Let wives be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord."³ Be obedient, respectful, helpful, and loving to them! Peace be with you!⁴ Oh, if all of you, husbands and wives,

Conclusion
and exhortation
to all
married
people.

¹ Quasi una de stultis mulieribus locuta es.—Job ii. 10.

² Viri diligite uxores vestras sicut et Christus dilexit Ecclesiam.

³ Mulieres subditæ sint viris suis, sicut Domino. ⁴ Pax vobis.

were always careful to do your duty properly, what peaceful, pleasant, and happy lives you would have! But since there is no one in the world without certain faults and failings, which are generally the cause of disunion and strife, even between those who would otherwise love each other dearly, I will give another exhortation of St. Paul, which he wrote to the Galatians: "Brethren, and if a man be overtaken in any fault, instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."¹ Think that others must bear with the same fault in you: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ."² Are your wives faulty? Then, husbands, you must bear with them. Are your husbands faulty? Then, wives, you must bear with them; and both of you in patience and Christian charity, for the love of God! Live with each other like the holy couple Zacharias and Elizabeth, to whom the Holy Scriptures give the following praise, in the Gospel of St. Luke: "And they were both just before God, walking in all the commandments and justifications of the Lord without blame."³ May the bond of love unite your hearts in this short life, in order that it may unite your souls in the long life that is to come! Such is my heartfelt wish for you! Peace be with you. ⁴ Amen.

THIRTY-FOURTH SERMON.

ON JEALOUSY IN THE MARRIED STATE.

Subject.

1st. What jealousy is, and what great mischief it works in the married state. 2d. How married people are to guard against it, and how one is to act, if the other is infected with it.—*Preached on the second Sunday after Easter.*

Text.

Tradebat autem judicanti se injuste.—From the Epistle of the day.—I. Petr. ii. 23.

"He delivered himself to him that judged Him unjustly."

¹ Fratres, etsi præoccupatus fuerit homo in aliquo delicto, hujusmodi instruite in spiritu lenitatis, considerans te ipsum, ne et tu tenteris.—Gal. vi. 1.

² Alter alterius onera portate, et sic adimplebitis legem Christi.—Ibid. 2.

³ Erant autem justi ambo ante Deum, incedentes in omnibus mandatis et justificationibus Domini sine querela.—Luke i. 6.

⁴ Pax vobis.

Introduction.

“ Dearly beloved, Christ has suffered for us, leaving an example that you should follow His steps. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. Who, when He was reviled, did not revile; when He suffered, He threatened not, but delivered Himself to him that judged Him unjustly.” So far St. Peter, in today’s Epistle. My dear brethren, how beautiful it would be for us Christians if we all lived together according to the example of our Model, Jesus Christ ! What a happy thing, especially for a married couple, if one knew how to give way to the other ! Certainly, peace and union would then be much better preserved, as we have seen already. There is yet another thing that causes much trouble and uneasiness. And what is that ? Where the peace and quiet of the married life are not disturbed by quarrelling and contention, they often are by rash judgments and secret injurious thoughts on one side or the other ; and that occurs when one suspects the other of being unfaithful : therein consists the jealousy that is often found amongst married people.

Plan of Discourse.

What jealousy is, and what great mischief it works in the married state, I will briefly explain in the first part. How married people are to guard against it, and how one is to act if the other is infected with it, I will explain in the second part of my instruction.

Jesus Christ, who gavest Thyself up in silence, patiently and meekly, to the unjust judgment of wicked men, give Thy grace to all married people, that they may never give cause for such evil judgments, or after Thy example, may learn to bear them with patience. This we ask of Thee through the merits of Thy Mother Mary and the holy angels guardian.

As worms and moths grow in clothes and eat them away, little by little, so jealousy grows out of love and, like a gnawing worm, eats it away and changes it into hatred. Jealousy is a mental disease which comes from the fear that we have of another getting possession of something that we love, and wish to keep for ourselves: the least interference with the object of our affection disturbs and disquiets the heart and mind exceedingly. Nothing is more common in the world, among all states and conditions, than this malady. The general loves honor and reputation for bravery and heroic actions ; a young officer is fortunate enough to van-

What jealousy is, and how common.

quish the foe frequently, and thereby makes a name for himself, and the general at once grows jealous of the young man, and cannot bear him, although the latter has conquered the enemies of his country. The praise that the officer gets grates on the ears of the other, who thinks that his own fame and reputation will suffer thereby. Thus Saul, who formerly loved David, hated him at last so much that he tried to take his life, and the sole cause of his hatred was the jealousy he felt when he heard the people singing in David's praise: "Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands."¹ A courtier is jealous of his fellow courtier, on account of the favor and grace of the prince, which he would wish to have for himself alone; one lawyer is jealous of another who gets more cases than he does; a doctor is jealous of another who is more successful in curing disease; a merchant is jealous when he sees another making more profit; a tradesman is jealous of another who possesses more skill in his handicraft. Jealousy is found amongst musicians, painters, and sculptors, on account of their art; amongst parents, on account of their children, and their beauty, cleverness, and talents; amongst women, on account of greater magnificence in dress; amongst students, on account of the highest places in the schools; in private houses, amongst children, if one of them is more caressed by his parents than the other. So unruly and so unmanageable does the love of a thing become, when there are many aspiring to the possession of it.

Nowhere more common and more hurtful than in the married state.

But there is no state in which this fell disease is more easily introduced, and develops more quickly into a mortal illness, than in the married state; and that is because the husband and wife, or either of them, who become infected with that malady, have a twofold, instead of a single love, and that love is a very earnest one indeed. The husband, for instance (and the same may be said of the wife), loves himself and his own happiness best; and next to himself he loves his wife as one who belongs to him alone; hence comes his ardent desire to be alone loved by her, and a great fear and anxiety lest she should share her heart with others, or conceive an aversion for him. If he sees only the least sign of that, he suspects her of being unfaithful, and is much grieved and distressed thereat; this fear, suspicion, and distress are a real mental disease, and constitute what is called jealousy.

This is a source of great

How much mischief this malady causes! In the first place it grievously torments the heart that suffers from it; hardly any

¹ Percussit Saul mille, et David decem millia.—I. Kings xviii. 7.

heavier cross can be found in the married life. Imagine, my dear brethren, a grisly monster with a hundred eyes and ears always open, so as to see and hear everything, and whatever he sees and hears tortures him most cruelly. Imagine that you see a lot of gloomy, melancholy thoughts and suspicions going in and out of the mind, day and night, without ceasing, like ants in their hill, or wasps in their nest. That is a picture of the heart and mind of a jealous husband. He believes that all his suspicions of his wife are true; that all that he dreads is actually occurring. He watches her every step and movement, he suspects all that she says or does in presence of others. Even if she goes to Church or says her prayers, he puts a wrong construction on it, and if he cannot detect any outward proof of unfaithfulness, his suspicions and fears sink all the deeper into his mind, and cause him unspeakable torture. But there is no use in describing this any further; they who suffer from it know by experience what a torment it is. Ah, yes! Temporal losses, misfortunes, poverty, sterility, trouble with children, sickness, illness, and death of children, an ill-tempered husband, an obstinate wife, worthless servants, and other trials of that sort which afflict the married state—all these things are easy to bear in comparison with that heart-gnawing disease, jealousy. No matter how courageous and brave a man may be in bearing all changes of fortune, if he once begins to suspect his wife of being unfaithful, his courage is gone from him. No matter how pious and good a wife may be, and how resigned in bearing crosses and trials, if she grows jealous of her husband, her patience and meekness are turned into fury and wrath, as the Wise Ecclesiasticus says: “A jealous woman is the grief and mourning of the heart. With a jealous woman is a scourge of the tongue which communicateth with all.”¹ The Spouse of the Canticles likens this feeling to the pains of hell: “Jealousy is hard as hell.”²

anguish to
one who is
infected
with it.

Hence, amongst other evils, arise discord, strife, and, in place of ardent love, an implacable hatred between the married pair, along with all the sins and vices which, as we have seen before, disunion causes in the married life. For, how can the husband look kindly on her whose love and fidelity he doubts? And how can the wife love him who is so suspicious and has such a bad opinion of her, that he watches her every movement? She will certainly

Disunion
between
married
people.

¹ Dolor cordis et luctus mulier zelotypa. In muliere zelotypa flagellum lingue omnibus communicans.—Ecl. xxvi. 8, 9.

² Dura sicut infernus æmulatio.—Cant. viii. 6.

begin to distrust her husband before long, and to believe that he is subject to the faults he suspects her of. Thus, although she may have been innocent, honorable, and faithful before, she will now venture on things that she would not have dreamt of doing at first. It is against this that Ecclesiasticus warns all husbands: "Be not jealous over the wife of thy bosom, lest she show in thy regard the malice of a wicked lesson."¹ That is, as Father Cornelius à Lapide says: "That she may not really become what she sees you suspect her of being."²

Sometimes
anger and
cruelty.

The world has had terrible experience of the effects of this passion. There have been women whom jealousy worked up to such a pitch of fury that, in order to be revenged on their husbands for suspecting them of unfaithfulness, they tore their own children to pieces before their husband's eyes and cast them at their feet; as we read of Medea. There have been women who, through jealousy of their husbands, cooked their children and served them up at table, nor did they say a word of what they had done until their husbands had unsuspectingly eaten the horrid repast; as the poets write of Progne. Almost all separations of married people have their origin in jealousy. Unhappy, indeed, is the married life, when this fury invades it! And how wicked are you, miserable scandal-mongers, agents of the devil, who delight in telling what you have seen or heard to husband or wife, so as to awaken the suspicions of either and kindle the flame of jealousy between them; a flame which can hardly ever be extinguished afterwards! Christian married people, do all you can to guard against these wicked and mischievous tale-bearers! Love each other constantly, with a true Christian love, which never suspects evil of the beloved one, as St. Paul says: Love suspects no evil.³ But how are you to act so that this vice may not find place in your hearts? That I will tell you in the

Second Part.

The wife
must avoid
suspicious
company
so as to give
no cause
for jealousy
to her hus-
band.

Since either of the married couple can give the other occasion for jealousy and suspicions, so both are bound under pain of sin to avoid everything that could give reasonable cause for uneasiness. You must not pour oil on the fire, or it will blaze up more furiously; if a cloud comes before the sun, it intercepts his rays, and the earth is in darkness. Therefore, the wife must be particularly

¹ Non zelus mulierem sinus tui, ne ostendat super te malitiam doctrinæ nequam.—Ecl. ix. 1.

² Ne setlicet adversum te faciat, quod videt, te timere et suspicari.

³ Caritas non cogitat malum.—I. Cor. xiii. 5.

cautious in this respect, if she sees her husband inclined to be very sensitive, and must carefully avoid all dangerous and suspicious company. The goddess of impure love was once represented by a painter as going on a journey, accompanied by a maid who prepared the way for her mistress. And what sort of a maid was that? Her name was Companionship,¹ and the painter wished to signify thereby that the way is prepared for impure love by being too free and unrestrained in the choice of one's company. Alas, what mischief and sin this unhappy maid occasions among young people of both sexes, who are allowed to see, hear, and speak, laugh and dance with each other, without any restraint, in modern society! And what mischief she works also among even married men and women! There is danger for wives even in the society of those of their own sex, if they are vain and frivolous; and a sensitive or suspicious husband could readily find cause for uneasiness therein, for, according to the well-known axiom of philosophers: "Birds of a feather flock together."² And a Spanish proverb says: "Tell me your company and I will tell you what you are," although I may not have had any previous knowledge of your character. There are women who like to show, by their independence and by their impudent manners, that they have the upper hand of their husbands. Such women are fond of going out. They frequent all sorts of company, without caring whether their husbands like it or not; they set themselves up as teachers, without being asked to do so, and undertake to instruct newly-married wives. In what? Here are the beautiful lessons they give: You must not allow yourself to be shut up at home; I would not let my husband do that; you must show that you have something to say; you must be like the rest of the world, or it would have been better for you to have entered a convent. Wherever you go, you must amuse yourself, or else people will think you want to play the wiseacre, etc. You who frequent such company should know, well enough, that you are either already infected with the spirit of it, or that you soon will be. Consequently, you give your husbands, if they are sensitive, sufficient cause to suspect your love and fidelity. Much more should wives avoid free intercourse, and especially solitary interviews, with persons of the opposite sex, no matter who they are; for no matter how innocent such intercourse may be, no matter how innocent it may always remain, still, when it is renewed frequently and without necessity, it gives food for suspicion, not only to the husband, but also to the other

¹ *Consuetudo.*² *Omne simile amat sibi simile.*

members of the household, although they may not be of a suspicious disposition.

They also frequently give cause for uneasiness by being too vain and frivolous in dress, especially when they appear so in company. For young unmarried women to act thus, and dress beyond their means and station, is certainly very wrong and opposed to the humility of the Gospel, no matter what any one says to the contrary; yet there may be a certain excuse for them, inasmuch as they are looking for some one whom they would be willing to please. Merchants are accustomed to polish up their goods and make them look well, so as to be rid of them all the sooner. But for a married woman, who has already entered on a state of life in which she should seek to please her husband and no other, to give way to vanity in dress, and that not at home either, where her husband alone could see her, but in company and amongst strangers, such conduct must certainly appear very suspicious to a respectable and honorable man.

They must have the fear of God and be kind to their husbands.

Above all, they should have piety and the fear of the Lord, and give their husbands an example therein. The pious are never thought ill of, while, on the contrary, they who are cold in the divine service, worldly in their lives, careless in their devotions, neglectful of confession and holy communion, and remiss in hearing sermons, easily give reason to think that, as they do not serve the Lord their God faithfully, so also they are wanting in fidelity to their husbands. Finally, they must always be friendly and loving towards their husbands, so as to give a proof of the love and affection they have for them. If a wife is always gloomy, unfriendly and distant with her husband, how can he think anything good of her? At least he must doubt the sincerity of her love for him, so that if he loves her as he ought, he will be filled with distressing and anxious thoughts. Sometimes wives complain that their husbands are jealous; that they are too sensitive; that they are always on the watch; that they keep them shut up like nuns in the house; that they never allow them any amusement or society unless in their presence, etc. But we might easily ask those who make that complaint: and how do you behave? Perhaps your conduct is such that your husbands have good reason to mistrust you. Examine yourselves and see whether you have not erred in some of the particulars mentioned already. If that is the case, it is no wonder, indeed, that your husbands are jealous! They would act stupidly and unreasonably otherwise.

The husband must

If the wife is bound in conscience to avoid and shun everything

that could give her husband reasonable cause for jealousy, so also is the husband equally bound to refrain from everything that might give just grounds of suspicion to his wife; and his obligation is even stronger, because, generally speaking, her love is much more sensitive and more exposed to the danger of suspicious fears and jealousy. Ulpianus says that when a wife is accused of being unfaithful to her husband, the judge first tries to find out what sort of a life her husband leads: "For it seems to be very unjust that a man should require in his wife a purity which he himself does not observe."¹ The same thing may be said here. It is useless and unjust for a man to keep his wife locked up at home, while he himself goes about as he pleases, day and night, without having any business to transact that would necessitate his absence from home. It is useless for him to expect her to be humble, modest, and reserved in company, and not to be too friendly with persons of the other sex, while he acts in the opposite way and allows himself the greatest freedom in his conduct and conversation with other women. And that is, unfortunately, only too often the case, and poor wives must sit down quietly and look on, their cheeks burning with shame! It is useless and unjust for him to forbid her all conversation with strangers, unless in his presence, while he is altogether too free in his manner and conversation, even with his own female servants, although his wife is looking on, and must feel troubled and distressed. It is useless and unjust for him to expect her to meet him always with a smiling countenance, while he is stern, gloomy, and harsh in his manner to her. To no purpose does he require her to be pious and devout, in order that she may give no cause for suspicion, if he himself leads a loose, unchristian, and scandalous life, and thereby gives her good reason to doubt his fidelity. No, as far as this matter is concerned, the wife has just as much right as the husband. They must both be, therefore, very careful to avoid everything that is likely to cause suspicion.

Married Christians should herein follow the example set them by the Bridegroom and Bride of the Canticle. What is that? "As the lily among thorns," says the Bridegroom of his Bride, "so is my love among the daughters."² Thorns prick and wound if one lays hold of them incautiously, and therefore they must be handled carefully; the lily is held in high esteem as the queen of flowers. The meaning, then, of the Bridegroom is, and all

also be careful.

Both must imitate the Bridegroom and Bride of the Canticle.

¹ Perinquam enim esse videtur, ut pudicitiam ipse ab uxore exigit, quam ipse non exhibeat.

² Sicut lilyum inter spinas, sic amica mea inter filias.—Cant. ii. 2.

husbands should be of the same opinion : I honor my bride as the most beautiful flower ; I look upon all other women as so many thorns, that I cannot touch without being wounded. And how does the Bride speak ? She says: "As the apple-tree among the trees of the woods, so is my beloved among the sons."¹ That is, I consider my bridegroom alone as the fruitful apple-tree that adorns the garden of our household ; all other men, rich and poor, old and young, beautiful or deformed, I look upon as wild trees of the forest, which are at such a distance that they can hardly be seen. If all married people followed this example, what peace, good understanding, confidence, and mutual love would be found in the married state !

What is to be done by the other if one is jealous without cause.

Meanwhile, it often happens the wife or the husband gives way to jealousy without any reasonable cause, and shows it by an anxious fear. What is to be done, then, so as to preserve peace and unity ? Both must have a sincere compassion for each other, and think that the fear and anxiety are not the result of malice or treachery, but, as is really the case, of a too ardent love that one has for the other. The husband has great reason to rejoice that his wife esteems him so highly that she desires to possess his whole heart and is troubled at the bare thought of a stranger having any share in it ; and similarly the wife with regard to the husband. They must rejoice, too, at the preservation of conjugal chastity, of which jealousy is an almost certain sign ; for if the wife, for instance, were unfaithful, she would not be much distressed if her husband acted coldly towards her. So, also, the husband would not trouble himself much about his wife, if he were involved in an impure attachment.

How they must act so as to be always free from it.

Finally, in order to avoid this dangerous and loathsome disease, remember the warning and the command of Jesus Christ our Lord : "Judge not."² Think no evil of each other. We must look upon our neighbor as good and pious, until we know for certain that he is wicked. Such is the Christian law and the true foundation of Christian charity. It is proclaimed to all men, but especially to married people with regard to each other. Therefore, put away all fears and suspicions, and treat them as mere bugbears of the imagination, as in truth they generally are. The earth is motionless to a healthy eye, but to a diseased one it appears to tremble. Put the best meaning on everything that you hear of, see, and remark in each other, as every Chris-

¹ Sicut malus inter ligna sylvarum, sic dilectus meus inter filios.—Cant. ii. 3.

² Nolite iudicare.—Luke vi. 37.

tian is obliged to do with regard to his neighbor's actions. If you are sometimes troubled with suspicions of your husband or wife, remember the words that Christ addressed to the Pharisees, who used to interpret everything in a bad sense: "Why do you think evil in your hearts?"¹ Do not listen to scandal-mongers, who blow sometimes hot, sometimes cold from the same mouth, when, under the appearance of intimacy or friendship, they tell one of you something suspicious they have seen or remarked in the other. Never be too curious in inquiring into each other's conduct; for, as the proverb says, he who asks many questions gets many different and disagreeable answers. He who is too anxious to know everything will find out a great deal that he would rather not know, and will cause himself much trouble and uneasiness. Plutarch tells us of a laudable custom among the Romans: When a married man was returning from a journey, he used to send on a servant in advance to let his wife know that he was coming. This custom was a prudent one, because it put a stop to all groundless suspicions, and it saved the husband from unpleasant surmises, which he certainly would have had, if on his return he had not found things as they ought to be. Alfonso, King of Spain, used to say: "Then only will the married state enjoy peace and quiet, when the husband is deaf, and the wife blind."² What! A deaf man and a blind woman would certainly make a beautiful pair! Yet, so it is: if the husband pays as little attention as if he were deaf to what his wife says to others, and to what others say of her, and if the wife acts as if she had no eyes to see where and with whom her husband goes, and thus they mutually refrain from suspicious investigations into each other's conduct and always put the best interpretation on it, then they will both enjoy undisturbed peace.

And St. Jerome says to a jealous husband (and wives may make a similar application of his words): "What is the good of the jealous care with which you look after your wife?"³ What is the use of it? If she is good and pure, your care is not necessary; if she is not, it will not cause her to amend. Why do you then torture yourself? Barlaam taught Josaphat a similar lesson by means of the following fable: A man once caught a nightingale and was about to twist its neck. Oh, cried the bird, spare my life, and in gratitude I will give you a piece of advice that

Explained
by an exam-
ple.

¹ Quid cogitatis mala in cordibus vestris?—Matth. ix. 4.

² Tum demum matrimonia tranquille exigentur si vir surdus, uxor caeca sit.

³ Quid tibi profuerit zelus et nimia diligentia in servando uxore tuo?

will often help you during your life. Tell it me, said the man, and I will give you your liberty. Always be careful of three things : never try to catch a thing that will not let itself be caught ; never believe a thing that is not probable ; never bewail a lost good which you can never recover. The bird was then set free, but no sooner had it recovered its liberty than it perched upon a tree, and spoke thus to the man : Oh, you poor simpleton, what have you done ? What a great fortune you have lost ; for if you had killed and cut me open, you would have been a rich man for the rest of your life, since I have a pearl as big as the egg of an ostrich in my body. Alas, said the man, would that I had known that at first ! Come with me to my house, I will give you a hearty welcome, and the best of food. The bird then laughed at him, and said : What a stupid man you are to forget my advice so soon ! Is it likely that I could have such a large pearl in my small body ? Why do you believe it then ? Do you think I would allow you to catch me a second time ? Why do you try to do so ? You have lost me and cannot have me again ; why do you bewail a loss for which there is no help ?

Conclusion
and exhortation.

I conclude with the same exhortation to you, married Christians, and I say : Is your husband, oh, wife, or your wife, oh, husband, true to you in conjugal love ? Then never believe nor fear that this fidelity will be shaken, for it is not likely that such will ever be the case. Is either of you too incautious and free in conduct ! Then the other must not be too anxious and jealous, for such care would be fruitless and profit nothing. Are you certain that you have been betrayed ? Then do not trouble nor distress yourself too much about it, but commend yourself to God ; for what is done cannot be undone, by any amount of grief or sorrow. Love each other with firm confidence ; select as your patrons that most holy married pair, Mary and Joseph. Although the latter was troubled about his spouse, yet, according to the holy Fathers, he never gave way to an evil thought about her, but submitted his reason to a mystery that he could not understand. That he had the idea of sending her away privately, arose, as the same holy Fathers say, from the fact that he was a just man, a title which the Sacred Scripture gives him, and therefore he wished to obey the law. Love your God constantly, and serve Him truly, and there will be no jealousy between you, and you will preserve peace, union, quiet, and heartfelt love, until you both see each other in the city of heavenly peace. Amen.

THIRTY-FIFTH SERMON.

ON ADULTERY.

Subject.

Adultery is 1st. An abomination before men. 2d. An abomination before God.—*Preached on Septuagesima Sunday.*

Text.

Multi enim sunt vocati, pauci vero electi.—Matth. xx. 16.
“For many are called, but few are chosen.”

Introduction.

Terrible saying: “Few are chosen!”¹ What good is it, then, to be called, if one does not arrive at the place to which one is called? This is a matter of interest to all human beings, no matter what their state or condition may be. We are all called by God to a certain state of life, that we may save our souls, and go to Heaven; but how few there are who earnestly work out their salvation according to their state, and consequently, how few there are who go to Heaven! I mean to apply this subject to-day to that state of life of which I have spoken up to the present. I mean the holy state of matrimony. Many enter on that state without first taking counsel with Jesus, and without being called to it by God. What wonder is it, then, that only a few of them save their souls? Many are called to that state, but they do not enter it as they ought, with God on their side. I am afraid that but few of them will be chosen. Many who fulfil these two conditions, do not live as they ought in their state; they do not keep in the friendship of God; they do not fulfil the duties of their state properly; they live in constant strife and dissension, and thus expose themselves to all kinds of vices and sins. I am afraid that but few of them will be chosen. There is one sin in particular, which, when it is committed in the married state, is the most likely to prevent election to Heaven. I hope, my dear brethren, that none of you here present are guilty of that sin. Yet I must speak of it, that all of you may conceive a proper horror and dread of it, although, to tell the truth, I have hitherto shuddered at the idea of saying anything about it. And what sin is it? Adultery. You unmar-

¹ Pauci electi.

ried people, do not go away! This subject is not so circumscribed as might be imagined at first sight: We are all frail and sinful mortals, especially when the opportunity offers; and even the unmarried of both sexes can commit this sin, not merely in deed, but also by a deliberate thought, for, as Christ says: He or she who looks on a married person with an impure desire has already committed adultery in the heart.¹ Christians, be on your guard against that sin! What a terrible crime it is!

Plan of Discourse.

It is an abomination before God and man. Such is the whole subject. It is an abomination before man. The first part. An abomination before God. The second part.

Those who wish, may apply this sermon to any mortal sin, considering every grievous offence as a spiritual adultery against the Holy Ghost, whose light and grace we implore, through the intercession of the blessed Virgin Mary and the holy angels guardian.

There is hardly any sin which in some part or other of the world is not thought little of.

Theft and robbery, murder and assault, gluttony and drunkenness, sorcery and witchcraft, and beastly lust are looked upon as shameful vices by all reasonable men. Yet there are whole nations and peoples in the world who do not look upon such vices as sins deserving of punishment, but openly tolerate them, so that, instead of being ashamed of them, people rather make them a subject for boasting. Tiraquellus writes that among some heathen nations, theft is regarded as a sign of cleverness and skill, and is rewarded by the chiefs; amongst others, it is looked upon as good and honorable to take an enemy's life, so as to satisfy one's wounded honor. Most heathen nations hold sorcery and witchcraft and their so-called priests in high esteem, and all who wish to have a name for wisdom must be well experienced in the diabolical art. In fact, their religion consists in adoring devils, and consulting them on all matters of doubt. Nowadays, in our own country, what account is made of the vice of drunkenness? Many are quite happy at being able to boast of having drunk another down, and brought him to complete intoxication. The Epicureans allowed all kinds of lust among unmarried people, and even in some Christian countries that abominable vice is regarded as a mere human frailty that no one need be ashamed of.

¹ Quia omnis, qui viderit mulierem ad concupiscendum eam, jam moechatus est eam in corde suo.—Matth. v. 28.

And yet, mark this, my dear brethren (for in my opinion it proves my subject as clearly as daylight), there is hardly a single nation in the world, not even in the lowest state of humanity, which does not condemn adultery as an abominable crime, and punish it in the severest manner. I will say nothing of the Imperial Law of the Roman Empire which punished with death one who was juridically convicted of adultery. It will be sufficient to consider how even the most savage peoples, who otherwise retain scarcely a vestige of humanity, treat this crime. Historians say of the Parthians: "They punished no crime more severely than adultery." Amongst the Arabs, both the guilty parties were beheaded. The Egyptians burnt them alive. The ancient Romans allowed the husband, whose wife was convicted of this crime, to put her to death as he pleased. The Turks, although they are a most sensual people, cannot tolerate adultery, and woe to the person whom they convict of it! The Peruvians not only burned alive the adulterers, but also put to death their parents, brothers and sisters, and all their blood relations, so that not one of the family in which such a crime was committed should remain alive. The Spartans punished this vice so cruelly that, populous as their country was, there was hardly an adulterer to be found in it. And, therefore, the story is told of a Spartan who was once asked by a stranger how adultery was punished in his country. The Spartan answered: The guilty person must travel through the world until he finds an ox big enough to stand on one side of a high mountain and drink out of the stream that flows on the other side. What nonsense! said the stranger; there is not such a monstrous beast to be found in the world! The Spartan answered: How, then, could you expect to find any one amongst us who would be guilty of such a monstrous crime?

Mark this, my dear brethren, heathen, infidel, wild, and savage nations, who knew nothing of the Christian faith and had not heard of the eternal punishments that divine justice inflicts in the next life, all condemned and punished the vice of adultery. Therefore, I am driven to the conclusion that, if there is hardly any vice, shameful and disgraceful though it be, which some nation or other does not look upon as lawful and honorable, and on the contrary, no nation in the world, no matter how savage and barbarous it is, but condemns adultery and forbids it by severe laws, then it must be that this vice has a special malice and deformity in itself which reason must condemn as abominable.

Adultery
alone is
always
condemned
by every
nation.

Therefore it
must be an
abominable
sin.

¹ Nulla delicta adulterio gravius vindicabant.

It is very injurious to the human race in general.

And whence comes the natural horror of this malice and deformity? From the fact that adultery is most injurious and prejudicial to the general welfare of the human race, as Philo says: "Adulterers should be put to death, as public enemies of the human race."¹ And so it is in reality, my dear brethren. The first and chief end of matrimony, for the general welfare, is to continue the human family by bringing up children to succeed as lawful heirs to their parents' property, after the death of the latter. But if adultery were tolerated, what would be the consequence? If, for instance, a married woman were guilty of it, how could the lawful be distinguished from the spurious heirs? And what disorder it causes to have legitimate and illegitimate children living together in the same house, supported and clothed with great labor and trouble by the same father, eating the same food at the same table, and enriched afterwards by the same property, the lawful children being cruelly deprived of their rights by the others! What a number of injustices thus follow on one crime; and injustices which can hardly ever be set right! How could they? Let any one guilty of that crime ask an experienced confessor what is to be done so as to repair the injury. The latter will say, according to the teaching of theologians: You must do all you can to prevent the children whom you know to be illegitimate from sharing in the inheritance of the others; you must economize and refrain from all unnecessary expenses in order to make occult compensation to the legitimate heirs. This is your obligation in conscience, and it also binds your accomplice. What would you think of an answer like that? Ah, it is easy to talk, but it requires skill, trouble, and hard work to do all that; I do not think there is one in a thousand who does it properly. And humanly speaking, it is almost an impossibility to make such atonement that the lawful heirs suffer no injustice whatever. See the trouble that unbridled passion may cause, and what harm it does the whole community.

Hence come many other fearful sins.

Again, what a number of sins of hatred, anger, rage, and despair spring from it, if the husband learns or reasonably suspects that his wife is unfaithful! What a wretched life the married couple then lead! If disunion alone makes the married life a hell on earth, as we have seen before, what will it be if the wife sees that her husband is guilty of adultery, or what is still worse, if the husband knows that his wife is perjured and false to him?

Shown by an example.

Surius, writing of the year 1528, relates the fearful resolve of a

¹ *Adulteri capite plectendi, ut publice hostes humani generis.*

married man, who had clear proofs of his wife's unfaithfulness: He got into such a rage that he killed, not only his wife, but all the children she had borne to him, crying out in his passion: "Death to all dogs and thieves who break into my house to rob me of what belongs to me! My property is for my own children, not for strangers!" The world has witnessed similar tragic scenes in Spain, Italy, France, and other countries; therefore, with reason does St. John Chrysostom call adultery murder: "Adultery is murder, nay, even worse than murder,"¹ because it brings with it so many crimes that injure not merely one individual, but a whole family, and even a whole community.

Married Christians, think of this! If you have only a spark of reason left, it should be enough to inspire you with a horror of such an abominable crime; of reason, I say, such as was sufficient for even heathens and savages to condemn and execrate that crime.

Therefore, all Christians must avoid it.

Mezentius, the tyrant, was as lustful as he was bloodthirsty. When he once heard a young married woman, named Sophronia, praised for her beauty, he sent for her husband and told him of the impure passion he had conceived for his wife. The husband, through fear of death, gave up his wife to the will of the tyrant. Sophronia was told of this and was ordered to come to the court. Wait, said she to the messenger, and let me put on my best attire that I may appear as I ought. She then entered her chamber, took a dagger in her hand, and raising her eyes to Heaven, swearing that she would rather die a thousand times than be untrue to her marriage vow, stabbed herself to the heart and fell dead on the floor. Such was the conduct of one whose husband had, although unjustly, allowed her to commit that crime, and who, therefore, had nothing to fear from him. By consenting to the tyrant's wishes she could have enjoyed the friendship of a monarch; furthermore, she was a heathen who could expect no reward for her virtue in the next life, so that she acted as she did because reason itself had inspired her with horror of such a detestable crime. Oh, holy laws of the Christian faith, where are you! Are there Christian men and Christian women who adore the one, true, living, all-seeing, almighty, omnipresent, all-holy, and just God, from whom they may expect a Heaven of eternal joys if they observe those laws faithfully, while they have the eternal fire of hell to fear if they act against them, and are those very men and women more shameless in this regard than the blind heathens? Alas,

Story of a heathen woman.

¹ Adulterium latrocinium est, imo omni latrocinio gravior transgressio.

that is only too often the case! What a horrible thing! If they do not fear the laws of men, should not the fear of the divine law at least keep them from so terrible a crime? The fear of the divine law, I say, for that adultery is an abomination to every reasonable man, makes it a shameful thing in the eyes of the world, which is, after all, not saying much. What should touch us Christians most of all is the fact that adultery is an abomination in the sight of God, as we shall see in the

Second Part.

Adultery an abomination before God because it sullies the sanctity of the marriage tie.

Every sin, no matter of what kind it is, is an abomination in the sight of God, because He is thereby despised and insulted; yet there is no doubt that some sins are worse in His sight than others, because they are more opposed to the divine goodness and perfections. Of this kind is the sin of adultery, because, in addition to the contempt of the divine law, which forbids all acts of impurity under pain of hell-fire, and besides the many acts of injustice already alluded to, which it occasions, it dishonors and defiles most grievously the sacred bond of marriage, which binds man and wife, in the sight of Heaven and earth, of angels and men, to love and be true to each other, and that bond cannot be severed, as long as they both live, by any civil or ecclesiastical power.

Shown from the Sacred Scriptures.

How hateful the crime of adultery is in the sight of God, is shown by His own words in the Old Testament, in which He calls it a great sin;¹ nay, even the greatest of sins. For Job says: "If my heart hath been deceived upon a woman," I am ready to endure any punishment, "for this is a heinous crime, and a most grievous iniquity."² Hear how God threatens all who are guilty of this sin: "Every man that passeth beyond his own bed: . . . this man shall be punished in the streets of the city, and he shall be chased as a colt; and where he suspected not, he shall be taken. And he shall be in disgrace with all men, because he understood not the fear of the Lord."³ So every woman also that leaveth her husband and bringeth in an heir by another; for first she hath been unfaithful to the law of the Most High; and secondly, she hath offended against her husband; thirdly, she hath fornicated in adultery. This woman shall be brought into the assembly, and inquisition

¹ Peccatum grande.—Gen. xx. 9.

² Si deceptum est cor meum super muliere; . . . hoc enim nefas est et iniquitas maxima.—Job xxxi. 9, 11.

³ Omnis homo, qui transgreditur lectum suum; . . . hic in plateis civitatis vindicabitur, et quasi pullus equinus fugabitur, et ubi non speravit, apprehendetur. Et erit dedecus omnibus, eo quod non intellexerit timorem Domini.—Ecc. xxiii. 25, 30, 31.

shall be made of her children. Her children shall not take root, and her branches shall bring forth no fruit. She shall leave her memory to be cursed, and her infamy shall not be blotted out." Such are the words of God, in the Book of the Wise Ecclesiasticus.

When the Pharisees asked Jesus Christ if a man were allowed to put away his wife, or a woman to leave her husband on account of any crime: No, answered our Lord, the bond of marriage can be loosed only by death; but the separation of one from the other, as far as cohabitation is concerned, is only allowed on account of adultery;¹ as we read in the Gospel of St. Matthew. Mark this, my dear brethren, "except,"² by which He meant that no crime or sin of one against the other is grievous enough to allow them to be separated, *unless* one of them commits adultery; for this is the terrible crime on account of which they are allowed to separate. Husbands, are you so unfortunate as to be obliged to live with a peevish, quarrelsome, disobedient, and obstinate wife? It is hard, indeed, and difficult to do so; but patience! you must put up with it. Is your wife idle, vain, extravagant, or given to drink? Then your lot is hard indeed; but patience! you must put up with it. Bear with her faults, punish and correct her as well as you can, but you cannot therefore separate from her. On the other hand, although your wife is cheerful, meek, obedient, prudent, clever, and industrious, have you convicted her of unfaithfulness to her marriage vow? Then away with her; in that case you are allowed to separate from her. Wives, are you so unfortunate as to have to live with a cruel, ill-tempered, or drunken husband, from whom you can expect nothing but suffering and ill-treatment? Have patience, and keep in the friendship of God, and you will be able, by a pure intention, to make your trials a means of gaining Heaven; but you cannot therefore leave your husband on your own authority. If you come to know, however, that he has only once failed against conjugal fidelity, that would be too intolerable a thing to bear, and you are then allowed to leave him and to live alone. Such is the meaning of the words of Christ to the Pharisees, from which we can see what an abomination adultery is in the sight of God.

And also, my dear brethren, we can draw the following inference: If even in the Old Law, when matrimony was a mere natural contract, adultery was regarded as a terrible sin, how must God now look upon it, when Jesus Christ has raised the marriage contract above nature to the dignity of a holy sacrament, and in-

How great
its malice in
the Old
Law.

How much
greater in
the New
Law.

¹ Nisi ob fornicationem.—Matth. xix. 9.

² Nisi.

deed of a great sacrament, as St. Paul says: "This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the Church."¹ For it is, as we have seen already, a symbol of the greatest and holiest mystery of our faith, namely, the wonderful union of the divine Word with human nature. It is a symbol of the espousal of Jesus Christ with His spouse the Holy Catholic Church; it is a symbol of the union of the Holy Ghost with the soul of man by sanctifying grace. And besides all this, it is the contracting parties themselves who administer this holy sacrament to each other. As long as they live, therefore, they constitute a sacramental symbol of the most sublime mysteries. Hence, adultery is not merely a sin against purity; not merely a grievous offence against the right that husband or wife has acquired by a contract ratified by God Himself; not merely a mortal sin, or, to speak more correctly, several mortal sins against the just rights of children; not merely a mortal sin, on account of the many sins it causes among married people when one suspects or knows the other to be guilty of it; but in addition to all these, it is a sacrilegious and shameful insult to a great and holy sacrament. If a Catholic were guilty of profaning the sacred vessels, the monstrance, ciborium, or chalice, or of turning a Church into a dancing house or theatre, he would be looked upon by every one as a sacrilegious wretch, and the people would cry out: To prison with him! But what has he done? He has profaned a chalice, or a sacred edifice. Is that all? They are sacred things, indeed, but only because they contain the Blessed Sacrament: What would you think of an adulterer, an adultress, or any unmarried person who sins with one who is married? For such people profane not merely the vessel which contains a sacrament, but the very Sacrament of Matrimony itself.

As appears from the judgment of the Church and the punishment she decrees against it.

Sacrilegious, indeed (according to the Papal decrees), is he or she who dares to profane so holy a sacrament in such a disgraceful manner! "Can any sin be found more grievous than adultery?"² Such was the expression of the holy Pope Clement, the disciple and successor of St. Peter, from whom he learned this doctrine. Tertullian was of the opinion that he who committed adultery could have no hope of repentance and forgiveness, no matter what efforts he might make. Although that opinion is very wrong, because it contradicts the infallible teaching of the faith, as well as the divine promises, yet we may learn from it how the early Christians loathed and abominated adultery. A single sin of the kind

¹ Sacramentum hoc magnum est, ego autem dico in Christo et in Ecclesia.—Ephes. v. 32.

² Quid in omnibus peccatis adulterio gravius?

was then punished by a public penance of fifteen years, as we read in the Penitential Canons of St. Basil: For the first four years, he or she who was guilty of that crime, was not allowed to enter a Church, or to associate with the faithful, and was obliged to remain at the Church door, weeping and sighing, begging like a poor mendicant for the prayers of all who were coming in or going out.¹ The five following years the guilty person was allowed to enter the Church, but only to hear the sermon.² The next four years he could hear Mass, but had to remain prostrate on the ground among the other penitents.³ For the next two years he was allowed to assist at all the public devotions, but not to receive Holy Communion.⁴ During the whole fifteen years, he had to fast for weeks at a time on bread and water, to wear a hair shirt and to practise other corporal austerities.

Can it be, oh, my God, that the sin of adultery was greater and more abominable in those days, than it is now? Hast Thou less horror of it now than Thou hadst then? Alas, how common it is now! And where is the penance, where the punishment for it? Yet we may be sure they will not be wanting, for St. Paul says: "Adulterers God will judge."⁵ As if His meaning was: Do not be surprised that the ecclesiastical and civil laws so seldom punish this vice, nowadays, for they cannot see nor find out everything. The sin is committed in secret and privately, so as to hide brutal lust from public view. But, says the all-seeing God, it cannot be concealed from Me; my strict justice will examine and condemn that hateful sin; I will be able to find out all who are guilty of it. "Adulterers God will judge."

God reserves to Himself the proper punishment for this sin.

Misery with their own children, as David experienced after having committed adultery, although he had bitterly deplored and repented of his sin; heavy domestic trials and crosses, as David also experienced; public shame and disgrace before the world, as David again gives us an example of; fearful maladies, and distortions of the body, as we read of some adulterous husbands, whose features became terribly deformed after their sin, and of others who were changed into demons, or into wild boars, in which condition they struck terror into every one who saw them. These, and other punishments such as these, are the chastisements that a just God holds over the guilty heads of adulterers, even in this life. Yet these fearful chastisements are only intended as mercies to drive sinners to repentance. There is a still more fright-

Here in this life.

¹ Quatuor annis erit defensus.

² Quinque erit audiens.

³ Quatuor erit substratus.

⁴ In duobus consistens sine communione.

⁵ Adulteros judicabit Deus.—Heb. xiii. 4.

ful doom in store for adulterers. But, oh, God of mercy, are not the other punishments enough? Christians, what think you? If the God of justice always punished every adulterer in that manner, what a crowd of black demons and deformed bodies there would be! How many husbands there are who keep sinful women in their very houses, or sin with their own servants! How many wives who secretly nurture an impure attachment! How many unmarried persons of both sexes who deliberately entertain impure desires with regard to married people! All-seeing God, Thou knowest how many sins of this kind have been committed in the world up to the present time!

In the next
life.

But woe to those who are guilty of that sin and do not repent of it sincerely! They will not escape the punishment that God has in store for them in the next life. And what is that? The eternal flames of hell that have been kindled especially for this abomination. The Wise Man says: "But he that is an adulterer shall destroy his own soul."¹ St. Paul says: "Do not err; adulterers shall not possess the kingdom of God."² Therefore, they are destined to hell for eternity.

Conclusion
and exhortation to the
unmarried.

"This is a great sacrament,"³ is my conclusion, with the same Apostle: matrimony is a great sacrament. Remember this, you who are unmarried, and be careful not to sully its sanctity, even by a deliberate desire; for if you only look at a married person with an impure desire,⁴ you have already committed adultery in your hearts. Have a respect for married people, says St. Ambrose: "God Himself is the Guardian of the married state," and since He is present everywhere, and sees all things, "no one can escape His power."⁵ "Although, oh, adulterer, you may deceive the husband," so that he knows nothing of your crime, although you may deceive the wife, so that she suspects nothing, "you will not deceive God, who is looking at you."⁶ If any one of you is tempted by a married person, do like the chaste Joseph in Egypt, who left his mantle in the hands of his mistress, in order to save his purity by flight. Go away at once from the house in which you are tempted to such a crime, leaving everything behind you, if necessary; and think at the same time, like Joseph: "How can I do this wicked thing, and sin against my God?"⁷ How could I commit a crime that God abhors so much?

¹ Qui autem adulter est, perdet animam suam.—Prov. vi. 32.

² Nolite errare, adulteri regnum Dei non possidebunt.—I. Cor. vi. 9, 10.

³ Sacramentum hoc magnum est.

⁴ Nam et qui viderit mulierem ad concupiscendam eam, etc.

⁵ Adest p[re]sul conjugii Deus, quem nullus evadit.

⁶ Et si maritum adulter fefelleris, non fallas Deum, etc.

⁷ Quomodo possum hoc malum facere, et peccare in Deum meum?—Gen. xxxix. 9.

Mark these words especially, you married people: matrimony is a great sacrament,¹ and you are the constituent parts of it. Never forget the fidelity that you have sworn to each other in the sight of God. If you are assailed by temptation, think and say, like the pious matron of whom Father de la Cerda writes: She was solicited to a sinful act, and full of indignation, she cried out: What do you ask of me? If you desired something that was my own, I could grant your request if I chose, but now I belong altogether to God and to my husband. Husbands, love your wives; wives, love your husbands—love each other, as Christ loved the Church;² that is, with a love pure, true, and constant till death. Keep steadfast in that love with your children, in the fear and love of God, that you may all live together in the eternal joys of Heaven. Amen.

To married
people.

THIRTY-SIXTH SERMON.

ON THE UNNECESSARY TROUBLES OF MARRIED PEOPLE.

Subject.

1st. Some married people trouble themselves without any reasonable cause. 2d. Others trouble themselves when they should rather rejoice.—*Preached on the third Sunday after Easter.*

Text.

Vos autem contristabimini.—John xvi. 20.

“You shall be made sorrowful.”

Introduction.

The ordinary, and, as I think, beautiful salutation among the ancient Greeks, when meeting one another in the street, was: “May you do well and be joyful.”³ In our days, we have other forms of greeting, such as: Good morning, good evening, good day, a happy new year, or if one is going anywhere, a pleasant journey; or if one wishes to pay compliments, he says, your servant, your most obedient, etc., and most frequently these expressions are mere empty words, and nothing more. Good Christians, when they meet, have now the praiseworthy custom of saying: “Praised be Jesus Christ;” and would that it was always said with proper rev-

¹ Sacramentum hoc magnum est.

² Viri diligite uxores vestras, sicut Christus dilexit Ecclesiam. ³ Bene agere et gaudere.

erence, which is not always the case, so that some dishonor that most holy Name, instead of honoring it. Although I give the preference to this last salutation, yet I now address you after the manner of the Greeks, and wish, my dear brethren, that you may do well and be joyful.¹ This is my heartfelt wish for you especially, married Christians, and I wish most earnestly that I could really cause you to feel this most desirable joy. But our Saviour has said something else to all His elect who do good and try to live piously: “You shall be made sorrowful.”² In the married state, especially, as you well know, there are, now and then, reasons enough for sorrow. Either the marriage is unfortunate, so that you do not live peacefully together—and that is, indeed, a great cross, as you have heard already—or if it is fortunate, so that you live in peace and love together—and that is great good luck, indeed—yet you often find things to trouble you, some of which give you reasonable cause for sorrow, and therefore make you deserving of pity, and I will try to console you for them next Sunday; while you yourselves make crosses and troubles of others without any necessity, nay, sometimes even when you should have rejoiced at them. This shall form the matter of to-day’s sermon.

Plan of Discourse.

Some married people trouble themselves without any reasonable cause. Oh, do not do that! Such will be the first part. Others trouble themselves when they should rather rejoice. What a foolish proceeding! The second part. Do well in the sight of God, and be joyful in the Lord, will be the concluding wish.

Which may the God of mercy effect in all through the merits of His Mother Mary, and the holy angels guardian.

What and of
how many
kinds sad-
ness is.

Sadness is a pain and perturbation of mind, on account of a suffering from which one wishes to be freed, or on account of an unsatisfied desire. St. John Damascene distinguishes four kinds of sadness: The first is when one is troubled at seeing or knowing of the sufferings and misfortune of another; thus, the mother is troubled at the pain her child suffers, the friend on account of his friend’s misfortune, and every kind-hearted man at the misery of his fellow-man. This sadness is called compassion or pity. The second is, when one is troubled at another’s well-being, because, for instance, the other is richer, more learned, or happier. Such was the case with Joseph’s brethren when they saw him more

¹ Bene agere et gaudere.

² Vos autem contristabimini.

richly dressed than they were. This is envy. The third is when one is grieved at what he believes to be an injustice, or a thing that should not occur, although it may not concern him. Thus, many a one is grieved at a manifest wrong, or because another is intrusted with a charge that he is not fitted for, and so on. This is called indignation. If this is caused by something contrary to the honor due to God, it is called pious zeal. The fourth kind of sadness is the grief that every one feels in contradictions that affect himself, and that trouble either the soul or the body. Thus, the merchant is grieved at the losses he has suffered, or because he has not gained a law-suit; an honorable man is grieved at an insult offered him; a husband is grieved at the death of his wife; the wife at the death of her husband; the parents at the illness or death of their children, etc. And this is what is properly called sadness. None of these four kinds is of any use when it is excessive, or when it comes from an unreasonable cause; and it is one of the rarest arts in the world, as Plato says, to know how to be sad, and how to be joyful, at the proper time, and in the proper degree.¹ Oh, if all men, and especially married people, understood this art thoroughly, and used it properly, how much chagrin and unnecessary trouble would be avoided! I must repeat what I have said before, that many things occur in the married state which give just cause for trouble and sadness, but it is true, nevertheless, that many people make their troubles greater than they ought to be; nay, they often trouble themselves without any reasonable cause. They seek troubles with a lantern, so to speak, and bring them into their houses, contrary to the warning of the Wise Ecclesiasticus: "Give not up thy soul to sadness, and afflict not thyself in thy own counsel."²

I will not say anything of those who annoy themselves about things that do not at all concern them; like that malefactor who, while he was being led to the gallows, kept on grumbling and murmuring the whole way. And what was he grumbling about, my dear brethren? About having to die such a shameful death, as any one would imagine? That would, indeed, be a rational subject for discontent; but that did not trouble him. He was annoyed because the streets were not better kept, and were allowed to be encumbered with all sorts of rubbish. Oh, foolish man, how do the streets concern you? Leave the care of them to the other citizens, who must walk on them many times a day and often ex-

Many trouble themselves about what does not concern them.

¹ Tristari et gaudere, sicut oportet.

² Tristitiam non des animæ tuæ, et non affligas temetipsum in consilio tuo.—Eccl. xxx. 22.

perience the inconvenience of them. What is it to you whether the streets are clean or dirty, well or ill kept, since you will never walk on them again? Any street is good enough to walk to the gallows on. In almost the same manner do many make troubles and annoyances for themselves, and grumble at things that they have, so to say, picked up in the streets. Look, they say, what a grand house such a one has built, as if he wished to spite us and other decent people! See how finely that woman and her daughters are dressed, and what airs they put on, as if we did not know them! It is enough to make one cross; could not we do the same if we chose? If I could not fill that office better than such a one, I would not undertake it; he is only fit to annoy the people, etc. They trouble themselves with things of this kind, and sometimes to such an extent that they become quite unhappy and discontented. Why do you plague yourselves about such foolish things? I must ask you, as Christ said to Peter, who was troubled at the thought of what would become of his fellow-Apostle John: "What is that to thee?"¹ Why do you trouble yourself with the concerns of others? Have you nothing to annoy you at home? If you have not, you ought to live in peace and be cheerful. Do not seek for troubles,² especially in matters that do not concern you: "And afflict not thyself in thy own counsel."³

Others
about mere
fancies, like
Jonas.

Another source of trouble, common enough amongst married people especially, even when they live together in harmony, is that they make crosses and trials for themselves in their own imaginations, where in reality none exist, or they make mountains out of molehills; thereby showing the truth of what Seneca says: "We are often more troubled at fancied trials than at real ones,"⁴ like horses that are afraid of their own shadow on the road. We have an example of this in the Sacred Scriptures, in the Prophet Jonas. Behold him seated alone, full of sorrow and affliction: "And Jonas was exceedingly troubled and was angry."⁵ Poor prophet! what is the matter with you, that you weep and lament so? Here is what ailed him, my dear brethren: At the command of God he had gone through the great city of Ninive, and foretold its destruction to its inhabitants in these words: "Yet forty days, and Ninive shall be destroyed."⁶ But since the people, terrified at the prophecy, had done penance and repented for their sins, God was appeased and, recalling the sentence he had pronounced, resolved

¹ Quid ad te?—John xxi. 22.

² Tristitiam non des animæ tuæ.

³ Et non affligas te metipsum in consilio tuo.

⁴ Sæpius opinione quam re laboramus.

⁵ Afflictus est Jonas afflictione magna, et iratus est.—Jon. iv. 1.

⁶ Adhuc quadraginta dies, et Ninive subvertetur.—Ibid. iii. 4.

to spare the city. Jonas, meanwhile, was anxiously awaiting the fortieth day, as that on which his prediction was to be fulfilled. He looked up to Heaven and down to earth, hoping to see some sign that his prophecy was coming true, but in vain! The fortieth day passed, and several more days also, and Ninive was still untouched. That was what troubled Jonas so much. Filled with shame, and hiding his face so that no one might recognize him, he slunk out of the city into a deserted place, and there commenced his lamentations: What, he said, am I the preacher and prophet, to be thus put to shame? I have been told to announce an event that was sure to happen, and now the contrary takes place; thus I am a false prophet, that is my reward: "Oh, Lord, I beseech thee, take my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live,"¹ and to bear my grief and my shame together.

"Ah, Jonas, Jonas," said God to him, "dost thou think thou hast reason to be angry?"² Is that the whole cause of thy trouble? What greater consolation could there be for a preacher than to see his hearers shed tears of repentance, amend their lives, and escape the punishment they were threatened with by God? You should rejoice at having done your work so well, but instead of rejoicing you are troubled so much as to desire death! Dost thou think thou hast just cause for thy anger? There is no doubt, my dear brethren, that Jonas had no reason for sorrow, but rather much reason for joy. His trouble came solely from his own imagination. He thought that the whole city would look upon him as a false prophet who had betrayed the people and made them fast and do penance for nothing; whereas the contrary was really the case. St. Ephraim represents the Ninivites as speaking thus: "Grieve not, oh, Jonas, but rejoice that we now lead a new life,"³ that thy preaching has moved us to do penance, and has turned aside from us the wrath of God. We look upon thee as our greatest benefactor, by whose warning we have received light and grace. Meanwhile, Jonas was in a despairing state. So great was his affliction that he wished for death to escape the shame that overwhelmed him when he thought that the whole city would consider him a false prophet.

How many there are who might be asked the same question: "Dost thou think thou hast reason to be angry?" You, oh, hus-

He had no cause for sorrow.

Such is the conduct of many, as-

¹ Domine, tolle quæso animam meam a me, quia melior est mihi mors, quam vita.—Jon. iv. 3.

² Putasne, bene irasceris tu?—Ibid. 4.

³ Non contristari, O Jona! sed gaude, quod novam vitam agimus.

pecially
married
people,
when they
make
trouble for
themselves
by their
own fancies.

band, who give way to all sorts of fancies if your wife only turns her head aside, or if she fails to meet you in her usual friendly manner; do you think that you have reason to be angry? You, oh, wife, if your husband, occupied with other cares, appears before you with a stern countenance, or gives you a short answer without meaning any harm, immediately think that his love is growing cold or that he despises, neglects, or hates you; then the two of you go about the whole day, gloomy and ill-tempered, not speaking a word to each other, and tormenting yourselves to such an extent that you can hardly sleep at night, and if the cause of all this trouble is sought for, it will be found to exist merely in the imagination. In the same way, they trouble themselves frequently at the bare idea and imagination of a trial that may come upon them. For instance, the husband is away from home, or the son is in a foreign country. If a letter does not come on the very day appointed, then the wife at once begins to imagine that there is something wrong. Her husband has certainly met with some misfortune; her son is very sick, or perhaps dead, or something else has happened to him. With such thoughts as these they torture themselves day and night, they mourn as dead those who are living, they bewail the sickness of those who are strong and healthy, or the misfortune of those who are quite safe and prosperous, until at last the news comes that they have been weeping and wailing for nothing. Meanwhile, they have been tormenting themselves, for no other reason but what their own foolish fancies suggested. If they had waited a little longer until the good news came, they would have escaped all that suffering; and even if their worst fears were realized, it would have been time enough to give way to their affliction when they heard that there was reason for it, and so they would have avoided suffering the same sorrow twice over, or they would not have had it for such a long time.

Or among
themselves
about what
may hap-
pen.

Do you think that you have just reason to trouble yourselves, you married people, if one of you has a slight cold or an attack of fever, or if one of your children is thus affected? Yet, what moaning and lamentation you make, excited thereto by your own gloomy fancies! If the child were to die, all my consolation in this world is gone! What would become of me if my husband died! What would become of my children—how could I support them! There would be no hope for me, I should despair! In that way they torment themselves for weeks and months, as long as the illness lasts, at the bare idea of trials that may come upon them in

certain circumstances, but which perhaps will never come at all. In the name of God, what is the use of that? Wait until the trial has come upon you; then it will be time enough for you to commence to trouble about it; there is nothing gained by doing so beforehand. Your child, your husband, or your wife will, in all probability, recover, so your long fretting is to no purpose. In the same way, generally speaking, they act when events occur which give them just cause for uneasiness, but they exaggerate things and make them worse than they are. For instance, the husband, the child, the friend is dead; that is, I must confess, a hard trial, but they make it harder. Oh, they say, if we had called in another doctor; if we had tried the medicine that a good friend recommended to us, perhaps he would now be alive and well! Yes, perhaps, and perhaps not. He is dead; what is the use of your perhaps? If they have used every means possible, they say: Oh, what a pity that we plagued the poor man with so many medicines and so much blood-letting. It did him no good, and he would not have been so much troubled! Perhaps, even, it was the medicine or the blood-letting that caused his death; if that is the case, we are to blame! There you have another perhaps. No matter what they do, they are not satisfied. Why do you trouble yourselves about things of which you can know nothing? The man is dead; weep for him if you have cause to do so, but put those foolish notions out of your head! So true is it that they who have no one else to torment them, torment themselves. But what an unreasonable thing it is to make for ourselves trials that we always try to avoid! "Afflict not thyself in thy own counsel."¹

In these cases the imagination must be kept in check and you will avoid much affliction. Yes, you say, but how? That is a difficult thing to do. Where is the difficulty? When you look at the moon you would be inclined to say that it is much larger than any of the stars in the firmament, although, in reality, the smallest star is much greater in size than the moon. An ignorant person would not believe this, yet it is the firm conviction of every one who knows anything of astronomy. If you are sailing down the Moselle in a boat and fix your eyes on the town of Treves, you would imagine, although you know better, that it is the town that is moving and not the boat. No matter how small the stars appear to you, you know that they are greater than the moon, because you have often heard so from those who understand the subject. How easily, then, you may correct, with your

In such circumstances these people must repress their fancies, in order to live in peace.

¹ Non affligas te metipsum in consilio tuo.

understanding, the error into which you are led by the imagination! In the same way you should accustom yourselves, in the cases above mentioned, and in similar ones, to keep the imagination in check, so as to preserve your cheerfulness and quiet. Think and say to yourself: I have tormented and plagued and worried myself so often during my life, for a mere imaginary cause, and nearly always I have found that the contrary to what I dreaded really occurred; it is possibly the same with me now. Therefore, I will not be so foolish as to trouble myself, until I know for what. How often have I not thought that my neighbor or friend was deliberately insulting me, because he passed me by once without saluting, or because, on some occasion or other, he did not speak to me, or because he let fall a dubious expression here and there. How often have I not thought that my husband or my wife was cross with me on account of a mere unfriendly look; and yet there was no cause for all this apprehension, so that I annoyed myself to no purpose; this is just a similar case. How often have I feared that my husband, my wife, my child, or my friend had met with some mishap, or even with death itself, and behold, they are all alive and well! And so will it now be in this apparent danger, in this misfortune that I dread; it will all turn out well in the end; therefore I will wait, patiently and quietly, and recommend the future to God. You see now how easy it is to avoid many crosses that you make for yourselves in your state of life. If you do not do so, you are not to be pitied, because you do not try to make things better. There are others who think they have cause for sorrow, when they should really rejoice. These I will speak of in the

Second Part.

Others trouble themselves when they should rejoice.

Children are the most fruitful cause of unnecessary trouble in the married life. Some people cannot be consoled, because they have no children; others, because they have too many; others, again, because their children die young. Let us see, now, whether they have cause for sorrow, and not rather for joy and consolation.

First, those who have no children.

The first have no children, although they wish very much to have them. It is true that the principal end of the married state is to bring up children in the service of God, and to lead their souls to Heaven, that they may praise God and bless Him for all eternity. It is true that children, when they are good, are the crown and joy of their parents, and therefore, in the Old Law, unfruitfulness was looked upon as a great misfortune, nay, even

as a shame and disgrace. How afflicted Anna, the wife of Elcana, was on account of her barrenness! She could not eat or drink; her daily occupation was to weep and sigh because she had no children, so that at last her husband said to her: "Anna, why weepest thou, and why dost thou not eat?"¹ As we read in the First Book of Kings, 1st chapter. And Rachel, too, how troubled she was, so that, like Jonas, she longed for death! I must have children, she said to her husband, "otherwise I shall die."² Now, although sterility is to be attributed to natural causes, yet it certainly depends on the decrees of God's providence, and therefore the Patriarch Jacob answered the complaints of Rachel by saying: "Am I as God, who hath deprived thee of the fruit of thy womb?"³ This one consideration should be sufficient to console married Christians.

And meanwhile, I ask all who thus trouble themselves, do you think you have just cause for sorrow?⁴ You should rather rejoice; for, in the first place, how many duties, cares, obligations, fears, and anxieties you escape, which fathers and mothers must suffer, precisely because they have children! To say nothing of the inconvenience and discomfort they have to put up with, day and night, while their children are still very young. What a great responsibility is theirs, if they do not bring up their children in a Christian manner! How great their trouble and anxiety if their children get sick! How deep their affliction, if they die! How profound their grief, if their children are deprived of their reason, or suffer some other defect! And what a trial it is when they are disobedient, wicked, disrespectful, and obstinate! What care and labor it takes to feed and clothe them decently! See from what God has freed you. You can enjoy your liberty and use your solitude, in order the better to devote your time to the service of God and the salvation of your souls. Is not that a great advantage?

They have reason to rejoice at being free from many obligations.

But perhaps you are wealthy, and are therefore sorry that you have no heirs to whom you may leave your possessions. Why should that annoy you? If you wish, you can find heirs enough, to whom it will be far better for you and more useful for your souls to leave your money. There are some birds that rear the young of other birds, as if they were their own; as we know to be the case with hens, that often rear ducklings. How many

They can also employ their wealth better.

¹ Anna, cur fles; et quare non comedis?—I. Kings 1. 8.

² *Alloquin moriar.*—Gen. xxx. 1.

³ *Num pro Deo ego sum, qui privavit te fructu ventris tui?*—Ibid. 2.

⁴ *Putasne, bene irasceris tu?*

poor orphans there are, who, on the death of their parents, are abandoned by every one! They have neither money, nor food, nor clothing. It is of them that Jesus Christ has said: "He that shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth Me." "Take them into your house, then, or at least into your care; provide for their wants. They will certainly, in their gratitude, look upon you as their father and mother, and they will be to you as children, to replace those whom you anxiously ask from God. You can adopt as many of them as you wish, and in their persons you can feed and clothe Jesus Christ Himself. Do you wish for some one to inherit your property when you die? How many poor people there are here and there, and perhaps in your very neighborhood, who are in want, and may, unknown to others, be without anything to eat, because they are ashamed to beg! They, too, represent the Person of Jesus Christ. Make them your heirs; you will lose nothing by them, but will gain a great deal. They will make over your property to Heaven, so that you will be able to live on it forever. And in that way, too, Jesus Christ will be your heir and your inheritance.

Example of
a pious
couple in
Rome.

Or act like that pious and noble couple in Rome who, after praying a long time fruitlessly for offspring, made the Blessed Virgin, the Queen of Heaven, their heiress, and daily besought her to make known to them how they should dispose of their wealth in her honor. This request was so pleasing to the Mother of God, that in the middle of summer she caused snow to fall miraculously in a certain place, as a sign that they should build a Church there to her. They obeyed the sign and erected on the spot a magnificent temple which bears the name *Maria ad Nives* to this day, and the feast of its consecration is celebrated every year on the 5th of August. From that you may see, married Christians, that you have no reason to grieve, but rather much reason to rejoice, if God leaves you childless.

Others who
have too
many
children.

Just as they who have no children bewail their lot, so also, they who have a numerous offspring groan under the burden, and complain that they have neither time nor means to bring them up properly.

They, too,
may rejoice,
for they
have no
just cause
for trouble.

But even you, if you think of the matter sensibly, have more cause for consolation than for sorrow. For, with regard to the annoyance and want of time, of which you complain, tell me, are you so badly off after all? There is a shopkeeper who must spend the whole day at his business; he is hardly out of bed in the early

¹ Qui susceperit unum parvulum talem in nomine meo, me suscipit.—Matth. xviii. 5.

morning when he hears people knocking at the door, who want to buy something ; while he is attending to them, others come, and so it goes on from morning to night; customers are constantly coming in; one wants this, another that; his house is always full of people, so that he has hardly time enough to take his meals, and in the evening he is not able to stand for weariness. What do you think of his case? It is truly very hard for the poor man to bear it ! But did you ever hear a shopkeeper complain that too many customers come to him? I should think not ; for on that his business depends. The more customers he has, the better pleased he is, and although they give him trouble, he is always glad to see them. He looks upon the trouble as nothing, provided he can make more money by it. Christian married people, what is the end and aim of the married state? I have told you already. The principal reason why you have chosen that state is to bring up children in the service of God. That is your principal duty, by performing which you will render a most pleasing service to God and will save your souls; that is your chief business, by which you can gain great glory in Heaven for yourselves and your children. So that, if you have many children, are you to be afflicted therefore? Certainly the annoyances, difficulties, and cares of your state will be increased. One child is crying out for something here, another there ; one wants this, another that, etc., and the parents often do not know which they are to attend to first. But it is in these very trials that your business consists. The more souls you can bring to Heaven, the greater your gain and merit for eternity, and therefore you should rejoice at the good opportunity you have in your numerous offspring. But, you think, it is easy to talk ; if there are many children, they will require a good deal of food and clothing, and where is it to come from?

Be satisfied! God, who sends you many to be fed, will also send you food for them, if you manage matters properly. Bring up your children as well as you can; some for a profession, others for an honorable trade or business. Let none of them be idle; where there are many to work, there are many to earn. Only serve God, and put your confidence in Him as your heavenly Father, as I have often told you, and He who fed the five thousand with a few loaves of bread will not allow you or your children to suffer want, if you are only true to Him. The number of your children is also a help to you in this respect, and an incitement to serve God better. If you had only a few, you would in all probability lead an idle, luxurious, and therefore unchristian life. You would spend a con-

As far as
support is
concerned

siderable sum in dress and in eating and drinking. You would be fond of going out and so might perhaps bring your children into sin and vice, and thus lead them to hell. But now, since you have a numerous offspring, all these things are impossible for you. The days seem too short for you, and you find work enough in your own house, so that you have not to seek pastime elsewhere. You all pray together every day and send up your petitions to Heaven for temporal and spiritual prosperity. Rejoice, therefore, and be glad in the Lord!

Those
whose
children
die young.

The third and last class of married people who trouble themselves without cause, consists of those whose children die young. If the tree puts forth many blossoms, if the vine promises to bear well, we are more grieved when a frost or a hail-storm puts an end to our hopes, than if we never had any reason to hope, such as would be the case if the fruit-tree or the vine perished in mid-winter. Such is also the case with parents: they bewail their misfortune, if their children die in the bloom of youth, just at the time when they promised to be a support and comfort to their parents for many years to come, far more than if they had no children at all. Alas, so I seem to hear them, especially the mother, sigh and lament: My only son; what a charming child he was! And now he is dead! My poor little daughter! I loved her most of all my children, and now she is dead, and all my consolation is gone with her! I am almost inclined to despair when I think of it! I shall not forget her as long as I live! Oh, what a trial, what a cross! What misery and affliction! Oh, poor, afflicted people, certainly the hand of God lies heavily upon you! Could there be a greater sorrow upon earth? No, it is impossible that there could be! Weep, therefore, and bewail your misery as much as you please; but if I were looking at you, instead of pitying you, I should be inclined to laugh, or if I had to show pity outwardly, it would be, not for your sorrow, but for your folly. Do you think you have cause to afflict yourself so excessively?¹ Excessively I say, because it is natural, and no parent is to be blamed for it; it is natural to be sorry for the death of a child. But I ask you again, have you any occasion for such *excessive* sorrow? In truth, if ever there was occasion for consolation and joy, it is this; for in addition to all the advantages which they have, as we said before, who are without children, they who have a child in Heaven have a consolation and joy that the others are without. And must I ask you why you brought into the world that child

¹ Putasune, bene irasceris tu?

whose death you deplore? Was it that it might live a long life here below? No, certainly, that would not be enough; its only end was Heaven, its eternal country, and your duty, strictly defined for you by the Almighty God, was to lead it there by every means in your power. And you have attained your object, your dear child is where it ought to be, and where you were bound to lead it. And yet you are so overwhelmed with sorrow!

Tell me, if your son or daughter were grown up and had to take a long journey to a far-off city, by a long and dangerous road, on which you know by experience that many have met with accidents, riding or driving, and many have been attacked and killed by robbers; in what anxiety would you not be until you hear that your beloved child has arrived in safety? Suppose, now, that your son had met with an unexpected piece of good luck on the way, that he had been taken up into a coach, and so had been able to finish his journey a week sooner than you expected, how would you act on hearing that news! Would you weep and lament? Would you tear your hair, and cry out, alas, my son has arrived at his journey's end a week sooner than I thought! Why did he not go on foot? Do you think you would act in that manner? Certainly not; it is only fools who would do so. No, your joy would be all the greater because your son arrived so quickly, and accomplished his dangerous journey in safety. Now, with regard to your child's early death, remember this: as long as we mortals are on earth, we are on a journey. The city to which we are tending is the heavenly Jerusalem. The way leading thither is this vale of tears, in which we are exposed to all sorts of accidents that threaten the body, such as sickness, weakness, cares, trials, and difficulties; and in which there are still worse and more numerous dangers and temptations surrounding our souls on all sides, and exposing us to eternal perdition. The greater number of travellers perish on the way, and are dragged down to everlasting fire by the demons, the robbers of souls. Should we not, then, desire a happy termination to such a dangerous journey? Should we not rejoice when we hear that one whom we love has reached the heavenly City? Christian parents, your dear son, or daughter, was also on that journey. Who knows what would have happened to your child if it had spent many more years here below? Who knows whether it would have reached Jerusalem, or have been dragged off to Babylon by the infernal spirits? The good God has, in His mercy, by a special favor, taken it up in His chariot, so to speak, and brought it quickly to

That they have reason to rejoice proved by a simile.

the end of its journey ; and perhaps He has done so because He foresaw that you, in your excessive fondness, would rear up your child badly and cause the loss of its soul. As it is, your beloved one is safe, and has escaped all dangers and troubles of soul and body ; for you may be certain now, what you could not be otherwise, that your child, dying in its baptismal innocence, is rejoicing with God in Heaven, and consequently, that you have an intercessor there to whom you may pray in private. Do you weep and lament at hearing news like that ? Where is your common sense, if so ? You should rather thank the divine mercy, rejoice at your child's good fortune, and say with St. Francis Borgia, when he heard that his daughter was dead : " The Lord lent her to me and He has taken her back again,"¹ and I know now that she is in His hands.

Conclusion
and exhortation to be
resigned to
the divine
will.

Certainly ! And my conclusion will be to you in the words of the Wise Ecclesiasticus, already quoted : " Give not up thy soul to sadness, and afflict not thyself in thy own counsel."² Married Christians, make no sorrow for yourselves (the sorrow for past sins alone excepted) which is not helpful to the service of God. Do not torment yourselves by your own fancies where you have no reason to be troubled, much less when you have rather reason to rejoice. The married state brings cares and troubles enough with it ; do not make unnecessary cares for yourselves. If you have nothing else to suffer, think that by your unreasonable cares you may force the Almighty to send you some of the real crosses and trials that others have to bear, and then you will have cause enough to mourn and lament. You are like a little child that sits crying at the door, until its mother runs out and asks: What is the matter with you ? Who has done anything to you ? But the child continues to cry until the mother gets vexed and at last takes the rod and gives the child a good beating, saying to it : There, now you have something to cry for. I tell you, therefore, to be careful that God does not act with you in the same way. And now: " Do well and rejoice,"³ and as St. Paul says, " Rejoice in the Lord always,"⁴ in a good conscience, and in a virtuous and Christian life, which will bring you safely from this life to eternal joy. Amen.

¹ Depositum acceperam, repetiit Dominus.

² Tristitiam non des animæ tuæ, et non affligas temetipsum in consilio tuo.

³ Bene agere et gaudere.

⁴ Gaudete in Domino semper.—Phillip. iv. 4.

THIRTY-SEVENTH SERMON.

ON THE CONSOLATION OF MARRIED PEOPLE IN TROUBLE.

Subject.

1st. Consolation in the trials caused by children. 2d. Consolation in the trials caused, even involuntarily, by one of the married couple.—*Preached on the fourth Sunday after Easter.*

Text.

Quia haec locutus sum vobis, tristitia implevit cor vestrum.
—John xvi. 6.

“ Because I have spoken these things to you, sorrow hath filled your heart.”

Introduction.

The disciples of Jesus Christ seemed to have good reason for sorrow and trouble, when they learned that their beloved Master was about to leave them and to go to Heaven ; and yet, as Eternal Wisdom declares, it was good for them that He should leave them : “ It is expedient to you that I go,”¹ so that the disciples had more reason to rejoice. In the same way, many married people trouble themselves without cause, or even when they have cause to rejoice ; as we have seen in the last sermon. But there are also many real troubles in the married state, which must be borne with patience. How married people are to console themselves under these, and how they are to make them lighter, will be the subject of the present instruction.

Plan of Discourse.

Consolation in the trials caused by children. The first part. Consolation in the trials caused, even involuntarily, by one of the married couple. The second part. Complete resignation to the will of God in all trials. Such is the conclusion that I wish myself and every one to draw.

Thereto give us Thy grace, oh, Jesus Christ, Consoler of the afflicted, through Thy Virgin Mother and the holy angels guardian.

Married people have different kinds of troubles to suffer from their children: for the latter may be wicked and unruly; or they may

A great
trouble for
married

¹ Expediit vobis, ut ego vadam.

people is to
have ill-
reared
children.

be weakly and delicate ; or through poverty, there may be a lack of means to support them properly. These three kinds of trials are very hard for parents to bear, and, since they give just reason for anxiety, they require, in my opinion, great patience. And first, if the children are wicked and unruly, that is a heavy cross indeed! Solomon says: "I hated all my application wherewith I had earnestly labored under the sun."¹ And why so, oh, wisest of kings? "Being like to have an heir after me, whom I know not whether he will be a wise man or a fool:"² that is to say, whether he will be pious or wicked. Oh, certainly, it is good reason for anxiety not to know how thy son will act after thy death! How would it have been with thee, if thou hadst seen (as was really the case) thy wicked son Roboam bringing thy happy kingdom to destruction? In truth, many parents have been grieved to death by the conduct of their children. The Emperor Severus, as we read in history, died through grief at the dissensions of his sons, and the trouble they caused him. Marcus Aurelius Antonius starved himself to death, because he saw that his son Commodus was a cruel and savage man. And yet, what wonder is it that Solomon, who was unfaithful to God, and the two last named, who were impious persecutors of the Christians, should have wicked and impious children? As the tree, so the fruit. And, therefore, Christian parents who give their children bad example, are not much to be pitied, when the latter follow in their footsteps; they are the cause of their own troubles. But what a sad thing it is for pious parents, who have tried to rear their children well, by duly chastising them and giving them a good example of piety and virtue, to see that they turn out disobedient, obstinate, reckless, given to lying, cheating, cursing, drinking, immorality, and other vices, and are therefore on the high road to hell? Could there be a greater trial than this for a pious father and mother?

Consolation
for such
parents.

Yet, you must not despair! Your grief should in part be mitigated by the thought that you have done your duty, and that you have not been wanting in your parental obligations. God does not require any more from you. If all your labor and trouble profit little with your wicked child, at all events, your future reward will be none the less, but will rather be increased, on account of the anxiety you suffer. In the same way, a preacher

¹ Detestatus sum omnem industriam meam, qua sub sole studiosissime laboravi.—Eccles. ii. 18.

² Habiturus hæredem post me, quem ignoro, utrum sapiens an stultus futurus sit.—Ibid. 18, 19.

is often obliged to comfort himself, when he sees that his spiritual children, whom he desires to lead to God by his instructions, hardly ever come to hear him, or if they do listen to him, refuse to obey and to do what he tells them. He must then say to himself : At least I have done my duty ; I cannot compel others to profit by my teaching, nor is it my duty to do so ; they are responsible before God for what they do. It is just like the official who is ordered by the magistrate to publish a command or a prohibition on certain days, in the public streets. The official does as he is told ; whether many or few people come to hear him, or whether they observe the law he publishes, or not, is nothing to him ; and if the people afterwards break the law and are punished, they must blame themselves. Nor would it be of any use for them to plead ignorance ; they could and should have known the law, since it was made public. In the same way, you must console yourselves, Christian parents, as far as the salvation of your souls is concerned ; and, although you have just cause to pity your miserable children, who wilfully ruin their souls, still you must never despair of their conversion. Do like the pious Job, who arose every morning and offered sacrifice for each of his children, for fear lest they should have offended God. Pray daily and fervently that God, who holds the hearts of all men in His hands, may give your children the grace to repent and to lead pious lives ; as I have elsewhere explained more in detail. Trustful and fervent prayer can work wonders with the infinitely good and faithful Lord. You will thus become parents of your children in a twofold sense ; for you will not only have given them their natural lives, but you will also have brought forth their souls to life for God and Heaven.

Although it is a hard thing for pious parents to have wicked children, yet there are some who attach little importance to the future life, and who think it a far greater trial to have weak and delicate, or deformed children. For instance, the children have distorted features ; one is stupid or even silly ; another is sickly and delicate ; a third is blind, lame, or crippled. Such is the whole cause of the parents' sorrow and trouble : Oh, my poor son, they think, full of anxiety ; oh, my unhappy daughter ! What am I to do with them ? How can I provide for them ? What will become of them when I am gone ? Is it not a great misfortune ? Even if they were with God in Heaven, we should die happy ! And thus they lament. But why are you so troubled, to no purpose, about the divine will ? God, who has created your chil-

Consolation
for those
who have
weak or deli-
cate chil-
dren.

dren, knows why He made them deformed or sickly. Say with the Prophet David : "He made us, and not we ourselves."¹ We often do not know what we wish, or desire, or ask from God, nor what we complain of and grieve about. He is the Lord, who alone knows what is best for each one of us, in every circumstance. He is the Lord, whose providence arranges all things for the good of man. When you think of your children, remember what Christ said : "It is better for thee, having one eye, to enter into life," with one hand, or lame and crippled, with one foot, "than having two eyes, to be cast into hell's fire,"² with two hands, or two feet. And, therefore, He tells us to pluck out an eye, to cut off a hand or foot, if we are thereby led into sin. Remember that if your children were all beautiful, clever, or healthy, they might become worldly, as God has foreseen ; they might sink into all kinds of vice and sin and be lost forever. As it is, their natural defects keep them out of many occasions of evil, and they will one day rise again, free from every defect, to rejoice with God in Heaven. Could you desire anything better than this for your children ? Therefore, let the Almighty dispose of them as He pleases. Thank Him, and be satisfied with your children such as He has given them to you.

They must love such children as much as the others.

Meanwhile, as far as bringing them up to virtue is concerned, you must be as careful of them as of your other children, whom you think possess better natural qualities. The former are made to the image of the Almighty God, just as well as the latter. If a precious treasure is confided to my care, I must guard it well, and not allow it to be stolen, whether the box which contains it is black or white, made of plain wood, or of gold and silver. For the box does not increase or lessen the value of the treasure it contains. Married Christians, the souls of your children are the precious treasures that the divine goodness has entrusted to your charge for a time. The body is only a box, or to speak better, a worthless sack, in which that royal treasure, the soul, lies concealed. What matters it, then, whether the sack is beautiful or ugly, crooked or straight ? In any case it contains a beautiful soul that is pleasing to God, and that, therefore, you also must love and esteem. And besides, if you look after your deformed or sickly children as you ought, and be satisfied with the decrees of providence, your temporal interests will not suffer, but will rather

¹ Ipse fecit nos, et non ipsi nos.—Ps. cxlix. 3.

² Bonum tibi est cum uno oculo in vitam intrare, quam duos oculos habentem mitti in gehennam ignis.—Matth. xviii. 9.

be advanced thereby, as many have already experienced. I myself have known parents whose grown-up son was blind, dumb, deaf, and lame, and at the same time silly, if not absolutely insane. Instead of complaining, as many parents would do in such a case, they used to say, in my hearing: Our son brings every blessing to our house. And when he died they wept bitterly. Now, said the sorrowing father, all the luck is gone from us! Such is the way in which the good Lord acts with us: He never sends us a cross without, at the same time, giving us consolation and blessing; although we sometimes do not know in what the blessing consists.

One of the heaviest crosses for married people, at least, according to their own idea, is to have children, and not to have bread enough to give them, or to try to rear them according to their condition without having the means to do so. Certainly, poverty is hated by all. But it arises either from the fault of married people themselves, or from the arrangements of divine providence.

Those who through poverty cannot support their children.

It comes from their own fault, either because they marry without sufficient means, and know not how they are to earn anything to support themselves and those who depend on them, or because, although they know how to earn, they are too idle and too fond of their own ease to work. What else can be the result of that, but a house full of poor children. Father Faber relates that a young man once came to a well-known friend of his, to borrow money to get a table made. I have been married for some months, said the young man, and have not yet been able to buy a table, so that we have been obliged to have our meals at a bench. You unfortunate man, said the other to him, is it possible that you have not even a table? Why did you get married, then? Where will you get food to put on the table, and how will you be able to support your children hereafter? Such instances are only too common, to the great detriment of the whole community, in which mendicity is thus increased. Or, as also frequently happens, the married couple may have means enough to live comfortably, and to support their children decently and respectably, but through carelessness they allow their wealth gradually to slip through their fingers, and so reduce themselves to poverty in the long run. They spread their wings too far, they bend the bow until it breaks. They try to be like others in respect to food, clothing, and house-keeping, although their means do not allow it. They dress their children expensively, and let them go

They must take the blame, if their poverty comes from their own fault.

about doing nothing, so that they appear to be richer than they really are, and at last they are forced to suffer the pinch of poverty, which they could have avoided by living in Christian humility and modesty, according to their means. How many cases of that kind there are in the world, and perhaps in our very midst! Go on with your luxury in dress and expensive living; you will find out your mistake in the end! I have never had the gift of prophecy, but in this matter I know that I will prove a true prophet, and that I am right in saying that your children, and your children's children will suffer want. These people and such as these may blame themselves for their poverty and the trials it entails, and they will certainly have to give a strict account to their Judge hereafter, for having thus wilfully reduced their children to poverty.

If poverty comes to them by misfortune, through divine decree, they must console themselves.

But if they repent, or if they and their children suffer want through the hidden decrees of the Almighty, oh, then, they have reason for patience and consolation, when they think that such is the will of God! Father, since such is Thy will, may that holy will be done! We and our children are not here that we may become rich, but that we may fulfil Thy most righteous will, oh, my God, and possess Thee forever in Heaven! To this end poverty will help us as well, nay, even much better than riches! Many, very many rich people are now in hell with the rich glutton, who, if they had been poor, or, at all events, not so rich on earth, would be now rejoicing in Heaven. Many, very many poor people, who now have to work hard for their daily bread, and who would have lost their souls if they had been rich, or had possessed more of the world's wealth, will be heirs of Heaven with the poor Lazarus. Cardinal Pallavicini had a beautiful idea when he compared riches to a shoe. A shoe, my dear brethren, to be well made, must fit the foot exactly: it must not be too wide nor too narrow. If it is too wide you are always in danger of stumbling and falling; if it is too narrow, you can certainly walk more safely, but it hurts your foot. The best and most comfortable shoe is that which is neither too large nor too small, and is just suited to the size of the foot. So it is also with riches and worldly goods: if they are too wide, that is to say, in superfluity, then there is great danger of falling into many sins, and perishing miserably. If they are too narrow, if you have not enough for your support, you feel the pinch of poverty. Therefore the Wise Man prayed to God: "Give me neither beggary nor riches:

Ita, Pater, quoniam sic fuit placitum ante te.—Math. xi. 26.

give me only the necessaries of life.”¹ He did not wish to have his shoe too wide nor too narrow, but so that it would fit his foot exactly.

Meanwhile, married Christians, if God wishes to make the shoe too small for you, what can you do? You must accept that small trial from His loving hand; it is better for your souls than if the shoe were too wide. With narrow shoes, because they hurt, we walk carefully; we go out only when and where it is necessary; we cannot venture to leap about too much with them, because our feet are too much confined, and we always try to avoid stony and dangerous roads. That is to say, owing to your poverty, you will be modest and humble, for it is, generally speaking, superfluous wealth that causes pride and vanity. You will learn to live quietly and economically, and to love labor and work, and in that way you will be free from many dangers and occasions of sin; for, generally speaking, superfluous wealth causes people to lead an idle life and, as a consequence of that, an unchristian life. You will learn in your poverty to raise your hearts to God and to heavenly riches, for it is mostly worldly wealth that turns the human heart away from God and heavenly things. You will encourage each other in the words of the elder Tobias to his son: Be of good heart, my son. “We lead, indeed, a poor life, but we shall have many good things,” in eternity, if we bear poverty in this short life with resignation, and “if we fear God and depart from all sin.”² For the consolation of the poor, I shall enter more in detail on this subject on another occasion; I pass on now to the other trials, which one of the married couple causes the other, and I will show you how you are to console yourselves under them.

Such poverty is good.

Second Part.

I will not speak now of the trouble and anxiety which married people wickedly cause each other, by unfaithfulness, aversion, hatred, avarice, extravagance, cruelty, and such like, by which discord is introduced into the married state; for I have already said enough on that head. I shall now consider only those natural frailties for which no one is to be blamed; such as a long and tedious illness, or even death itself. The first of these causes

Comfort for married people when one of them is suffering from a tedious illness.

¹ Mendicitatem et divitias ne dederis mihi: tribue tantum victui meo necessaria.—Prov. xxx. 8.

² Pauperem quidem vitam gerimus, sed multa bona habebimus, si timuerimus Deum, et recesserimus ab omni peccato.—Tob. iv. 23.

great anxiety to two hearts that really love each other, especially when the illness is of long duration. We can easily imagine how people feel in such circumstances : the sick person has pain and sorrow enough, while the other, who is in good health, is almost as badly off, either through pity, or on account of the labor of attending on the former. And what advice is to be given to them in such a case ? None, except that they should resign themselves humbly to the will of God ; for it is certain that health and sickness, life and death, come from the Lord, and sickness is a gift of God, as well as health. Trials of this kind are often useful, nay, even necessary for us, since thereby our eyes are opened, and we can see where we are here below, namely, in a vale of tears, where we can have no joy or consolation unmixed with trials and suffering. The poets of old tell us that Prometheus, when forming the first man, mixed up the clay that was to make his body, not with ordinary water, but with tears, to signify that man is placed in a world of sorrows. If married people, who truly love each other, were always in good health, they would often nearly lose every desire for the joys of Heaven, and would dread nothing more than death, which would separate them, and rob them of the paradise they think they have found on earth. Therefore, God often visits them, afflicts one of them with a tedious illness, and thus disturbs their joy, so that they may both learn that their true country is not here, but in eternity, and that they cannot reach it except by the rough road of trials and difficulties.

When one
of them
dies prema-
turely.

For the same reason God frequently dissolves the bond of marriage, and takes one of them away by a premature death. That is the hardest trial of all for married people who love each other. It pierces the heart of the survivor with a sorrow that can hardly be healed for the first half year. And truly, one must be made of marble or iron, not to grieve over the unexpected loss of a person in whom all one's love, happiness, and consolation have been centred, next after God. There is not even a savage beast but grieves when it is deprived of something that it has long been attached to. But let that be as it may, what is the use of so much weeping and sorrowing ? Its only effect is to make one pine away with melancholy, and ruin one's health. All our tears will not restore the dead to life, nor be of any help to one who has entered into eternity.

How they
must con-
sole them-
selves.

Therefore, married Christians, the best thing for you to do in such a case, is to put away the sorrowful thoughts out of your

minds, and occupy yourselves with some lawful business. Think also for your consolation: It is done now, and I cannot undo it ; such is the will of God; the Lord has given me my husband, or my wife, He has taken back His gift: “ Blessed be the name of the Lord.”¹ I knew very well, when I was getting married, that I was uniting myself to a mortal who could not escape death some time or other; why should I now grieve and sorrow so much for the death of that mortal, who has accomplished a journey that I, too, must end in the same manner. I am not astonished when I see that wax melts in the heat of the sun, that wood burns when it is thrown into the fire, that clothes are gnawed away by the moths, for I know that all these things occur according to natural laws. In the same way, I must look upon this death as a mere natural occurrence, since all men must die. How many great people are subject to death, although so many people depend on them, and they must be satisfied with the will of God; why should I not be so too? My husband, my wife, is, I hope, in Heaven; why should I be envious of that great good fortune, or try to trouble it by my sorrow? He, or she, who is gone before, will prepare the way for me, and will obtain powerful graces for me from God, that I may save my soul; besides, I can say that the love I formerly gloried in so much on earth, is changed into a better and purer one. The object of my affection sees, in the light of God’s presence, all my sorrow and affliction, and, perfectly happy while I am weeping, prays that everything may help me to my eternal salvation. How do I know what misfortune would have happened if he, or she, whose loss I so bitterly deplore, had lived longer in this miserable world? A violent death would have caused me and my children much greater sorrow. A sudden and unprovided death, without confession or repentance, would surely lead to eternal misery, and the loss would be irreparable forever. But since he, or she, was well prepared and received the last Sacraments before death, why should I not be resigned to the will of God? Therefore, I will praise God for the mercy He has shown to the dear departed one, as well as to me. God could have easily prevented this death. He did not do so. He is my loving Father whom I adore daily. He knows me and my children. He knows our circumstances and the loss we have suffered by death. He has foreseen the sorrow and trouble I now have to bear; but He knows also the power of the graces that He intends bestowing on me, if I only resign myself humbly and contentedly to His Father-

¹ *Domina dedit, Dominus abstulit.—Sit nomen Domini benedictum.—Job 1, 21.*

ly will. He knows the great merit I can gain by patience, the crown of glory He has in store for me in Heaven, and the temporal blessings He intends bestowing on me and my children, whom He can provide for far better than we could have done, with all our labor and trouble. Therefore, I will place no obstacle in the way of His bounteous providence by murmurs and complaints, nor will I hinder Him from bestowing on me and mine the blessings He has in reserve for us. For the future I will fix all my love in the God of infinite goodness, for before my heart was divided.

According to the example of all pious married people.

It was thus that Melania, the daughter of a Roman citizen, mitigated her grief after the premature death of her husband, and of two beloved sons. Such was her heroic resolution, as St. Jerome tells us in his letter to St. Paula: "Now, oh, Lord, I will be able to serve Thee with less hindrance, since Thou hast freed me from such a great burden."¹ In the same way, too, the holy queen, St. Elizabeth, consoled herself, after the death of the king, her husband, with the thought that she would have a better opportunity of devoting herself with all her heart to the love of God; and as Surlius testifies in her life, she said, full of joy and consolation: "I would have given the whole world to preserve my husband's life; but since God has been pleased to take him from me, I would not give a single hair of my head to have him back again." All of you should learn from these Christian heroines to resign yourselves patiently and contentedly to the will of God, in such circumstances.

A good conscience is a consolation in all difficulties.

Finally, a general remedy for all trials, no matter where they come from, and a sure source of consolation, is the love of God and a good conscience. As the Holy Ghost Himself tells us in these words of the Wise Sirach: "Gather up thy heart in His holiness; and drive away sadness far from thee."² We know by experience that such is the case; for crosses and trials in this life are generally chastisements that the just God sends to pious Christians, as well as to the wicked, and indeed, He sends the former far more of them than the latter. But see which of the two is the more afflicted: a good, conscientious man, or a wicked and vicious one? Which of the two is the more easily consoled in similar trials: a pious, virtuous woman, or a vain, frivolous, and worldly-minded one? Which of the two will give way to noisy lamentations, to complaints and murmurs against God and Heaven, and to despair and melancholy? A

¹ Jam magis expedite tibi servitura sum Domine, quia tanto me onere liberasti.

² Congrega cor tuum in sanctitate ejus, et tristitiam longe repelle a te.—EccI. xxx. 24.

good or a wicked Christian? There is no doubt that if we consult experience, we shall find that a slight annoyance, a trifling loss or misfortune, a thing of no account, so to speak, is enough to drive a wicked man to frenzy; while a pious Christian who loves God, can bear a far heavier cross much better, for although he feels it, yet the bitterness of his suffering, the heavy weight of his cross, will not press long upon him, before he has recourse to God for strength. A single confession or communion, a devout prayer, is enough to make him resigned to the will of God; and therefore, although his eyes are filled with tears, his heart is full of consolation and contentment.

A priest of our Society went once into a house to console a mother and her daughter who were suffering a very severe trial. He found them both seated in a room, bewailing their misfortune, He tried everything to console them and amongst other means, he reminded them of the sufferings of the crucified Jesus and of His sorrowful Mother, who, without any fault of their own, suffered far greater torments and trials through love of us. The daughter was still young, and had been lately married. She had been educated from her childhood in a convent, and had been brought up in the love and fear of God. The mother was a vain woman, who had learned but little of the maxims of the Gospel, and had hitherto lived according to the laws and usages of the world. Mark, my dear brethren, the difference between the two, and see what a different effect the priest's words had on them. The mother, with a frown on her face, said: Oh, Father, you may take away your crucifix, if you have nothing better to console us. It is a poor sort of consolation that one can get from it! It is good enough for monks and nuns in their cells; it is of no use to us who live in the world. She then turned her back on him, and began to cry and lament as before. The daughter, on the contrary, although she had to bear the weight of the trial, and the mother was grieving only on her account, recovered herself immediately, because she was devout and pious, and acting on the priest's advice, betook herself to prayer, whereupon she felt greatly consoled, became resigned to the will of God, and in a few days was quite peaceful and contented; while the mother continued to give way to grief and to reject all consolation, until, in a short time, she died. She was a martyr to sorrow without any merit, and perhaps went to the eternal torments of hell!

Christian married people, and all who are here present, who are now and then tried in various ways, no matter what your

Shown by
an example.

Conclusion
and exhortation to the

afflicted to
be resigned
to God's
will.

state of life may be, take to heart this advice which the Holy Ghost gives in the words quoted already: "Gather up thy heart in His holiness, and drive away sadness far from thee."¹ Be careful to have a good conscience, and to keep in the friendship of God always, and then, no matter how heavy your cross is, you will be relieved of half the burden; and then resign yourselves to the will of God, and think and say with the patient Job: "If we have received good things at the hand of God, why should we not receive evil?"² from a Fatherly hand with patience and resignation? Yes, my heavenly Father, let it be as it pleases Thee!³ I desire and wish for nothing else my whole life long but that Thy holy will be done in and by me and all belonging to me. If it is Thy pleasure for me to suffer much through my children, Thy holy will be done! If it is pleasing to Thee for me to have much trouble on account of my husband, or my wife, may Thy holy will be done! If it is pleasing to Thee for me to have trials and difficulties from other sources, Thy holy will be done! Do Thou only give me more patience, and do with me as Thou pleasest! I will try more earnestly to keep in Thy friendship, and if my sensitive nature forces the tears from my eyes, yet I will always say in my heart: "May the name of the Lord be blessed,"⁴ now and forevermore. Amen.

THIRTY-EIGHTH SERMON.

ON THE PRAYER OF MARRIED PEOPLE IN THEIR TROUBLES.

Subject.

1st. Troubles teach us to pray. 2d. They teach us the best way of praying.—*Preached on the fifth Sunday after Easter.*

Text.

Petite et accipietis, ut gaudium vestrum sit plenum.—John xvi. 24.

"Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full."

¹ Congrega cor tuum in sanctitate ejus; et tristitiam longe repelle a te.

² Si bona suscepimus de manu Domini, mala quare non suscipiamus?—Job ii. 10.

³ Ita, Pater, quoniam sic fuit placitum ante te. ⁴ Sit nomen Domini benedictum.

Introduction.

Hear, Christian married people, and all of you who are now and then visited with crosses, trials, and difficulties, and rejoice ! Why have I spent so much time hitherto in telling you how to console yourselves in trials ? Hear what the best Consoler of all, Jesus Christ, says to you : “ Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full.”¹ It is the almighty and most faithful God who says this ; consequently, the best and safest means against all difficulties, is prayer to God. When I think of that, I must say : Your trials are most useful to you, and most desirable. Because the Lord complains that we pray so little to Him, and ask so little from Him : “ Hitherto you have not asked anything.”² And so it appears that He sends new crosses sometimes, in order to force and compel you to ask consolation from Him in prayer. Such is the case, my dear brethren, and therefore, crosses and trials are good for us, because they teach us how to pray, as I shall prove now, for the greater consolation of the afflicted.

Plan of Discourse.

Troubles teach us to pray : that is a great benefit. The first part. Troubles teach us the best manner of praying : that is a still greater benefit. The second part. Therefore, pray in your troubles, and you may be certain of being consoled. The conclusion.

Do Thou, oh, Jesus, who hast said : “ Ask and you shall receive,” help us thereto by Thy grace, through the intercession of Thy Mother Mary and the holy angels guardian.

I know not if men could receive a greater benefit in this mortal life than the gift of prayer to the Lord their God. For, since the good of a thing is estimated partly by its necessity, in so far as we cannot do without it, and partly by its usefulness, in so far as it helps us to gain a great deal, what could be more necessary to us poor mortals, in the midst of the trials and difficulties of this life, which affect both soul and body, than prayer to God ? For He has determined, generally speaking, to give not a single gift or grace, unless to those who ask Him for it ; as I shall hereafter show more fully, when I come to speak of the necessity of prayer. What can be more useful and advantageous than prayer ? For everything good that we can wish for and desire can be obtained only by prayer, nay, it must sometimes be sought for with importu-

The gift of prayer is a great benefit.

¹ Petite, et accipietis, ut gaudium vestrum sit plenum.

² Usque modo non petistis quidquam.

nity. God says to all men: "Ask, and you shall receive."¹ "Seek and you shall find."² Come on boldly, and seek what you want, and you will find it with Me. "Knock" at my door, "and it shall be opened unto you."³ Mark this, my dear brethren: Just as a shop-keeper stands before his shop and invites customers to come and buy, exhibiting his wares, and praising them, so as to inspire every one with a desire of purchasing them, so does God act when He offers us all His gifts and graces, provided only we pray for and desire them. And He is a faithful God, who never can fail to fulfil His promises, and whose perfections compel Him to give us everything He has promised. Therefore, He must give His grace, the eternal joys of Heaven, nay, even Himself, to all who ask Him in the proper way; as I shall show more fully, when I come to speak of the efficacy of prayer. Hence I come to the conclusion that there is nothing more useful and more desirable for human beings, than that which forces and compels them to pray, and without which they would neglect such a great good.

To which men are driven by trials.

But, mark this! such is precisely the effect of the trials and difficulties that the all-ruling God sends us in different ways. We have daily experience of that. How do things go on in a town or community in a time of general peace? Certainly, if we were just and honest, we should thank the goodness and generosity of God for such a blessing. But, alas, the contrary is most frequently the case! With reason does the poet say: "Sacrifices are scarce in prosperous times."⁴ In truth, it is so. If we have everything according to our wishes, then good-by to prayer; no one thinks of it! The majority of people forget their God; He is cheated of His due service; the Churches are never crowded; the altars are bare; there are few who raise up their eyes to Heaven, few who speak to the good God, few who think of appeasing His anger: "Sacrifices are scarce in prosperous times."

This is seen in public calamities.

But if the apparently prosperous wheel of fortune turns in another direction; if clouds begin to hide the sun; if the season turns out unfruitful, and brings on scarcity; if a general war disturbs the public tranquillity; if a pestilence hurries off numbers of young and old to the grave, oh, then there is an immediate change to be seen everywhere! The hitherto almost deserted Churches are again filled with people; the knee is bent humbly before the great God; the hands are stretched out to Heaven, or folded in prayer; great and small unite in crying out to God for

¹ *Petite, et accipietis.* ² *Quærite, et invenietis.*

³ *Pulsate, et aperietur vobis.*—Luke xi. 9. ⁴ *Raræ fumant fœlicibus aræ.*

help and mercy. So does the darkness of night compel us to light a candle; the bitter cold of winter drives us to the fire; a severe illness makes us speak kindly to the doctor; the trials and difficulties of life force us to seek help from God by prayer. It is a beautiful saying of St. John Chrysostom: "Prayer is the fruit and the reward of calamity."¹ And if calamity had no other effect but to teach us how to pray, we should on that account, alone, hold it in the highest esteem.

In former times the goodness of God had bestowed countless wonderful benefits on the Jewish people, but none of them was more profitable than the rod with which He sometimes chastised them. And why so? Because as long as things went well with them, they were rebellious and ungrateful; they forgot God. The Sacred Scripture says: they left God, their Maker,² and adored false gods. St. John Chrysostom says: "So does prosperity make people forget God."³ And how must the ungrateful people be taught to return to the true God, and to adore Him? They must be forced by necessity: "Their heart was humbled," says the Prophet David, alluding to their history: "they were weakened," with pestilence, war, and famine, "and there was none to help them," and so they changed very quickly: "Then they cried to the Lord in their affliction."⁴ David says elsewhere: "When he slew them, then they sought Him; and they returned and came to Him early in the morning,"⁵ to adore Him, and ask His help.

Just as was the case formerly with the Jews.

An equally powerful teacher and master is calamity, not only in a community, but with each individual in particular. The Holy Scriptures are filled with examples that prove this. Jonas prayed, but when? He tell us himself: "I cried out of my affliction to the Lord,"⁶ when I was cast into the sea, and swallowed by a monstrous fish; being miraculously preserved, I remembered my God, from whose face I had flown. I learned to pray and call upon the Lord in trials. Ezechias prayed with tearful eyes; but when? When he was suffering from a grievous illness, and was on the point of dying: "He turned his face to the wall, and prayed to the Lord,"⁷ "and Ezechias

Private calamities also compel us to pray. Proved from Holy Scripture.

¹ Oratio est merces calamitatum. ² Dereliquit Deum factorem suum. — Deut. xxxii. 15.

³ Adeo deliciae solent ad numinis oblivionem adducere.

⁴ Compelle intrare. — Luke xiv. 23.

⁵ Humiliatum est cor eorum, infirmati sunt, nec fuit qui adjuvaret. Et clamaverunt ad Dominum, cum tribularentur. — Ps. cvi. 12, 13.

⁶ Cum occideret eos, querebant eum et revertebantur, et diluculo veniebant ad eum. — Ps. lxxvii. 34.

⁷ Clamavi de tribulatione mea ad Dominum. — Jon. ii. 3.

⁸ Convertit faciem suam ad parietem et oravit Dominum. — IV. Kings xx. 2.

wept with much weeping,"¹ as we read in the 20th chapter of the Fourth Book of Kings. Mark this, again says St. John Chrysostom: when Ezechias was well and prosperous, "his heart became filled with pride:"² but when he was stricken down by sickness, he began to pray as he never did before. Samson prayed, but it was when the Philistines put out his eyes and imprisoned him. The three Hebrew children prayed in the fiery furnace. Daniel, though he often prayed at other times, was especially devout in the lions' den. Jacob prayed the whole night through when he was expecting to be attacked by his brother Esau. I hear the disciples of Jesus Christ crying out: "Lord, save us, we perish,"³ but when? When their boat was on the point of being overwhelmed by the storm; whereas, before the danger threatened them, they allowed their Master to sleep, and were talking about other things. Peter prayed alone before all the disciples; he cried out to Christ: "Lord, save me!"⁴ When did he say that? "When he was commencing to sink beneath the water,"⁵ then it was that he cried out, Lord,⁶ now is the time to help me! The Chananæan woman prayed, because her daughter was possessed by an evil spirit. The Centurion in the Gospel prayed, because his servant was stricken with the palsy. The blind man prayed by the wayside, because he wished to have his sight restored to him. The ruler of the synagogue prayed, because his daughter was dead. The ruler of Capharnaum prayed, when his son was in danger of death. Martha and Magdalen prayed when their brother Lazarus lay at the point of death, etc. So true is it that: "Prayer is the fruit and the reward of calamity."⁷

For this reason God sends us trials.

For, God acts with us as the mother does with her child. If she sees that the child is fond of running about and leaving her, thus putting itself in danger of an accident, and that it will not come when called, what does she do? She tells one of the servants to disguise himself, and to go and frighten the child, so that the latter may at once run to its mother for protection, and may not be so ready to leave her in future. In the same way our heavenly Father acts when He wishes to keep His children close to Himself; as St. John Chrysostom says: "He allows trials to come upon us, that we may have recourse to Him more frequently by prayer."⁸

Especially to married

If this means is necessary for any state of life, it certainly is

¹ Flevitque Ezechias fletu magno.—IV. Kings xx. 3.

² In altum cor ejus erectum. est.

³ Domine, salva nos, perimus.

⁴ Domine, salvum me fac. †

⁵ Cum coepisset mergi.

⁶ Domine!

⁷ Oratio est merces calamitatum.

⁸ Tribulationes fieri permittit, ut ad ipsum frequentius confugiamus.

for the married state ; for since, on the one hand, married people are occupied the whole day with domestic cares and temporal concerns, so that they are hindered from preserving a constant union with God ; and on the other hand, the pleasures of the world and the enjoyment of creatures are apt to turn away the heart from God and heavenly things, it is already evident that if everything went according to their wishes, and if they had no trials to bear, they would hardly think seriously and earnestly of God once in the day, nor would they see any necessity of praying to Him for anything ; but they would turn away from Him like little children, and abandon Him. And then the Almighty says: If you will not remain with Me, and pray to Me otherwise, I will teach you how to do it. He then immediately commands His servants, that is, His creatures, to take away some of their wealth from those people ; to bring sickness on their beloved son ; to cause the husband or wife a mortal illness ; to trouble the parents by the wilfulness and obstinacy of the children ; to make one of the married couple a source of anxiety and grief to the other. And to what purpose ? That they may learn to have recourse to Him, to stretch out their hands to Him, and implore His help. In that way they learn to pray ; otherwise, they would not have thought of it.

people, that they may learn to pray.

And what is still better, not only will they be driven to have recourse to God by prayer, but also, generally speaking, the words of the Gospel with regard to the ruler will be verified with regard to them, and to their household : “ Himself believed, and his whole house.”¹ In such trials not only do the married couple themselves learn to pray, but all the children, servants, and friends must help them therein and ask God to assist them, because the trouble affects the whole family. Nor is this all ; they get others to pray also, they have Masses said, and they recommend themselves in public devotions to the prayers of the whole congregation. Thus God is praised by the united prayers of many persons ; and prayer of that kind is sure to ascend to Heaven, according to the infallible promise of Jesus Christ : “ Where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”² “ Whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by my Father.”³

And their whole household as well.

You must see now and acknowledge, Christian married people, what a great and useful blessing trials and crosses bring into your

Therefore trials are good for them.

¹ *Credidit ipse et domus ejus tota.*—John iv. 53.

² *Ubi sunt duo vel tres congregati in nomine meo, ibi sum in medio eorum.*—Matth. xviii. 20.

³ *Quæcunque petierint, fiet illis a Patre meo.*—Ibid. 19.

house. They teach you to pray to God, and that is already a great advantage ; but what is better still, they also teach you how to pray in the best manner, as we shall see in the

Second Part.

Prayer must
be humble.

There is praying and praying. The Pharisee prayed in the Temple before the altar ; the publican prayed at the same time, in the same temple, behind the door. The latter went home justified after his prayer ; but not the former. Many Christians pray, nowadays, to whom the words of the Apostle St. James might be applied : “ You ask and receive not, because you ask amiss.”¹ So that the first requisite for prayer, to be good and pleasing to God, is humility, as I shall prove hereafter : “ This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles.”² Who is that poor man, asks St. Augustine ; is it only he who is poor in earthly goods ? Oh, if that were the case, woe to you, rich and wealthy, for your prayers would do you little good ! No ; the rich are not excluded, if they pray like the poor ; that is to say, humbly acknowledging their wants and miseries, and confessing, with full submission to the divine Majesty of God, that they require His help and assistance in everything, and that He alone can free them from their evils. How do poor mendicants act in order to arouse the rich man’s pity, and to induce him to give them an alms ? If they have a sum of money that they succeeded in scraping together elsewhere, do they show it to him ? By no means, for if they did, he would give them nothing. No ; they conceal it as well as they can, and let him see only a few pence in their hands ; they pretend to be much poorer than they really are ; they show their ragged clothes and the sores that appear through their torn garments ; they point to their faces emaciated by hunger, and they openly declare and acknowledge everything that could excite pity and compassion. In the same humble condition should we appear before the great God, to ask His help and mercy by prayer. We must declare to Him our necessities, wants, and frailties, both of soul and body ; we must tell Him that we can do nothing and that we have none to help us, and appeal to His goodness and mercy. This is the prayer of which God says by the Prophet Ezechiel : “ The prayer of Him that hum-

¹ *Petitis, et non accipitis ; eo quod male petatis.*—James iv. 3.

² *Iste pauper clamavit, et Dominus exaudivit eum, et de omnibus tribulationibus ejus salvavit eum.*—Ps. xxxiii. 7.

bleth himself shall pierce the clouds; and the Lord will not be slack.”¹

But when do we feel the greatest impulse to pray? Is it in the time of prosperity? By no means. When everything goes according to our wishes, although we should acknowledge that we have received everything from the goodness of God, who is there who confesses humbly, before the throne of God, wants and miseries that he does not feel? But when the shoe pinches and hurts, when the hand of the Lord wields the rod, when a severe trial or a heavy cross comes near us, or actually upon us, that is the time to humble ourselves. We do not require to borrow words from prayer books then to express the misery that we feel. How easy it is for us to humble ourselves in such circumstances before the Lord our God! How deep and sincere are the sighs and groans with which we show Him the ulcers that afflict us, and cry to Him for mercy!

Trials force us to this.

See with what great humility the Chananæan woman prayed to Christ to free her daughter from the evil spirit, and herself from her affliction. She prostrates herself before Him on the ground, and cries out: “Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously troubled by a devil.”² Christ pretended not to hear her, and answered not a word.³ But she did not cease to urge her humble petition, and the disciples besought Him for her: “Send her away,”⁴ do as she asks. And the good and gentle Saviour answered: No; “it is not good to take the bread of the children and to cast it to the dogs.”⁵ So that He appears to treat her as a dog! And what does she answer? “Yea, Lord,” she says with the greatest humility; “for the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters.”⁶ Allow something to fall from thy table for me also, a poor hungry whelp, and I will be content therewith. My dear brethren, it must not have been the first time that that woman was called by such an opprobrious name, since she acted so well on this occasion! She does not consider herself a bit better than a poor little dog. What impelled her to pray so humbly? The affliction she was suffering on account of her daughter’s unhappy state; and as the

The Chananæan woman proves this.

¹ *Oratis humiliantis se nubes penetrabit, et Dominus non elongabit.*—Ecd. xxxv. 21, 22.

² *Miserere mei, Domine, Fili David: illa mea mala a dæmonio vexatur.*—Matth. xv. 22.

³ *Qui non respondit ei verbum.*—Ibid. 23.

⁴ *Dimitte eam.*—Ibid.

⁵ *Non est bonum sumere panem filiorum, et mittere canibus.*—Ibid. 26.

⁶ *Etiam, Domine: nam et canelli edunt de micis, quæ cadunt de mensa dominorum suorum.*—Ibid. 27.

result of her prayer, she obtained mercy from our Lord ; for He said to her: " Be it done to thee as thou wilt." ¹

Shown by
an example.

This incident of the Gospel reminds me of another example, which occurred during the Pontificate of Clement V. This Pontiff was so embittered against the Venetians, on account of their misdeeds, that he inflicted all kinds of spiritual and temporal punishments on them, and could not be appeased in any way. Amongst the ambassadors whom the Venetians sent to Rome to pacify the Pope, there was one Francis Dandolo, by name. When this latter heard that Clement was inexorable, he placed a heavy chain round his neck, and while the Pope was at table, he came in on his hands and knees, and crawled in that humble position, like a four-footed beast, up to the table, as if to say: Jesus Christ had mercy on the Chananæan woman, because she asked for the crumbs like a little dog ; see, oh, Vicar of Jesus Christ, I lie under your table like a dog and await your grace and mercy ! Clement was quite confused at this proceeding. He told the prostrate ambassador to rise up and take off the chain, forgave the Venetians the injuries they had done him, and received them again into his friendship. You may learn from that how powerful humble prayer is with God, and how it can obtain anything, even from men ; but see, too, how difficulties and trials teach men how to pray humbly.

Prayer must
be fervent.

Another necessary quality for prayer to be efficacious is fervor and earnestness. The Prophet David says of himself: " I cried with my whole heart: Hear me, oh, Lord !" ² What good is it to speak with the lips, if the heart is dumb ? What good is it to play with the fingers on the keys of an organ, if there is no one to blow the bellows ? The keys will give forth no music, nor will the prayer of the lips merely have any efficacy. A single Our Father, prayed fervently and earnestly, is worth more, in the sight of God, than a dozen rosaries, or any amount of them said without fervor and attention. St. Bernard had a wonderful vision once, as he was singing the Psalms in choir with his brethren: He saw an angel standing by each monk, with a book and a pen in his hand, writing down the words of the Psalms. The Saint was astonished at the difference of the letters in this book. Some of these were written in pure gold, to signify the inward and outward attention with which some of the brethren sang the praises of God ; others were written in silver, to denote the pure in-

¹ *Fiat tibi, sicut vis.*—Matth. xv. 28.

² *Clamavi in toto corde meo: Exaudi me, Domine!*—Ps. cxlviii. 145.

tention they had; others again were written in black ink, to signify that the prayer was said in the ordinary way; others were written in water, which disappeared immediately, and these denoted that the prayer was tepid, devotionless, and without fervor; and finally, the words that some of the brethren uttered were not written down at all, but in place of them the following: "These people honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me."¹ Thus the angel testified his dissatisfaction at voluntarily distracted prayer.

Oh, prayer of Christians, of what kind art thou, especially in time of prosperity, when no necessity impels us to have recourse to God? Holy angels, show us your book for once, that we may see in what colors you have written down that prayer! I fear there are many whose prayers are written in black letters; more still whose prayers are written in water, and with the greater number, I fear, the pen will not be once laid to the paper! People go every day to Church and hear Mass. That is a good deal, and they who do so may be reckoned as pious Christians. When benediction is given, or there is an indulgence to be gained, or there is a procession taking place, people generally are present. That part of the prayer book, in which the most pleasing and touching instances of the perfect love of God are given, is read, and people think that the longer time they spend in such devotion, the more devout are they during the day. They imagine all sorts of wonderful things about the great service they have shown to God, and they think something very good and holy has been done by them. Ah, that is not what devotion consists in: true prayer does not consist in saying so many prayers; for what is the general character of them? If they were all counted up together, many of them would be represented by a mere cipher. There is more idleness than devotion in such prayers. There is such curiosity of the eyes, and such distraction of the mind, that the devil laughs at those prayers; as those two experienced, of whom Jordanus writes that they were saying the office together, but so sleepily and distractedly that the evil spirit caused a fearful stench to arise at the end of the prayer, and said to them, laughing: "Such a prayer deserves this kind of incense."² Many read all sorts of things in their books, and do not understand what they are reading, what they desire, or what they are asking for; they are not at all in earnest about receiving from God what

Which it rarely is in time of prosperity.

¹ *Populus hic labiis me honorat, cor autem eorum longe est a me.—Matth. xv. 8.*

² *Ad talem orationem, tale debetur incensum.*

they ask for in that way. The Our Father is certainly said hundreds and thousands of times, and many who say it so often do not once earnestly desire that a single petition contained in it be fulfilled; and meanwhile, a soul overwhelmed with affliction at some heavy cross, cries out only once to Heaven: Lord, grant me patience; Lord, help me in my necessity; or, Lord, Thy will be done! This one sigh is more to the glory of God, and to the advantage of the soul, than all the long, unfervent, and distracted prayers that are said in time of prosperity.

Trials teach us how to pray with fervor.

Such is the case, my dear brethren. The approach, or the actual arrival of misfortune is, so to speak, the bellows that makes the organ sound; it fills the heart with the proper zeal and fervor in prayer. If a beam of wood falls upon a man and crushes him, he does not want a prayer book then, as I imagine; like a hungry beggar, he will easily find a few, earnest words, coming straight from the heart, to make known his difficulty to God. In prosperity it is the book, so to say, that speaks; in adversity, when we ask for help or relief, it is our will. Formerly it was merely the lips that moved in prayer, now it is the heart. The eyes do not wander about, the whole being is absorbed in prayer, through the intense desire of being heard. The cry, then, is, with David: "I cried with my whole heart: Hear me, oh, Lord."¹

Shown by an example from the Sacred Scripture.

Her sterility taught Anna, the mother of Samuel, to pray with such fervor. The Sacred Scripture says of her, in the first chapter of the First Book of Kings: "As Anna had her heart full of grief, she prayed to the Lord, shedding many tears. And it came to pass, as she multiplied prayers before the Lord, etc."² Here, the holy Fathers ask, what is the meaning of multiplying prayers, since Anna in a few words asked of God to give her a son. Yes, answers St. John Chrysostom, her prayer was manifold, although her words were few, on account of the inward zeal and earnest desire with which she poured forth her heart before the Lord; for she thus prayed more with the heart than with the lips, according to what is said of her further on: "Now Anna spoke in her heart, and only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard at all."³ With the same zeal Sara learned to pray, after her seven husbands had been killed by the devil, one after the other, on the first night of the marriage feast, and she had thus come to be

¹ *Clamavi in toto corde meo: Exaudi me, Domine!*

² *Cum esset Anna amaro animo, oravit ad Dominum, fletu largiter. Factum est autem, cum illa multiplicaret preces coram Domino, etc.—I. Kings i. 10, 12.*

³ *Porro Anna loquebatur in corde suo, tantumque labia illius movebantur, et vox penitus non audiebatur.—Ibid. 13.*

looked upon as the murderess of her husbands. In this trial, says the Sacred Text, "she went into an upper chamber of her house; and for three days and three nights did neither eat nor drink; but continuing in prayer, with tears besought God that He would deliver her from this reproach."¹ Such also is the testimony of King David, speaking of himself: "Instead of making me a return of love, they detracted me,"² and repaid me evil for good. What didst thou do then, oh, unhappy king? He says: "But I gave myself to prayer."³ Cajetanus reads: "But I became a prayer."⁴

Oh, God of infinite wisdom, how canst Thou draw such sweetness from such apparent bitterness? What a great good Thou effectest for us with the very thing that we look upon as a great evil, when Thou visitest and seemest to punish us with trials? If crosses and afflictions brought us no other advantage nor merit, than to force us to pray, and to pray in the best possible manner, that ought to be enough to make us readily accept the cross from Thy hands, and to thank Thee for it! Certainly, as St. John Chrysostom says: "Are we suffering from poverty? Then let us give thanks to God!"⁵ Are we persecuted by men? let us give thanks to God! In weakness and illness, let us give thanks.⁶ In troubles and desolation, let us give thanks! In all difficulties that occur, let us give thanks! "For this serves to unite us with God;"⁷ since we learn thereby to lift up our hearts to God, and to speak to Him in humble, fervent prayer.

We must, then, thank God for trials as for a great benefit.

Pray, then, Christian married people, and all of you; such is my conclusion, in the words of the holy Apostle St. James: "Is any of you sad? let him pray."⁸ Pray with fervor and humility, as often as difficulties in your state of life cause you sorrow and suffering. Do not say, as people often do: I am so troubled and annoyed at home, that I can do no good; I cannot say a single Our Father devoutly, and it is that which causes me the greatest uneasiness. What do you mean by saying that you cannot pray? If it were possible to pray only in the Church, where you can read as much as you like out of your prayer book, quietly and devoutly, then I should acknowledge that crosses and trials would prevent rather than encourage devotion. But, as I have told you

Conclusion and exhortation to prayer in incidental trials.

¹ Perrexit in superius cubiculum domus suæ, et tribus diebus et tribus noctibus non manducavit, neque bibit, sed in oratione persistens: cum lacrimis deprecabatur Deum, ut ab isto improperio liberaret eam.—Tob. iii. 10, 11.

² Pro eo ut me diligerent, detrahebant mihi.—Ps. cviii. 4.

³ Ego autem orabam. ⁴ Ego autem oratio. ⁵ In paupertate sumus? Gratias agamus.

⁶ Gratias agamus. ⁷ Hoc enim nos fecit, proximos esse Deo.

⁸ Tristatur aliquis vestrum? oret.—James. v. 13.

often enough before, real prayer does not consist in that. If you only think of God in your troubles, humbly acknowledge that your crosses come from His hand; if you only cry out from the bottom of your heart: Lord, have mercy on me; Lord, give me patience, etc., you will have prayed very well, indeed. It is easy for you to do that, no matter how troubled you are, and you really often do it, too. Cry out to Heaven frequently in that way, and you may be assured that you will not have long to wait for help, or at least for consolation from God, who tells us that He is our loving Father, and that His promises cannot deceive us: "Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full!"¹ Yes, in future, my only refuge, my sole consolation will be sought in humble prayer to my heavenly Father: "I shall cry out and Thou wilt hear me!"² Thou wilt hear me, although Thou seemest to disregard my prayer. Thou wilt hear me, although I may not notice that my burden is lightened. One consolation, at all events, I shall have after prayer, and that is that I shall know Thy holy will, according to which it is decreed that I should suffer, so that Thou mayest prepare an eternal reward for me in return for the short sufferings of this life. Amen.

¹ *Petite et accipietis, ut gaudium vestrum sit plenum.*

² *Clamabo, et tu exaudies.*

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

SERMONS
ON THE
DIFFERENT STATES OF LIFE.

ADAPTED TO ALL THE SUNDAYS AND HOLYDAYS OF THE YEAR.

BY THE
REV. FATHER FRANCIS HUNOLT,
Priest of the Society of Jesus, and Preacher in the Cathedral of Treves.

TRANSLATED BY THE
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CONTENTS OF VOLUME II.

ON THE DUTY OF PARENTS TOWARDS THEIR CHILDREN, AS FAR AS THE SOULS OF THE LATTER ARE CONCERNED.

| SERMON | PAGE |
|--|------|
| XXXIX. On the Christian Training of Children, - - - - | 7 |
| XL. On the Reasons why Parents should Bring Up their Children in a Christian manner, - - - - | 19 |
| XLI. On the Teaching that Parents should Give their Children, | 31 |
| XLII. On the Watchfulness of Parents Over their Children, | 47 |
| XLIII. On the Due Chastisement of Children, - - - - | 58 |
| XLIV. On the Paternal Chastisement of Children, - - - - | 70 |
| XLV. On the Good Example that Parents should give their Children, - - - - | 80 |
| XLVI. On the Necessity of Parents Giving Good Example to their Children, - - - - | 92 |

ON THE DUTIES OF PARENTS TOWARDS THEIR CHILDREN IN TEMPORAL MATTERS.

| | |
|--|-----|
| XLVII. On the Duty of Feeding and Supporting Children, - | 103 |
| XLVIII. On the Great Care that Parents must Take of their Children, as far as Temporal Things are Concerned, | 118 |
| XLIX. On the Usefulness of Alms-giving for the Temporal Welfare of Parents and Children, - - - - | 131 |
| L. On the Usefulness of Alms-giving for Eternal Life, - | 145 |
| LI. On the Just Claims that the Poor Souls in Purgatory have on our Help, - - - - | 159 |

ON THE MUTUAL OBLIGATIONS OF SUPERIORS AND INFERIORS.

| | |
|---|-----|
| LII. On the Duties of Subjects to their Spiritual and Temporal Superiors, - - - - | 170 |
| LIII. On the Duties of the Laity towards Priests, - - - - | 184 |
| LIV. On the Duties of Masters and Mistresses towards their Servants, - - - - | 197 |

| SERMON | PAGE |
|---|------|
| LV. On the Duties of Servants towards their Masters and Mistresses, - - - - - | 209 |
| LVI. On the Evil of being Too Much Occupied, - - - | 224 |
| LVII. On the Guiltiness of a Too Busy Life, - - - - | 237 |
| ON THE STATE OF THE RICH. | |
| LVIII. On the Goodness of God towards the Rich, - - - | 250 |
| LIX. On the Ingratitude of the Rich towards God, - - - | 262 |
| LX. On the Duty of the Rich towards the Poor, - - - | 274 |
| LXI. On the Vain Excuses of the Rich with regard to Alms-giving, - - - - - | 289 |
| ON THE STATE OF THE POOR. | |
| LXII. How Deserving of Help the Poor are, - - - - | 304 |
| LXIII. On the Decent Poor, - - - - - | 318 |
| LXIV. On the Happiness of the Poor, - - - - - | 332 |
| ON THE CONTENTMENT OF EACH ONE IN HIS STATE OF LIFE. | |
| LXV. On the Divine Decree, which has Appointed a State and Condition of Life for Each One, - - - | 350 |
| LXVI. On the All-wise Providence of God in Arranging Different States of Life, - - - - - | 363 |
| LXVII. On the Contentment of Each One in his State of Life, as far as the Service of God is Concerned, - - - | 378 |
| LXVIII. On the Contentment of Each One in his State of Life, as far as the Dangers of the Soul are Concerned, - - - | 391 |
| LXIX. On the Childlike Confidence with which Every One ought to Abandon Himself to Divine Providence, - - - | 402 |
| ON THE GOOD USE THAT EACH ONE IN HIS STATE OF LIFE SHOULD MAKE OF TIME. | |
| LXX. On the Redeeming in Old Age of Lost Time, - - - | 418 |
| LXXI. On Making a Good Use of Present and Future Time, Especially for Young People, - - - - | 432 |
| LXXII. On Shrove-Tide, - - - - - | 445 |
| LXXIII. On Morning Prayer, - - - - - | 457 |
| LXXIV. On the Use and Nature of Morning Prayer, - - - | 467 |
| LXXV. On the Examination of Conscience in the Evening, - - - | 480 |
| LXXVI. On the Use of the Present Time, - - - - - | 493 |
| Index of Sermons, - - - - - | 507 |
| Alphabetical Index of Subjects, - - - - - | 516 |

ON THE DUTY OF PARENTS TOWARDS
THEIR CHILDREN, AS FAR AS
THE SOULS OF THE LATTER
ARE CONCERNED.

THIRTY-NINTH SERMON.

ON THE CHRISTIAN TRAINING OF CHILDREN.

Subject.

Parents must train their children most carefully for the end of their creation. 1st. This is commanded by the natural and the divine law. 2d. The eternal salvation and happiness of the children require it.—*Preached on the fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Dedit illum matri suæ.—Luke vii. 15.
“He gave him to his mother.”

Introduction.

Why does Christ give the son to his mother? The young man would certainly have gone to his mother of his own accord, after having been raised from the dead. But our Lord wished to remind the mother that she must henceforth confess that she would never have recovered her son, if Christ had not restored him to life by a miracle. Christian parents, do you ever think who it is from whom you have received your children? They are gifts of God, bestowed upon you by the Father and Creator of all, and without Him you could not have one such gift. But that is not what I wish to speak of now. Do you ever, do you frequently, think why and to what end God has given you your children? You

must train them up carefully; that you know well enough. But how, and for what, must you train them? For the end of their creation, for which God has made them. That is the only object you must have in bringing up your children, as I shall now prove. This is a very important matter, on which the salvation of many souls depends; and I am forced to speak of it by the great neglect that many parents are guilty of in this respect, and by the command of the holy Father Ignatius, who lays it down as a rule for preachers to explain this subject frequently and impressively. I say, therefore, to-day of that duty in general—

Plan of Discourse.

Christian parents, bring up your children most carefully for the end of their creation. This is commanded by the natural and the divine law. As I shall show in the first part. The eternal salvation and happiness of your children require it. As I shall prove in the second part.

Would that I had a tongue of fire, and a voice of thunder, to impress you all deeply with this truth, on the knowledge and fulfilment of which the salvation of almost all men depends! Thou, oh, God, canst do what Thy poor instrument cannot; give me, then, oh, almighty Master, the grace that I now ask through the intercession of Mary, and all the holy angels guardian.

Nature teaches all wild beasts to bring up their young for the end for which they are made.

What am I about to do? To admonish parents to bring up their children with the greatest care, for the end for which God has created them! And to whom am I going to speak? To human beings, endowed with reason! And what sort of human beings are they? Are they Turks, heathens, barbarians, who have grown up in a wilderness, and know nothing of eternity? No; they are Christians, who have received supernatural sights, and who know the duty that I am about to admonish them of! But, be still, my tongue; do not disturb Christian ears with such a useless and vain exhortation! Ye birds of the air, and wild beasts of the field; ye lions, tigers, bears, serpents, and most savage animals that nature has produced, you must be my audience now; for certainly my subject is more necessary for you than for Christians! But hold! I am afraid that if I attempted to accuse you of negligence in this matter, you would soon put an end to my speech, you would spring upon me, and tear me to pieces with your claws and fangs. Such is the case, my dear brethren; the wild beasts would not permit it; for they are so careful in training their young for the purpose that

God intended them for, according to their nature, that they require neither exhortation nor admonition therein. What! the lion would say to me; wilt thou teach me to train up my young? Have I ever been wanting therein? They are created for prey, and it is my daily task to teach them that while they are young. Woe to him who would venture even to approach my den, to injure them, or to take them away! What! the bear would growl forth; do I not work diligently to teach my cubs, until I have given them all the knowledge that nature requires from them? The falcon says: Do I not teach my young to pounce upon their prey? The eagle: Do I not show mine how to fly, as the Creator Himself gives testimony.¹ What! the hen would cry out; see how carefully I always train up my chickens; how I shelter them under my wings the whole night, and the greater part of the day; how I work continually to provide them with food, although I must often suffer hunger myself; how I defend them against cats and dogs, although I know that the latter are stronger than I, and how I spread out my wings and ruffle up my feathers so as to protect my chickens, and save them from every danger! And so all the lower animals might say to me: It is useless for thee to teach us our duty in this respect; nature has taught us sufficiently already.

And must I now exhort reasoning beings, supernaturally enlightened Christians, to their duty in this respect? Must I accuse them of negligence, nay, can I even imagine that they are wanting in an obligation that nature has taught even to the most ferocious animals? Truly, Christian parents, I seem to be guilty of great presumption. You have just cause to be indignant with me. "Be angry,"² and avenge yourselves on me; I confess my fault. Accuse me, and be my judges, for having publicly insulted and offended you! Would to God that I were wrong! Would that I could be persuaded that my suspicions in this matter were ill-founded, and that not a single Christian parent could be found guilty of neglecting in the least that most important duty of bringing up children for their last end!

How much more should not reasoning beings know that-

But, alas, what an immense number of parents might come forward and say that I am quite right! Are men, then, worse and more cruel in this point than the most savage beasts? Unfortunately, it is only too true, and daily experience convinces us of it. Most people train up their children very carefully from their youth; they are not wanting in that. But to what do they train them? To eat, drink, stand, or walk becomingly; cats and

But there is a great want herein, with most people. Children get training, but for their bodies.

¹ Sicut aquila provocans ad volandum pullos suos.- Deut. xxxiii. 11.

² Irascimini!

dogs do as much as that for their young. To speak, read, write, and dress properly; that is no more than heathens and infidels do for their children. To what tends the greatest care of parents for their sons and daughters, when the latter are past the years of childhood? Some try merely to teach them some respectable trade, so that they can earn their living. Others, thinking that their children are not obliged to work, train them up to speak foreign languages, or to the liberal arts and sciences, or instruct them in commerce, or send them to travel in foreign countries, that they may know something of the world and its customs, and thus be able to deal with people in different offices and employments. Or they try to settle their daughter well in life, or to procure a benefice, or a rich marriage, for their son; or, finally, their whole aim is to be able to leave their children well off, after their own death. Such is the chief care of most parents; it is the only one of very many! If they are successful in that, their whole duty is fulfilled, as they think, and they have nothing more to trouble about. It certainly is a care that cannot be found fault with; and would that all fathers and mothers attended to it properly, and gave their children a decent trade or profession. If they did, there would not be so many idlers and good-for-nothings going about the streets.

But the souls are generally neglected.

But, Christian parents, is that the only end for which your children were entrusted and given to you by their Creator? Have they come into the world for no other purpose than to care for their bodies, which will one day become the food of worms? Is it their only object to earn their bread, and to live respectably in the eyes of the world? Have they not a soul—one only soul—one immortal soul? Does not that concern you at all? Have their immortal souls nothing to hope for, nothing to fear after this life? Faith, where art thou? There is an eternal fire, to which your children may be condemned; forget it not. There is an eternal Heaven, in which they may rejoice; forget it not. To this latter they are called by God. They are entrusted to you by their Creator that they may attain it. The principal thing, the only object for which they are created, is to live piously, to fear and love God, and to be eternally happy. If they do not attain that end, it were better for them never to have been born. If you do not train them up for it, you are not the fathers and mothers, but the butchers and murderers of your children, whose souls God will demand from you.

Although the law of

If the natural law is not enough to convince you of this obli-

gation, hear the divine law, as St. Paul declares it to you: "And you, oh, father," do you know what you have to do? "You must bring up your children."¹ To what? To eating and drinking? To gaming, dancing, and fencing? To the arts and sciences? No; they are not created for those things: "Bring them up in the discipline and correction of the Lord."² "Rejoice not in children if they be multiplied," says the Holy Ghost by the Wise Ecclesiasticus, "neither be delighted in them, if the fear of God be not with them. For better is one that feareth God, than a thousand ungodly children; and it is better to die without children, than to leave ungodly children."³ When the Prophet Elias had restored to life the son of the widow of Sarephta: "And Elias took the child," says the Sacred Scripture, "and brought him down from the upper chamber to the house below, and delivered him to his mother."⁴ Mark, my dear brethren, the word *deposuit*, "he brought," as if to signify, according to the force of the Latin word, that the mother should look upon her son as a loan made to her, a deposit entrusted to her charge, which she must look after very carefully so as to restore it to its lawful Owner uninjured.

God commands them to be cared for specially.

Oh, Christian parents, St. John Chrysostom says: "What a great and precious deposit God has left with us in our children! Let us look after them with the greatest care, so that no crafty thief may steal them away from us,"⁵ but that we may be able to restore them to Him from whom we have received them. When your children were brought home, after having received baptism in the Church, you received their souls, and henceforth were bound to honor them; not as your children, but, what they really were, as children of God, and to take them from the hands of the priest as a sacred treasure given to you by him in the name of God, who thereby wishes to say to you: You have offered this child, the fruit of my blessing, to Me. I love it, and will henceforth be its only father and mother. Now I lend it, I deposit it with you, but with the strict obligation, on your side, to bring it up according to the spirit and law of my Gospel, and to restore

The souls of children are deposited by God in the parents' hands, and He will demand them again.

¹ Et vos patres, educate filios vestros.

² Educate illos in disciplina et correptione Domini.—Ephes. vi. 4.

³ Ne jucunderis in filiis, si multiplicentur, nec oblecteris super ipsos, si non est timor Dei in filiis. Mellior est enim unus timens Deum, quam mille filii impii; et utile est mori sine filiis, quam relinquere filios impios.—Ecc. xvi. 1, 3, 4.

⁴ Tullitque Elias puerum, et deposuit eum de cœnaculo in inferiorem domum, et tradidit matri suæ.—III. Kings xvii. 23.

⁵ Magnum habemus pretiosumque depositum, filios. Ingenti illos servemus cura, atque omnia faciamus, ne fur nobis id astutus auferat.

it to Me in the same state in which you now receive it. And what state is that? When you brought that child to Me first, it was still a child of Adam, a slave of the devil, laboring under a malediction. Now that I have washed it in my Blood, cleansed it from original sin, and adorned it with sanctifying grace, it is a holy child of God, a vessel of grace, a living temple of the Holy Ghost, a citizen of Heaven, a companion of the angels, an heir of my glory and happiness. Such is the state in which you must restore it to Me; and woe to you if by your neglect in training it, it should be led astray from Me and be lost! Therefore, Christian parents, all your desires must tend to preserve that heavenly treasure for your children; all your ambition must be centred therein, that you gain eternal honor for them; all your care and trouble must be employed to restore them uninjured to their heavenly Father.

Most parents lose that treasure, to the eternal ruin of their children.

But, alas, I must cry out, with St. John Chrysostom, there is nothing that many parents think less of, than the last end of their children; nothing they care less about, than bringing them up for God and for Heaven! "Hardly any one provides God for his children; some provide them with honors, others with dignities," and arts, and sciences, "others with riches," and treasures, and the comforts and conveniences of life: "Hardly any one provides God for his children." Oh, deplorable blindness! there is hardly any one who tries, as he ought, to gain Heaven for his children! If many a father and mother were commanded by God, under the severe punishment of eternal damnation, to bring up their sons and daughters to worldly vanities, they could not do more in that way than they do now. If the devil were to say to many a father and mother: You must give up your son, your daughter, to me, could they do more to satisfy his desire than they do now? If they were addressed in the words of Christ to St. Peter, when the latter was troubled about the fate of his fellow-Apostle, St. John: "What is it to thee? Follow thou Me." Father, what is your son to you? Mother, why should you trouble about your daughter? Never mind your children's souls. Look after yourself, or be satisfied with providing them with food and drink. Look after their bodies, let their souls be. If, I say, many parents were thus spoken to by God, could they be more careless or neglectful in this matter, than

¹ Nemo filiis suis providet Deum. Alii honores, alii dignitates, alii divitias. Nemo filiis suis providet Deum.

² Quid ad te? Tu me sequere!

they already are? There are many who look after their horses and dogs with more care than after the immortal souls of their children. Miserable children! I pity your lot in being born of, and brought up by, such parents. It seems as if they had given you temporal life, only that they might drag you down to eternal death! Parents, if you have no fear of God and His commandments, you should be impelled to take all possible care of the souls of your children, at least by the thought that their eternal salvation requires that care. As I shall show in the

Second Part.

Fathers and mothers, you love your children, do you not? But what a useless question! Nature itself inspires you with love for your own flesh and blood. And you give sufficient proof, too, that you love them. What trouble mothers cheerfully take with their little children, day and night, is best known to themselves. How fathers work, and think, and labor incessantly, so as to leave their children well off, is taught us by daily experience. But do you really desire your children's welfare? Do you really wish to do them good? Then you must not grudge them the best and greatest good, but do all you can to secure it for them, namely, to gain for them the eternal happiness of Heaven. For how can they thank you afterwards for having given them this miserable life, which is over in a few years, if you do not gain eternal life for them? How can they be grateful to you for feeding and clothing them, if you prevent them from enjoying the never-ending banquet of Heaven? What can they think of you, although you may have had them instructed in many branches of knowledge, if you do not give them the real wisdom of Heaven, the knowledge and love of God? What is the use of your leaving them worldly riches, if they lose eternal treasures through your fault? In a word, how can they be grateful to you for bringing them into the world, if they cannot live forever with God in Heaven? To this, therefore, in preference to everything else, must be directed all your parental love and tenderness.

But now, whether your children attain this highest good, or not; whether they are to burn forever among the demons in hell, or to rejoice eternally with the angels in Heaven, depends mainly on yourselves, oh, parents, and on how you train up your children! For on the good or bad training they

The children will not think much of their parents' care and trouble, if they do not go to Heaven.

The gaining of this depends mostly on their training.

get depends, generally speaking, the good or bad life of your children, which is terminated by a good or a bad death, and followed by a happy or a miserable eternity. Your little children, oh, parents, says St. Basil, are like soft wax in your hands—you can give them any shape you please. They are like young plants, says St. John Chrysostom; do you wish them to grow up straight? do you prefer to have them crooked? It all lies with yourselves. They are like a canvas prepared for painting: you can paint on them whatever you please, a devil or an angel; an accursed, reprobate goat, or a sheep of the fold of Christ destined for Heaven. Plutarch relates of Lycurgus, the Spartan lawgiver, that as he was once addressing the people publicly in the market-place, and exhorting parents to bring up their children carefully, he brought two puppy-dogs on the stage, in sight of the people. One of these dogs had been trained for hunting, the other had been allowed to remain idle at home. He then placed on one side of the stage a dish full of bread and meat, and on the other side he let go a hare, when a strange thing occurred; the dog that had been allowed to remain at home sprang at once open-mouthed upon the dish, while the other paid no attention to the dish, and ran at once after the hare. Whereupon, Lycurgus cried out with a loud voice: Citizens! See what the force of training is: These dogs were alike in the beginning, but they have been made quite different by training!

Hence
different
manners on
account of
different
training.

Christian parents, I say, how is it that there is often such a difference in the morals and life of children, who are of the same age, the same condition, state, and family, who have the same faith, and have been born in the same town, the same street, the same house? Examine the cause thereof, and you will find it to consist in nothing but the difference of training and bringing-up. Wencenlaus and Baleslaus were two brothers: the first was a very pious, mild, and righteous prince in Bohemia, the second, on the other hand, was a cruel tyrant; and what wonder? For the first was trained by his mother, Ludmilla, a pious and holy lady, to virtue and the fear of God, while the second was brought up and instructed by his mother, Drahomira, a wicked woman. But there is no need to go back to ancient times; we may find proof enough of this in our own days. If we take the trouble to examine the matter, we shall find in one household, that the children know all the chief parts of the catechism, that they kneel down to say their prayers every morning, and, as is the pious custom in every good Christian family, that they make their ex-

amination of conscience every evening carefully. In another house you will find that the children get up and go to bed when they please, and that in place of praying, they curse, swear, play, and indulge in useless conversation. In one family it is the custom for them to hear Mass every day, to go on Sundays and holy-days to the sermon and to catechism, and to be sent regularly to the Sacraments. In another, the sons frequent the tavern, the daughters go into dangerous company, for a whole month they neither see nor hear anything of the Word of God, or of what would benefit their souls. In one household, one hardly knows that there are daughters in it at all, because they are hardly ever seen out of the Church; in another, every one can easily be aware of their presence, because they spend their time at the window, or before the door, talking and laughing, even with persons of the opposite sex. In one household the children dress modestly, according to the law of Jesus Christ; in another, they ape all the vanities and extravagances of the world. In one family the sons and daughters are always occupied with work or study; in another, they are allowed to run idle about the streets, where they will certainly not learn much good. In one family they are trained to give up their own will, for the sake of doing the will of God; in another, each child does as he pleases; one thinks of nothing but eating and drinking, another is taken up with vanity and folly. And whence comes this great difference? From the difference in the training and teaching they received from their childhood upward. In one family the father and mother attend to their duty; in another, Christian doctrine, paternal vigilance, correction and chastisement, and good example are wanting. What wonder is it, then—how can it be otherwise—that young children live as they are taught or allowed to live? And therefore, among the Lacedæmonians, of whom I have spoken already, the wise Lycurgus published a law that they were to observe strictly, and that was, that if the children committed any crime, not they, but their parents were to be punished for it, since the latter were really to blame. If the son did any wrong, the father was punished; if the daughter committed a fault, the mother had to bear the punishment; and the reason of that was, because all the faults of the children were attributed to a want of vigilance and care on the parents' part.

But according as children are accustomed to lead a pious or a wicked life in their youth, so will their after life be pious or wicked, as the Holy Ghost infallibly testifies by the Wise Man : As children, are in their youth, so generally

they remain
in old age.

“A young man according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it,”¹ as I have shown more fully already in the sermon on the text: “What an one, think ye, shall this child be?”² And the answer then was, as I proved by many reasons: It will be as it is in its youth, as it is brought up by its parents. Therefore, moralists answer the question, whether is it better to have a good natural disposition to piety, and a bad training, or a wicked disposition and a good training to virtue and piety, by saying that the latter is far better than the former.

Therefore
their eter-
nal salva-
tion or
damnation
depends on
their train-
ing.

From all that I have said up to this, you can easily conclude, Christian parents, that the eternal happiness or the damnation of your children depends on the good or bad training you give them; and therefore, if you love them sincerely and wish to secure to them the possession of the one thing necessary, you must train them up for their last end, that is, for true piety, for God and for Heaven, with the greatest care. And woe to you, if you are wanting in this most important duty! Woe to you, if by carelessness, or by not instructing them in the catechism and leading them on to good, or by giving them bad example, you prevent even one of your children from saving his soul, and drag him down to the eternal flames of hell! Even if you yourselves were pious, although that cannot really be the case if you deliberately neglect this important duty, without fulfilling which all your piety is not worth anything; even if you were to die a happy death and go to Heaven, a supposition which is as little likely to be realized as the other, what would your thoughts and feelings be, on the day of judgment, at seeing your own flesh and blood dragged down to hell by devils, when you know that you must think to yourself: I am the cause of it, I should have led my child to Heaven, and I have delivered him over to eternal torments, because I did not do my duty in training him as I ought! And now my child is lost forever!

The lost
souls of
children
will cry out
for ven-
geance on
their care-
less parents.

What would you think if you heard your lost children crying out from hell to God for vengeance on you, the cause of their damnation? As St. Cyprian says, they might say: “We are not the cause of our own ruin; our parents have ruined us; they are the murderers of our souls.”³ Strict justice of God, we cannot find fault with thee! Thy sentence is, and remains, holy and just! We have deserved hell by our vicious lives; that we must confess! But our par-

¹ *Adolescens juxta viam suam, etiam cum sennerit, non recedet ab ea.*—Prov. xxii. 6.

² *Quis putas, puer iste erit.*—Luke i. 66.

³ *Non nos perdidimus, perdidit nos paterna perfidia! parentes sensimus parricidas!*

ents are the cause of our wickedness, and of our damnation. "Our parents are the murderers of our souls!"¹ Demons of hell, we cannot reproach you for your cruelty; you are the executioners of divine justice, and therefore you have dragged us down to share in your punishment; we have deserved it! But our parents are the cause of that, because they did not bring us up better, and train us to virtue! "Our parents are the murderers!" It is my father, the son will say, who is to blame for my damnation. He never spoke to me of any but earthly and transitory things. He hardly ever said a word to me of God and Heaven. He often told me how to make my fortune on earth, hardly ever did he give me the means of saving my soul and securing eternal happiness. From him I learned to curse, swear, blaspheme, and give way to other sins of the sort that he was constantly committing. He never asked me, and never troubled himself about where, when, or with whom I went, whether I frequented the Sacraments, or heard Mass and sermon on Sundays and holy-days, or attended catechism. But if by accident I broke anything in the house, his anger against me burst forth in fearful curses. If I blasphemed the Name of God, spoke ill of my neighbor, lied, cursed, or swore, he never said a word to correct me. Our parents are our murderers! My mother is to blame for the loss of my soul, the daughter cries out from the flames of hell. I would have been modest, reserved, and humble, according to the law of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, if she had not, as soon as I was able to walk, trained me up to all sorts of worldly pomp and vanity. I kept my virginal purity and baptismal innocence unsullied, until she brought me into dangerous company, where I learned vice and wickedness. I was pious, until she sent me away to a foreign country, where I soon changed for the worse. I was chaste, until she allowed me to be idle, to go about wherever I pleased, and to walk and amuse myself in the evening, alone, with a person of the opposite sex! Our parents are our murderers! Cruel father, cruel mother, if you had taken a knife and stabbed me to the heart immediately after my birth; or if you had allowed me to die of hunger and thirst, you would not have been so cruel to me! Have you, then, brought me into the world for this? Mother, have you suckled me at your breast; father, have you worked to support me, only that your own flesh and blood should be condemned to suffer the pains of hell, and to curse God and you for all eternity? If you did not intend to lead me to Heaven, why did you bring me into the world? It would have

¹ *Parentes sensimus parricidas!*

been a thousand times better for me never to have seen the light of day, and to have remained in the abyss of my original nothingness. Would to God that I had been your dog, and not your son or your daughter: I would not now have to suffer these torments! You are the murderers of our souls! Thus will the lost souls of children cry out for vengeance on their parents.

Conclusion
and exhortation
to parents to
fulfill their
duty better.

Parents, what does your father's or mother's heart now say to you? What are you to do? If any of you have really a child in hell, whose damnation you are the cause of by not bringing up that child properly, what can you do now? Alas, the poor soul is lost, and you will never be able to remedy your mistake! Parents, do penance now for your past faults, that you may not be condemned to do fruitless penance for them in hell, with your unhappy child. Make up, by diligence and care with your remaining children, for the neglect with which your conscience now reproaches you. I repeat with St. Paul: "Fathers, bring up your children in the discipline and correction of the Lord."¹ Let it be your chief care to lead them on to the fear of God, to the love and practice of virtue, to a Christian, that is, a holy life, and to the kingdom of Heaven. All your love, your labor, and trouble, nay, even your devotions and good works are of no use, if you are guilty of deliberate and grievous neglect in this point. That is the principal duty that God and the natural law require from you in your state of life; and if you do not care about God, nor the natural law, it is the principal duty that the eternal salvation of your children, whom you certainly love sincerely, requires. Oh, happy parents who have now children in Heaven, to pray to God for you daily, and to praise and bless Him forever! Happy parents, whose greatest care hitherto has been to bring up your children to piety and virtue! What consolation it will be for you to find yourselves one day, along with your children, at the right hand of your Judge, and to hear those children proclaiming publicly, in presence of all mankind: My father, my mother, is the cause of my eternal happiness! Christian parents, let this thought impel you to train up your children in a holy manner. Amen.

¹ *Patres, educate illos in disciplina et correptione Domini.*

Bringing up Children in a Christian Manner. 19

Another Introduction for the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost:

Text.

Ad terram prosternent te, et filios tuos qui in te sunt.—Luke
xix. 44.

“They shall beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee.”

Introduction.

Jesus weeps over the City of Jerusalem! What! over the walls and houses that are to be thrown down? No; that would be no reason why God should weep. He weeps over the people and their children, who then lived in the city. It was the thought of them that drew such bitter tears from the eyes of the merciful Saviour. Why? “They shall beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee.”¹ Was it because they were to be beaten flat to the ground by a mere temporal calamity? No; for that would not give the Redeemer cause to weep. He foresaw that the parents and their children would be condemned to eternal death, on account of their many sins and vices. That was the reason why Jesus wept. My dear brethren, how many Christian towns and villages there are over which Jesus would have just cause to weep, on considering the parents and their children and the eternal ruin of very many of them! The children incur that ruin by the sins that they have been accustomed to commit from their youth, but the parents incur it because they are the cause of those sins, by bringing up their children in a careless and unchristian manner. Of this I will speak to-day. It is a subject of the greatest importance, etc.—*continues as before.*

FORTIETH SERMON.

ON THE REASONS WHY PARENTS SHOULD BRING UP THEIR CHILDREN IN A CHRISTIAN MANNER.

Subject.

Parents should bring up their children well, and in a Christian manner, for thereon depends, 1st, the temporal happiness, 2d, the eternal happiness, of the parents.—*Preached on the sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost, on which the Feast of the Holy Angels falls.*

¹ *Ad terram prosternent te, et filios tuos qui in te sunt.*

Text.

Videte, ne contemnatis unum ex his pusillis.—Matth. xviii. 10.
 “See that you despise not one of these little ones.”

Introduction.

Children, no matter how small, how poor, how lowly they are, are of great worth and value in the sight of God; so that He has given each one of them a Prince of Heaven, as companion, tutor, and guardian; therefore: “See that you despise not one of these little ones,” nor scandalize them; “for their angels in Heaven always see the face of my Father who is in Heaven.”¹ Christian parents, this warning and exhortation is addressed especially to you. Have you children under your care? “See that you despise not one of these little ones.” Ah, above all, see that you do not look down upon them, but take the greatest possible care of them, so that not one may be lost! Oh, holy angels, forgive me if I seem to neglect you to-day, your feast-day, on which I should be bound for countless reasons to speak in your praise and honor! Yet, I know that I cannot honor or please you better, than by endeavoring to lead your charges on to their last end, to God and to Heaven, for that is the object of the care you take of them night and day. But the surest and best way of doing that is for the parents to bring up their children with the greatest care for their last end. Help me, therefore, to effect that, so that your joy may be full. Christian parents, bring up your children most carefully for their last end, that is to say, train them to be pious, to love and fear God, so that they may attain eternal happiness. That is required by the natural and the divine law, and the eternal salvation of your children, as you have heard in the last sermon. But if that is not enough for you, I shall now give you some more reasons, that ought to have even more effect on you than the first.

Plan of Discourse.

If you love your children, bring them up for their last end, for your own salvation and happiness depend thereon: Your temporal happiness, as I shall show in the first part. Your eternal happiness, as I shall show in the second part.

¹ *Videte, ne contemnatis unum ex his pusillis. Quia angeli eorum in caelis semper vident faciem Patris, qui in caelis est.*—Matth. xviii. 10.

Holy angels guardian, and thou in particular, Mary, Queen of angels, I rely upon your assistance, and repeat the text: "See that you despise not one of these little ones."¹

The temporal happiness that parents can expect to have from their children in this life consists in bringing up those children well, so that the latter are always ready to obey their parents, are always respectful, loving, and helpful to them in every possible way, and think nothing of such importance, after the service of God, as to give their parents consolation and joy. It is the debt that all children owe their parents; it is the greatest satisfaction that parents can seek and desire from their children. Consequently, if we hear of parents who enjoy that satisfaction, we say that they must be happy indeed, since they have such good children.

The temporal happiness of parents consists in training their children well.

Christian parents, tell me, how can you hope to have that comfort and consolation from your children, if you do not bring them up, from their earliest years, in the fear and love of God? No, it cannot be; for virtue, piety, and the fear of God alone can make children really obedient, respectful, and loving towards their parents. He who loves God, endeavors to fulfil His holy will in all things; therefore, since the will and commandment of God is: "Honor thy father and thy mother,"² obey and love them, a pious child must necessarily be most careful in observing this most important duty. On the other hand, if the son or daughter is disobedient to the father or mother, obstinate, ready to contradict them, fond of murmuring, complaining, and speaking against them, and so forth; I should say at once, without any fear of being mistaken, that such children are not pious, they have not the fear of God, they are wanting in virtue, inasmuch as they do not fulfil that important commandment of childlike reverence and love towards their parents. The Holy Ghost says of pious and god-fearing children, by the mouth of the Wise Man: "A wise son maketh the father glad."³ By wisdom is here meant piety and the fear of the Lord, just as the impious are always called fools in the Sacred Scriptures.

Children are not well trained unless they live piously.

Of these last we read in the same place: "But a foolish son is the sorrow of his mother."⁴ We read in history that the tyrant Dionysius, wishing to be revenged on the philosopher Dione, put the son of the latter into prison, not to kill him, nor to torture

Without the fear of God, they will cause trouble and sorrow to their parents.

¹ Videte, ne contemnatis unum ex his pusillis.

² Honora patrem tuum et matrem tuam.—Exod. xx. 12.

³ Filius sapiens lætificat patrem.—Prov. x. 1.

⁴ Filius vero stultus moestitia est matris suæ.—Ibid.

him, for such a vengeance would not at all have satisfied his resentment ; but in order to cause the philosopher greater grief, he placed his son in the power of a wicked man, that he might be taught all manner of vice. When the young man had spent a sufficient time in this school of iniquity, the tyrant gave him back to his father. And why did he do so ? What was his object ? He foresaw that the father would be more grieved and afflicted at seeing his son leading a wicked and impious life, than if the latter had been cruelly put to death before his eyes. Nor can it be otherwise. He who is unfaithful to God, is, generally speaking, unfaithful to men ; he who dishonors God, will not show proper respect to his parents ; he who disobeys God, will pay little attention to the commands and prohibitions of his parents ; he who resists God, will be obstinate and stiff-necked with his parents ; in a word, he who does not fear to offend God, will have still less fear of grieving his father and mother.

**Their being
pious and
virtuous de-
pends on the
training
they get.**

But now, oh, parents, how your children are to be in this respect, depends principally, nay, almost entirely on you, and on the way in which you train them, as I have told you in the last sermon. Do you wish them to be wicked and impious ? They will be so, if you are only careless of their souls. Do you wish them to be pious and God-fearing ? They will be so, if you earnestly desire it, and train them up to it with care from their earliest years. God will give them more or less grace to lead a pious life, according as you are more or less diligent in fulfilling your duty, and in trying to make them good. St. Bernard went so far as to say that he never saw parents who sincerely desired to have good and pious children, and who were careful in training them up well, disappointed of their desires : “ All parents,” he says, “ who destined their children to the service of God, and trained them up for it, obtained their wish.”¹ Such was the experience of the mother of St. Louis, the mothers of Saints Edmund, Clement, Hugo, Luibert, of St. Edith, Ludgard, and many others ; their only wish was to bring up pious sons and daughters to serve God. They spared no pains in training their children, so that the latter were innocent and good, although living in courts and in royal palaces, and exposed to many dangers of sin, and they became great servants of God. Try that plan also, Christian parents, and see whether it will not have the same result with your children ; for it is on your training, I repeat, that

¹ Omnes parentes, qui filios Dei servitio destinaverunt, et ad illud eos educaverunt, votis suis potiti sunt.

it mostly depends whether they are to be good or bad, and consequently, whether they are to be a joy or a sorrow to you, whether they are to make you happy or miserable in this life. Think over the matter and see which you had better choose.

Think, I implore of you, what an indescribable comfort and joy it must be for you to be able to say with truth : I am the father, or the mother of a holy child, who is always obedient, respectful, loving, and pleasing to God and man. Suppose, on the other hand, that through want of Christian training, your son is wicked, obstinate, unruly, given to drink and other vices, your daughter disobedient, immodest, and leading a scandalous life, so that your children are a disgrace to your family, and will obey neither you nor any one else.—I leave it to yourselves to say, could there be a greater trial for a father who loves his son, or a mother who loves her daughter? Especially when the parents must say to themselves : I am the cause of this misfortune, since I did not train up my wicked son as I should have done ; I am the cause of it, because I was not careful in looking after my children ; I am the cause of it, because I let them do as they liked, and gave way to their folly and obstinacy ; I am the cause, because when they first went wrong, I, through a foolish and inordinate love, did not punish nor correct them ; I am the cause of it, because I gave them bad example ; I am the cause of it, because I did not keep them away from dangerous occasions and bad company ! What a trial, I say, it must be for a father and mother who love their children!

Parents have great comfort with good, great trouble with bad children.

What a trial it was for Agar to be turned away by Abraham, on account of her ill-reared son Ishmael, and to be obliged to wander about with him, hungry and thirsty, in the desert, as we read in the 21st chapter of Genesis ! What a sorrow it was for David, who had not punished his son Absalom for having murdered his brother, to be attacked by that son and driven from his throne, and in the end to have to hear the sad news of the temporal and eternal death of his rebellious child ! How great was the grief of the Patriarch Jacob, when the news was brought to him that his daughter Dina, whom he had allowed to go out to see the women of the country, was dishonored and disgraced ! How great must have been the wailing and lamentation of those parents of whom we read in the 2d chapter of the Fourth Book of Kings, that they allowed their children to go out into the street and mock the Prophet Elisæus, at seeing two-and-forty of their unhappy offspring torn to pieces by wild bears!

This is shown by examples from Scripture.

From daily
experience.

But it is not necessary to go back so far. Would to God that we had not daily experience of the same deplorable kind ! Are there not parents enough, nowadays, who have nothing but trouble and sorrow from the very children to whom they looked for comfort and consolation in their old age, and to whom a foolish love made them too indulgent? Now they lament and complain: What an unhappy being I am ! Could there be a greater trial on earth, than what I have daily to suffer from my own children? It seems that my son or daughter is actually accursed by God. They cannot be induced to say a prayer, to go to Church, or to join in any devotion; I dare not ask them to do anything, or they will do the contrary; if I reprove them, they are sure to have a sharp answer ready. I have taken so much trouble and worked so hard to better their position, and now they are ashamed of me! They are shortening my life ! My God, do I deserve to be thus treated by my own children? Yes, you have reason for asking that question ; you have richly deserved to be ill-treated by your children. It is not so much a curse from God, as a curse that you have brought upon yourself that you are suffering from. You have cut a rod to beat yourself with. Tell me, how have you brought up your children? What have you taught them from their childhood? How have you punished and chastised them when they committed a fault? What sort of example have you given them? If you have failed in any of these points, what wonder is it that your children cannot be induced to join in any devotion, since they were not trained to it from their childhood? What wonder is it that they are disobedient and obstinate towards you ; for you have not taught them how to fear and love God ! You have taught the little dog to eat from the dish ; how, then, can you expect him to go a-hunting ? Now you come wailing and lamenting and seeking to mend matters, but it is too late. Try to bend a large oak tree, or tame an old and savage wolf ; you will not succeed. You should have taught your children better long ago ; and you must only blame yourself for the trouble they now cause you ! The Lord says : “ What things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap.”¹ You have, by your want of care, sown weeds, thorns, and thistles in the souls of your children. You cannot now hope to reap good wheat therefrom, but rather thistles and thorns that will pierce your heart with sorrow. You have sown curses and oaths in their still innocent ears ; and now they use against you what they learned from you.

¹ Quæ seminaverit homo, hæc et metet.—Gal. vi. 8.

You have, by your bad example, sown in their still innocent eyes vanities and follies ; what else can you now expect to reap ? “ Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles ? ”¹ asks Jesus Christ. No, that cannot be : “ What things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap.”² Whatever grief or trouble your children now cause you, is just what you chose yourself.

And this is the just punishment that the hidden judgment of God decrees against you, oh, parents ! He chastises you with that wherewith you offended Him. You have offended God by not carefully training up your children, from their earliest years, to fear, obey, and love Him, and now He allows them to refuse you the obedience, respect, and love they owe you. Not that your wicked children are to be excused ; by no means. They will have to suffer in this life and in the next ; but the divine justice wills that you should, even in this life, share in the punishment merited by your children, since you are the cause of their present perverseness, by neglecting their early training. You see, then, that it depends on you, Christian parents, whether you are to have joy and consolation, or grief and trouble with your children. At all events, you must confess that your own temporal happiness requires that you should rear up your children in the fear and love of God, for their last end. I know well that is a consideration which is very apt to touch your heart, and to induce you to train up your children properly ; but if it were the only one, I should not much deplore your misfortune, as long as your eternal salvation was not at stake. That is what should make the greatest impression on you, and induce you to spare no trouble in doing your duty to your children. As I shall show in the

Parents justly punished by temporal misfortune, on account of badly training their children.

Second Part.

In order to be sure of your eternal salvation, you must fulfil all the duties that God has imposed on you, under pain of mortal sin. There is not the least doubt of that : “ If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.”³ But I have already shown you, oh, parents, clearly enough, from the natural and divine law, and from the law of charity towards your children, that you are bound to bring up the latter in the fear and love of God ; and I hardly think you can have any doubt of your being obliged to do so. Now, if you consider the matter seriously, you will see that you

Grievous sin for parents to train their children badly.

¹ Numquid colligunt de spinis uvas, aut de tribulis ficus ?—Matth. vii. 16.

² Quæ seminauerit homo, hæc et metet.

³ Si vis ad vitam ingredi, serva mandata.—Matth. xix. 17.

commit a very grievous sin, incur a fearful responsibility before God, and that thus you cannot entertain any reasonable hopes of salvation, if you do not fulfil this duty. To be the deliberate cause of leading into sin immortal souls, for whom the Son of God shed His Blood, and died a shameful death, to betray them into vicious habits, to deliver them up to the devil, to deprive them of Heaven and drag them down to hell, surely that is a terrible sin ! It is the sin of which our Lord says in the Gospel: “Woe to that man by whom scandal cometh; it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea.”¹ If this is true of all men, even of strangers and foreigners, who are not otherwise at all concerned about your children, because they are not entrusted with the care of them, if they give your children occasion to sin by wicked teaching, by unbecoming conversation, by immodest looks and gestures, or by bad example; nay, if they even do not prevent your children from committing sin, when it is in their power to do so (alas, there are so many scandals, both public and private, in our days!) ; if, I say, all these people are threatened with eternal woe, and the souls they have betrayed will be required at their hands, how will it be with you, oh, fathers and mothers, if by your evil training, or neglect of giving them good instruction, or, what is still worse, by your wicked instructions and example, you lead astray your own children, who are your own flesh and blood? What will you have to say, if you deliver up to the devil those whom God has entrusted to you, that you may bring them to Him? But their good or evil lives, their piety or wickedness, and consequently their salvation or damnation, depend, generally speaking, as I have often told you, on the training you give them from their early years.

The sins of their children will be imputed to them.

Therefore, the holy Fathers say positively that the sins and misdeeds of children will be imputed by the justice of God to the parents, if the latter have been remiss in their duty, just as if they themselves were guilty. St. Ambrose says: “The evil life of the son will be imputed to the carelessness of the father, the wickedness of the daughter to the negligence of the mother.” Such is also the opinion of Origen: “All the faults of children will be imputed to their parents, who neither instructed nor corrected

¹ *Væ homini illi, per quem scandalum venit. Expedit ei, ut suspendatur mola asinaria in collo ejus, et demergatur in profundum maris.—Matth. xviii. 6.*

² *Ad negligentiam patrum refertur dissolutio filiorum.*

them.”¹ Nay, the Catechism of the Council of Trent teaches that such careless parents will be punished, not merely for the sins of the children whom they have badly reared, but also for the sins of their children’s children, who will be influenced in turn by the bad training their parents received. Oh, my God, what a fearful reckoning that will be for many parents!

And what terrible vengeance the divine justice will take for the loss of so many precious souls, who were ruined through want of proper training! What do you think, fathers and mothers; what would you say if your beloved child was brought by its nurse to a witch or sorcerer, delivered over to be the victim of diabolical arts, and instructed in witchcraft afterwards, so that it could not be induced to repent? Say what you think; what punishment would that nurse deserve? Could you, in your just anger and resentment, think of any punishment that would be sufficient for such a crime? No; the most painful death would not be severe enough. And why so? Because, on the one hand, you love your child tenderly, and on the other, you must see it hopelessly lost and corrupted. I acknowledge that you would, in such a case, have great cause for grief and resentment. But, tell me, is God less concerned in the salvation of your children than you? Does He love them less than you do? You are their father and mother according to the body, but you cannot give them their immortal souls; God alone is their Father according to the soul. You have suckled and fed your children, but you have not given your blood for them, nor have you fed them with your own flesh. You have borne with much inconvenience, discomfort, and trouble on their account, for many years, to support them decently; but you have not suffered cruel bonds, nor scuffs, nor scourges, nor thorns, nor nails, nor spear for them. You have helped to support their temporal existence, but you have not hung on a gibbet for them. Such is the inexpressible love that the almighty God has for your children, so highly does He value them, that He has suffered all this, and other fearful tortures, too, willingly for their sakes, so that they might escape hell, and go to Heaven. Therefore, your children have far more right to say to Him, than to you: “Our Father who art in Heaven.”² Say again, what you think, oh, parents, but speak this time against yourselves; how do you think God will look upon you, if you, by

God will inflict fearful punishment on such parents.

¹ Omnia, quæ deliquerint filii, de parentibus requiruntur, qui non erudierint, neque corripuerint filios.

² Pater noster, qui est in cælis.—Matth. vi. 9.

culpable negligence in training them, deliver up the souls of your children, whom He loved even unto death, to the devil and to the eternal flames of hell, from which they can never be liberated? Such was the complaint of the Prophet David against the fathers and mothers of Israel: "They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to devils."¹ Can He who is a jealous God allow such a crime to go unpunished? Are the torments, even of hell, severe enough to punish it as it deserves?

And will
require the
souls of
their chil-
dren at their
hands.

Certainly, if God entrusts your children to the care of teachers and masters who instruct them in the arts and sciences; of confessors who hear them accuse themselves of their sins, and who direct their consciences; of catechists and preachers, who teach them how to avoid sin and how to fear and serve God; of spiritual and temporal authorities, whose first duty it is to see that provision is made for the proper education of children; and if all these people must answer before the judgment seat of God, for the souls of the children entrusted to their care, under the pain of eternal damnation if they are found guilty of negligence, how much more, oh, parents, will not the souls of your children be required at your hands? What sort of a hell awaits you if you are careless in this duty, to which you are bound, not by a political or human law, but by nature itself? Hear what St. John Chrysostom says: "Parents, bring up your children in the discipline and correction of the Lord."² As St. Paul commands: "For if we are bound to care for them, as having to render an account for their souls, how much more the parents who brought them forth."³ How much stricter the obligation of the latter must be, how much greater their responsibility for those to whom they have given life, and whom they have brought up! Woe to you, then, I again repeat. If the just God will require the souls of your children at the hands of strangers, how much more will He not require at your hands!

Heaven will
complain
against
them.

Unhappy parents, what a fate is in store for you! What answer will you make when the great God says to you: I have given you so many sons and daughters, and entrusted them to your fatherly or motherly care, under the strictest obligation of giving them back to Me again. Where are they now? Where is your son, or daughter? I find only some of your children among my chosen sheep; the others are amongst the goats; and yet I ex-

¹ *Immolaverunt filios suos et filias suas dæmonibus.*—Ps. cv. 37.

² *Patres, educate filios vestros in disciplina et correptione Domini.*

³ *Si enim nos ipsi quoque vigilare jubemur, tanquam pro animabus illorum rationem reddaturi, quanto magis ergo pater qui genuit.*

pected that they would all serve, fear, and love Me, and be happy with Me forever. It is you who have estranged them from Me, and given them over to the demon ! What answer will you make when your heavenly Father says to you : I have given you the title of father, which of right belongs to Me alone ; I have given you part of my paternal authority and right over my children, and you have misused my generosity to ruin and destroy them for eternity ! And Jesus Christ, the Son of God, will say : I have chosen you as my helpers and co-operators in the eternal salvation of your children, for whom I have shed my precious Blood, and you have sold them to my sworn enemy for a miserable price ! God the Holy Ghost will also accuse you, saying : I entrusted those souls to your care, after I had chosen them and consecrated them as my temples ; and now, through your negligence, they have become dens of murderers ! Mary the Mother of God, will also be there to accuse you : I had already taken your children under my protection in order to bring them to eternal life ; but you, by your culpable carelessness, have allowed them to abandon me, and to become the prey of demons ! The holy guardian angels will complain of you : We have labored day and night to protect our charges and lead them to eternal happiness, and we found no more bitter opponents, no worse enemies on earth, than you, who should have helped us ! All the Saints in Heaven will cry out against you : We hoped and desired that the number of our companions in happiness would be increased by you ; and now by your negligence, and the bad training you have given your children, you help to increase the number of the reprobates in hell ! What answer will you make to all this, I again ask you ; what judgment, what sort of a punishment can you expect ?

Oh, what a fearful number of parents, even of those who have no other grievous sins to answer for, will be lost eternally because they did not bring up their children in a pious and Christian manner ! St. Isidore says : “ A great number of parents will be lost on this account alone, that they were the cause of the loss of their children.”¹ This truth is confirmed by the fact that very little is thought of negligence in this respect, so that hardly any one makes it a case of confession. Thus, through culpable ignorance, many do not confess it, nor repent of it as they ought.

Many parents will be lost through this sin alone.

Conclusion and exhortation.

Christian parents, who are here present, I hope better things

¹ *Magna parentum pars salute destituitur ob hoc ipsum, quod eorum culpa filii sunt perditii.*

ation to
parents.

of you. Look upon this duty as the most important one you have to perform. Think every day, as in truth you ought: The greatest obligation that the married state places me under, is to bring up my children piously and with the greatest care, that they may fear and love God. Think: The most important thing for my children is to escape hell and to gain Heaven. If that thought does not influence you, then, at least, you must be moved by remembering that your own welfare is at stake, that there is question of your being happy with your children here in time, and hereafter in eternity. If you do not fulfil your duty, nor repent duly of your negligence, there can be no hope of salvation for you. Think, whenever you look at your little children: Woe to me, if I should ever be the cause of these now innocent souls losing their innocence and burning in hell, and thus make myself a sharer in their damnation, by bringing them up badly! On the other hand, what a consolation and joy it would be for me, if I could stand before the judgment seat of Christ, with my children, and say to my Judge the same words that He said to His heavenly Father: "While I was with them, I kept them in Thy name," as long as they were under my charge. "Those whom Thou gavest me, have I kept; and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition;" who lost himself by his wilful obstinacy. "And now I come to thee."¹ Thou hast given me two, three, four, five, or more children; I have brought them all up to Thy service as well as I could, according to Thy command; not one of them is lost. Behold, they are here with me, and now I give them up into Thy hands; now I come with them into Thy Kingdom! Oh, what a consolation! It is what I wish you all, Christian parents, from my heart. May you and your children be happy together forever. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost:

Text.

Qui in se confidebant, tanquam justi.—Luke xviii. 9.

"Who trusted in themselves as just."

How many there are in the world, my dear brethren, who look upon themselves as just, while they are in reality full of secret sin! How many who could say, like the Pharisee in the Gospel, I am not an unjust man, nor a robber, nor a murderer, nor an

¹ Cum essem cum eis, ego servabam eos in nomine tuo. Quos dedisti mihi, custodivi, et nemo ex eis perivit, nisi filius perditionis. Nunc autem ad te venio.—John xvii. 12, 13.

adulterer, nor a calumniator, nor a drunkard, etc., because they know they are free from those vices. But at the same time, they are unjust before God, because they neglect, or perform carelessly, certain very important obligations of their state of life! This is especially true of you, married people! Do not be satisfied with merely avoiding certain grievous sins, although you may be otherwise exact in fulfilling the divine law. Do not think that you are faithful servants of God because you go often to confession and communion, frequent the Church, are devout in prayer, hear Mass daily, and never lose the sermon on Sundays and holy-days; or because you are faithful, loving, and kind to each other, and patiently bear trials and adversity. In spite of all this, you will be unjust before God, and deserving of eternal damnation, if you are deliberately guilty of grievous neglect in that most important duty that God has imposed upon you, of training up your children for their last end; that is, to piety, the fear of the Lord and Heaven; for that is required by the natural and the divine law, etc.—*continues as before.*

FORTY-FIRST SERMON.

ON THE TEACHING THAT PARENTS SHOULD GIVE THEIR CHILDREN.

Subject.

1st. Those parents do not train up their children in a Christian manner, who do not teach them what is good. 2d. Much less they who teach them evil. There are many of both kinds. —*Preached on the seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Cujus filius est?—Matth. xxii. 42.
“Whose son is He?”

Introduction.

The question that Christ asked the Pharisee about Himself, is one that people often ask about others nowadays. If we see a child that we do not know, we ask: Whose child is that? What

is his name? Whose son is he? Whose daughter is she? If I were asked: Whose son is that who is so fond of running about the streets, who is so ill-behaved in Church, who is given to cursing and swearing? And if I were asked: Who are the parents of that child who is quiet, modest, reserved, and humble, who comes to Mass every day, who goes to confession and communion so often in the month? Although I might not know either the children or their parents, yet I should guess at once how the parents bring up their children, and should say: The first is the son of a father and mother who do not fulfil their duty; the second is the son of a pious father and mother who look after the souls of their children; for as we have seen already, children, generally speaking, lead a good or a bad life, according as they are well or ill brought up by their parents. Hitherto, my dear brethren, I have spoken in general of the obligations that parents are under to train up their children in a Christian manner; for that is required of parents by the natural and divine law; and I have also shown that the eternal welfare of the children, and the temporal and eternal welfare of the parents, depend thereon. It now remains for me to show how this Christian training is to be given, and what it requires. What is that? Be attentive now. Parents who wish to bring up their children, as they ought for their last end, must have good tongues, sharp eyes, paternal hands, and good habits: tongues to teach their children what is good; eyes, to be watchful over all their actions; hands, to punish them when necessary, in a paternal manner; good habits, so as to give them a good example of virtue and the fear of the Lord. If one of these be wanting, the children will not be trained properly. I shall confine myself to the first to-day, and I say—

Plan of Discourse.

Those parents who have not good tongues, do not rear their children properly; because they do not teach their children what is good. Such will be the first and chief part. Much less do those parents rear their children well, who have bad tongues; that is to say, who teach them evil. Such will be the second part.

There are many parents of both kinds; a fact which cannot be sufficiently deplored. That they may amend both those great faults, give Thy grace, oh, God, to all parents, through the in-

The Teaching Parents should Give Children. 33

tercession of Thy Mother Mary, and all the holy angels guardian.

Amongst the many miseries that we inherit from the sin of our forefather Adam, is deplorable ignorance in nearly everything. No man is born learned, in the general course of nature. No matter who we are, we bring ignorance with us into the world. It lies with us in the cradle, and remains with us for many years afterwards. Children must be taught and instructed how to speak, read, and write, nay, even how to walk and stand, eat, and drink, although the beasts themselves require no instruction in these latter things. How many years it takes, what great labor and trouble are required, before a teacher can get a child to understand the Latin language alone! But this is not what I am most concerned about. It would not matter much, oh, parents, if your children were and remained ignorant of such things.

We are born in ignorance.

There is another art, and if they remain in ignorance of it, they will never be happy with God in Heaven; that is the art of arts, the chief business, nay, the only business that we must, necessarily, attend to as long as we live; it is the only art that we must know—the art of living and dying in a Christian and holy manner. Now, the most deplorable fact of all is, that this art is the one we are most ignorant of naturally, and we find the greatest difficulty in learning it, on account of our inclination to evil. Hence, in order to acquire a knowledge of it, much more time, trouble, and labor must be expended, than what a mere natural art or science would require. Even after having learned and understood that art, it is the one that we forget most easily, unless we are constantly reminded of and instructed and exercised in it.

Especially in what concerns the business of the soul.

Therefore, if children are to attain to eternal happiness, which is the chief thing for them, they must necessarily be instructed most diligently in this art, from their earliest years, and must be constantly exercised in it, by those on whom the duty of teaching them devolves. And who are they? You, fathers and mothers, have, before all others, received this charge from God: "Teach your children," says the Lord to His people, in the 11th chapter of Deuteronomy, after He had warned them to observe all His commandments faithfully: "that they meditate on them."¹ And you must teach them constantly: "When thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest on the way, and

So that children must be instructed herein by their parents.

¹ Docete filios vestros ut illa meditentur.—Deut. xi. 19.

when thou liest down and risest up;” teach your children.”¹ What? “What I command you this day, that you love the Lord your God, and serve Him with all your heart.”² The words of the Wise Ecclesiasticus to parents are: “Hast thou children? instruct them from their childhood.”³ Mind, he does not say: “Enrich them; exalt them; but instruct them.”⁴ In what? In that of which Eternal Wisdom says: “Come, children, I will teach you the fear of the Lord.”⁵ What the Apostles were, as teachers of the whole world, what bishops and priests are to those under their charge, that you are, oh, parents, in your families; therefore, St. John Chrysostom calls you Apostles: “You are Apostles in your families, which are called the domestic Church by St. Paul; you preside over them, you instruct them.”⁶ “The lips of parents are books,” he continues, “for the purpose of instructing their children:”⁷ and teaching them the law of God.

Not superficially, but thoroughly.

But how, and in what manner, must this instruction be given? What must it treat of principally? That the children know how to make the sign of the Cross, to say the Our Father, the Hail Mary, and the Creed, as well as the Commandments of God and of the Church, and that they know all the principal parts of the Catechism by heart, seems to be enough for most parents, even for those who wish to live as pious Christians and to fulfil their parental obligations; and would to God that all parents taught their children even that much! But, is this all the instruction that they owe their children? It is part of it, certainly, but not by any means all of it; for what good is it to know the faith by heart, and not to know how to live according to it? Of what use is it to be able to repeat the ten Commandments, and not to know what is commanded or forbidden by them? Nay, what good is it even to understand all this, if the children are not constantly urged to observe the truths they have learned? To be satisfied with the bare knowledge, would be like trying to feed a hungry child by holding out a piece of bread to him so that he could see, but not eat it. If that mode of action were persevered

¹ Quando sederis in domo tua, et ambulaveris in via, et accubueris atque surrexeris.—Deut. xi. 19.

² Docete filios vestros.

³ Quæ ego hodie præcipio vobis, ut diligatis Dominum Deum vestrum, et serviatis ei in toto corde vestro.—Deut. xi. 13.

⁴ Filii tibi sunt? erudi illos a pueritia illorum.—Eccl. vii. 25.

⁵ Dita illos; extolle illos; sed erudi illos.

⁶ Venite filii, timorem Domini docebo vos.—Ps. xxxiii. 12.

⁷ Apostoli estis familiæ vestræ; hanc Apostolus vocat Ecclesiam domesticam, hinc præsedetis, hanc instruitis.

⁸ Libri sunt labia parentum, namque ad erudiendos filios.

in, the child would die of hunger. Let a mother show to her infant son a plate of warm soup, and say: Come, my child, eat; you must eat in order to live. Although the soup is good and healthy food, the child knows nothing of that, nor how to eat it, and therefore the mother herself must begin and taste it, and put it to the child's lips. So it is, also, with the food of the soul: it is not enough merely to present it, or to impress the Christian law and the ten Commandments on children's memories, so that they can repeat them like a parrot; they must see how that food is eaten. That is to say, they must be taught every day, clearly and earnestly, how they are to lead a pious life, according to what they have learned. They must have that food put into their mouths by frequent exhortation, so that they may practise what they have learned when opportunity offers.

In that way they must be deeply impressed with the last end of their creation. For instance: Listen, my child: the life we lead in this world lasts but a short time, and an uncertain time; we cannot be sure of a single month; we may die to-morrow, or even to-day. Our greatest care should be to live well, so that we may die well. We are not here to be rich, and therefore, they who are rich, are not happy on that account. We are not here to eat and drink, to sleep and play, so that they who enjoy all the pleasures they desire, are not to be looked upon as happy. We are not here to be praised and honored, nor are men happy merely because the world esteems them. We are here solely for the purpose of fearing God, serving Him, keeping His commandments, doing His will in all things, loving Him above all things, and so, after this short life, enjoying Him forever in Heaven. If we do not get there, it were better for us never to have been born. That must be the object of all our desires, to it all our actions must tend, for it we must pray and sing every morning and often during the day. All that I do, think, and say must be for God's sake, and to gain Heaven. They must be taught to have a great esteem for God, above all things, and to hate mortal sin and fear it more than anything else, because the great God is offended by it. Think, my child, you might say: if you were to lose your father and mother, who would take care of you? Who would give you food and clothing? Would you not be badly off? And yet that would be a thousand times better for you, than that you should commit even one mortal sin in your whole life-time, and thereby lose God. If you were struck blind, so that you could not see your father or mother, brother or sister, nor even the light of day, that would be

Some ways
of teaching
children
principal
points of
doctrine.

a great misfortune, would it not? And yet, it would not be near so great an evil, as if you were to offend God. To be spitted alive and roasted, or treated like the holy martyr St. Lawrence; what do you think; would you be able to endure that? And yet it is only a shadow compared with the fire of hell, where the wicked shall burn forever, and never die. And they who sin grievously against the commandments of God, deserve that fire. Therefore, whatever you do, see that you never commit a mortal sin for any one, for any pleasure, or for any gain. But, Christian parents, be careful that your children do not imagine a sin to be where there is none, nor a venial sin to be a mortal one; for sometimes, for the sake of quieting the children, or keeping them away from small sins, or making them devout, the mother, or the servant, will say to them: Be quiet; children who cry so will not go to Heaven; to tell a lie, to talk in Church, or not to be obedient is a mortal sin, and so on. It often happens that the children are afterwards really deceived by such remarks and believe them, and yet commit the sin all the same. They must be taught, from their earliest years, to have a great love for the Christian virtues, especially for humility, modesty, diligence, meekness, patience, and contentment with the will of God in all things. They must be told of, and you must read to them, the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, how obedient He was to His poor parents, as a lowly workman's apprentice, how He was clad modestly and humbly, how poor His food was, and how many years He thus spent on earth, until He died in torments on the cross, in order to show us the way we have to go if we wish to follow Him to Heaven. In that way you will save them from the deceitful spirit of the vain world, and will fill them with the true spirit of Jesus Christ and His Gospel from their tenderest years. They must be taught to have a tender love and devotion to Mary, the Mother of God, and to the holy angels guardian. To that end, along with their daily devotions, you might select a certain day in the week on which you and your children could pay them special honor. To teach your children to be respectful in Church and devout at prayer, you must always make them pray with folded hands before and after meals, and every morning and evening they should kneel down, to pray to God and the Saints. They will learn to be merciful and charitable to the poor, if they are told to bring the alms to any poor person who is begging at the door, and they must be told, at the same time, that what is given to the poor, is given to Christ; go, therefore, my child,

and give this piece of bread, or money, or whatever it is, with as much respect, love, and good-will, as if Christ Himself were standing at the door to take it out of your hand. These exhortations must be often repeated, and so earnestly, that the children will think it an honor worth striving for, to be allowed to bring the alms. The day would be too short for my sermon, my dear brethren, if I were to mention everything that parents should constantly impress upon their children.

If you wish for examples of parents who have thus trained their children, in order to see how they did it, read those of the Sacred Scriptures; there you will find, amongst many others, the history of Tobias, and how he trained his son: "From his infancy he taught him to fear God, and to abstain from all sin."¹ And how did he instruct him? Read the 4th chapter of the Book of Tobias, and you will see words there which should be constantly on the lips of parents: "Hear, my son, the words of my mouth, and lay them as a foundation in thy heart."² "All the days of thy life have God in thy mind; and take heed thou never consent to sin, nor transgress the commandments of the Lord our God."³ "Thou shalt honor thy mother all the days of her life; for thou must be mindful what, and how great perils she suffered for thee."⁴ "Give alms out of thy substance, and turn not away thy face from any poor person; for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned from thee."⁵ "According to thy ability, be merciful. If thou have much, give abundantly; if thou have little, take care, even so, to bestow willingly a little; for thus thou storest up for thyself a good reward for the day of necessity.⁶ For alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness. Alms shall be a great confidence before the most high God, to all them that give it." "Eat thy bread with the hungry and the needy, and with thy garments cover the naked."⁷ "Take heed to keep thy-

After the
example of
the elder
Tobias.

¹ Quem ab infantia timere Deum docuit, et abstinere ab omni peccato.—Tob. 1. 10.

² Audi, fili mi, verba oris mei, et ea in corde tuo quasi fundamentum construe.—Ibid. iv. 2.

³ Omnibus diebus vitæ tuæ in mente habeto Deum; et cave, ne aliquando peccato consentias, et prætermittas præcepta Domini Dei nostri.—Ibid. 6.

⁴ Honorem habebis matri tuæ omnibus diebus vitæ ejus; memor enim esse debes, quæ et quanta pericula passa sit propter te.—Ibid. 3, 4.

⁵ Ex substantia tua fac elemosynam, et noli avertere faciem tuam ab ullo paupere; ita enim fiet, ut nec a te avertatur facies Domini.—Ibid. 7.

⁶ Quomodo potueris, ita esto misericors; si multum tibi fuerit, abundanter, tribue: si exiguum tibi fuerit, etiam exiguum libenter impertiri stude; præmium enim bonum tibi thesaurizas in die necessitatis.—Ibid. 8-10.

⁷ Panem tuum cum esurientibus et egenis comede, et de vestimentis tuis nudos tege.—Ibid. 17.

self, my son, from all fornication, and beside thy wife never endure to know a crime. Never suffer pride to reign in thy mind or in thy words; for from it all perdition took its beginning. If any man hath done any work for thee, immediately pay him his hire, and let not the wages of thy hired servant stay with thee at all. See thou never do to another what thou wouldst hate to have done to thee by another.”¹ Keep away from bad company: never eat nor drink with the wicked. “Seek counsel always of a wise man. Bless God at all times, and desire of Him to direct thy ways, and that all thy counsels may abide in Him.”² “Fear not, my son; we lead, indeed, a poor life, but we shall have many good things if we fear God, and depart from all sin, and do that which is good.”³ Such were the beautiful exhortations and teachings of the pious old man; whereupon, Tobias answered his father and said: “I will do all things, father, which thou hast commanded me.”⁴ The tears come to my eyes whenever I read or meditate on this chapter. Christian parents, compare with that the teaching you give your children, and see whether they both agree.

The mother
of St. Ed-
mund.

Read the Lives of the Saints. There you will see how the mother of St. Edmund, while her son was studying in a foreign land, never sent him clothing without sending also a hair shirt, or some other instrument of penance, with an earnest exhortation to use it diligently, in order to chastise his flesh, keep his innocence and purity untarnished, and preserve his soul free from all sin. Therefore he used to say: “If hell were opened on the one side, and on the other I were compelled to do something that could not be done without sin, I should prefer to go down to hell for all eternity, rather than offend God.” Parents, compare your teaching; children, compare your practice with this, and see whether there is any difference between the two.

The holy
Queen
Blanche.

You may read of Queen Blanche, who daily taught her son Louis a certain lesson, when he asked her blessing in the evening, before retiring to rest (children, it was a king who thus

¹ Attende tibi, fili mi, ab omni fornicatione, et præter uxorem tuam nunquam patiaris crimen scire. Superbiam nunquam in tuo sensu, aut in tuo verbo dominari permittas; in ipsa enim initium sumpsit omnis perditio. Quicumque tibi aliquid operatus fuerit, statim ei mercedem restitue. Quod ab alio oderis fieri tibi, vide, ne tu aliquando alteri facias. —Tob. iv. 13-16.

² Consilium semper a sapiente perquire. Omni tempore benedic Deum, et pete ab eo, ut vias tuas dirigat, etc.—Ibid. 19-20.

³ Noli timere, fili mi: pauperem quidem vitam gerimus; sed multa bona habebimus, si timuerimus Deum, et recesserimus ab omni peccato et fecerimus bene.—Ibid. 23.

⁴ Omnia quæcumque præcepisti mihi, faciam, pater.—Ibid. v. i.

acted to his mother, and you are sometimes ashamed to do it): “My son,” she said, in an earnest tone, “I love you more than myself; you are the only consolation that I have on earth; you are the hope of the whole country; but I would rather see you lying dead at my feet, than learn that you had committed a deliberate mortal sin.” Parents, are you, too, thus disposed?

But mark how the teaching of pious parents has its effect on their children. Every one knows how carefully Louis followed his mother’s instructions, and lived according to them. Nor was he holy for himself alone, but he also left to his descendants the effect of his good example. In his *Life*, by Lawrence Surius, you may read the beautiful advice he gave to his eldest son Philip. I will give you a short extract from it: “My son,” are his words, “above all, see that you love God, for no one can be happy who does not love God. Be careful never to commit a mortal sin, but rather endure all the torments in the world. When trials come, bear them patiently, and think that you have deserved them; you will thus derive great profit from them. When you enjoy prosperity, return humble thanks to God, lest you should become exalted and grow worse through that which should have made you better.”¹ “Frequently confess your sins to a pious and learned confessor, who will teach you what to do, and what to avoid, and give him every liberty to tell you of your faults, and to punish you for them.”² “Hear Mass with great devotion; do not allow your eyes to wander about in Church, much less must you talk, or try to divert yourself; but pray to God with lips and heart. Be kind and compassionate towards the poor and oppressed, and help them as well as you can. Listen with pleasure whenever God and heavenly things are spoken of.”³ “Frequent the company of the good and pious, and avoid that of the wicked. Wherever you are, do not allow anything to be said against God and His Saints, nor against the good name of any one. Often thank God for all the benefits He has bestowed on you, so that you may be worthy of still greater ones. Listen patiently to the complaints of the poor, etc.” After many other fervent exhortations to act justly during his reign, to preserve peace, to protect the Church, and to spread the Catholic faith, he concludes with the following words: “May the most

And her
son, St
Louis.

¹ *Fill mi. ante omnia diligenter in eam curam incumbe, ut diligas Deum. . . Cave, ne unquam admittas peccatum mortiferum, etc. Cum adversa accidunt, feras æquo animo, etc. Cum rebus prosperis fueris, humiliter agas gratias Deo.*

² *Crebro confitearis peccata tua, etc.*

³ *Officium divinum devotè auscultes. . . . Animo sis pio et humano erga pauperes. Sermones, qui fiunt de Deo, lubens audi.*

Holy Trinity and all the Saints protect you from all evil,¹ and may God give you the grace always to live in piety and justice and to fulfil His holy will, so that He may be honored by you, and we may meet after this life before Him, to rejoice with Him forever." Christian parents, it was a king who thus taught his children! Happy, indeed, are such families! What a Heaven on earth it is where the parents teach and the children learn such lessons! Blessed are the fathers and mothers who thus do the work of Apostles and co-operators of Jesus Christ, for the glory of God, and the salvation of the children entrusted to their care! Blessed children, how happy you are in being thus inspired with the fear and love of God from your tenderest years! Would that such were the case in every household; what a change there would be for the better, how different life would be throughout Christendom!

Negligence
of parents
in giving
this instruc-
tion.

But, alas, there is little use in talking thus! How many there are who are guilty of grievous negligence with regard to teaching and instructing their children! How many households there are, in which there is hardly a word said, the whole week, of God and heavenly things, unless the holy name of God is blasphemed, or uttered irreverently! We ought to be ashamed when we read that even the heathens try to bring up their children well. The philosophers of India, as Father Drexelius writes, were formerly accustomed to forbid their children, or scholars entrusted to their care, to come to table, until they could give the correct answers to a certain number of questions, and had told what each had done during the day that was deserving of praise. If any of the children did not satisfy these conditions, they were sent away from the table hungry. Christians, what is our conduct in this respect? A fine thing, indeed, it would be for parents to keep their sons and daughters fasting until the latter repeated what they remembered of the last good exhortation they received, or the last sermon or lesson in catechism they heard! A fine thing, indeed, for all masters and mistresses to assemble their children and servants together on Sundays and holy-days, to read a spiritual book for them, or to teach them something for the good of their souls! That would be contrary to all rules of state and policy; that work is suited only for school-masters and preachers! But tell me, is it not also the school-master's business to teach your children foreign languages, writing, drawing, and other studies, in which you make their whole education consist? And yet you often examine

¹ Sacrosancta Trinitas, et sancti omnes servant te ab omni malo.

them in those things yourselves, to see what progress they are making. They are often obliged to exhibit their proficiency in your presence and before others also. Are those things, then, of more importance than their eternal salvation? But, no more of this; for there is still another thing to be considered that is much more to be deplored, and that is, that if some parents neglect their duty, and are on that account to be condemned because they do not use their tongues to instruct their children, how much more are not they to be condemned, who, instead of giving good instruction, teach their children wickedness by their evil tongues, and lead them into sin? Yet, alas, there is a large number of such people in the world, as we shall briefly see in the

Second Part.

You are frightened, no doubt, Christian hearers, at this subject, and you think it almost an impossibility that amongst Catholic Christians, parents are to be found who deliberately and wilfully teach wickedness to their sons and daughters; for that would be to make one's house into a school for the devil, to the eternal ruin of souls. And yet, I repeat, how many there are who set up such a school of perdition in their own houses, so that the devil finds no better teachers and agents in the world, than many fathers and mothers, whom they make use of to betray innocent children! It would, in truth, be much better for many sons and daughters that they had never been born, or never been brought up by their parents, or that they had been abandoned in the streets to the fate of illegitimate children, and had been reared in a foundling asylum. Better for them, if, after baptism, they had been put, like Moses, into a basket and been left to the mercy of the winds and waves, or that they had been suckled by wolves in a forest, like Romulus and Remus, or had even been devoured by wild beasts. Better, I say, to lose their lives at once, than to live and learn sin and wickedness from their parents! St. John Chrysostom says: Would to God that the worst was¹ that your children, oh, parents, learned nothing from you, although you should answer to God for it: yet it could be tolerated to a certain extent. But you do worse than that by teaching them what is directly opposed to their salvation!² Let us see, now, if this is the case.

Many teach
their chil-
dren evil.

I will not speak here of those undoubted agents of the devil

Many teach
them max-

¹ Utinam hoc tantum culpa esset.

² Ita universa filios jubetis facere, quæ si faciunt, salvi esse non possunt.

42 *The Teaching Parents should Give Children.*

ims opposed
to Christian
truth.

who teach their children to lie and cheat, to work on Sundays and holy-days, to eat meat on forbidden days, to steal, to curse, to be immoral, and to have dealings with the devil (I shudder when I think of it); I could not suspect decent parents of being guilty of such things. Yet there are such people in the world. My complaint shall now be directed principally against those who inspire their children with the false and lying maxims of a corrupt and perverse world, which are altogether opposed to the Christian religion, and to the life and example of Jesus Christ, whom we must try to imitate, and to the maxims of the Gospel that we must observe, if we wish to gain eternal happiness. For instance, Christ, by His example, and in His Gospel, that all parents should teach their children from their tenderest years, says that the poor in spirit are blessed;¹ and condemns the greed of gold: “Woe to you that are rich;”² to you who set your hearts on riches. Now, some parents daily teach their children the contrary of that, and tell them that happiness consists in being very wealthy. See, they say, that gentleman, that merchant, how well he has got on in a short time, by his industry. What a beautiful house he has! What a rich inheritance he has succeeded to! He is certainly fortunate. How well that son, that daughter, is married! What would you think, my child, if such good luck fell to your share? Such teaching as that makes a very strong impression on tender minds, so that they afterwards come to look upon money and riches almost as their God. Christ says in the Gospel: “Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart.”³ “Amen, I say to you, unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.”⁴ If you are invited by any one, “sit down in the lowest place.”⁵ But what do parents say? My son, my daughter, you are as good as such and such a one. You must not give way to them, nor yield to them; you are superior to them in rank and position. “But I say to you,” says Christ in the Gospel, “love your enemies, do good to them that hate you.”⁶ What do parents say when their children suffer anything from another? My child, will you put up with that? Can you not defend yourself? Will you let yourself be treated in that way? Many fathers are quite pleased to see their sons fight-

¹ *Beati pauperes spiritu.*—Matth. v. 3.

² *Vae vobis divitibus.*—Luke vi. 24.

³ *Discite a me, quia mitis sum et humilis corde.*—Matth. xi. 29.

⁴ *Amen, dico vobis, nisi conversi fueritis, et efficiamini sicut parvuli, non intrabitis in regnum caelorum.*—Ibid. xviii. 3.

⁵ *Recumbe in novissimo loco.*—Luke xiv. 10.

⁶ *Ego autem dico vobis, diligite inimicos vestros, benefacite his, qui oderunt vos.*—Matth. v. 44.

ing. If they are victorious the fathers even praise them, and say: The young fellow has courage, he will turn out well some day! Of course he will turn out well; but wait! If a little child cries because it cannot have what it wants, the parents give it a stick and tell it to beat and scold the naughty person who has made it cross. A very good way, indeed, to give them a vindictive spirit.

How do mothers sometimes instruct their daughters, who would otherwise willingly be pious and devout? Is it according to the teaching of Christ in the Gospel: "Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world"?¹ Is it according to the teaching of St. Paul, who condemns all superfluous, and much more, all vain and scandalous luxury in dress, and who even tells women to veil their faces on account of the angels? No, indeed; quite the contrary. Go to your father, they say, and tell him you want another dress; you ought to be ashamed to appear like that in the streets. What will people think when they see their own children better dressed than you? Sometimes the daughters say to their mothers: I have heard in the sermon that it is not right to dress in that way, or to follow that fashion, and that it might give scandal, etc. What, says the mother, let preachers say what they like. They do not understand these things, nor how people must live in the world. Everything they say is not Gospel. We must not mind them, but do as others do. Other pious people do the same, and we do not want to be any better than they! You must be dressed as I wish. All right; be it so; and they will go also where you, and not God, wish them to go. There are daughters who, through natural bashfulness, or through a love of virginal purity, wish to remain quietly at home, to avoid the society of the other sex, and to occupy themselves in some lawful manner, and the mothers, who ought to strengthen them in that good resolution and approve of their modesty, cannot bear it, and drag them about into all sorts of company. What, they say, you must not be bashful, but friendly with people. You must learn how to go about and let yourself be seen; otherwise, who will have you? Thus their innocent souls, even without their own knowledge and consent, since they would willingly go to Heaven by the narrow way of the cross, are filled with the love of idleness and vanity, and are led astray on the broad road, by those who should lead them to humility, modesty, virtue, and Heaven.

I have seen little girls, I do not say where, who were taught

Especially mothers with their daughters
As experience teaches.

¹ Nolite diligere mundum, neque ea, quæ in mundo sunt.—I. John 11. 15.

44 *The Teaching Parents should Give Children.*

by their parents to dance, the one like a peasant man, the other like a peasant woman, and to go through all the motions and figures that peasants practise in their dances at rural merry-makings. It must have taken a deal of time and trouble to teach them all that. When I saw it, I could not help sighing to myself, and saying: What a wretched lesson for their immortal souls! I saw the father and mother laughing and enjoying the scene, when their little children sang impure love songs, or repeated conversations of the same character. They even ordered the children to begin again, so as to prolong their pleasure. Alas, what a training for Christian children! I have seen parents who, when they were playing cards, brought their little children with them, and taught them how to play also. Alas, what training for Christian children! There are parents, too, who cannot bear to see their children piously inclined. They cry down piety in every way possible. See, they say, what a devotee we have! That boy will be good for nothing; he is too pious; we shall not know what to make of him; he is only fit for a priest, etc. These are the fine lessons that many parents give their children nowadays! What wonder is it that the latter, reared in such a school, grow up to be vain and foolish? Wicked parents, for whom do you bring up your children? For God, or for the world, that they have formally renounced in baptism? For God, or for the devil, whom they have also renounced forever? Have you had them baptized that they might serve under the standard of Jesus Christ, or under that of the demon? Has God entrusted them to you, that you might lead them astray, since you lead them in that unchristian manner on the high road to hell? You are, as St. Bernard says, "betrayers of your children!"¹

Exhortation
to parents
to instruct
their children
themselves.

Ah, Christian parents, is my conclusion in the oft-quoted words of the Lord: "Teach your children,"² from their childhood. And what? "To love the Lord their God,"³ that they may serve Him alone with all their hearts. If you know not how, or cannot undertake to perform the office of a Christian teacher, and instruct your children in goodness, then send them, at least, and see that they go to where they will get proper instruction from others. Bring them with you to sermons, although they may be still very young; they will hear many salutary things that will be for the advantage of their souls their whole lives long. They will at least have a wish to hear the Word of God, from their tenderest years, and that is a sign of predestination. And you, too, will learn

¹ Seductores filiorum :

² Docete filios vestros.

³ Ut diligant Dominum Deum.

much that you can afterwards teach your children. If you do not do even that much (and alas, there are many who hardly go to a sermon once in a quarter of a year, through indolence and laziness, or through fear of being disturbed in conscience!), what wonder is it that you and your children live and die in culpable ignorance of what concerns your eternal welfare? What wonder is it that you live a sensual life, according to the fashion of the world?

You must send your children every Sunday to catechism. If the mother is not able to nurse her child, does she neglect it altogether? No, for she would thus cause the child's death; she hires some one who can take care of it in her place. In the same way, if some parents do not know how to instruct their children, they must not, therefore, allow the souls of the latter to perish. If they did so, they would be murderers in a spiritual sense; and therefore they must have recourse to others, who will teach their children for them. Alas, what great negligence parents are often guilty of in this respect too! So that ecclesiastical superiors must often compel them, by penalties, to send their children to catechism. Good God, what are things coming to, in the Christian world? Who ever heard that a magistrate had to compel people to look after their cows, and sheep, and pigs, and goats? But the souls of poor children are left without any one to attend to them! It was that thought which so often drew tears from St. John Chrysostom. He says: "We take more care of our asses and horses, than of the souls of our children." ¹ Certainly, what the Emperor Augustus used to say of Herod: "It is better to be Herod's pig, than his child," might be affirmed of many Christians. There are many people who treat their swine better than they treat their children. Listen, parents: If you yourselves do not teach your children the catechism, nor send them to others to learn it, you cannot hope to save your souls, unless you repent sincerely of your negligence. Understand me, now; I do not say that you commit a grievous sin by keeping them away from catechism now and then; but if you are guilty of grievous carelessness herein, you cannot be excused from mortal sin, as the best theologians teach.

Or to get others to instruct them, in which they are wanting also.

Therefore, "teach your children," ² or at least see that they are taught by others. Think often, for your consolation, that there is no work more holy, nor more divine, than to co-operate in the salvation of souls. You can daily practise zeal for souls,

Conclusion.

¹ *Majorem asinorum et equorum quam filiorum curam habemus.*

² *Docete filios vestros.*

and for souls that are most closely connected with you. Spare neither care nor labor herein! You could not find a better employment. Rejoice at the promise made by God: "They that instruct many to justice, shall shine as stars to all eternity." Amen.

Another Introduction for the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost :

Text.

Loquebatur recte.—Mark vii. 35.

"He spoke right."

To speak, and to speak always right, as we should, is a great and a rare art. It is an art that I desire for myself and for all men, but especially for parents, since it is so very necessary for the Christian training of children. Hitherto, my dear brethren, I have treated of this subject in general, and shown how all parents are bound by the natural and divine law to train their children, and how the eternal salvation of their children, and their own temporal and eternal welfare, should incite parents to perform this duty. It now remains for me to tell you how this training is to be given, and what it requires. What is that? Be attentive: Parents who wish to bring up their children for their last end, must speak, see, feel, and live right. They must speak right, to instruct their children in what is good; see right, to be watchful over them; feel right, to punish and to chastise them when necessary; live right, to give them a good example. If one of them be wanting, the children will not be trained properly. I confine myself to the first to-day, and I say: Parents who do not speak right, that is, who do not teach their children what is good, do not train them in a Christian manner. The first part. Much less do those parents who speak evil, that is, who teach their children what is evil, bring them up properly. The second part, etc.—*continues as before.*

³ Qui ad justitiam erudiunt multos, fulgebunt quasi stellæ in perpetuas æternitates.—Dan. xii. 3.

FORTY-SECOND SERMON.

ON THE WATCHFULNESS OF PARENTS OVER THEIR CHILDREN.

Subject.

Parents who wish to bring up their children for Heaven, in a Christian manner, and to keep them from sin, must be watchful over all their actions.—*Preached on the eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Confide, fili, remittuntur tibi peccata tua.—Matth. ix. 2
“Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee.”

Introduction.

Christ could speak like that ; for no one but God can forgive sin, except those to whom He has given that power. Christian parents, God has given you great power over your sons and daughters! But He has not empowered you to forgive them their sins. Oh, if you had that power! If you could say, whenever your children are guilty of sin: “Be of good heart, son,” or daughter, “thy sins are forgiven thee,”¹ it would be easy for you, then, to bring up your children to Heaven. But what am I saying? You can bestow on them a still greater benefit than the forgiveness of their sins. What benefit is that? You can, if you manage matters properly, prevent your children from committing any grievous sin, so that they do not need forgiveness; and that depends upon your giving them a Christian training. We have treated, last Sunday, of the good tongue, that is, the good instruction that is necessary to a Christian training. But that alone is not enough: you must also have sharp eyes, so as to watch carefully over all their actions, as I shall show in to-day’s instruction.

Plan of Discourse.

Parents who wish to bring up their children for Heaven, in a Christian manner, and to keep them from sin, as they ought,

¹ Confide, fili, remittuntur tibi peccata tua.

48 *Watchfulness of Parents over their Children.*

must be watchful over all their actions. That is the whole subject.

Virgin Mother Mary, and you holy angels, who always watch over our salvation, cast your gracious eyes on all parents, and obtain for them, from God, the grace of this necessary vigilance!

A school-master must keep his scholars quiet by his vigilance.

When the cat is away, the mice may play, as the saying is. When children see that no one is looking after them, they do what they like, and are generally wild and naughty. We can see that in a school, where a lot of little boys are sitting together. As long as the teacher is there, and looking about him, they are all as quiet and diligent as possible. There is not a word to be heard, unless when they are repeating their lessons, or arguing with each other. But if the teacher turns his back for a moment, some, who think he does not see them, begin to whisper and talk together; and if he goes out of the school altogether, and they know that he is wanted outside, what a noise they make then! A swarm of bees is not half so lively as a lot of children when left to themselves. They talk, laugh, shout, cry out, fight, and jump over the benches as if they wished to knock down the house, as they experience who have schools in their houses, if the teacher is absent, or wanting in vigilance. To prevent that, teachers generally appoint some one, when they are obliged to be absent, to keep order in the school, and write down the names of those who make a noise. But that is often of little use, for he who has charge of the children is frequently as bad as they are. Or else the children determine, at all costs, to take advantage of the teacher's absence, although they run the risk of punishment on his return. Nor is it any wonder; for they are children, and act as such. There is nothing to keep them quiet but the sharp eye and unceasing vigilance of a teacher who loves them as his scholars.

So also parents must act with regard to the moral character of their children.

My dear brethren, a Christian household in which there are little boys and girls is nothing but a school, over which the father and mother are placed by God as teachers to instruct their children in the Christian faith, and to bring them up to virtue, piety, and the fear of the Lord, that they may live well and die happily, as we have seen in the last sermon. Now, if parents fulfil this duty and often teach and exhort their children to good, they do a great work, that is unfortunately rarely done nowadays, even by Christians. But what good is it all, if they do not continually watch their children, to see if their instructions are followed? Not a bit,

or, at most, very little. If the children find out that they can go where they like, out of sight of their parents; that they can go with whom they like, and do what pleases them best, what will become of their conduct, then? They will be like the scholars who are left alone by their teacher. Sometimes the eldest son or daughter is told to look after the little ones, to keep them out of mischief; or the latter are intrusted to the care of servants. But that is of little use, nor do the children pay any heed to it. It is only their father and mother, whose authority is from God, who can keep them in order; and therefore God has inspired children with a natural respect for their parents.

No child is so naughty and disobedient as not to be afraid of doing anything unlawful before its father or mother, unless it is neglected and trained to evil from its infancy. No child is so good, modest, and inclined to virtue, as not to be guilty of a few pranks now and then, when its parents are not looking. When did the Prodigal Son of the Gospel begin to drink, and gamble away his money, and live riotously? Was it not when he went to a foreign land, away from under his father's eye? For he certainly would not otherwise have dared to lead such a wicked life. When did Absalom, the eternally unhappy son of a holy father, who was a man after God's own heart, begin to rebel against his father and to seduce the subjects of the latter from their allegiance? Was it not when he was forbidden, for having murdered his brother, to look on his father's face, or to appear in his sight? Moses was placed by God over the people of Israel, as their leader and law-giver. He gave them many pious exhortations to be always faithful to God, and yet when he went away from them for a short time to the mountain, how did they act? The Sacred Scripture says: "And the people, seeing that Moses delayed to come down from the mount, gathering together against Aaron, said: Arise, make us gods, that may go before us."¹ Nor did they stop until they had brought him all their golden earrings, out of which he made a golden calf, and set it up for them to adore, and to offer sacrifice to. "And the people sat down to eat, and drink, and they rose up to play."² My God, what an extraordinary thing! Old and sensible people, who had preserved their fidelity to the true God, in the midst of the persecutions of Egypt; that chosen people, who had seen so many wonders of the divine goodness always accompanying them in their journeys,

No teaching is of any good without this vigilance. Proved from Scripture.

¹ Videns autem populus, quod moram faceret descendendi de monte Moyses, congregatus adversus Aaron, dixit: Surge, fac nobis deos, qui nos præcedant.—Exod. xxxii. 1.

² Et sedit populus manducare, et bibere, et surrexerunt ludere.—Ibid. vi.

now abandoned the true God, because their leader and law-giver was away from them for a short time ! What may we not, then, expect of children, who are unable to govern themselves on account of their youth; who do not yet feel much desire for a supernatural end or motive, and who are inclined to all sorts of distractions and amusements, when they are left to themselves by their leaders and guides, their fathers and mothers? What must become of them if they fall into the hands of wicked, ill-reared children, from whom they can learn nothing good, and by whom they will be led into sin, if the vigilance of their parents does not save them? Alas, that would be as bad as to allow a flock of sheep to wander about in the vicinity of the wolf, without a shepherd!

What parents must be watchful of.

Therefore, for a Christian training to be given in the proper way, it is absolutely necessary that parents should keep a watchful eye on all the actions of their children, so as to see how they live and what they do; what evil they commit; what good they do; whether they fear and love God; whether they go to Mass every day; whether, and how often, they go to confession and communion; whether they attend sermons and catechism; when they go to bed, and when they get up; whether they say their morning and evening prayers devoutly; when, where, with whom they go out; what they learn from their teacher; whether they can hear, see, or learn anything good or evil from the servants in the house; how the relatives of the family, and the neighbors act, with regard to them, when they are allowed to visit them; whether the children with whom they play are well or ill-reared, what books they read, etc. Every care must be taken to keep them constantly occupied in some lawful manner. They must never be allowed to remain idle, for that would give the devil every opportunity of leading them into all kinds of sin and vice. They must be carefully kept away from dangerous company, and even from the least occasion of sin. Without this care and watchfulness, all your teaching and exhorting will be of no avail.

After the example of pious parents in the Old Law.

This was the principal thing with all pious, God-fearing parents, who wished to bring up their children for Heaven. When Sara saw her son Isaac playing only once with Ishmael, the son of her handmaid, she could not rest until the latter and her son were turned out of the house. She said to her husband Abraham: "Cast out this bond-woman, and her son."¹ She was afraid

¹ Ejice ancillam hanc, et filium ejus — Gen. xxi. 10.

that he might corrupt the innocent Isaac. The Patriarch Jacob, too, was ill at ease when his sons, although they were grown up, were away from him, minding their flocks. His father's heart was filled with anxiety to know what they were doing, and how they were getting on. Therefore, he used to send his beloved son Joseph to them: "Go," he said, "and see if all things be well with thy brethren; and bring me word again what is doing."¹ The same anxiety troubled Isai, when his sons were absent from him, and therefore he sent David to see, not merely what they were doing, but in what company they were, as we read in the 17th chapter of the First Book of Kings: "Go see thy brethren, if they are well, and learn with whom they are placed."² The Sacred Scripture says of the God-fearing Job, that he was not satisfied with knowing merely what his children did, but also that he was anxious about what they thought, although God alone could know that; and therefore, "rising up early, he offered holocausts for every one of them. For he said: Lest perhaps my sons have sinned, and have blessed God in their hearts."³ The meaning of that is, according to the Septuagint: "Lest perhaps my sons have thought something wicked against God in their hearts."⁴ "So did Job all days."⁵ Therefore, careful parents, like Job, are not content with knowing what their children do outwardly, they also try to find out their inward acts. They note, not merely what they say, but also, as far as possible, what they think. They try to find out where their evil inclinations tend, so that they may provide a timely remedy for them. Much may be learned of their thoughts by watching their looks and actions, and, as with other men, a little thing is enough to give cause for suspecting them of evil inclinations.

But it is easy to talk of being anxious about the thoughts and desires of children! If parents only kept their eyes open to the outward acts of their children, it would be something. What a great want there is in this respect, with most parents! Some are occupied with far different things the whole day, either at home or elsewhere. The last thing that troubles them is to look after the children. They are very curious about what is going on in town, or in the country, or in the homes of

Many parents fall herein, by busying themselves about other things and paying little attention to their children.

¹ Vade, et vide si cuncta prospera sint erga fratres tuos; et renuntia mihi quid agatur.—Gen. xxxvii. 14.

² Fratres tuos visitabis, si recte agant, et cum quibus ordinati sunt, disce.—I. Kings xvii. 18.

³ Consurgens diluculo offerebat holocausta pro singulis. Dicebat enim, ne forte peccaverint filii mei, et benedixerint Deo in cordibus suis.—Job i. 5.

⁴ Ne forte filii mei in mente sua cogitaverint mala erga Deum.

⁵ Sic faciebat Job cunctis diebus.

other people. They pay no attention to what occurs in their own homes, or to what their sons and daughters are doing. Sometimes they do not see their children for the whole day, unless at meals. They allow them to go out when they please, to stand talking in the streets, or at the door, in the morning, the evening, or even at night, with whom they like. How can that have a good effect on young people? Is that the way to watch over the actions of children, when they are allowed to run through the streets as they like, boys and girls together, Christians and Jews, playing, shouting, fighting with each other in full liberty? Is it not the case? I have myself seen, with much bitterness of heart, girls of ten, eleven, and twelve years of age, of decent families, playing with very wild and naughty boys in the public streets. And decent Christian parents think they can bring up their children properly in that way! Is that the way to exercise parental vigilance, when sometimes all the neighbors can speak of the wilfulness, wickedness, and vices of certain children, while the fathers and mothers know nothing at all about them? So little do they watch over their children! . Alas, unhappy children, whose father and mother think as little of you as a runaway dog! Nay, would that they thought even as much of you! Sometimes a gentleman loses his hunting-dog, or a lady her lap-dog; the servants are then immediately sent out to look for it, and bring it home so that it may not run away altogether, or be seized upon by strangers. While the son and daughter may run off wherever they like, and stop away half the day, and no one ever thinks of looking for them! People are anxious enough to know if the sheep and cows have come home at the proper time in the evening, from the pasturage; but they trouble themselves very little to know whether their sons and daughters are at home early in the evening.

The
heathens
were more
careful
hereth.

Ah, if that philosopher, of whom Plutarch writes in his book on the Instruction of Children, were to rise from the dead, and to stand on the top of the highest tower of the town, and cry out: "Where are you going to, citizens? You spend all your time and care in business, and little or none on your children, to whom you must leave your wealth."¹ In the same way I should like to cry out in the ears of those careless parents: You fathers and mothers, where are you going? What is your business now? I am going to a lawyer, one of them might answer, about

¹ Quo tenditis, cives? quo tenditis? Qui rei faciendæ omne impenditis studium, nullis vero instituentis, quibus opes vestras relinquitis exiguum ac plane nullum.

a case I have on hand; I am going to a debtor of mine, to get some money; to a merchant, to do business with him; to the market, to buy some things I want in the house; to my cousin, or neighbor, to pay a visit, or to pass the time. And where are your children meanwhile? Are they well looked after, under the care of a good and pious teacher? If so, then go, in God's name, and do your business, as well as you can! But, during the time that you cannot look after them, are they idle at home, or running about the streets with wicked children, or are they in company from which they can learn nothing good? Oh, if so, go back at once! Go back, hard-hearted parents; your children are of more importance to you than anything else. Your first care must be their eternal salvation; when you have looked after that, you may attend to other things. For what purpose do you intend the money that you lay up, with such labor and trouble? Is it not to support your children? But what a folly it is to neglect and forget those very children whose bodies you labor so much for! As St. John Chrysostom says, that would be like a foolish gardener, who would work outside the garden to bring in the water, so as to water his plants and trees, while he hardly ever looks after the plants themselves, or cares whether the trees grow straight or crooked, whether they bring forth good or bad fruit. Go back, parents; look after your children better! But there is no use in talking that way to those who do not wish to hear!

But if there are some parents who keep their sons and daughters at home, and do not allow them to run about at will, nor to go into bad company, yet, these very parents may be guilty of great and deplorable carelessness of another kind, by not caring what sort of servants they have, although the children are with the servants the whole day. If the latter are faithful to their duties in the house, diligent and obedient, that is all the parents care about. They never trouble themselves about how the servants talk and act with the children, and what example they give them. In the same way parents are guilty of sin by not caring whether the school-master, or drawing, dancing, or fencing master, or others who have to instruct the children, are pious or not; whether their moral character is good or bad. It is enough, as they say, to be able to get the children out of the way for a while. Alas, I must again say with St. John Chrysostom, we select the best shepherd we can find to look after our sheep and cows; but it does not matter to what master or mistress we intrust the

Others do not care what sort of teachers and servants they intrust their children to.

54 *Watchfulness of Parents over their Children.*

immortal souls of our children, that they may be kept from evil and be trained to virtue.

And allow them to associate with the opposite sex.

Most especially do those parents sin in this respect, who allow their children, and particularly their grown-up daughters, to have free intercourse with persons of the opposite sex, although it may be in their own houses, and under the pretext of securing a suitable match, or of close relationship; and also they who permit their engaged children to be alone with the person they are about to marry. Alas, when I think of this abuse, I could weep bitter tears with the Prophet: "Who will give me a fountain of tears,"¹ to weep for the countless, precious souls who are thus sullied and defiled! My God! To leave two people of opposite sexes alone; two who love each other foolishly; two who know that they will soon be married! Who will give me tears enough to bewail the countless sins that are committed in such circumstances by impure desires, looks, and actions! How many lose their virtue thereby, before their marriage! How can there be luck or grace in a marriage that is begun by offending God? Careless parents, what answer will you give hereafter to your just Judge, if you deliberately, or through carelessness, allow your children to act thus, and make yourselves responsible for the sins they commit; and if they do not commit sin, which would indeed be a wonderful thing, you leave them, at least, in the proximate danger of it? Yet so many fathers and mothers think so little of it, that these sins are hardly ever mentioned in confession, and never repented of and atoned for!

They send their children to foreign countries, where they become perverted.

Further, what sort of care do those parents take of their children, who not only allow them to do what they like at home, and to go out walking and talking when and with whom they please; but even place them beyond their reach, in such a way that they could not watch over them, even if they wished to do so? I allude to those who, without any necessity or grievous cause, send their sons, and especially their daughters, to foreign lands, to learn a useless language, that they could perhaps have learned at home just as well; or to be instructed in the fine arts, which they have as good, if not better, opportunities of learning in their own country, or to learn the ways of the world, which will be of more harm than good to their souls, their whole lives long. I do not say, my dear brethren, that this is to be always condemned, provided the son is in a boarding-house, or the daughter in a convent, where the parents can be certain they

¹ Quis dabit mihi fontem lachrymarum?—Jerem. ix. 1.

will be as well looked after as if they were at home; but few concern themselves about that, and therefore their children bring back from foreign countries nothing else than that they can say: I have been in such and such a town; I have seen this, that, and the other thing. What do I say? Nothing else! Would that it were no worse! They bring back, often, nothing but unchristian and frivolous manners, sinful consciences, and perverse and corrupted lives. Would to God that this were not proved by experience! I ask you, oh, parents, to give testimony to this. Must not some of you acknowledge in your hearts that if you have been guilty of sins in your youth, you learned and committed the most of them when you were out of your parents' sight? And now, children must learn how to lose their souls, in order to be able to speak a foreign language, and put on the vain, frivolous, and wicked manners of the world, in order to complete their education! Fathers and mothers, you must give an account to your Judge, for thus driving your children away from you into the occasion of sin!

Finally, what must I say and think of those parents who are not only careless in watching over their children, so as to keep them from sin and its dangers, but actually lay snares for them at home and elsewhere, and lead them into the occasions of sin? Many lay snares for their own children.

What a fearful thing! Many fathers go to the tavern, their sons must go with them; mothers go into company and bring their daughters with them, into places which ought to be shunned by young people who wish to preserve their innocence. They have pictures in their houses, and statues in their gardens, that no man or woman, not to speak of curious children, could look at without being scandalized. They allow their little boys and girls to occupy the same bed. They are not at all cautious of what they say in their presence, and are very remiss in teaching them Christian modesty. Thus the poor children learn wickedness in their very tenderest years. Christian parents, poverty does not excuse you from the duty of seeing that your children are never placed in the occasion of violating modesty. But, you say, what danger is there? They are young and innocent, and do not know anything of vice. Be careful, or they will learn it much quicker than the Our Father, or the Creed. Are they still innocent? Then keep them so; but they will not long remain so, unless you are very careful. The philosopher Aristotle says that children begin to dream in their fourth or fifth year; I go a little farther, and say that they begin to hear and see in

their fourth or fifth year, or even earlier. And although they cannot sin, because they have not the use of reason, yet many sins can be caused in after life, by what they hear and see in their childhood. If we were to ask many of the perverse, corrupt youths of our times what Jesus Christ asked the father in the Gospel: How long is your son in this miserable state? They could answer, as that father did: "From infancy." How long have you been so wicked? From infancy. When did you learn to commit that sin? From my very childhood. I learned it from my parents, from my brothers and sisters at home. And such is indeed the case.

**Conclusion,
and exhortation
to parents to
be watchful
over their
children.**

Christian parents, be watchful over the actions of your children, from their very infancy, if you wish to preserve them from sin, and to keep them in the fear of God. If you had a hundred eyes, you should keep them all open for this purpose; but you have only two, and therefore must be all the more careful. You should inspire yourselves with a holy fear, by thinking: I must one day stand before my Judge to answer for the sins of my children, if I have been the cause of them by a want of vigilance. Nor must you imagine that this is too unjust or severe towards you, for you judge in the same way of others. If your watch goes wrong, you accuse the watchmaker, and say that he does not know his business. If you see a child with a distorted foot, you get indignant, and think that if the mother or the nurse had been more careful, the foot would have been all right. And in the same way the divine Judge will say, when He sees a son or a daughter living in an unchristian manner: Father and mother, what have you been doing? Why have you allowed the unfortunate children to be thus perverted? And what answer will you make to Him? You may say: I have not perverted them, they have done it themselves. I could not prevent them from leading wicked lives. But the Judge will answer: You should have been more watchful over them in their youth. I look upon you as the first cause of their destruction. And such is really the case, Christians! You have, for instance, a clerk in your shop, to whom you give a yearly salary on condition that he looks after your goods, and takes care of them. Now, suppose that, while you are absent, the clerk goes to sleep, and a thief comes in and steals your things; what would you say in that case to the clerk? Unfaithful servant, you would cry out, full of anger, you must either make good the loss or go to prison. But why? What has

¹ *Ab Infantia.*—Mark ix. 20.

the poor man done ? He went to sleep when he should have remained awake. But, there is no harm in that ; when a man is asleep, he can do no evil. But he should have kept his eyes open, and not have allowed my things to be stolen. He is the cause of the loss I have suffered ; he must go to prison ! You are quite right ; for, according to every law, he who has charge of anything, is responsible for injuries that happen to it, through his negligence. Fathers and mothers, the most precious treasures you have are the immortal souls of your children, whom God has confided to your care with the promise of eternal happiness, if you are faithful in your duty. But if you go to sleep, and do not watch over your children, so that the devil comes and steals one of them away, then, woe to you when you appear before God ! How can you make good that irreparable loss ? Do not say : What have I done ? I have not taught my children anything bad, nor given them bad example, and I have often exhorted them to fear God. That may be ; but you have slept when you should have been awake. You were wanting in vigilance and so your son or daughter is lost. I will require their souls at your hands, the Judge will say to you. Think, too, for your consolation, how much you may do for the honor and glory of God, if by your watchfulness you can save your children even from one mortal sin, and how much you can do for the salvation of souls, if you bring them, by your diligence, to Heaven, along with yourselves. What a pleasing and joyful sight it will be for you on that day when St. Peter will appear with the thousands of Jews that he converted, St. Paul with the countless multitudes of heathens that he gained over to Christ, and the other Apostles, and missionaries, preachers, confessors, and priests, with all the souls that they instructed and led to Heaven ! Ah, parents, do what you can now, so as to be able to take your place amongst them, with your children at your side, and to say to your Judge : Behold, I have kept those souls, and saved them by my watchfulness ! With what joy and gladness you will then hear the happy words : “ Well done, good and faithful servant ; ” thou faithful father ; thou good mother ! “ Because thou hast been faithful over a few things,” in being watchful over a few souls, “ I will place thee over many things,” come “ enter,” with thy children “ into the joy of thy Lord.”¹ Amen.

¹ *Euge, serve bone et fidelis, quia super pauca fuisti fidelis, super multa te constituam: intra in gaudium Domini tui. — Matth. xxv. 23.*

Another Introduction for the Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost :

Text.

Beati oculi qui vident quæ vos videtis.—Luke x. 23.

“Blessed are the eyes that see the things which you see.”

Blessed are the tongues of parents who speak right, and as they should; that is, who instruct their children, from childhood, in good and heavenly things! And this is the first requisite to a Christian training, as we have seen in the last sermon. “Blessed are the eyes”¹ of parents, who also see well, as they ought to see; that is, who are always watchful over the actions of their children! And that is the second requisite to a Christian training. Such, without further prelude, is the whole subject of to-day’s instruction—*continues as before.*

FORTY-THIRD SERMON.

ON THE DUE CHASTISEMENT OF CHILDREN.

Subject.

1st. Parents, who wish to bring up their children in a Christian manner, must chastise them in a parental way, when necessary. 2d. Many parents are guilty of grievous neglect in this point.—*Preached on the nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Ligatis manibus et pedibus ejus, mittite eum in tenebras exteriores.—Matth. xxii. 13.

“Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into exterior darkness.”

Introduction.

You must either raise your hands to punish, when necessary, the misdeeds of your children in this life, or you must see them bound hand and foot, and cast into exterior darkness in the next life. What think you of that, Christian parents? Which of the alternatives do you choose? What do you think, children?

¹ *Beati oculi.*

Whether is it better to shed a few tears and suffer a little pain now and then, here, or to be cast into the gloomy lake of fire, where there is eternal weeping and gnashing of teeth, hereafter? No doubt you all choose the first. And that is exactly what is necessary in order to avoid the second; that is to say, children must sometimes weep here, to escape eternal wailing hereafter. Parents must punish and chastise their children here, that they may not be obliged to see them bound and cast into exterior darkness hereafter. And this is the third requisite for a Christian training. The tongue must be good, to instruct the children in piety and lead them on to it; the eyes must be good, to keep constant watch over them; and the hands, too, must be made use of to feel right, that is, to inflict due punishment on them. Such is the subject of to-day's instruction, or rather complaint, since there are so many who are wanting in this point.

Plan of Discourse.

Parents, who wish to bring up their children in a Christian manner, must chastise them in a parental way, when necessary. Such will be the short instruction of the first part. Many parents are guilty of grievous neglect in this point. The complaint of the second part.

That this defect may be amended, obtain for all parents, oh, Virgin Mother of God, and holy angels guardian, a powerful grace from God; so that none of them may hear the words: "Bind his hands,"¹ etc.

There is a duty imposed by God on all men, although it is often disregarded, and that is the duty of fraternal correction. By that every one is bound, under pain of sin, to restrain his neighbor from sin, or if the latter has already sinned, to warn him, and if he continues obstinate, to accuse him to others who will have more influence over him. This obligation binds him who prudently foresees that he will easily be able to restrain, reprove, or accuse his neighbor, so that his correction will benefit the latter. This is the teaching of all theologians, founded on the words of the Holy Ghost: "He gave to every one commandment concerning his neighbor,"² and on the express command of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of St. Matthew: "If thy brother shall offend against thee, go and rebuke him between thee and him

Every one is bound to fraternal correction.

¹ Ligatis manibus ejus, etc.

² Mandavit unicuique de proximo suo.—Ecc. xvii. 12.

alone.”¹ If he listens to you, you have saved your brother’s soul. If he despises your warning, take some one else with you as a witness, and repeat it. If you still find no trace of improvement—“And if he will not hear them, tell the Church”²—accuse him to his superiors. I have said elsewhere, when speaking of detraction, that it is not allowed to mention the secret sin of another in confession, if you can declare your own sin sufficiently otherwise. Yes, Christians, that is the case, and I repeat that it is not lawful to take away another’s good name, even in the confessional; yet it is one thing to make known the private crime of another to one who is no better for knowing it, except that he knows it, and who therefore should be left in ignorance of it, and another to declare even the unknown sin of another to one who can induce, or help the guilty person to amend; this is not merely lawful, but it is a duty that binds every one, under pain of sin. Thus a neighbor is bound to tell the parents of their son or daughter, and the master and mistress of their servants, if they see the latter committing any sin unknown to the former. Thus, also, every one who notices anything dangerous in a house, and who prudently hopes to make matters better, is bound to make known the circumstances to those who are able to remove the danger. This is required by the law of Christian charity and fraternal correction, so that sins and offences against God may be prevented.

Much more
are parents
bound to
correct their
children,
when nec-
essary.

Why do I say all this, my dear brethren? In order that all Christian parents may learn therefrom what a great obligation is imposed on them by God, to punish their children in a parental manner, and to chastise them if they commit a fault, or do anything wrong; for if every man, if even strangers, who have nothing to do with your children, except that they are their neighbors, are bound to correct them when necessary, I repeat with St. John Chrysostom: How much greater and stricter is the obligation of the father³ and mother in such a case, since they have given life to their children and are bound to keep them from evil, and to lead them on to virtue and to Heaven? And there can be less doubt about this, since God has given parents such great authority over their children, and has inspired children with such great reverence and respect for their parents. A father or mother who admonishes a child seriously, or speaks a word

¹ Si peccaverit in te frater tuus, vade et corripe eum inter te et ipsum solum.—*Matth.* xviii. 15.

² Quodsi non audierit eos, dic Ecclesie.—*Ibid.* 17.

³ Quanto magis pater ergo, qui genuit.

of warning, or gives it a single threatening look, can do more to correct it, than any one else could by beating it. Without your correction and chastisement, oh, parents, there is no use in anything that others may do. What good can school-masters and teachers do your children, if you tolerate in the latter what ought to be punished? How can the catechist, the preacher, or the confessor induce them to amend their vicious lives, if you allow them to act as they please when they are not in Church, at the sermon, or in the confessional, and if, after you have noticed a few times that they are given to certain faults, you do not earnestly admonish and chastise them? No, it is all useless; you will never rear good children, no matter how much you preach to and instruct them, no matter how watchful you are over their conduct, unless you punish and chastise, in a parental manner, their faults and vices.

Such is the case, Christian parents. If you wish to perform the duty of rearing your children properly, you must not spare the rod of chastisement, when it is useful and necessary, as the Wise Ecclesiasticus says. Hear the warning he gives, which, since it comes immediately from the Holy Ghost Himself, should have much more effect upon you than any words of mine: "He that loveth his son, frequently chastiseth him"—thus the 30th chapter begins—"that he may rejoice in his latter end, and not grope after the doors of his neighbors. A horse not broken becometh stubborn, and a child left to himself will become headstrong. Give thy son his way, and he shall make thee afraid; play with him and he shall make thee sorrowful. Laugh not with him, lest thou have sorrow, and at the last thy teeth be set on edge. Give him not liberty in his youth, and wink not at his devices. Bow down his neck while he is young, and beat his sides while he is a child, lest he grow stubborn and regard thee not, and so be a sorrow of heart to thee." Fathers and mothers, mark these words of the Holy Ghost; learn from them how earnestly you must correct and chastise your children, from their earliest years, and that you must not spare the rod on your sons and daughters while they are young, if you wish to be saved from the necessity of applying it to them when they are grown up. In

As God expects them to do.

¹ Qui diligit filium suum, assidue illi flagella, ut lætetur in novissimo suo et non palpet proximorum ostia. Equus indomitus evadit durus, et filius remissus evadet præceps. Lacta filium, et paventem te faciet; lude cum eo, et conturbabit te. Non corrideas illi, ne doleas et in novissimo obstupescant dentes tui. Non des illi potestatem in juventute, et ne despicias cogitatus illius. Curva cervicem ejus in juventute, et tunde latera ejus, cum infans est, ne forte induret, et non credat tibi, et erit tibi dolor animæ.—EccI. xxx. 1, 8-12.

their childhood you must not allow the least sign of anger, vindictiveness, untruthfulness, disobedience, frivolity, or vanity to go unpunished, so that these weeds may not take deeper root, and become more difficult to pull up afterwards. There is no doubt that it is indispensably necessary for parents to correct and chastise the faults and misdeeds of their children; and if this were done by all fathers and mothers in a proper manner, the morals and lives of Christians would be far better than they now are; but herein lies the great fault of many parents, as we shall see in the

Second Part.

They fah
herein who
are afraid to
say a cross
word to
their chil-
dren.

The natural love for very young children is so inordinate and foolish with many mothers and, what is still more surprising, with many fathers, that they fear to distress their children by saying a single cross word to them. They give them everything they ask for; they fulfil their every desire as quickly as possible, so as to avoid the grief and sorrow that the tears of their children would cause them. They are children, they say, we must have patience a little longer. And when the little ones notice that, they soon become lords and masters over their own parents, and the latter must obey their every command and slightest wish, like most dutiful servants; for they know how to use the weapons that they have already found to be so powerful, that is, their tears. I have occasionally seen families in which this was the case, and I have secretly pitied the poor parents, who were ruled over by their little sons or daughters to such an extent, that they had to make children of themselves, and were obliged to run up and down and play about with the little one for half the day. If the father said one thing, the child asserted the contrary; if the mother said yes, the child said no; if it did not at once get what it wished for, it began to cry, so that father and mother were quite ready to obey it and do its will. Even then they had a great deal of trouble to make the wilful child satisfied and contented. Oh, thought I to myself, what would I do, if I had to submit to that slavery? If I had charge of that child, I would go quite another way to work with it, and would soon make it submit, and do my will.

By which
children are
spotted.

Is that the way to love children and bring them up in a Christian manner? Does it not rather tend to make them stubborn, impudent, obstinate, wilful, and disobedient, and in such a way

that it will be impossible afterwards to correct them of those faults? And what are you doing by this over-indulgence, but cutting a rod to beat yourselves? For you are rearing up a disobedient son, a wilful daughter, who will afterwards occasion you much grief and anxiety. Hence, the Holy Ghost says, as we have seen already: "Give thy son his way, and he shall make thee afraid," when he grows up; "play with him, and he will make thee sorrowful,"¹ and turn thy laughter into tears. The Wise Solomon says in the Book of Proverbs: "The child that is left to his own will bringeth his mother to shame."² Formerly, as St. Jerome writes, children, as soon as they were born, were sprinkled with salt, that their limbs might grow strong and vigorous. In our days, so to speak, the children are sprinkled with honey and sugar. What wonder is it, then, that they afterwards occasion their parents so much trouble and grief? How many parents there are who now experience the truth of that, in the torment that they have with their children, because they did not punish and chastise them in their youth! If they had done so, the children would now be obedient and respectful to them. As it is, the poor parents come weeping and complaining; but to what purpose? They may thank themselves for the troubles they have. It is too late to do anything now. The tree has grown up crooked, and cannot be straightened.

The Wise Ecclesiasticus says: "Beat his sides while he is a child,"³ and still in the cradle. The rod must be used whenever he refuses to obey his father or mother, because young children especially have not a due sense of reverence, and can be kept in restraint only by fear. In that way you will make a deep impression on his imagination, so that he will know that there is a beating in store for him whenever he does wrong. But the poor, dear child commences to cry so pitifully when he feels the rod! Quite right, let him feel it; such tears are the best and most salutary food he could have; for corporal food preserves only the mortal body, while due chastisement saves the immortal soul. If that same child were suffering from some illness, and had to take a bitter medicine, would you send away the doctor, because the child makes a wry face and cries when he sees him? On the contrary, you compel the child to take

The rod must not be spared with young children.

¹ *Lacta filium et parentem te faciet; iude cum eo, et contristabit te.*

² *Puer, qui dimittitur voluntati suæ, confundit matrem suam.—Prov. xxix. 15.*

³ *Tunde latera ejus, dum infans est.*

the medicine, no matter how bitter it is. But he cries. That is nothing, you say; better for him to cry and get well again, than to laugh and die. And you are quite right! But is his soul of less importance? To save it, you must often employ the bitter medicine of chastisement, and would you allow the child's tears to prevent you from using it, and thus destroy his precious soul?

Others fall herein who reprove merely, and do not punish their children.

Again, parents sin by the same foolish love—or shall we rather call it hatred and anger—towards their children, when they correct their grown-up sons and daughters, in the way in which the high-priest Heli corrected his children; that is, by mere words. They curse and swear, and threaten all sorts of things to their children, but never fulfil their threats, because they are afraid to cause pain to their dear son or daughter; and yet they know by experience that their threats have not the least effect. What an unchristian and foolish love that is!

Explained by a simile.

Father, mother, I will borrow a simile from St. John Chrysostom: Imagine that you are walking with your child along the river. The child goes a few paces away from you and falls into the deep water. What will you do? Will you stretch out your hand to save him from being drowned? Who could doubt it? You would do that even at the risk of your own life. But the child is already nearly under the water, and you must catch him by the hair to pull him up. Will you do that? Or will you rather say: Oh, I cannot bear to pull my darling child by the hair; it would hurt him too much; I could never bring myself to do it! Oh, foolish parents, will you then look on while your child is drowning, and not try to save him? My opinion is that if it were necessary to pull one of his arms off to save his life, in such a case, you would not hesitate to do it.

How foolish such parents are.

Now, father, pay attention. You hear from well-meaning friends, you see and know yourself that your son plays truant from school and Church, and spends his time running about the streets with bad boys; that he can curse and swear, and gamble, and drink; that he does not go to catechism or sermon on Sundays and holy-days; that he never says his morning and evening prayers. Ah, your son is in great danger! Help him at once, or he will be lost forever! Mother, if you see that your daughter is too vain and frivolous in her behavior; that she is too free in company; that she idles about the house, and sometimes in the street; that she is not restrained enough in the company of some friend or neighbor of the opposite sex; that

she laughs and jokes with him alone in the garden, or at the house door late at night,—then is the time to help your child, for she will otherwise be ruined. Now what will you do in such circumstances? I am speaking now to father and mother. What will you do, I ask? You may stretch out your hand to save your child, that is, you venture on a mild expostulation, as Heli did: “Why do ye these kind of things which I hear, very wicked things, from all the people? Do not so, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear.”¹ In the same way you say to your children: My son, that is not right; my daughter, that is not becoming; you must not do that! Well-reared daughters must stay at home, and employ themselves in some suitable work. Have you not heard what was said in the sermon, that children who act as you do, are in danger of losing their souls? Girls who act in such a manner will never get good husbands, etc. But what is the use of all that talk? It will not save your children from the danger in which they are. They are sinking deeper and deeper: you must exert yourself to more purpose, and stretch forth your arm to help them; that is to say, you put on an angry countenance and threaten them, saying: Take care, if you do not amend I will punish you severely; I have a rod in pickle for you, etc. But these threats are of no use either. They frighten only for the moment; the children are used to them, and they know that they are only harmless thunderstorms, without lightning. They appear to tremble, but in reality they are laughing at you in their sleeve, and they think: Oh, I have heard that often enough! Thus they are on the point of sinking altogether; you must pull them out by the hair; that is, you must chastise them seriously and in a parental manner, until they show signs of improvement, not merely in words, but in deeds. But, alas, the mother says, and sometimes the father, too, although he should have more sense, I cannot bear to beat the darling child! Children must not be ruled with the rod! No? then the darling child must go to ruin, while you, father and mother, look on, and prefer to see your son or daughter howling amongst the demons forever, rather than cause them to shed a few tears here on earth by your parental chastisement! Do you think your children will thank you hereafter for such a foolish love? How could they?

Still more foolish are they who not only refuse to punish their

The worst
fault is that

¹ Quare facitis res hujusmodi, quas ego audio, res pessimas, ah omni populo? Nolite, fili mei; non enim est bona fama, quam ego audio.—I. Kings ii. 23, 24.

of those who
cannot bear
to see their
children
punished by
others.

children when the latter do amiss, but even do not permit other well-meaning persons to perform this duty. Sometimes a child is punished in school for a fault; it knows that the punishment was deserved, and is very careful not to say a word to father or mother about the matter. But if the parents hear of the punishment, what a noise they make! They call the teacher an unmannerly, coarse, and savage person, instead of thanking him for what he has done. And that, sometimes, even in presence of the children, although the latter would otherwise bear their punishment patiently enough. A fine way that to rear children! Sometimes a neighbor comes with the best possible intentions, and says to the father or mother, as he is in duty bound: I have heard so and so of your son, or daughter; I myself have seen them act in such and such a way; I thought it right to tell you, that you may correct them in time, etc. Whereupon the parents get quite angry, and say: It is not true; it is false; mind your own children and leave me to manage mine. So that they do not wish to hear anything of the bad conduct of their children, or pretend not to know anything of it, that they may not be forced to punish them. A fine way, indeed, of rearing children! What can be the end of such children?

Blindness of
parents
when one
prevents the
other from
punishing
the chil-
dren.

Sometimes a sensible father wishes to do his duty in this particular, when the mother rushes up, crying and screaming: You murderer, do you want to kill the child? Or, on the other hand, as is also frequently the case, a pious mother is determined to administer due punishment to her child, but she is prevented by the foolish father. Thus the children have a protector, to whom they know they can fly for refuge, when they have done wrong, and of course they trouble themselves little about the faults they commit, or about the threats of punishment they hear. I have known children who dared to say to their mother, who was about to punish them: "Wait till my father comes home; I will tell him, and then you must look out." Ah, blind parents, is that the way you love your children? Do you not see that such apparent mildness and mercy is, in reality, the greatest cruelty that you could practise towards them? You are like the apes that press their young to death through sheer love. You drive your unfortunate children to a still more terrible death, that of their immortal souls, by your false love, since you do not punish them when you ought.

They thus
occasion the

You, parents, who are in any way wanting in this duty, hear what the holy Pope, St. Gregory, relates of his own experience

with a child five years old. Lest I should appear to exaggerate, I give you his own words: "Although it is reasonable to believe that all children who are duly baptised and die in childhood go to Heaven, yet it is not an infallible truth that each and every little one who can speak, goes to Heaven after death; for their parents, by not bringing them up properly, close Heaven against them. A certain man, who was well known in this city, had, three years ago, a little son, who seemed to me to be about five years old. The man had an inordinate love for this child, and was much too indulgent to him, and, terrible to relate, the little boy used to blaspheme the divine majesty when anything displeased him. Three years ago this child fell mortally ill, and (as is attested by eye-witnesses), while he was reclining in his father's arms, he saw, to his dismay, the evil spirits approach him: "Help, father, help!"¹ he cried out in a loud voice, and hid his face in his father's bosom, so as to avoid the dreadful sight. The father asked him what was the matter, and he answered: There are black men coming to take me away; whereupon he again blasphemed God, and died. Thus the Almighty God, for some reason or other, allowed those robbers to take away the soul of that child, that in his last moments he might show that on account of not being duly chastised by his father, he died blaspheming God, in the actual commission of the sin that the divine patience had so long borne with. So that the father might see how guilty he was in neglecting the soul of his little son, and thus rearing up a great sinner for hell-fire."² Such are the words of St. Gregory, in the 4th Book of his Dialogues, chapter 18th. My God, according to the opinion of such a holy man, a child of five years was dragged down to hell by demons! What will then become of those grown-up sons and daughters, who commit many sins through habit, because their parents do not chastise them? Is it not punishment enough for you, oh, parents, that by your foolish love, or rather senseless cruelty, you condemn your own flesh and blood to the eternal flames of hell?

loss of their children's souls. Shown by a simile.

Ah, blind parents, I repeat, what a strict account you will one day have to give in your own persons for the many sins that your children committed and did not repent of, because you did not chastise them properly! And what a terrible punishment you have to expect from the divine anger! You have often heard of

These parents will be severely punished by God. Proved from Scripture.

¹ *Obsta pater! obsta.*

² *Quatenus reatum suum pater ejus agnosceret, qui parvuli filii animam negligens, non parvulum peccatorem gehennæ ignibus nutrisset.*

the high-priest Heli, and how God was so wroth with him, that He took away the priestly dignity from him and his children forever, and deprived them of life as well. "Behold I do a thing in Israel," said the angry God to Samuel; "and whosoever shall hear it, both his ears shall tingle. In that day I will raise up against Heli all the things I have spoken concerning his house; I will begin and I will make an end. For I have foretold unto him, that I will judge his house forever, for iniquity."¹ Nay, some of the holy Fathers, and amongst them St. John Chrysostom, are of the opinion that Heli and his sons are lost forever. Why did God judge them so severely? He tells us Himself: "Therefore have I sworn to the house of Heli, that the iniquity of his house shall not be expiated with victims nor offerings forever."² Terrible words! And woe to King David, inasmuch as he did not punish the crime of Amnon, nor chastise Absalom for the murder of his brother. If he had done his duty, he need not have suffered so much, nor shed so many bitter tears afterwards! Still greater woe to those careless parents, who allow too much liberty to their children, and do not punish them when they deserve it; and yet refuse to repent of their negligence, because their foolish love blinds them, and they do not consider that negligence sinful!

Conclusion
and exhortation
to children to
thank their
parents for
chastisement.

In conclusion, I turn to you, children. You will henceforth have no very good opinion of me. You will say that I have taken your part very badly to-day, for I know well that you do not like to hear anything of beatings and punishment. The rod is an ugly thing that you would rather see in the fire, than in the hands of your parents. Yet, you may believe me when I say that there could be nothing better for you than the subject of to-day's sermon, and you will one day thank me for having spoken to your parents, apparently against, but really for your advantage. If your father and mother are too indulgent to you, so that you are thus led into evil ways, you will one day (and let this be a conclusion for parents, too,) be the first to utter complaints against them, and your complaints will be eternal. Such was the complaint of St. Augustine against his father: "The thorns of lust," he says, "were growing over my head, and there was no one to

¹ Ecce ego facio verbum in Israel, quod quicumque audierit, tinnient ambæ aures ejus. In die illa suscitabo adversum Heli omnia, quæ locutus sum super domum ejus, incipiam et complebo. Prædixi enim ei, quod judicaturus essem domum ejus in æternum propter iniquitatem.—1. Kings iii. 11, 12, 13.

² Idcirco juravi domui Heli, quod non expietur iniquitas domus ejus victimis et muneribus usque in æternum.—Ibid. 14.

pull them up.”¹ In the same way, too, the malefactor condemned to the gallows, of whom Gerson writes, was wroth with his parents. He asked to speak to his father before suffering the last penalty, and when the latter came up to him, he leaned forward under the pretence of embracing him, and bit off his nose, saying at the same time, in a loud voice: “If you had chastised me better when I was young, I should not be here, now.” And what will you say, children, if through want of chastisement, you grow up wicked, and lose your souls? That you may not then have to complain fruitlessly, do not complain now; but be glad and thank your parents when they chastise you, in a parental manner, for the faults you commit. Kiss the rod as a token of submission and gratitude to your parents for the great benefit they have thereby conferred on you, so that you may rejoice with them in Heaven for all eternity. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost :

Text.

Et factum est, dum irent, mundati sunt.—Luke xvii. 14.

“And it came to pass, as they went, they were made clean.”

What the lepers said to Jesus Christ: “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us,”² might be said to their parents by many children, who are suffering from spiritual leprosy, through want of proper training, if they only understood their condition, and loved their souls. Father, mother, have mercy on us! Teach us how to fear and love God. Father, mother, have mercy on us! Be watchful over our actions, so that we may not be lost. These two conditions, as we have seen, my dear brethren, are necessary to a Christian training, namely, to speak right, so as to teach the children what is good, and to see right, so as to keep a watchful eye upon their actions. Now, the Gospel of to-day says of the lepers: “And it came to pass, as they went, they were made clean.”³ Where were they going? To the priests, as Christ had commanded them. The priests of the Old Law used to lay their hands on lepers, and pronounce them free from leprosy. See, Christian parents, what is still required for the proper training of your children, if they are to be cleansed from sins and faults, or to be preserved from them—*continues as before.*

¹ Ascendebant vepres libidinis super caput meum. . . et non erat manus eradicans, etc.

² Jesu, princeps, miserere nostri. —Luke xvii. 13.

³ Et factum est, dum irent, mundati sunt.

FORTY-FOURTH SERMON.**ON THE PATERNAL CHASTISEMENT OF CHILDREN.**

Subject.

This chastisement must be inflicted: 1st. With a good intention for a proper end. 2d. With discretion and parental love.—*Preached on the twentieth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Domine, descende prius quam moriatur filius meus.—John iv. 49.
“Lord, come down before that my son die.”

Introduction.

That father was careful of his son's life! After having tried every means in vain, he at length ventured to ask Jesus Christ to heal his son by a miracle. Our Lord did not at once answer the father's petition, but commenced to speak of other matters, namely, of the people's want of faith: “Unless you see signs and wonders, you believe not.”¹ But the father, uneasy about his son, interrupted our Lord at once, and said: “Lord, come down before that my son die.” As if he meant: this is not the time for talk, but for action: Quick Lord; help my son, or he will die! “Come down.”² So much concerned, my dear brethren, was this father for the temporal life of his son. Perhaps if the latter had been in danger of eternal death, his father would not have been so uneasy. Oh, how many parents there are in our days who trouble themselves very little about that danger! If their children are suffering from bodily illness, and are in danger of death, how the parents weep and lament! Every means is tried to save the beloved child's life, and to restore it to health; but if the soul is sick and dead through sin, hardly any one is concerned about it; although that spiritual illness and death are manifest enough, so that there can be no doubt in the case, there is no one to lend a helping hand. I have shown on last Sunday, that to train children properly and to keep them from sin, or to make them repent of sin committed, and consequently to preserve the life of

¹ Nisi signa et prodigia videritis, non creditis.—John iv. 48.

² Descende.

their souls, their faults and feelings must be chastised and punished; and at the same time, I complained of the great negligence of so many parents, who, through foolish love, and the fear of causing their children pain, give way to them in everything, like the apes that are so fond of their young that they press them to death with their embraces. There is still another point to be observed in connection with this duty, and that is, how chastisement is to be inflicted so that the children may be made better thereby, and be brought to eternal life. Many parents punish their children, when the latter commit a fault, but they do not do it properly, and therefore do more harm than good to the souls of their children. How that chastisement must be inflicted I will tell you in this instruction.

Plan of Discourse.

This chastisement must be inflicted with a good intention for the proper end. The first part. With moderation and parental love. The second part.

Neither of these two is observed by every one. That both may henceforth be observed by all, we ask of God through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and the holy angels guardian.

“Do all to the glory of God,”¹ is the exhortation the Apostle St. Paul gives us. All, he says, without exception. “Whether you eat or drink,” or wake or sleep, or labor or rest, are sorrowful or cheerful, or “whatsoever else you do,” great or small, “do all to the glory of God.”² So that in all those things, and by all our thoughts, words, and deeds, we can merit Heaven, if we only do them with a good intention for a supernatural end. What a happiness for us, oh, God of goodness, that we can so easily, and even by means of works that appear most despicable, gain eternal joys and increase them the whole day long! And how deplorable the condition of most men in the world, even of those who otherwise lead good lives, since they hardly ever think of this good intention during the day, and thus lose countless eternities of heavenly joys, so to speak, in a single week, which they will never have another chance of regaining! But I must not waste my time in such lamentations now.

Everything must be done for a good end, the honor and glory of God.

¹ Omnia in gloriam Dei facite.

² Sive manducatis, sive bibitis, sive aliud quid facitis, omnia in gloriam Dei facite.—I. Cor.

Hence, too,
the correc-
tion of chil-
dren.

Everything must be done for the honor and glory of God, Christian parents, and consequently and especially the chastisement and correction of your children, when it is necessary, must be directed to the glory of God as to its proper end. You must have no intention, when inflicting it, but to amend your children's way of life, keep them from sin, and lead them on to good, even by violent means. Oh, if this were the only thing that sets in motion the reproofing tongue, or chastising hand of a father or mother, there would not be so many great faults committed by parents in this particular, to the great detriment of their children !

Those par-
ents err
who punish
according to
their humor.

That end is altogether disregarded, first by those parents who inflict punishment according to the humor they are in. If they are in a bad humor, if they are annoyed and put out about something, oh, then the children had better keep out of their way, for if the least thing goes wrong, they beat them unmercifully, and do not always distinguish between the innocent and the guilty. If they are in a good humor, they are ready to overlook any number of faults and short-comings, although they may be committed before their very eyes. That is not the way to inflict punishment for the glory of God, because God has commanded it, and the salvation of the children requires it. It is inflicting punishment because the father or mother is out of temper. What good will that do the children, and how can they help it, if their parents are in an ill-humor ? Why, then, should they be made to pay for that ill-humor by blows ?

Who only
punish
faults that
make them
angry.

Those parents also fail in this point, who use the rod only when the children are guilty of a fault that vexes the father or mother, while they allow serious faults to remain unpunished because they are not angry, nor displeased, nor hurt by them. For instance, a wilful child breaks a glass through love of mischief, the father or mother immediately beats the child severely. And quite deservedly, too. But on another occasion the same child curses, or swears, or uses indecent language, by which God alone is offended. That is another thing altogether ; it is passed over unnoticed, or at most a half threat is uttered to deter the child from such expressions. So that the punishment was not inflicted for the proper end in the first case, nor because God was angry at the fault committed, but solely because the parents were vexed at the loss they sustained.

Who caress
their chil-
dren im-

Thirdly, those parents do not punish as they ought, who beat their children in anger, when the latter deserve it, but immedi-

ately afterwards commence to caress and talk kindly to them, to show that they are sorry and wish to be forgiven. That is clear proof that neither the amendment of the fault, nor the glory of God, was the reason why they inflicted the punishment, but simply a desire of giving vent to their anger. Such chastisement is neither parental, nor salutary; it should be earnest and serious, so that the children may learn by experience that every fault they commit will be punished, and may see by the continued displeasure of their parents how great the wrong is that they have committed.

Fourthly, there are parents who make a difference between their children when punishing them, and who thereby commit a grievous error. For instance, there are in the same family two boys and two girls. One son and one daughter are never looked upon as guilty by their parents, while the other two are never able to please them; so that whatever happens, the first two are never wrong, and the others never right. Every venial sin of the latter is magnified into a mortal sin, while if the former commit a fault that ought to be punished, the father and mother only laugh, and are amused at it. But if the latter are guilty of the same fault, their parents have only sour looks, and cross words, and even blows for them. Why is that? What is the cause of this different treatment? The fault is the same in both cases, and deserves the same punishment, in order to be corrected. Yes, that is true, but the one son and daughter are their parents' favorites, or their grandmother's pets (as if the others were not their children also!). They must not be beaten, nor spoken crossly to; that would cause too much sorrow to the father, or mother, or grandmother! The others, who are sometimes more beloved by God, "have not yet found favor"¹ with their parents, either because they are not so beautiful and clever as the former, or because they are a little stupid and backward, or suffer from some other natural defect, for which they are not to be blamed, as it is inborn in them; therefore, they get all the beatings and cannot stir in the house, while the favorites may do as they please. What an injustice, what a wrong, oh, parents! Is that the way to punish children with a good intention, for the glory of God, and for their last end, and to correct their faults? For the blind love for some causes their faults to be overlooked, while the same faults in the others are punished.

mediately
after pun-
ishing them.

Who make
a differ-
ence be-
tween their
children,
when pun-
ishing them.

Hence
comes great
misery.

¹ Non invenerunt gratiam.

that a great deal of misery will be the result of treating children so differently. In the first place, the punishment that you inflict on the child whom you care less for, can do it little good, and will only serve to embitter and render it desperate. For it is quite able to see that the punishment does not come from parental affection and love, but from hatred and dislike. In the second place, a necessary consequence of this favoritism is envy, discord, and enmity between brothers and sisters, which sinks deep into the tender minds of children, and remains with them their whole lifetime. The Sacred Scripture says of the Patriarch Jacob: "Now Israel loved Joseph above all his sons." And what was the consequence? Nothing but bitterness, envy, and vindictiveness amongst the brothers of Joseph, which they made him feel. "They could not speak peaceably to him." They wished to kill him: "Behold the dreamer cometh; come, let us kill him." They cast him into a deep pit, to let him die of hunger, but when the Ishmaelite merchants passed by, they sold him as a slave into a distant land, and caused his father great sorrow. St. Ambrose, commenting on this passage, reproves Jacob, and gives a salutary warning to all parents: Jacob loved Joseph most, he says, and he had cause enough for this preference, because Joseph was more worthy of love, and more apt to win over his father's heart, than his brethren. He was wiser and more clever, more obedient to his father, and more pious and devout towards God, than the others, and besides that, Jacob, like all old people, was most inclined to love the son of his old age. But he was wrong in showing that outwardly, for he should not have given cause for discord and envy amongst his children: "From this example all parents should learn," continues St. Ambrose, that although one child is more beautiful or clever, or better mannered than another, although he knows better how to please and flatter his father or mother, and therefore the latter are naturally more inclined to love him, yet they must not give the least outward sign of this inclination. The same faults must be punished in the same manner, without any distinction; all the children must be treated with the same affection and the same severity, if their good or ill-conduct is alike, nor is there any other way of making punishment profitable to them.

¹ Israel autem diligebat Joseph super omnes filios suos.—Gen. xxxvii. 3.

² Nec poterant ei quidquam pacifice loqui.—Ibid. 4.

³ Ecce somniator venit; venite occidamus eum.—Ibid. 19, 20.

⁴ Hoc exemplo docentur parentes.

Finally, they do not punish their children with a proper motive, who in place of chastisement, or while administering it, give way to cursing, swearing, or abusive language against their children. Is that a Christian, or a parental way of punishing a child? Can that be for the glory of God, since God is offended and His commandment is broken in the very act? Can there be any assistance to amendment, to avoid sin, or to practise virtue, in a chastisement which teaches children wickedness, and induces them to follow their parents' bad example? so that they, too, curse and swear, and often (since the cursing of parents has a powerful influence on the children, as I shall show hereafter more fully, and as experience proves) are given up to the devil, and to all sorts of misfortunes, God so permitting it. Is that chastisement salutary, and apt to make children more obedient and respectful to their parents, and more ready to follow their advice in future, by which children lose all respect and esteem for their parents, and have not only a bad opinion of them, but even hate and detest them on account of their horrible habit of cursing? Of such parents we may say with truth what the impious Jews falsely said of Christ through hatred and envy: "By the prince of devils, He casteth out devils."¹ They, too, wish to cast out devils from their children by invoking the prince of darkness. No; all such chastisements are not administered for a good end, and therefore they cannot help either the parents to merit, or the children to amend. But in addition to the proper end it must have, chastisement must also be inflicted with discretion and parental love, if it is to do any good, as we shall see in the

Who curse and abuse while punishing.

Second Part.

If ever a professional man is obliged to use great discretion and reflection in the actual exercise of his art, certainly it is a doctor who prescribes and administers medicines. For, in the first place, they who prescribe a great deal of medicines, and are always trying on something new with the sick person, are not the best doctors; but rather they who are able to cure the disease by a few simple and effective remedies: for too much medicine, although it may overcome the sickness, ruins the stomach, and occasions a loss of strength, so that the sick person requires a long time to recover after having taken it. In the second place, if a doctor

A doctor must use great discretion in prescribing medicines.

¹ In principe dæmoniorum eicit dæmonia.—Luke xi. 15.

gave the same medicine to all his patients, although they may be suffering from the same fever, and the medicine may be good against that fever, he would act very imprudently and indiscreetly. Because, though the patients have all the same disease, yet some have it worse than others, and besides, the constitutions of people differ very much, some being naturally stronger than others. Thus the same medicine given in like quantity, would be too weak for some people and too strong for others, and therefore it would not help, but rather injure them. Hence an experienced doctor endeavors, first of all, to find out the constitution of his patient, and then prescribes according to that. In the third place, painful remedies, such as burning, cutting, amputating, and the like, are seldom used, and only when all other means have proved ineffectual. Even at the commencement of the malady, when it is not sufficiently developed, clever doctors use only domestic medicines, as they are called, and they are often better than others. It is only when such medicines fail to produce an effect that they send to the apothecary. Besides all this, the proper time must be observed at which to administer the medicine. If the fever is at its height, the medicine will produce no effect, it should not be given until the paroxysm is passed. Cornelius Celsus says, writing of the cure of diseases: "It would kill a sick person to bleed him in the height of the fever; that must not be done until the fever has somewhat abated."¹

So also parents when chastising children.

See there, Christian parents, an example of the discretion you must use in chastising your children! The faults that your sons and daughters commit are the maladies of their souls, which if not cured in time will cause them eternal death. You are the physicians of their souls. God has intrusted you with that office, and the medicine you have to administer is parental correction and chastisement.

Continual punishment does little good.

And, in the first place, just as too much medicine often does more harm than good, so those parents do not correct their children properly who always cuff or beat them, or pull their ears for the least fault, and who never overlook anything, but punish the slightest mistakes even more severely than they do serious ones. The children are not improved by that; on the contrary, they become dulled and callous, so that they do not feel the punishment; like an old horse that is so accustomed to bit and spur, that neither has any effect on him in the end. The celebrated horse, Bucephalus, as Curtius writes, after having been

¹ In ipso impetu febris sanguinem emittere, hominem jugulare est; expectanda remissio.

severely beaten, became so unmanageable that no one could ride him. Alexander the Great was grieved to see such a fine animal spoiled, and seizing him by the bridle, he commenced to pat and caress him, and speak to him in a friendly tone. He thereby tamed the horse so completely that the formerly ungovernable animal would kneel down to allow his rider to mount him. In the same way the correction of children does not always consist in beating and striking them, especially when such punishment is inflicted too frequently. Parental chastisement is a medicine that must be given at a suitable time, and it must not be used as daily food. Sometimes, especially when a fault is committed for the first time, a cross look, at other times a serious threat, has more effect than any amount of beating, in making children amend their shortcomings.

Again, just as a skilful and prudent doctor studies the constitution of his patients, so also parents must always take into account the characters of the children whom they are about to punish. When they are still very young, and have not come to the full use of reason, they require far different treatment from that which would suit them when they are more advanced in years. Little children must be governed by fear, and therefore, if they do anything wrong, they must be made to feel the rod. But with grown-up children this means is not always salutary. Some are naturally retiring, bashful, and modest, and if they were beaten only once, they would lose their bashfulness altogether. Others are vain-glorious and boastful, and for them there can be no better punishment than to humiliate them by laughing at, or ridiculing them in presence of their brothers and sisters. Prudent parents will find opportunities enough of doing this. Others know how to flatter and fawn on their parents, so as to gain their favor. For these the hardest punishment would be to remain unnoticed by their parents for a time, when they commit a fault, not to be spoken to, to be looked at sternly, or to be treated with indifference. Others, again, feel most severely being deprived of some food or drink that they are very fond of, or being left out when presents are given to other children. These and similar punishments may be used by prudent parents, according to the different characters of their children, and always with reference to the eternal salvation of the latter. With grown-up children, generally speaking, the rod should be the last resource, just as burning and cutting are the last resources with sick people, and should not be used until all other means have failed. But when

The punishment must be suited to the child's character.

it is used, it should be done in earnest, so that a second application may not be necessary.

Always
with paren-
tal affec-
tion.

Yet it must always be done with due regard for parental affection. Hence, those stern fathers are wrong who make their poor children tremble and fly before them, as if they had seen a wild beast. Of such parents the Wise Man says: "Be not as a lion in thy house, terrifying them of thy household."¹ No; children should have a childlike, and not a servile fear of their parents. They must be corrected and punished, certainly, but in the same way in which the heavenly Father corrects His elect children: He sends them many trials and crosses during their lives, but only because He loves them, and because He wishes them thereby to atone for their past sins, to be freed from vicious inclinations, or to be strengthened in virtue, and thus to acquire greater merit for themselves and greater glory in Heaven. With the same parental affection should the rod be used on children, with the sole purpose of punishing their faults and vices. St. Augustine says: "He who says sinful man, speaks of two different things; punish him, therefore, because he is sinful, but have mercy on him because he is a man."²

And there-
fore never
in anger.

Therefore it is advisable for parents never to punish their children immediately after a fault, and while they still feel angry. They should wait till their anger is over, although they might then be obliged to defer the punishment for a whole week, provided, that is to say, that the child has been admonished of his fault. For instance, you might say to him: You see now what you have done; you must not expect to get off without punishment. And believe me that such a mode of chastisement is best for the children, and makes far more impression on them, than if they were punished at once after a fault, for while they are waiting, they are apt to be far more careful, and more afraid of giving their parents displeasure, since the punishment is still hanging over their heads. I know myself from experience that school teachers have tried this plan and have found it so successful that after having kept the children in expectation of punishment for a fortnight after the fault was committed, they could afford to let them off altogether, because the latter were in such a state of suspense that they suffered more during that time than if they had actually been punished, and that they would have been quite pleased to have received due chastisement at once, so as to have it over. But

¹ Noli esse sicut leo in domo tua evertens domesticos tuos.—Ecc. iv. 35.

² Duo nomina sunt: homo peccator. . . . quia homo est miserere.

many parents say : I cannot punish my child unless I am angry. More is the pity ; for that is a sure sign that punishment is inflicted in anger, and not with parental affection. You must overcome yourself, although the tears are forced from you while correcting your child ; the punishment will then be all the more efficacious, because it will be in accordance with the command of St. Paul : “Bring up your children in the discipline and correction of the Lord.”¹ Mark the words, “in the correction of the Lord,” according to what the Prophet Habacuc says: “When thou art angry, thou wilt remember mercy.”² Chastisement of this kind convinces children that their parents really love them, and punish them only for their good.

And to you, Christian children, I must again speak, in conclusion. You must not think that the rod is an instrument of hatred and vengeance ; it is rather one of love, and is used to correct your faults or to prevent them, so that your parents may thus lead you to Heaven. If the young plants in a garden had sense and reason, they would not complain when the gardener comes with a knife to cut off their superfluous branches. On the contrary, they would say: Cut away everything that is useless and injurious to us, although you have to hurt and wound us thereby ; for we wish to be properly trimmed, so that we may adorn the garden and produce better fruit. Such should also be your sentiment, Christian children, when your father or mother takes the rod to punish you. You should think : I have deserved it ; it is good and useful for me to be thus corrected and purged of my evil habits. And therefore, according to the custom in Christian families, you should, as I have said before, kiss the rod in token of thankfulness, after having received your punishment. What you cannot or will not understand now, you will see clearly enough later on, and will say with grateful hearts: Oh, what a good father and mother I have had : they did not allow me to do wrong when I was young, and punished all my faults ! Oh, precious rod, you will exclaim, which has preserved me from sin, and brought me to repentance ! What better would I be now, if my parents had always flattered and caressed me, so that I should hereafter be obliged to do eternal penance for my sins in hell ? I must now cry out with David : Oh, Lord, “Thy rod and Thy staff,” which Thou hast placed in my parents’ hands, “they have comforted me.”³ Precious rod, thou art the key that openest

Exhortation
to children
to rejoice
when they
are chas-
tised.

¹ Educate filios vestros in disciplina et correptione Domini.—Ephes. vi. 4.

² Cum iratus fueris, misericordiae recordaberis.—Habac. iii. 2.

³ Virga tua et baculus tuus, ipsa me consolata sunt.—Ps. xlii. 4.

80 *Good Example Parents should Give Children.*

the gate of Heaven to me ! Blessed be the hand of my father, of my mother, which, next to God, I have to thank for eternal happiness ! With these sentiments, with this gratitude and desire of amendment, you, oh, children, must always submit to parental chastisement, and you, oh, parents, must always administer it with a good intention, out of sincere love, so that you may all be numbered, by your heavenly Father, amongst His elect children. Amen.

FORTY-FIFTH SERMON.

ON THE GOOD EXAMPLE THAT PARENTS SHOULD GIVE THEIR CHILDREN.

Subject.

The best and most necessary means to bring up children in a Christian manner, and to lead them to Heaven, is the pious life and good example of their parents.—*Preached on the twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Jussit eum dominus ejus venundari, et uxorem ejus, et filios, et omnia quæ habebat, et reddi.—Matth. xviii. 25.

“ His lord commanded that he should be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.”

Introduction.

But how could the poor children prevent their father from wasting his master's property, and not being able to pay his debts ? Why, then, were they to be sold as slaves, and to atone so severely for the fault of another ? Because the master probably thought that the children must be like their parents, and therefore would be just as extravagant with his money. Hence, he sentences them without mercy, and orders the man, and his wife and children, to be sold, that the debt may be paid. Christian parents, what will be the sentence of the heavenly Judge, when you shall one day appear before Him, to give an account of the property He intrusted to your care—I mean the souls of your children, which

He will demand, as a precious treasure, at your hands? Oh, woe to you, if by negligence in bringing up your children, you have squandered this treasure! Where will you find the means of paying your debt, and making good the loss of those souls? And what will be your fate? You have no other sentence to expect, but that which was passed on the servant in to-day's Gospel. You and your children will be condemned to eternal slavery; you, because you were the cause of your children's ruin; they, because they led bad lives, on account of the bad training they got from their parents, and after the example of the latter, incurred the debt of sin. Therefore, parents, I warn you again, to bring up your children well, and take care of their souls, that they may go to Heaven; as I have told you already several times. The means that you must use to that end are salutary instruction in good, constant watchfulness over all the actions of your children, and parental correction of their faults. I repeat it so often, that it may sink all the deeper into your minds, since the salvation of so many souls depends on it. We have still one point, and that the principal one, to consider, namely, the necessity of the parents living piously and giving good example to their children. This is the matter of to-day's instruction.

Plan of Discourse.

The best and most necessary means to bring up children in a Christian manner, and to lead them to Heaven, is the pious life and good example of their parents.

Christ Jesus, who hast taught Thy Apostles and many others to imitate Thee, give Thy grace to all parents, that they may henceforth give a good example to their children; and to the children, that they may imitate their parents. This we all beg of Thee, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the holy angels guardian, so that no family may hear the terrible sentence: "His Lord commanded that he should be sold," etc. ¹

According as the glass of a mirror is ground or colored, so does it reflect in different ways the image of him who looks at it. If the glass is green, the image is green; if it is red, so is the image; and if it is clear and spotless, it will represent the image faithfully. Some mirrors make little things appear great, others apparently diminish great objects. Some make everything seem distorted, others beautify things that are really ugly. The best are

According as a mirror is made or colored, so does it represent what it reflects.

¹ Jussit eum Dominus ejus venundari, etc.

those which truly reflect the spots and deformities on the face, so that they may be removed.

Monkeys imitate what they see others do.

Again, it is peculiar to monkeys to imitate whatever they see another doing, so that one must be very careful in the presence of such dangerous animals. *Ælianus* writes of a monkey that, according to a common custom, was allowed to go about the house at will. It one day saw how the mistress of the house undressed her little baby, bathed it in tepid water, and then wiped it dry again. Some time after, when the mother was away, and no one else was present, the monkey took the child out of the cradle, undressed it, and brought it into the kitchen, where there was a vessel full of boiling water, on the fire. He dipped the child into the water, and took it out again, as he had seen its mother do. He repeated the operation until the child was actually boiled to death, and in that state it was found by its mother. See what a great misfortune occurred, because the mother was so incautious as to allow the monkey to look on, while she was bathing her child, although she committed no crime, nor injustice thereby.

The life of the parents is the mirror of the lives of the children.

Christian parents, what is your life, your example, with regard to your children? It is a mirror that they look at daily, since they are always with you, and to it they conform their lives and actions. Yet there is this great difference: The mirror does not work any real change in the person who looks at it. The distortion, the red or green color, exists only in the glass; he who looks at it, remains as he was. And again, if the mirror is without fault, it reflects truly the faults or perfections of a person. The contrary is the case with the lives of parents. As a general rule, children who take notice of them, act well or ill, according to the example given them by the ordinary actions of their father and mother. "They become what they see,"¹ may with truth be affirmed of them, as the holy Fathers say of the angels and Saints in Heaven: The Seraphim see in God pure love, and therefore they, too, become burning with love. The Cherubim see clearest of all the knowledge and wisdom of God, and therefore they are all light and knowledge. Of all men who will have the happiness of enjoying God in Heaven, St. John the Evangelist says plainly enough: "Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God, and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like to Him; because we shall see Him as He is."² In the same way, almost, children will generally be what

¹ *Fiant quod vident.*

² *Charissimi, nunc filii Dei sumus, et nondum apparuit, quid erimus. Scimus quoniam cum apparuerit, similes ei erimus; quoniam videbimus eum sicuti est.—I. John III. 2.*

they see in their parents. If they see in them vanity, pride, avarice, impurity, vindictiveness, laziness, and sloth in the service of God, "they shall become what they see."¹ If they see in them Christian humility, modesty, meekness, chastity, the fear and love of God, zeal and piety, and a love of all virtue, "they shall become what they see." They will have the same inclinations and desires that they see reflected in those mirrors. The holy Bishop Salvianus has reason to say, in speaking of children: "Before they get possession of their parents' property, they have their parents themselves in their habits and manners."² They do not yet enjoy the wealth of their father and mother, but they have their piety or wickedness.

St. Paul says, writing to the Romans: "For if the first fruit be holy, so is the lump also; and if the root be holy, so are the branches."³ Of which Theodorus says: "As the lump must be like the first fruit, and the branches like the root, so must children be like their parents."⁴ Hence, just as bad yeast spoils the bread that is made with it, and as a rotten root infects the branch that grows from it, so it would be an unusual thing if wicked parents had not wicked children.

We read in the First Book of Kings that Saul was once amongst the prophets. "And all that had known him yesterday, and the day before, seeing that he was with the prophets and prophesied, said to each other: What is this that hath happened to the son of Cis? And one answered another saying: And who is his father?"⁵ As if they meant: We have never heard that his father could prophecy; how, then, can the son have such favor with God, that he is amongst the prophets? The same Saul, when he saw the youthful David fighting in single combat against the gigantic Philistine, and conquering him with a sling, could not but express his admiration at such great valor, and asked Abner, the captain of the army: "Of what family is this young man descended?" And again: "Inquire thou whose son this young man is." And at last Saul himself asked David: "Young man, of what family art thou?"⁶ My dear brethren, why was

Proved by other similes.

¹ Flunt quod vident.

² Priusquam in domino suo habere inclinant res paternas, habent in animis ipsos patres.

³ Quod si delibatio sancta est, et massa; et si radix sancta, et rami.—Rom. xi. 16.

⁴ Necessè est, fermento massam et radicè ramos assimilari; sic parentibus filios.

⁵ Videntes autem omnes, qui noverant eum heri et nudius tertius, quod esset cum prophetis, et prophetaret, dixerunt ad invicem: Quenam res accidit filio Cis? Responditque alius ad alterum dicens: et quis pater ejus?—1. Kings x. 11, 12.

⁶ De qua stirpe descendit hic adolescens? . . . Interroga tu, cujus filius sit iste puer? . . . De qua progenie es, o adolescens?—Ibid. xvii. 55, 56, 58.

84 *Good Example Parents should Give Children.*

Saul so anxious to know who was David's father? He had often seen him before, and had had him with himself. Because, as a learned writer says, he was fully persuaded that such heroic courage did not come from nature, but from the bravery of the young man's parents. For a close resemblance is, generally speaking, to be found between the conduct of parents and that of their children.

Children are like monkeys and imitate all they see in their parents.

Christian parents, what are your children like, especially when they are still young, and are living under your authority? They are like monkeys that imitate everything they see; like parrots, that repeat whatever they hear; like little birds, that sing whatever tune they are taught. Such is your daily experience with your own little daughters, who dress their dolls, and carry them about, and put them to sleep in the cradle; with your own little sons, who ride on a stick, etc. The former learn from their own mothers, or from the nurse, the latter from their fathers. Listen, now, to a far more terrible imitation than the one I told you already about the monkey.

Further explanation of the force of example, especially of that of parents with children.

The same Ælianus tells us that Macareus, a faithless and wicked man, prompted by avarice, cut the throat of a traveller while the latter was asleep, in order to get possession of his money, and this crime he committed in presence of his two sons, but without any scruple or anxiety on that account; for he thought to himself: They are too young and innocent, they do not understand what I am doing. But he was very much mistaken. A short time afterwards these two innocent little brothers were playing together. Come, said one to the other, let us do what father did lately to the strange man, when he rubbed the knife on his throat; you will be the man, said the elder, and I will be father. They both agreed, thinking there was nothing wrong. The younger child laid himself down on the bed, and in his childish way, pretended to be asleep; the other took up the very same knife that his father had used to commit the crime, and struck it with such force, although he knew not what he was doing, into his brother's neck, that the latter was killed on the spot. The mother, hearing the cries of her surviving son, as he saw his brother lying dead, came into the room, and in her frenzy, killed him too. The father, hearing of what had happened, killed his wife, and was himself caught by the authorities and executed. Christian parents, what do you think of this tragedy? You, I mean, in particular, who are not afraid nor ashamed to do and say in presence of your children things that they should never hear nor

see, and those things you do and say under the empty excuse that the children are still too young and innocent to understand them. Take a sensible view of the case. If the example of their father induced those children to do a thing that could give them no pleasure, and thus to commit a murder, which is apt to terrify and shock every one, how great must not the influence of the parents' example then be, in things that are pleasing and flattering to our corrupt nature, so that we are already inclined to them of our own accord, and drawn to them violently by a natural impulse ?

The proverb says, very truly, that the example of others, and what we see them do, impels us¹ with a gentle violence to imitate them, and that is the case in evil much more than in good things. Now, if it is true that we easily imitate what we see in others, even though they are strangers to us, how much more powerful will not the example of parents be with their own children, since God has given them such great authority and influence over the minds of the latter, that there is nothing like it in the world? "Father and mother," says the wise Philo, "are visible deities in the eyes of their children, who generally imagine that there can be no one better, or more excellent, than their parents. They sometimes hear of kings and rulers, but do not think as much of their authority as they do of that of their father and mother, because they do not see the former, while they have the latter constantly before their eyes. This respect and reverence, coupled with the ignorance of childhood, which makes it so difficult at first to distinguish between good and evil, make it impossible for children to find fault with, or condemn anything their parents do. They think that their father and mother cannot do wrong, and they look upon their very vices as virtues deserving of praise, so that they imagine the best thing they can do is to imitate something they have seen in their parents. St. Augustine tells us of a certain heathen who, seeing a picture representing the amours of the god Jupiter, exclaimed: "Has the great Jupiter done such things, and must I abstain from them, I who am only a miserable mortal?"² So do boys and girls think in their childhood: My father, who is a learned and clever man, speaks, acts, and lives in such a manner. My mother, who is so experienced, acts thus; how can I, who am but a child, hope to do better? In a word, children are naturally so apt to imitate their parents,

¹ *Exempla trahunt.*

² *Ego hominico non hoc faciam ?*

86 *Good Example Parents should Give Children.*

that Christ our Lord made use of no other proof to convince the wicked Jews that they were not real children of Abraham, than to reproach them for not doing the works of Abraham: "If you be the children of Abraham," He said, "do the works of Abraham!"¹ And since they did the works of the devil, He calls them children of the devil: "You are of your father, the devil."² Learn from this, Christian parents, what a powerful influence your bad or good example has to corrupt your children, or to lead them on to virtue.

Therefore it is no wonder that they act and speak like their parents.

No father, therefore, can be surprised if his sons are given to lying and cheating, to swearing and cursing, to drinking and gambling, if he himself speaks and acts so as to set them an example of these vices. No mother should be astonished if her daughters are too free in their manner, vain and frivolous, when her own conduct is not as it should be. It is to no purpose that parents often exclaim, when their children do or say anything wrong: My goodness, where did the child learn that? Not from me, surely! By all means it is from you. You have taught it, not by express words, but by your bad example. The child has heard or seen it before from his father. How could he help learning it, since it was taught in such an impressive manner, by the living example of his parents, that he picked it up very quickly and retains it in his memory? You will never hear a child speak French if his parents and all the servants of the house speak another language.

Proved by an example.

You all know, my dear brethren, without doubt, what happened to the little boy in Liege. The innocent child had lost its way in the streets, and of course, as children do, commenced to cry. One of the citizens, who did not know the child, was moved with pity and wished to help him; so he went up to him and asked him to whom he belonged. To the devil, answered the child. What is your father's name? The devil. Your mother's? The devil's wife. Your own? The devil's child. What is the name of the house in which you live? The devil's house. The man hardly knew what to think, he was so astonished. He took the weeping child by the hand, and brought him from one street to another, until at last he came to where the child's parents lived. The mother was standing at the door, and as soon as she saw her little son, she cried out: You child of the devil, where have you been so long? Come in

¹ Si filii Abrahamæ estis, opera Abrahamæ facite.—John viii. 39.

² Vos ex patre diabolo estis.—Ibid. 44.

here at once! The father, hearing the noise, came out and said to his wife: You devilish woman, what are you shouting at now? Ah, ha, thought the man, as he went away silently; now I know what sort of a language is spoken in that house, and I am not surprised that the innocent child knew no other.

Oh, how many children there are nowadays in Catholic families who are far more apt to call upon the demon, than upon their Father in Heaven! How could it be otherwise? They hear nothing else at home; it is the language that their father and mother speak. Oh, woe to you, parents, who thus accustom yourselves to curse and swear! If it were no sin even on any other account, it would be a grievous and terrible one by the sole fact that you give your children and servants a very bad example, so that they learn to speak the same horrible language. How many a son knows how to drink to excess before he learns to read and write! And how could it be otherwise? he is only following his father's example. How many a daughter knows more about playing cards and cheating, than about saying her beads! How many a one can sit for two hours before her looking-glass, but not one in the Church; or spend her time in frivolity with persons of the opposite sex, instead of saying her morning and evening prayers; or please the devil by giving scandal through immodesty in dress, rather than do the will of God by mortifying her eyes and her sensuality by Christian modesty and self-denial! How could it be otherwise? her mother is just the same. How many still innocent children know how to speak of impure and unbecoming things, even before they are capable of committing sin, although they will afterwards commit sins enough! How can it be otherwise? they have seen these things and heard them from their imprudent parents. Woe to you again, parents, who in any way whatever give bad example to your children! If it were better for him who gives scandal, even to a stranger, to have a mill-stone tied about his neck, and to be cast into the depths of the sea, what do a father and mother deserve, who give scandal to their own children, and lead them into sin by their bad example?

Ah, how much reason had not St. Jerome to warn a mother with regard to her little daughter (and all parents should take this warning to themselves): "Your child should see nothing in you, nor in her father, which she would sin by imitating." Parents, when in presence of your children, you should tremble

Proved also
by daily
experience.

Thus par-
ents who
lead bad
lives, not
only sin
themselves,
but destroy

¹ Nihil in te et in patre suo videat, quod si fecerit, peccet.

many other
souls.

with fear lest you say or do anything that they could not say nor do without sin! Never forget that when you do wrong at home, you not only injure your own souls and offend God, but you also bring many other souls into the same sin and to spiritual death, by your example. The Prophet David says: "You shall fall like one of the princes."¹ Mark this, Christian parents; when you fall into sin, you fall like one of the princes. How so? why like a prince? Because if a tall tree falls, its branches and boughs fall with it. If I hear that a general is killed in battle, I know, without further questioning, that a number of common soldiers have also lost their lives. "Like one of the princes;" such is your fall also, oh, parents. When you sin in presence of your children, or so that they can know that you have sinned, you fall as the general and head of the household, that is to say, not alone, for you also involve in your destruction those who are subject to you. To make those latter quarrelsome, vindictive, proud, dishonest, unchaste, and impious, it is not necessary to instruct them in such things, nor to urge them thereto by threats and punishment. No; for if you are given to these vices, and your children notice that, they will soon follow your example of their own accord.

Explained
by a simile.

An assassin once wished to kill a certain nobleman; and how do you think he managed it? By powder and ball, or dagger, or sword, the means that are generally made use of to commit such a crime? Not at all. And what then did he do? He made a poisonous torch, and used it to light the nobleman home one night. The latter, following him, breathed the poisonous smoke from the torch; it affected his heart and he died soon after. I certainly do not believe that amongst Christian parents there is a father or mother so cruel as deliberately to attempt the spiritual murder of their children, and thus to drag them down to eternal death, by giving them bad example; yet they do so in reality, they carry such a poisonous torch before them, that their children, who inhale its fumes, must die a spiritual death. And what is still more to be deplored, not only does the bad example of parents hurt their own children, but its bad effects are often continued down to their children's children, and to all their posterity, who are thus infected with the contagion of bad example. For, as your sons and daughters are, oh, parents, so will their children also be, and these latter will propagate still farther the evil influence of the bad example of their own parents; so

¹ Sicut unus de principibus cadetis.—Ps. lxxxv. 7.

that there will be an almost endless series of sins descending from one generation to another, like an inheritance.

And it is that of which an angry God complains by the Prophet Osee: "But they, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant,"¹ and violated my commands. Such, says the Glossa, is the complaint of God against parents who lead vicious lives. But why is the sin of parents compared to that of Adam? Probably because they are as ungrateful as Adam by sinning against God, who has bestowed countless benefits on them. Such is the reason given by St. Jerome; but there is still another. Mark the words that God spoke: "They, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant."² Now, what covenant did God make with Adam? It consisted in this, that the consequence of Adam's obedience in observing the divine command, or of his disobedience in eating the forbidden fruit, should descend to all his children and their posterity. So that the sin of parents is likened to his in this, that as the latter, in virtue of the covenant made by God, has descended on all Adam's posterity, so also the former, by the influence of the parents' bad example, is inherited by their children and by their children's children, who in their turn follow the example of their father and mother.

Of which God complains.

It is in this sense we must understand the terrible threat of the Lord in the Book of Exodus: "I am the Lord thy God, mighty, jealous, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and fourth generation of them that hate me."³ And how is that? Does the just and merciful God punish innocent children for the sins of their forefathers? Was it their fault if their parents led bad lives? Does not the same Lord say clearly and plainly enough by the Prophet Ezechiel: "What is the meaning that you use among you this parable as a proverb in the land of Israel, saying: the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the teeth of the children are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord God, this parable shall be no more to you a proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine. The soul that sinneth, the same shall die; the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father."⁴

And the sins of parents will be punished in their children.

¹ *Ipsi autem sicut Adam transgressi sunt pactum.*—Osee vi. 7.

² *Sicut Adam transgressi sunt pactum.*

³ *Ego sum Dominus Deus tuus, fortis, zelotes, visitans iniquitatem patrum in filios, in tertiam et quartam generationem eorum, qui oderunt me.*—Exod. xx. 5.

⁴ *Quid est quod inter vos parabolam vertitis in proverbium istud in terra Israel, dicentes: patres comederunt uvam acerbiam, et dentes filiorum obstupescunt? Vivo ego, dicit Dominus Deus si erit ultra vobis parabola hæc in proverbium in Israel. Ecce, omnes anime mee sunt, ut anima patris. Ita et anima filii mea est. Anima, quæ peccaverit, ipsa morietur; filius non portabit iniquitatem patris.*—Ezech. xviii. 2, 3, 4, 20.

And again He says by St. Paul : “ Every one shall bear his own burden.”¹ What, then, is the meaning of the words : “ Visiting the iniquity of the fathers, to the third and fourth generation”?² St. Jerome, writing of the 18th chapter of Ezechiel, explains these words by saying : “ Because the children are imitators of their parents,”³ and commit sin after the example of their parents. Besides, one of the most terrible punishments that God inflicts upon parents who lead vicious lives, is that He generally permits their children and children’s children to fall into the same vices. He says expressly by the Wise Ecclesiasticus : “ The children of sinners become children of abominations.”⁴ And in the Book of Wisdom : “ But the wicked shall be punished according to their own devices. Their hope is vain, and their labors without fruit, and their works unprofitable; their children wicked, their offspring is cursed.”⁵

Therefore, the pious life of the parents is the best means of bringing up children well.

From all this you may see, Christian parents, how necessary it is, if you wish to do your duty, and to bring up your children in a Christian manner for their last end, that you give them a good, Christian, and holy example. Do you wish them to be pious and to go to Heaven? Then the first thing you have to do, your first thought must be how you yourselves are to lead holy lives, and to advance on the right path to Heaven, so as, in all your actions, to give them an example of how they ought to live. The Apostle says: “ If the root be holy, so are the branches.”⁶ We see and experience that in many families, in which from one generation to another, holy souls are found who give an example of a good, pious, and conscientious life to their descendants.

If all parents lived thus, the whole world would be pious and holy.

Oh, if I could persuade all parents to lead good and Christian lives, and to induce their children to imitate them, what a great change there would be for the better, what a different appearance the whole of Christendom would present in a very short time! The Church, I have no doubt, would be provided with pious priests, the religious orders with holy members, spiritual and secular employments with worthy officials, and all households with pious souls; nay, the whole world would become holy, and would be an earthly paradise, in which God alone would be

¹ *Unusquisque onus suum portabit.*—Gai. vi. 5.

² *Visitans iniquitatem patrum in tertiam et quartam generationem.*

³ *Quia filii patrum exierunt semulatores.*

⁴ *Filii abominationum sunt filii peccatorum.*—Eccl. xii. 8.

⁵ *Impii autem secundum quæ cogitaverunt, correptionem habebant. Vacua est spes filiorum, et labores sine fructu, et inutilia opera eorum : et nequissimi filii eorum, maledicta creatura eorum.*—Sap. lii. 10-13.

⁶ *Si radix sancta et rami.*

sought, loved, praised, and blessed! Such was long ago the judgment of the wisest Fathers of the Church, assembled in the Council of Trent. After having consulted together for a long time as to the best means of arousing tepid Christians, and removing the abuses and evil customs that had crept in amongst them, they finally came to the conclusion that the best means to that end was the amendment of the lives of parents and the proper training of children.

Therefore, you fathers and mothers who are here present, continue, or if you have hitherto been wanting herein, begin, at least to do your share of the work! Remember that the salvation of so many of your descendants depends on your living piously; hence, before every other domestic care, see that you serve God justly and faithfully, and that you encourage your children to do the same, by your example. In that way, when you are no longer on earth, you will leave souls there, after you, who will (oh, what a consolation for you!) serve God, love Him and praise Him for you, and their service, love, and praise will be imputed to your training and example. The Lord will rejoice even now on your account, as He formerly did on account of the Patriarch Abraham. He says: "Can I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? For I know that he will command his children, and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord, and do judgment and justice."¹ What? He will command his household after him? How can he command when he will be no longer on earth? Will he perhaps rise from the dead to lead his descendants on the way of the Lord? No, says the learned Pererius; the Lord God foresaw that the holy example, by which Abraham instructed his children to justice, would be continued amongst their descendants, who would follow the same example, and keep it up in their families; and that was the reason why God rejoiced and praised Abraham. Christian parents, you should do the same. If you give your children an example of virtue in this life, they will follow it, and they will follow you also into eternity, where you will all see, love, and praise your God in the everlasting joys of Heaven. Amen.

Exhortation to parents to begin, or continue to live piously.

¹ Num celare potero Abraham, quæ gesturus sum. Scio enim, quod præcepturus sit filiis suis, et domui suæ post se, ut custodiant viam Domini, et faciant iudicium et justitiam. —Gen. xviii. 17, 19.

FORTY-SIXTH SERMON.

**ON THE NECESSITY OF PARENTS GIVING GOOD EXAMPLE TO
THEIR CHILDREN.**

Subject.

Unless parents lead pious lives and give good example, all their efforts to train up their children in a Christian manner, will come to nothing.—*Preached on the twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Cujus est imago hæc?—Matth. xxii. 20.
“Whose image is this?”

Introduction.

From the image we may learn the appearance of a person whom it represents. In to-day's Gospel, Christ, in order to show the Jews to whom they should pay tribute, asked them to bring Him a piece of money: “Show Me the coin of the tribute,” and then He asked: “Whose image is this?”¹ “They say to Him: Cæsar's.”² Therefore, answered the Saviour, since the image represents Cæsar, it proves clearly enough to whom the tribute is to be paid. “Give, therefore, to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's.”³ My dear brethren, a child is called, “the image of his father,”⁴ so that if I see a son or a daughter, and consider their character, I have nothing more to do, in order to know of what kind their father or mother are, than to ask: “Whose image is this?” Who is the father of this son? Who is the mother of this daughter? And when I hear their names, although I may not be personally acquainted with them, yet I can form a sufficiently accurate judgment of their manner of life, so as to know whether they are pious or not, according as I have seen whether the children are good or bad. For as a general rule, the character of the parents is reflected in the children, these latter being the images of the former, and generally speak-

¹ Ostendite mihi numisma census.—Matth. xxii. 19.

² Cujus est imago hæc?

³ Dicunt ei: Cæsaris.—Ibid. 21.

⁴ Reddite ergo quæ sunt Cæsaris, Cæsar. —Ibid.

⁵ Imago patris.

ing, imitating their example. Therefore, people say of the pious son or daughter of wicked parents: Oh, that child is not at all like its parents; and the same thing is true of a wicked child whose father and mother are good and pious. Christian parents, you may again conclude from this how important it is for you to give your children a good and holy example. I have shown in the last sermon that the pious lives and good example of the parents is the best means of bringing up children well. I shall now prove that—

Plan of Discourse.

Unless parents lead pious lives and give good example, all their efforts to train up their children in a Christian manner will come to nothing, or will do very little good. Such is the whole subject. Therefore, parents, I repeat, live piously, if you wish to bring up pious children, and to lead them to Heaven!

Effect this in them by Thy grace, oh, Almighty God, through the intercession of the Mother of Thy Son, and the holy angels guardian.

There are many things required for a field to produce good fruits: First, the ground must be ploughed, then it must be freed from weeds, thistles, thorns, and stones, and unless this is done, a crop cannot be expected. The seed must also be planted in the ground that is thus prepared to receive it. After the sin of Adam, the earth lost its power of producing good fruits of itself. In the third place, the seed must be harrowed in, and protected from birds, and therefore scarecrows are generally put up in the fields to keep the birds off. All these things are necessary, but they are not yet sufficient to insure a good crop; for if the light of the sun and moon are wanting, all the former preparations are of no avail. The sun, with its light and heat, the moon, with its wonderful influence, must assist the decaying seed to shoot forth and grow. If the sun and moon were taken away, the whole earth, no matter how much it is ploughed and sown, would be a desert. Furthermore, the condition of the earth depends on that of the sun: if the latter is cool, so is the earth; if it is cold or hot, so also is the earth; and there you have a sketch of my subject that you may easily understand, my dear brethren.

Many things are required for the earth to bring forth good fruits, principally sunlight.

Now, the fruits that parents, who desire to train up their children for their last end, expect and wish the latter to bring

Parents must use various

means for their children to produce good fruit.

forth, are piety and good works, by which all who come to the use of reason must gain Heaven. Such, too, is the comparison that Jesus Christ Himself uses in the Gospel: "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire."¹ Now, that fruits of this kind may grow in children, many different means are required, of which we have spoken already, namely, good instruction, constant vigilance, and parental correction. Correction prepares the tender minds of children, as the plough does the ground, and purifies them from thistles, weeds, and thorns; that is, it corrects their present evil propensities, and guards against future ones. Good instruction plants the seed, according to the words of Christ: "The seed is the Word of God,"² whereby parents continually instruct and exhort their children to good. By constant vigilance over the actions of children, the birds of prey that seek their souls are prevented from carrying off the good seed, and the children themselves are saved from the dangerous occasions of sin. All these things are good and necessary to a Christian training.

But they are of little use, if the good example of the parents is wanting.

But they help little or nothing to the sanctification of children, if the sun and moon do not shed their light, and bring forth fruits of eternal life. Nor do I speak here of the light of God's grace, for as a matter of course, no good can be produced in us without that. Without God's help, no one is capable of doing a good work that is meritorious of Heaven; but God is never wanting in His part of the work. Fathers, mothers, you are the sun and moon to your children, by the example you give them. The patriarch Joseph says of his dream: "I saw in a dream, as it were, the sun and the moon worshipping me."³ It is not necessary for us, my dear brethren, to seek another interpretation of these words, besides that which Jacob gives: How, my son, he asks with evident indignation, what are you thinking of? "Shall I and thy mother worship thee upon the earth?"⁴ That vision of Joseph, therefore, shows that the father is the sun, and the mother the moon in the house; and to them in particular does Christ say: "So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in Heaven,"⁵

¹ Omnis arbor, quæ non facit fructum bonum, excidetur, et in ignem mittetur.—Matth. vii. 19.

² Semen est Verbum Dei.—Luke viii. 11.

³ Vidi per somnium, quasi solem et lunam. adorare me.—Gen. xxxvii. 9.

⁴ Num ego et mater tua adorabimus te super terram?—Ibid. 10.

⁵ Sic luceat lux vestra coram hominibus, ut videant opera vestra bona, et glorificent Patrem vestrum, qui in cælis est.—Matth. v. 16.

and they, especially, who are daily under your training, should see that light, in order to be encouraged to do good works. If the sun and moon are eclipsed, the whole earth is in darkness: if the father and mother do not give forth the light of virtue, piety, and the fear of God, the minds of the children are cold and tepid in the divine service. In a word, if the good example of the parents is wanting, all other means of rearing up their children in a Christian manner will be of little or no use. Let us now consider that more in detail.

In the first place, although it is true that good instruction does wonders for the salvation of children, and if it is wanting, they live and die in ignorance of many divine truths, and of course in the sins that spring from this ignorance, yet, I ask, how could a father, or mother, hope to instruct others in good, to teach and exhort them to lead Christian lives, if they themselves do not know how to live well and as Christians ought? "No one gives what he has not,"¹ is a saying well known in the schools. If I have nothing good myself, I can give nothing good to others. Now, suppose that those parents, who do not lead a good life, spend a long time every day in instructing their children in the truths of salvation. The children see that their father and mother do not practise as they preach; how then can their teaching have any effect, since they contradict it by their example? Which of the two are the children most likely to follow? Ah, it is easy to talk, but what enters by the eyes makes a far deeper impression on the heart, than what goes in by the ears, and we are far more apt to do what we see others doing, than what they command us to do. Solomon, the wisest of men, had written many holy books, in which he left most beautiful instructions to his children, but Roboam, his son, was far more influenced by his father's example, than by his teaching. He followed the latter's bad example, and not his instructions.

First, good teaching is of no use without example, because children follow what they see rather than what they hear.

Besides, what impression can mere teaching make on children? They could answer their parents, if not in words, at least in thought, as the envious Jews said to the blind man in the synagogue, when he wished them to become disciples of Christ: "Thou wast wholly born in sins, and dost thou teach us?"² So also might the children say: Father, mother, you spend your lives in committing sin, and do you wish to teach us to be good, and to live piously? You treat each other sometimes like cat

Because teaching makes no impression when the example of parents is wanting.

¹ Nemo dat, quod non habet.

² In peccatis natus es totus, et tu doces nos?—John ix. 34.

and dog—you live in discord, quarrelling, and strife. You abuse and threaten, curse and swear at each other, and do you think you can teach us¹ to practise meekness, to live in peace, to yield to each other, to be patient and to bear with each other's defects and faults according to the teaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? You tell us that children who curse will not go to Heaven; but we hear you every day, at meal-times, backbiting your neighbors, speaking uncharitably of the faults of the absent, and arranging how you are to pay off some one for an injury he has inflicted on you. And do you wish to persuade us that we must consider our own faults, and put the best interpretation on the actions of others, that we must never speak ill of others, that we must forgive injuries as the Christian law teaches, and love those who hate us, and do good to those who persecute us? Father, we often see you coming home intoxicated, and will you now exhort us to be temperate and sober? Mother, we know that you are too extravagant in dress, too free in company, and too idle, since you spend the whole day in sleeping, drinking, eating, standing at the door or the window, paying and receiving visits, etc.; how, then, can you teach us to be modest, reserved, and humble, to avoid the society of persons of the opposite sex, and to make the best use of our precious time, to rise early in the morning, and to retire at a proper hour in the evening? Parents, we see in you few signs of piety, or of the fear and love of God, and on the contrary, a great desire for earthly things, a great neglect of morning and evening prayer, and very little desire to hear the Word of God. And do you think you can teach us to be devout, to attend sermon and catechism on all Sundays and holy-days—a thing that you never do—to say our morning prayers and make our evening examen of conscience on our knees? How does your teaching correspond with your practice? Children, God forbid that you should ever dare to make such reproaches to your parents! Even from wicked teachers, and much more from your father and mother, although they may not give you good example, you must take their instructions and exhortations to good, for your souls' sake, not otherwise than if they came from the lips of Christ Himself. But you, parents, see whether your children have not reason to reproach you, at least in their own minds, when they have sense enough to see that your conduct is not what it should be. If they cannot see that, what good will your teaching do them? They will think: What father and mother

¹ Et tu doces nos?

say is not true ; they do not mean it seriously ; it cannot be wicked to do the things they warn us against, or they would not do them themselves. The good they exhort us to cannot be much or they would do it too, etc. No; teaching without example is of little or no use.

Jesus Christ, although He is the Holy of holies, and the Supreme Law-giver, who is bound by no law, did not begin to teach until He had first given a holy example of His doctrine in Himself: "And Jesus began to do and to teach,"¹ is written of Him when He commenced His public preaching during the last three years of His mortal life. Mark these words: doing goes first, and preaching comes next. (Alas, my dear Saviour, whenever I think of those words, I am overwhelmed with shame, and must ask myself, how can I teach others what I fulfil so badly? But, all the more thanks to Thee, my God, even because Thou hast chosen me, miserable as I am, as Thy instrument in this office of preaching! This thought should be a constant spur to me, and woe to me if I do not labor diligently to observe what I preach to others in Thy Name and with Thy inspiration!) I speak again to you, Christian parents: If your teaching is to do your children any good, and to help them to save their souls, you must give them good example. Whenever you speak of piety, devotion, virtue, or the service of God, you must not be content with merely saying: Son, daughter, or servant, "do this;"² but you must say: "Come, let us all do it!"³ It is not enough to say: Imitate Jesus Christ; you should say with the Apostle: "Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ."⁴ It is not enough to point out the way to Heaven, and say: Go there. Every wooden finger-post about the country could do as much as that, for it shows the traveller his way, but never stirs from the one spot. Children must be led by the hand. You must act like the mother, or the nurse who teaches the little ones to walk; how does she manage? Come now, my child, she says, go on. But she is not satisfied with that alone, for if she were, the child would fall down after taking one or two steps. She takes it by the hand and walks along with it, step by step. See, she says, that is the way to walk. That was the way in which St. Monica taught her son Augustine to leave the path of error and to embrace the truth, as the latter tells us: "She watered her words with her tears, and strengthened them by her example."⁵ In short, good example

Parents must show them what they teach. like Christ.

¹ Incept Jesus facere et docere.—Acts. i. 1.

² Fac!

³ Faciamus!

⁴ Imitatores mei estote, sicut et ego Christi.—I. Cor. xi. 1.

⁵ Verba sua rigabat lachrymis, nutriebat exemplis.

alone, without words, can do much with children, but good words, without example, are of no use.

Vigilance helps little, because children lose all shame of evil-doing, if their parents give bad example.

Another means necessary to bring up children in a Christian manner, consists in the parents being watchful over all their actions. It is true that this vigilance can prevent many sins that the children would in all likelihood commit, if they were not watched over; but what good can it do, if the parents had a hundred eyes, and kept them always open, without good example? For, how is it that the watchful eye of the parent keeps the child from sin? That comes from a natural inborn shame that prevents us from doing what is wrong or unbecoming in the presence of others, and that shame is very powerful with children, on account of the reverence and respect that God has inspired them with for their parents. Therefore, there is no child so impudent as to dare to act improperly in presence of its father, or mother. But this shame and reverence must of necessity disappear, when the children see and know that their parents do wrong. They think, then: Oh, I need not be ashamed to do what my parents do, and to behave as they behave. Parents, you should rather be ashamed in your hearts, when you think of your duty of looking after your children, and you should ask yourselves: How can I dare to reprove them for what my own conscience tells me I am guilty of?

Vigilance averts the danger of sin, but parents, by bad example, place their children in that danger.

Besides, vigilance is required of parents, principally, that they may prevent their children from hearing or seeing anything that would scandalize them, from going into the danger of sin, and from being corrupted and made vicious by bad company. Oh, certainly, this care and watchfulness are very necessary! Parents, you should almost lock up your children in a box, to keep them from going about wherever they please. There are, alas, so many traitors and deceivers almost everywhere, nowadays, that one cannot be careful enough, and very often one finds danger to the soul, where it ought least of all to be feared. But tell me now, you parents who lead bad lives, and give your sons and daughters bad example, what use is it for you to prevent your children from hearing or seeing anything scandalous, when you yourselves are a stumbling-block in their way every day at home, when they remark in your lives and conduct, that are always before their eyes, things that must necessarily be an occasion of scandal to them? What good is it for you to save your children from other dangers of sin outside, when they find dangers enough at home, in the conduct of their own father and mother? What good is

it to keep your children from bad company, if you yourselves betray them, by your wicked example, ruin their innocence, and lead them on to evil? Are the dangers that come from their parents less to be dreaded, than those that come from strangers, or should they not rather be more feared, since they are much more powerful? No! be as watchful as you like over the actions of your children, but if you do not give them good example, your vigilance is useless.

The third and last necessary means of bringing up children well, consists in parental correction and chastisement of the children's faults, so that they may be induced to repent, and to avoid such faults in future. Oh, if many fathers and mothers had not such a blind, foolish, and senseless love, or to speak better, such a hatred and dislike for their children, that they overlook all the faults of the latter, lest, as they say themselves, they should cause the dear children pain, then most children would not be so ill brought up! But now I ask for the last time: You fathers and mothers who do not give good example, how can you dare to punish, in your children, a vice that you and they know you are yourselves subject to, so that you are as deserving of punishment as they are? Who would not laugh at a courtier, who finding his prince's servants talking and laughing before their master's door, would cry out at the top of his voice: Be quiet, the prince is asleep, and you must not awake him! Who, I say, would not laugh at such conduct? In the same way, Christian parents, do you not think that your sons and daughters secretly laugh at you, when you punish them for a fault, or a moral disease, that they are well aware you suffer from also? With reason does St. Augustine say: "He can with justice correct others who has nothing to be corrected in himself."¹ At least he should be free from the vice that he punishes in others, or else his guilt must not be known, for otherwise one could say to him: "Physician, heal thyself,"² before you undertake to cure others. Or else one might say of him what the Jews said of Jesus Christ, when they were mocking at, and blaspheming Him as He hung on the cross: "He saved others, Himself He cannot save."³ Or the same reproach might be made to him which Christ addressed to the envious Pharisees: "Hypocrite, cast first the beam out of thy own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to take out the mote from thy

Even correction, without good example, is of no use.

¹ Ille justus reprehensor est, qui non habet. quod in illo reprehendatur.

² Medice, cura teipsum.—Luke iv. 23.

³ Alios salvos fecit. seipsum non potest salvum facere.—Matth. xxvii. 42.

brother's eye."¹ Or else the words might be applied to him, which our Lord addressed to the Pharisees, when they wished to stone the woman taken in adultery: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."² In the same way, father, or mother, if you see that your children have done wrong, punish them. It is right and just to do so, it is even an obligation that your office as parents imposes on you. But if you wish the punishment to do good, you must see that you are not laboring under the same fault; for otherwise your children, or at all events, your conscience, could cry out to you: Hypocrite, punish yourself! Hence, I must often laugh at the complaints of parents who do not lead good lives: I do not know, they say, what to do with my child. I cannot get him to be pious, he is always wilful and obstinate; no matter what I say to him, he is no better. I threaten and beat him, but all to no purpose; he is just the same as before. What are you saying? That all your punishing is of no use? That you see no sign of improvement in your child? I quite believe you! But where did you begin the correction? Was it with yourself? Did you first commence to be pious and devout? If not, I am not surprised that your child is not inclined to piety and devotion, and that all your chastising effects nothing.

Shown by
an example.

The men of the city of Jericho came once to the Prophet Eliseus to beseech him to help them, as they were suffering a great deal for the want of sweet water, as we read in the 2d chapter of the Fourth Book of Kings. They said: "Behold, the situation of this city is very good, as thou, my lord, seest; but the waters are very bad, and the ground barren."³ Eliseus answered: "Bring me a new vessel, and put salt into it." And then, "he went out to the spring of the waters, and cast the salt into it, and said: Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters, and there shall be no more in them death or barrenness. And the waters were healed unto this day."⁴ Why did Eliseus cast salt into the fountain, and not into the stream? Because all the bitterness came from the fountain, so that when it was once purified, all the water that came from it was sweet. The Glossa of Father Cornelius à Lapide re-

¹ Hypocrita, ejice primum, trabem de oculo tuo, et tunc perspicias, ut educaas festucam de oculo fratris tui.—Luke vi. 42.

² Qui sine peccato est vestrum, primus in illam lapidem mittat.—John viii. 7.

³ Ecce, habitatio civitatis hujus optima est, sicut tu ipse, domine, perspicias; sed aquæ pessimæ sunt, et terra sterilis.—IV. Kings ii. 19.

⁴ Afferte mihi vas novum, et mittite in illud sal.... Egressus ad fontem aquarum, misit in illum sal, et ait: Hæc dicit Dominus: Sanavi aquas has, et non erit ultra in eis mors neque sterilitas. Sanatæ sunt ergo aquæ usque in diem hanc.—Ibid. 20-22.

marks on this passage, aptly enough for my subject: "As water comes from the fountain, so do children come from their parents."¹ If the spring is worthless, the water is no good; so that if children are to be corrected, the parents must first correct themselves. Once the father and mother begin to lead pious lives, the children will follow their example, and become spiritually healthy and pious, too. You may learn from this, Christian parents, that all your instructions, and vigilance, and correction, and every other means you may use to train up your children in a Christian manner, are of no use unless you live piously, and give them good example.

I conclude this part with a well-known fable: The crabs once held a council together, to see if they could manage to improve on their way of walking. We ought to be ashamed of ourselves, said one; whenever any one is unfortunate in business, people say of him: He is going backward, like a crab. We must not allow people to speak of us in that way. I know what we must do, said one of the oldest crabs; we are now too old to change, and are too much accustomed to our way of walking, so that it would be very difficult for us to alter it; but we must issue a general order, obliging all to teach the young crabs to walk straight before them; in that way we shall no longer be disgraced before the people. The advice seemed good to all, and was at once acted upon. You must now learn how to walk, said an old crab to its young one. But how am I to do it, asked the latter? You must put one foot before the other, was the answer, and move it right out in front of you. See that you do so exactly. Father, go on before me,² said the young one, so that I may see how you do it. The old crab began to creep in his usual manner, and the young one followed his example. What are you doing, asked the old one; did I not tell you to walk straight? Father, go on before me, was the answer. Father, show me what to do, I cannot do it otherwise. In a word, the old one had to give up the task, and so all crabs continue to walk as they did before. Christian parents, the meaning of this fable has been sufficiently explained in this and the preceding sermon. Think of it, whenever you give your children good advice or correction. Imagine that your son or daughter is saying to you: Father, mother, go on before me.³ You tell them not to lie, curse, or swear: father, mother, give me an example of Christian conversation, and show me how to speak. They must not

Therefore, parents must give their children good example. Proved by a fable.

¹ Sicut aqua ex fonte, ita filii ex parente promanant.

² Pater, I præ. ³ Pater I præ; mater I præ.

be idle, and must use their precious time in some suitable employment, with a good intention for the glory of God: father, mother, show us how to do it. They must be humble, modest, devout: father, mother, show us how. They must say their prayers in the morning and make their examen of conscience in the evening on their knees: father, mother, let them see you do it; kneel down with your children, according to the custom in proper Christian families. They must hear Mass daily, assist at the sermon on Sundays and holy-days, and go often to confession and communion: father, mother, go with them; bring your children with you to Mass, sermon, and Holy Communion. They must live piously, that they may go to Heaven: father, mother, live so that you may inherit the kingdom of Heaven with your children.

If they do that, their vigilance and correction will be good.

In that way your instructions and warnings will make an impression on your children, your vigilance will keep them from sin, they will either require no punishment, or when you have to inflict it, it will produce the desired effect, and you will thus train up your children properly. Oh, would that all parents acted thus! How much hell would then lose! how many chosen souls would be gained for Heaven! Oh, God, the Ruler of hearts, Thou who hast redeemed all men by Thy Precious Blood, and who wishest all to come to the knowledge of the truth, and to eternal life, do Thou effect, by Thy powerful grace, what my words, that have likely been lost on the majority of those who heard them, could not do! Impress all parents with the necessity of doing their duty to their children. Thy own honor and glory, that will thus be increased, are concerned therein!

Exhortation to parents to fulfil their duty as it has been explained to them.

And you, Christian parents, whatever you do, see, above all, that you fulfil exactly that great and most important duty of rearing up your children well! That is the earnest prayer of the immortal soul of your children, for their going to Heaven or to hell for all eternity depends on whether you give them a good training, or not. The angels of Heaven make the same request of you, for on you it depends to help them to bring their charges to Heaven. He who gave His life, amid unspeakable torments, for you, and to whom you cannot, therefore, refuse anything, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, asks you to do it, for thereon depends the saving of the souls He has purchased with His Blood, from the infernal serpent, into whose toils they would fall, if you were careless of their training. The heavenly Father Himself asks it of you, for He has given you a share of His authority to this end, that you may give Him back the souls of your children

which He has lent to you, and confided to your care. Your own souls demand it, for if your children are lost through your negligence, you must account for the loss and pay for it.

Therefore pray daily to the Almighty God, who has promised to give us whatever we ask Him for, and who generally does not bestow His grace without prayer, and it is a great gift of God to be able to rear children well. Pray, I say, daily, for your sons and daughters, that He may govern them by His grace, inspire them with His fear and love, keep them from all sin and all occasions of it, by His holy angels; lead them on the right way to Heaven and keep them on it to the end. Do like holy Job, of whom I have recently told you that he offered sacrifice to God every morning for his children, lest they might have sinned even in thought, without his knowledge. Pray to God often with all your hearts, rather to take your sons and daughters, no matter how much you love them, out of the world, than to allow them to offend Him by a single mortal sin. Never warn, chastise, or correct your children without first offering what you are doing to God, with a pure intention, and with the humble prayer that the correction and punishment may be for His greater honor and glory. Pray daily, in the words with which Jesus Christ recommended His Apostles to His heavenly Father: "Father, keep them in Thy name, whom Thou hast given Me; that they may be one, as we also are;"¹ so that they may be Thine and remain Thine forever. Pray every day, also, to the Mother of God, to the holy guardian angels of your children, and to all elect parents who are now with God in Heaven, and you may rest assured that you cannot say a better, more useful, or more necessary prayer, nor one more suited to your state of life. Pray, also, that you yourselves may obtain the grace to fulfil your obligations properly; say: Behold, my Lord and my God, Thou hast placed me in this state, in which my chief duty is to bring up my children so that they may save their souls. Thou hast given me so many children; they belong to Thee; they are only lent to me that I may keep them faithfully for Thee. Ah, my God, Thou knowest my ignorance and weakness; help me with Thy light and grace in this most difficult and important task. Let Thy Holy Spirit inspire me with words to teach my children properly, and to exhort them to good, so that they may always fulfil Thy holy will. Remind me by Thy holy angels,

Therefore, they must pray constantly to God and the Saints, for their children, and that they themselves may fulfil their duty.

¹ *Pater, serva eos in nomine tuo, quos dedisti mihi, ut sint unum. sicut et nos.—John xvii. 11.*

and leave me no rest, so that I may always keep a watchful eye over my children. Give me patience to bear for Thy sake the difficulties and trials I may find in performing this duty. Give me zeal to correct their faults when necessary, in a parental manner, and so as to amend them. Give me a horror for sin and worldly vanity, so that I may not injure the souls of my children by my example, but bring them up so as to be able to give them all, without losing a single one, to Thee, on that day when Thou wilt demand them from me, and that I may thus, along with them, enjoy Thee forever. Thus, Christian parents, should you pray, thus should you act.

And never
forget it.

Think often of what you have hitherto heard on this subject. Let it not be with you, as is the case with most people, who go away from a sermon and forget all they have heard, and are not a bit better for it. Nor must you be like those who now and then remember what they heard in a sermon, but still are drawn back to the old courses by the bad example and way of living of worldly people, so that they think: Oh, preachers only want to frighten us; it is not so bad as they make it out. Other people, who are known to be pious, and who wish to go to Heaven, bring up their children in a far different manner to what the preacher advises, etc. Ah, my dear brethren, do not think that I wish to burden your consciences, and make sins where there are none! You may believe firmly that what I have hitherto said to you, is the teaching of the Catholic Church, of the holy Fathers, who have written on the training of children, and of theologians, nay, even of sound reason itself. But that the manners and customs of men are generally opposed to such teaching, is evident from what St. John writes in his First Epistle: "The whole world is seated in wickedness."¹ And from what St. James writes: "Know you not that the friendship of this world is the enemy of God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God."² And from what Jesus Christ, the infallible Truth, has said: "For many are called, but few are chosen."³ These very sermons of mine will one day be the voice of one crying in the wilderness, against those who neglect them. You have heard what we said to you, you have known the truth, but you have not practised it! And against those who do not believe: You have heard the truth, but had

¹ *Mundus totus in maligno positus est.*—I. John v. 19.

² *Nescetis, quia amicitia hujus mundi inimica est Dei? Quicumque ergo voluerit amicus esse sæculi hujus, inimicus Dei constituitur.*—James iv. 4.

³ *Multi enim sunt vocati, pauci vero electi.*—Matth. xxii. 14.

no faith in it. The world and its perverse usages made more impression on you than the infallible Word of God. You preferred to follow the example of the children of the world, rather than to walk in the footsteps of the Saints. They will also cry out against those who did not wish to come to the sermons for fear of being disturbed in conscience, and I know that some remained away on that account: "Who have said to God: Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways."¹ For they were of those of whom David said: "He would not understand that he might do well."² Not so, Christian parents, must you act: often call to mind the truths you have heard; forget them not, and live according to them. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost:

Text.

Et ipsi observabant eum.—Luke xiv. 1.

"And they watched Him."

Jesus Christ, the Holy of holies, in whose life not the least thing could be found that was not good and holy, yet was not free from the prying eyes of the invidious Pharisees, who watched Him everywhere He went, and whatever He did, in the hope of discovering something that they could find fault with and condemn: "And they watched Him."³ Christian parents, there are also some who watch you, wherever you go, and whatever you do, not merely outside the house; and no one, no matter how good and innocent he is, can avoid curious eyes and cavilling tongues in our days. But (what is more to my purpose now) you have them also in your own house. And if there was no one else to do so, be assured that your own children will watch you; they will note everything their father and mother do. No matter how young they are, their eyes are sharp enough to see all that you do, and they are like monkeys, that imitate everything they see you doing. Therefore, parents, lead good lives, and be careful, especially before your sons and daughters, if you wish to bring up pious children, and to lead them to Heaven. In the last sermon I proved, etc.—*continues as before.*

¹ Qui dixerunt Deo: Recede a nobis, et scientiam viarum tuarum nolumus.—Job xxi. 14.

² Noluit intelligere, ut bene ageret.—Ps. xxxv. 4.

³ Et ipsi observabant eum.

ON THE DUTIES OF PARENTS TO-
WARDS THEIR CHILDREN
IN TEMPORAL
MATTERS.

FORTY-SEVENTH SERMON.

ON THE DUTY OF FEEDING AND SUPPORTING CHILDREN.

Subject.

1st. Parents are bound to support their children and take the greatest care of their temporal welfare. 2d. Many are not careful enough in this particular, and sin by neglect and omission.—*Preached on the twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Domini, filia mea modo defuncta est; sed veni, impone manum tuam super eam, et vivet.—Matth. ix. 18.

“Lord, my daughter is even now dead; but come, lay Thy hand upon her, and she shall live.”

Introduction.

Would that all fathers and mothers had as great a care and interest in the eternal life of the souls of their children, as the ruler in to-day's Gospel showed, and as most parents nowadays have for their children's temporal welfare; if that were the case, many children would be better brought up and would save their souls! Hitherto, my dear brethren, we have seen in detail what the duties of parents are regarding the souls and the salvation of their children; and those duties are the most important of all, and all others must give way to them. But, enough of that for the present, although it never can be preached enough, nor thought

enough of. Let those parents who are careless in the service of God, and who do not often come to sermons, see how they will one day answer to the strict justice of God, for the grievous faults they daily commit in bringing up their children, because they do not come to get instructed in that important duty. They will be told that they could and should have known it. There is still another duty that parents owe their children, with regard to the temporal welfare of the latter, according to which they are bound to support and look after them as well as possible. In this point, too, many great faults are committed. Some care too little, others too much; some sin by defect, others by excess, and both are inexcusable. I will deal with the first in this instruction, and will pr briefly—

Plan of Discourse.

That parents are bound to support their children, and to take the greatest care of their temporal welfare. The first part. Many are not careful enough in this particular, and sin by neglect and omission. The second part. The amendment of this fault, which is the source of many other sins, will be the conclusion.

Help me, by Thy grace, oh, heavenly Father, through the merits of the Mother of Thy Son, and the intercession of the holy angels guardian.

Is it worth while to ask, you will think, whether parents are bound to support their children, and to look after their temporal welfare? He who knows what a father or mother is, will see clearly that they are bound to do this. If one were to lose all parental instincts and love for his children, if he were even dead to all human feeling, so that he could have a doubt of this, such a person ought to be sent to learn from the wild beasts what nature itself teaches them of this duty. What desert ever contained a wild beast so cruel as to neglect its young, and to allow them to die of hunger? Lions, bears, wolves, and tigers, that hardly ever leave their caves to appear in the sight of men, are never more fierce, nor daring, than when they have young ones to support. Then, no matter how shy they may be of man otherwise, they are not afraid of the hunter, they attack cattle, and even men who come in their way. Sometimes they go into the villages and go around the stables, looking for something to carry off to feed their young with. It is wonderful to see how the little birds,

The natural law commands parents to support their children.

when, after long hatching, their young at last come out of the shell, fly to and from their nests the whole day long, bringing food to their young in their beaks, although they themselves may be suffering from hunger, so that during that time they become quite thin. It is wonderful to see how a hen scratches and tears with her beak to feed her chickens. As soon as she finds a grain of corn, she does not eat it herself, although she may be hungry enough, but commences to cackle, until her chickens are all about her, when she gives them the precious morsel, and then she begins to scratch and tear afresh. If a whole handful of corn is thrown to her, she does not touch it until she sees that her chickens are quite satisfied, and cannot eat any more. And that care continues on her part, until they are able to look after themselves, and leave her. In the Holy Scriptures, the Prophet Jeremias mentions only one hind that left her young, because there was no food for it. And therefore the Prophet did not wish even to mention her young, for he says merely: "Yea, the hind also brought forth in the field, and left it, because there was no grass."¹ And what did she leave? Certainly, what she gave birth to. But why does he not say so? Because, as Villa Regius answers, she left it. "That cannot be called a child, which the mother abandons,"² and does not support. Mark this, my dear brethren: the light of nature alone is sufficient to teach even unreasoning animals their duty of striving to support their young and feed them as well as they can.

The law of
charity also.

Man, endowed with reason, is bound to do this too, not only by the law of nature, but also by the law of charity and justice. The law of charity requires all to help their neighbor who is in extreme necessity, when they can, and to save his life, if he cannot help himself. How much more, then, does it not require parents to have that care for their own flesh and blood, whom they have brought into the world! For, who would be bound to support children, if parents were not? And this is not to be understood merely of little children, and of the parents' obligation to feed and clothe them; but also, according to the same law, the father and mother are bound in conscience to support their children, when the latter are grown up, according to their condition, and to see that they leave them enough to live on decently.

The want of
this charity
causes many
sins.

What a great responsibility parents incur by forgetting the obligations of charity and neglecting this duty! Who does not

¹ Nam et cerva in agro peperit, et reliquit, quia non erat herba.—Jerem. xiv. 5.

² Improprium videtur quos dixerat reliquisse, filios nominasse.

know, by experience, the misery, sin and vice that are caused by want and poverty, especially when one has not been always poor from his childhood? I am filled with wonder whenever I recollect that the devil dared to attack Jesus Christ in the desert, and to tempt Him. For, I think to myself, he probably had heard the voice of the heavenly Father speaking to His Son, who was being baptised in the Jordon, and giving Him authority to teach the whole world; and he must have known how our Lord fasted in a most superhuman manner, for forty days and nights. How, then, could he dare to tempt Him? For he should have had enough proof that his temptations would be powerless with the Son of God. Besides, if the devil had known beforehand that he would be defeated, he would have left Christ in peace, partly out of envy, so as not to give Him occasion of greater merit, partly through pride, that he might not be conquered and be forced to submit. How, then; did he dare, I ask again, to tempt our Lord? Because, as Theodoret answers, he had no doubt of victory. It is true that the voice he heard saying that Christ was the Son of God, restrained him somewhat. And he was not a little frightened by His long fasting. But “when He had fasted,” says the Scripture of Christ, “forty days and forty nights, afterwards He was hungry.”¹ When the devil saw that, he had some hope of succeeding. Theodoret says: “When the enemy saw that he was hungry, he began to hope for victory.”² Now think of this, my dear brethren, and conclude therefrom: If the devil hoped to conquer Christ our Lord, no matter what he may, or may not have known of Him, he knew, at all events, enough of His former life to see that He was a holy and perfect Man. If, I say, in spite of that, he promised himself a victory over Him, simply because he saw that He was hungry, what would not the wicked tempter hope to accomplish with a hungry and needy person who, as he knows, is not the Son of God? Into what sins, injustice, theft, impurity, and shameful actions, could he not lead children, by his temptations, when he knows that they suffer from hunger! “Command that these stones be made bread.”³ Try to earn something by that traffic. See, now you have an opportunity of making money by stealing, by going into that company, or by committing sin. Would to God that the devil had nothing but hopes in this way! Would to God that the world had not such experience of crime commit-

¹ . . . Postea esurivit.—Matth. iv. 2.

² Vidit hostis famem, et victoriam speravit.

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

ted by children through poverty and want ! And alas, how many sins, of which we know nothing, come from the same cause, nor shall we know anything of them, until the great day of reckoning comes, when they shall be declared to the whole world ! Children, indeed, commit grievous sins and are not to be excused, when they try to procure, by unlawful means, the necessaries of life, that their parents left them without. For, as far as possible, they should endeavor to find some lawful occupation, and trust in divine providence to supply them with what is needful. But, at the same time, woe to those parents who do not perform their duty by providing for, and supporting their sons and daughters as well as they can ! All the sins and evils that follow from their neglect are to be attributed to them, and they must answer for them in judgment.

The law of justice as well.

Finally, the law of justice binds parents to perform their duty, in this respect, to their children. As long as I am the owner of a horse, and it is in my possession, I alone am bound to feed it, if I wish it to live ; and if I bring it into another's stable, or knowingly allow it to go there without leave from the owner of the stable, and intending thus that he should support my horse, I commit an injustice. Now, children belong to their parents, under God, and therefore these latter, and no others, are bound to do their best to feed and support them properly. In a word, it is a general rule that he who gives life to a thing, is bound to preserve that thing, and to supply it with what is necessary to its natural existence. A tree receives its life from the earth, and from the earth it also gets its nourishment ; the fruit has its life from the tree, and must be supported by the same tree, until it is ripe. Father and mother have, under God, given life to their children, and therefore, they are in justice bound to support those children, as well as they can. So that there can be no doubt that parents are obliged to take this care of their children, for the law of nature, the law of charity, the law of justice, and even the reason itself of every one, who has not lost all vestige of humanity, prove this. But would to God that all who know their duty in this respect, fulfilled it exactly ! How is that, you again ask, my dear brethren ; are there parents in the world who neglect that duty ? Indeed there are, and not a few of them, too, are to be found amongst Catholic Christians, as we shall see in the

Second Part.

The first great fault committed against this duty, will seem strange indeed to you, and it is common enough amongst those who are least to be suspected of it, namely, the rich and wealthy, who can leave their children money enough. That fault is committed by those mothers who, without sufficient cause, or through exaggerated fears, do not nurse their own children, but intrust them to the care of strangers, that they themselves may have less trouble. God Himself complains of such people by the Prophet Jeremias: "Even the sea monsters have given suck to their young; the daughter of my people is cruel, like the ostrich in the desert."¹ Of this bird, Job says: "She leaveth her eggs on the earth. She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers."² Unnatural mothers that you are; unless you are prevented from performing this duty by real illness or weakness, or other reasonable cause! Why has your Creator given you children, if not that you may attend to them? How can children have a natural, proper, and childlike love for you, if you neglect them in their tenderest years?

Mothers who, without weighty reasons, do not nurse their own children, sin against this duty.

And how many great evils are often the consequence of that which you would try to ignore altogether, if you could! For, how do you know the character of the people to whom you intrust your children? Do you know their dispositions and inclinations? Whether they are well, or ill-reared? Whether they are inclined to sin and vice? If this latter is the case, your poor children will be infected with their wickedness and vice, and be boorish, rude, and uncultivated in their manners, and utterly unlike their parents; for experience shows that children easily copy the manners and dispositions of those who take care of them. Hence, Titus, the son of Vespasian, was always sickly and delicate, because his nurse had a secret malady. Tiberius Nero, who was called Biberius Nero, on account of his drunken habits, was brought up by a nurse who was much given to wine. Caligula was a blood-thirsty tyrant, as all the world knows, and he inherited that character from his nurse. It is frequently the case that nurses are wicked people, who practise witchcraft, and initiate the little children intrusted to their care, in their diabolical art, and the children are with difficulty induced to give it up afterwards. On account of these and other similar evils, there have

Many evils follow therefrom.

¹ Sed et lamiae lactaverunt catulos suos: filia populi mei crudelis, quasi struthio in deserto.—Lam. iv. 3.

² Derelinquit ova sua in terra. Duratur ad filios quasi non sint ei.—Job xxxix. 14-16.

been great queens, and princesses, and ladies of the highest rank, and there are some still, who would never allow others to look after their children, no matter how troublesome they themselves might find it to do so. "The daughter of my people is cruel like the ostrich in the desert."¹ Unmerciful as ostriches are those mothers, who through sheer love of their own comfort, neglect the children that God gave them to look after, and intrust them to the care of strangers!

Parents who do not support all their children alike.

Another class, who do not support their children properly, consists of those parents who, without just cause, do not treat their children alike, as far as the care of their temporal welfare is concerned. Sometimes a son or a daughter takes complete possession of the father's or mother's heart. When that is the case, no trouble nor expense is spared to dress them nicely, to educate them well, and to give them a position in the world, while the other sons or daughters, because they are not so beautiful, or have some natural defect, and cannot get any share in their parents' affection, are treated with indifference, and are allowed to get on as best they may. Every effort is made to induce these latter to enter a convent, or to obtain a benefice for them, whether they are fit for it or not, whether they are called by God to that state, or not, whether they wish it themselves, or not; all these questions are passed over lightly enough, as long as the favorite son or daughter can have the whole inheritance. Unjust father, unjust mother, says St. Ambrose, do you know what you are doing? This favoritism is a torch that will kindle the fire of dissension in your family and your descendants. It will sow the seeds of jealousy, of envy, vindictiveness, lawsuits, and disputes between brothers and sisters. Are they not all your children? Does not the one, as well as the other, come from you? Has not the one, as well as the other, been left with you by God as a deposit? Why, therefore, should you care more for one, than for the other? Your children have an equal share of your flesh and blood; let them also share equally in your affection.² It is frequently the case that, by a just judgment of God, the children who are idolized, as favorites of their parents, looked upon as the hope of the family, and who therefore receive the far greater share of the inheritance, through some trickery or other, either die an untimely death, or have no children of their own, or else they lose and squander away the property they

¹ *Filla populi mei crudelis, quasi struthio in deserto.*

² *Jungat liberos æqualis gratia quos jungit æqualis natura.*

have so unjustly acquired, and they are often the very ones who give least comfort and consolation, and who cause the most grief and sorrow to their parents. And that is to be expected! "Thou art just, oh, Lord, and Thy judgment is right."¹

The third class consists of those rich but avaricious parents, whose only care is to be able to leave a large sum of money to their children at their death, while during their lives they either allow their children to remain idle, or do not make them learn a trade, or profession, so as to save expense, and make them rich afterwards. What a wretched way that is to provide for children! That is not the way to support them according to their condition. What good will your money be to them after your death? They will be ill-mannered, boorish, and ignorant, fit for no important office, and they will resemble blocks of wood that are silvered or gilded over; they will not know how to do anything but spend the money, that you have saved for them, with their own children, and that they will do sooner or later, until they have nothing left, and are reduced to want and poverty. No, Christian parents, the best inheritance you can leave your children is some honest trade, business, or profession, which you must have them taught in their youth, so that afterwards they may be able to provide for themselves, although you cannot leave them anything. This is also meant for those misers who, when their children have chosen a state of life, either refuse them the promised sum of money, or do not help them to get on, although they could easily afford to do so. That is often the reason why children secretly look forward to, and long for the death of their old father or mother.

The fourth class of those who do not provide for their children as they ought, consists of those parents who dress themselves and their children above their means and condition. What a frightful abuse that is in our days, even amongst Christians, who renounce formally the pomps and vanities of the world in holy Baptism, and profess to follow the standard of the humble Jesus on the narrow way of penance, and of the cross! What a fearful abuse, I repeat, is that accursed luxury in dress! What an amount of money it costs every year in a town, and that money is sent away to foreign countries to bring home new fashions and new dresses! How many respectable families, who could otherwise live decently according to their state, are thereby brought to poverty, because they wish to put on as good an ap-

Who through avarice, do not allow their children to study or learn a trade that they may leave them more money at their death.

They who dress themselves and their children above their station.

¹ *Justus es, Domine, et rectum judicium tuum.—Ps. cxviii. 137.*

pearance as others, and do not wish to dress differently from the rest of the world ! I will not dwell on what most of the holy Fathers say of it, namely, that luxury in dress can hardly be without sin, nor shall I now say what kind of a sin it is, nor how many sins it occasions ; I merely ask you, how can it be consistent with the proper nourishment, support, and temporal interest of your children and of your children's children, if your yearly income is barely sufficient to pay the merchants and shopkeepers, and if all that you make by your business or employment is spent on dress for yourselves and your children? And that is only too often the case nowadays. So that one can hardly distinguish between the different conditions that have been appointed amongst people by God, nor can one distinguish between the daughters of a rich and a poor man. To such a degree of arrogance have people come, that it is enough to excite laughter. Many, when they go out, carry their whole property on their backs, so that when they come home again, they have hardly bread and meat enough to eat, and to feed the bodies that they deck out in such a costly manner. Nor have they anything left to share with Jesus Christ in the person of His poor, as they ought, and in addition to the waste of their income, they incur debts that they will hardly ever be able to pay. When Totila, the king of the Goths, sent one of his officers, dressed up in royal robes, to St. Bernard, the holy man said to the latter, as soon as he saw him : " Put off what you are wearing, my son, for it is not your own."¹ The same might be said nowadays to many children of the world, who strut about in fashionable clothing : Sir, madam, son, or daughter, that dress is not your own. Those precious ear-rings, that silver or gold lace, that velvet or silk cloak, that damask robe, belong to the merchant, who has entered all your magnificent dresses in his book of debts, and who must, perhaps, wait a long time before he is paid. That fashionable dress, those embroidered slippers, belong to the tailor or shoemaker, who is not yet paid for his labor, and who, therefore, must suffer the pinch of poverty. Put it off ; it is not yours.' Such is the case, my dear brethren, with many people in the world, although I do not know any of them in particular, who run into debt through extravagance in dress, and impoverish others by not paying them at all, or by deferring payment for a long time.

And thus
wilfully re-
duce them-

And what can be the result of this in the long run, but poverty ? For, not only do parents thus make themselves unable to

¹ Depone tibi, depone quod geris ; nam tuum non est.

² Depone, tuum non est.

leave their children anything, but they also deliberately place the latter in such a position, that they can never raise themselves out of the secret poverty into which they have fallen, because it is a very hard thing, indeed, to be obliged to give up a position to which one is accustomed, and to dress more plainly, and thus make one's poverty known to every one. Thus children are often driven to unlawful means and dangerous plans in order to be able to dress as well as before, and of course they remain always poor then. Oh, if every one profited by the exhortations of the holy Apostle, St. Paul: "But having food, and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content"! My dear Christians, if we have enough to clothe and feed ourselves decently, let us be satisfied therewith, and then families will be much better off, and the children can be properly provided for. But there is no use in talking! People will insist on showing off. The fashions and customs of the world must be followed, and many think that it is better to have a dish less at table, and even to suffer hunger and poverty, rather than appear less than others through Christian modesty and humility! Let those who are of this opinion do as they please, as far as I am concerned. Reduce yourselves to want, if you are determined on it, but do not hereafter blame any but yourselves, and your own wilfulness, pride, and vanity, for the poverty that you will surely suffer. Cruel, heartless parents that you are, who thus foolishly squander what should be employed to bring up and support your children decently!

To this class belong also those parents who, along with their children, lead an idle and luxurious life: The father gives many unnecessary entertainments; the mother and her daughters spend the whole morning in bed; the greater part of the day is passed in doing nothing, and the rest is taken up with visiting, gambling, eating, and drinking; thus the yearly income is found barely sufficient, and they will have nothing to leave their children afterwards. The rich glutton "feasted sumptuously every day,"¹ as the Gospel says, whilst poor Lazarus lay before his door, begging in vain for a piece of bread. It seems to me that many parents act in the same manner: they eat, drink, and enjoy themselves, without caring how their children will fare afterwards; although the latter live in hopes of inheriting enough from their parents to continue the same luxurious mode of life.

selves to poverty.

Who, along with their children, lead an idle, luxurious life.

¹ Habentes autem alimenta, et quibus tegamur, his contenti sumus.—1. Tim. vi. 8.

² Epulabatur quotidie splendide.—Luke xvi. 19.

But they will be disappointed, and will perhaps be like the poor Lazarus, forced to beg their bread from door to door.

Who spend
their money
in gambling
and drink-
ing.

Finally, the most heartless, and as far as this matter is concerned, the most wicked parents are those fathers, and (what a disgraceful thing!) those mothers even, who are given to gambling and drinking, and who either shorten or destroy, by their drunken habits, the lives that they are bound to preserve for the good of their children, or make themselves unable to attend to their business, employment, or housekeeping as they ought, and to lay by something for their children; or, as is, alas, frequently the case, by constant tipping, spend on Sundays and holy-days what they earn during the week, nay, even what their wives and children earn by their labor, and meanwhile the poor mother and her wretched children must remain hungry at home, feeding themselves with bitter tears, and not having any decent clothes to cover themselves with. What an injustice crying to Heaven! The very men to whom God has given wives and children to look after, are the ones who rob them of what belongs to them, and bring them to poverty! It is a sin against Christian mercy not to defend and support poor widows and orphans when one can; what a fearful cruelty it must then be to take from them what they have, and to reduce them to beggary; and those one's own wives and children! And to do that by drunkenness, that is to say, by committing sin, and offending God! What sins follow from that! How those children must hate and curse their father! How desperate the mother must become, so that the whole family are likely to exchange temporal for eternal misery! Poor children, how I pity you who have such parents! It were better for you to have been born in the desert, with wild beasts for your father and mother, for they would at least have provided for you properly! And you, parents (wild beasts, I should call you, were it not that the name is too good for you, for even wild beasts suffer hunger and thirst that they may feed their young), what think you of your unnatural conduct? The pelican, as naturalists tell us, draws the blood from its own breast in order to feed its young; but you, reasoning beings (shame on you!), drink, so to speak, the blood of your own children, for you snatch the bread out of their mouths to satisfy your gluttony and drunkenness. How will you account for your cruelty before the judgment-seat of God? If you do not wish to support your children properly, why have you brought them into the world?

Conclusion
and exhortation.

Think of this, and ponder on it, Christian parents! Attend, as

far as you can, and in the first place, to the eternal salvation of your children, and next to that, see that you provide for their support and temporal welfare with all possible diligence. Think to yourselves: My state of life, to which God has called me, requires this; I am bound to it, also, by the law of Christian and parental charity towards my children, and by the law of justice, nay, even by the law of nature itself. If the prosperity of your children is a matter of indifference to you, although I can hardly imagine that, then remember, at least, that your children belong to the number of those of whom Christ has said: "Amen, I say to you: as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me."¹ If the Son of God, still a child, were intrusted to any father and mother, with what great care and diligence would they not attend to Him! But you must now consider the same Son of God, Jesus Christ, in the persons of your children. If the labor is sometimes too much for you, if you have a great deal of trouble in supporting and bringing up your children, remember what God said to our forefather after the fall: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread;"² and therefore say to yourselves: In the sweat of my face I must work for myself and for those who belong to me, so that they may not be brought to want through my idleness, and that they may not be without that which God, our common Father, has commanded us to pray for every day: "Give us this day our daily bread."³ But think at the same time: Nothing can be gained without labor, therefore I will work as well as I can, and spare no trouble, with renewed confidence in my heavenly Father, who feeds the birds of the air, and who, if I fear and love Him, will not let me and mine want for anything, according to the testimony of the Prophet: "I have not seen the just forsaken, nor his seed seeking bread."⁴ I will trust in God and in righteousness, and will place my confidence in Him, as well as in my daily labor, and then I shall receive daily bread and temporal blessings for myself and my children. Amen.

tation to
parents to
provide for
their chil-
dren.

¹ Amen dico vobis: quamdiu fecistis uni ex his fratribus meis minimis, mihi fecistis.—*Matth. xxv. 40.*

² In sudore vultus tui vesceris pane.—*Gen. iii. 19.*

³ Panem nostrum quotidianum da nobis hodie.

⁴ Non vidi justum derelictum, nec semen ejus quærens panem.—*Ps. xxxvi. 25.*

Another Introduction for the Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost:

Text.

Cujus filius est?—Matth. xxii. 42.

“Whose son is He?”

How that question will one day resound in the valley of Josaphat! Whose son is he;¹ whose daughter is she? Who is the father, who is the mother, of these children? What a consoling question it will be for many parents, who have brought up good and pious children, and who can now give them up to their Judge, saying: I am their father; I am their mother! Here are all my children with me; I have lost none of them through my own fault. Whose son is he; whose daughter is she? What a terrible question for most parents who have brought up their children according to the maxims of the vain world, and who now stand before their Judge to hear Him pronounce sentence of condemnation on themselves and their children too, unless they have done true penance in this life! Hitherto, my dear brethren, we have seen in detail, etc.—*continues as before.*

FORTY-EIGHTH SERMON.

ON THE GREAT CARE THAT PARENTS MUST TAKE OF THEIR CHILDREN, AS FAR AS TEMPORAL THINGS ARE CONCERNED.

Subject.

1st. Some parents care too much for their children, and for their sake make an unlawful use of otherwise lawful means.
2d. Others use unjust means. The first is great folly; the second excessive stupidity.—*Preached on the twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost and the Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.*

Text.

Beatus venter, qui te portavit!—Luke xi. 27.

“Blessed is the womb that bore Thee!”

¹ *Cujus filius est?*

Introduction.

Oh, truly happy and blessed Mother, who amongst all women, wast alone found worthy to bear in thy womb a Son whose Father is the Eternal God, to nourish and suckle at thy virginal bosom Him at whose Name all in Heaven, on earth, and under the earth must bend the knee! Forgive me if I do not say more in thy praise to-day, for I wish to finish the subject I have hitherto been speaking of, in thy honor, and that thou and thy Son may be served, loved, and praised by many others. And happy, too, are you parents, who will one day be able to say with truth: I have reared, nursed, fed, and supported my children, and taught them during their lives to love Jesus Christ, to be His friends and imitators, His brothers and sisters, so that they may now rejoice forever with their Father in Heaven! But woe, if the contrary is the case, if your son or daughter must cry out from the flames of hell: "Accursed be the womb that bore me!"¹ Cursed be the father who gave me life, the mother who suckled me! Or if it must be said of you: Cursed be the father, or mother, who gave life to, or brought forth, that son, that daughter! Their miserable children are in hell for all eternity, because their parents did not bring them up for Heaven, and because they did not support them, and look after their temporal interests, as they could and should have done. That such a terrible misfortune may be averted from every one, all faults regarding this important duty should be carefully amended. In my last sermon I proved that parents sin by not caring enough for the support and temporal interest of their children; now I am about to speak to those parents who care too much for their children's temporal welfare, and thus sin by excess.

Plan of Discourse.

Some parents care too much for their children, and for their sake make an unlawful use of otherwise lawful means. The first part. Others use unjust means. The second part. The first is great folly; the second excessive stupidity.

Save all parents from those two evils, oh, heavenly Father, by the intercession of that most Blessed Mother, who bore Thy Son in her womb! And do you, oh, holy angels guardian, help herein, that we may say to all children of their parents: "Blessed is the womb that bore thee."²

¹ *Maledictus venter, qui me portavit!*

² *Beatus venter, qui te portavit.*

What is excessive is of no use.

Is it possible to be too careful of the temporal prosperity of children, especially when lawful means are used to secure it? It is hardly possible to support one's self and one's children decently, nowadays, without a good deal of trouble. Many people have large families, and they know not but they may be larger still; all their children must have enough to eat and drink, and they must dress according to their station. All that requires a good sum every year; and how can it be obtained unless people work hard for it? The father and mother have their hands full, until they get their children decently settled in life. Besides, the latter expect something on their parents' death. Oh, it is easy to talk for one who is sure of having his meals at the proper time, and of getting what clothing he wants, without having to ask where they come from. But that will not do for us, people of the world; we must work hard to get what we want. How can we, then, do too much? If we use lawful means for our object, who can accuse us of excess, or say that we are guilty of sin? And you are quite right, too, my dear brethren, only you must remember the old proverb, "All excess is faulty." Even the care you must have of your children's temporal welfare, if it is to profit them anything, should be regulated by prudence and discretion.

Such is the case with parents who are so eager about their children's welfare, that they neglect the service of God, although they do not make use of unlawful means.

Now, there are fathers and mothers of families who depend altogether on their own industry and labor, for their happiness and prosperity. They are so taken up with their domestic cares, with their trade, or business, or employment, that they hardly think of God once in the day; they never hear Mass on week days; they have no time for piety or devotion; they hardly hear a sermon once in the half year; they are satisfied with going to confession and communion once or twice a year, and they are always uneasy, anxious and disturbed; their thoughts and ideas are constantly turning on making money, and in order to attain that end with greater certainty, they seldom give alms to the poor and needy, although they thus act in a very unchristian and unlawful manner, or else they give alms very sparingly and not according to their means, solely through fear that they or their children may suffer loss, if they refuse to give alms altogether. It is of such people that I speak; and I say, without any fear of being mistaken, or of being guilty of a rash judgment, that they do too much altogether. Their care for their children's temporal welfare is excessive, and therefore I call it foolish and culpable.

¹ Omne nimium vertitur in vitium.

In the first place, they forget themselves in their eagerness to labor for others. They bake the bread to feed others, while they themselves suffer hunger. They are like the oxen that plough the land, but can never reap a crop off it, nor have any advantage from their labor but the straw that is thrown to them for food. They forget their own lives, that their children may have the means of living a few, uncertain years here below, and they keep only the useless straw for their immortal souls, which they allow to remain poor and naked, like a beggar's child, for after death they will have nothing left to live on for eternity. What folly that is! Well ordered charity should begin from one's self, especially in what concerns the soul. The learned and holy Bishop Salvianus writes with great compassion for such parents: "Oh, unhappy and miserable condition, to use temporal goods to gain happiness for others, and sorrow for one's self."¹ Do you, then, care so little for your souls, fathers and mothers, that through love of your sons or daughters, and merely because they bear your names, you neglect your own spiritual welfare, and are prepared to go bare and empty of good works into the house of your eternity? Salvianus continues: "Love your children—we can find no fault with that—but next to yourselves—love them so as not to appear to hate yourselves;"² for it is a foolish love that makes us think so much of others, that we forget ourselves. Remember that the judgment of God awaits you after death, and then the word will be: "Behold the man and his works;"³ and the first question will be: What do you bring for your soul? Where are the good works for which you can expect a reward? But you do not think of that now; you forget yourselves; you grovel in the earth like worms seeking something to eat. Your only care is to leave your children some money, that they may enjoy themselves after you die, so that you leave your poor souls in poverty and nakedness. "Return rather to thyself."⁴ First God, then your souls, and after that your children. Give, therefore, first of all, to God what belongs to Him, and to your souls what belongs to them, and then you are free to look after the spiritual and temporal welfare of your children. But what have I said? That you labor for the good of others? That you are too anxious about the food and support

It is a folly, because they forget their own souls to labor for others.

¹ O infelix et miseranda conditio, bonis suis aliis præparare beatitudinem, sibi afflictionem.

² Amate, non obstimus, amate filios vestros, sed tamen secundo a vobis gradu. Ita eos diligite, ne vos ipsos odisse videamini.

³ Ecce homo, et opera ejus.

⁴ Revertere potius in te.

of your children? I should rather have said that you care too little about the temporal prosperity of your sons and daughters, and I should have classed you amongst those idle and careless parents, of whom we spoke in the last sermon, for you neglect the best means of securing your own and your children's temporal welfare.

For they forget God, from whom all blessings must come.

For what are you thinking of, foolish people that you are? Do you think you can have a blessing on your household, when you neglect and refuse to serve Him who alone can bestow a blessing on your labor and trouble? If God is not on your side, what will all your care, and anxiety, and labor, and trouble profit you? If God wishes to bestow a blessing on you, who can prevent Him from so doing? But, as I have said in a former sermon, you wish to begin the building without the architect, and of course you will not succeed. "Except the Lord build the house," that is, helps you to support your family, all that you do for that purpose is labor in vain.' So that you place your stone and timber on a foundation of sand, and the first strong wind will tumble the whole thing down. "You brought it home," says the Prophet, "and I blew it away,"² because you brought it without my help. You do not act sensibly, therefore, nor prudently, for the welfare and advantage of your children, when you labor and work in forgetfulness of the Almighty and His service.

They are much more prudent who labor with God as their Friend.

No, Christian parents, you must manage far differently, if you wish to secure your own and your children's advantage. History tells us of Julius Agricola, a Roman senator, who in his old age fell into disgrace with the emperor, so that he was deprived of his office and dignity. He bore his misfortune with great mildness and patience, and when he was on the point of death, he bequeathed nearly all his property to the emperor, and left only a very small portion of it to his own children. Nearly every one who knew of this strange proceeding, looked upon it as madness and folly; for, said they, he should certainly have provided for his children. Their father's property belonged to them of right, and they stood more in need of it than the emperor did. But others who understood the matter better, could see the prudence and foresight of the plan, and they said that Agricola never did a wiser or more clever thing in his life, for he thus made the

¹ Nisi Dominus ædificaverit domum, in vanum laboraverunt qui ædificant eam.—Ps. cxxvi. 1.

² Intulstis in domum, et exsufflavi illud.—Agg. i. 9.

prosperity of his children and descendants far more secure than it otherwise would have been, since, although he left them but a small inheritance, they were sure of the emperor's favor; whereas the greatest riches would have been of little use to them, if the emperor was their enemy. There are many parents, my dear brethren, who resemble the unthinking people who condemned Agricola's action: they are so anxious about the support of their children, that they forget God and neglect His service. They think, foolish people that they are: The time I give to hearing Mass, to attending to different devotions, to prayer and to the practice of virtue, is taken away from my business; I could do a good deal for my children during that time, and they want all I can give them! The alms that I could give to God, in the persons of the poor and needy, are also good for my children, and I must not take away anything from them, and so on. Oh, what folly! you are like a blind man trying to judge of color; you are reckoning without your host. A little of the favor and friendship of the Emperor of Heaven and earth would do more for your and your children's temporal prosperity, than half the riches of earth without His favor and grace. The more children you have, the richer you mean to leave them; the more, if you are wise, you will try to make God friendly to you and yours by good works, so as to benefit by His infinite power and generosity; the more time, too, should you spend in prayer, and other exercises of piety; and the more generous should you be in helping the poor and needy, so as to have as many friends as possible to pray to God for your children, and to gain His favor for them.

Therefore, I repeat, give to God what belongs to God, and to your souls what belongs to them. This should be your first care. Everything else you may leave to the common Father of all, the Ruler of the world, whose most bounteous Providence will certainly know how to bless your moderate labor and care, and to supply the wants of your children, as He Himself says: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you."¹ No matter how busy you are, let not a day pass by without hearing Mass, unless, as sometimes happens, a work of Christian charity may prevent you, for charity goes before all other virtues, and in such circumstances God must often be left for God's sake. You may believe me fully when I tell you that the hearing of holy Mass every day will not in the least

Exhortation to all, first to seek God and their souls' welfare, and then to work for their children.

¹ *Quærte primum regnum Dei et justitiam ejus, et hæc omnia adjicientur vobis.—Luke xii. 31.*

diminish, but will rather increase your temporal prosperity. Never let a month pass by without uniting yourselves to God by a worthy confession and communion. When the conscience is at peace and the will is always united with God, your labor is most likely to turn out well. Make a point of hearing a sermon every Sunday and holy-day, as long as you are in good health. It is only right that, after having labored the whole week for your mortal bodies, you should do something once a week at least, on days specially consecrated to God, for the support of your immortal souls, by giving them their supernatural food and encouraging them afresh in the divine service. In your daily domestic duties, do not forget the good intention ; keep yourselves in the presence of God by frequent ejaculations, and you will certainly have the Almighty as your helper in everything you do. When the boatmen on the river get what they call the help of God, that is to say, when their boats are carried swiftly onward by the rapids, they may lay aside their oars, while their boats go a long distance in a short time. In the same way must you act, too, anxious parents : keep God always on your side ; do not abandon Him even for a moment. Only try once what you can do by confidence in His Providence, and you will soon see that without God's help, all your care, labor, and trouble could profit nothing. There is another class of parents who are far too anxious about their children's temporal welfare, and who are still more wicked and foolish than the first class, because they use unlawful means to attain their object. We shall speak of them in the

Second Part.

Who use unjust means to support their families.

I speak to you now, misers without conscience, to whom it is a matter of indifference whether you make your profits justly or unjustly, as long as you can make them at all. The Wise Man says : " Nothing is more wicked than the covetous man,"¹ who has gone so far as to set his heart on money and riches, for there is no law, human, divine, or natural, that he is not ready to violate, in order to hoard up wealth. He does not pay his workmen ; he keeps shopkeepers and tradesmen a long time waiting for their money ; he falsifies his accounts, so as to escape paying his just debts ; he gives bribes to lawyers, that his opponent in a law-suit, although his case is just, may lose it. Merchants of this kind sell

¹ *Avaro nihil est scelestius.*—*Ecll.* x. 9.

bad wares as if they were good; tradesmen keep the material belonging to others, that is left after having finished their work; shopkeepers change weights and measures; public officials allow themselves to be bribed against the interests of justice; the rich lend money to the poor in time of want, at usurious interest; the powerful abuse their influence to rob widows and orphans, under a pretence of legality; many do not scruple to commit simony so as to get benefices for their sons; servants steal from their masters; others receive stolen goods, paying for them very cheaply, or keep what they find without making any inquiries for the owner, and so they go on, cheating their neighbors in different ways, for a paltry profit, or a worthless gain.

I must again cry out with Salvianus, and with still greater pity than before: "Oh, unhappy and miserable condition!"¹ Oh, foolish people, what are you thinking of? Where are your brains? Tell me, what do you intend to do? What do you desire? Do you mean to help your children in that way? If you intended to reduce them to beggary, and to bring yourselves, along with them, to temporal and eternal misery, then I should say to you: By all means go on, you will certainly attain your object; continue as you have begun, and you will gain your end, for you cannot adopt better means of so doing! And how could money, acquired unjustly, make your children rich? Divine word, daily experience, what have you to say to this? If even lawful labor and means are of no avail, without the help of God, to gain temporal prosperity, if that help cannot be hoped for when the divine service is neglected, even in things that are not commanded under pain of sin, what could you expect to accomplish, when God is against you, when you make the almighty, omnipresent God your sworn enemy? Do you think, perhaps, that God is so weak and feeble that He cannot defeat your unjust projects, and avenge Himself on you; or is He so careless and indifferent that He would not wish to do so? No! Injustice cannot thrive, as the old proverb says. The Lord says, by the Prophet Malachias: "They shall build up, and I will throw down; and they shall be called the borders of wickedness, and the people with whom the Lord is angry forever."² They will gather together, and when they think they have something, I will scatter their possessions to the winds. Mark what I now

They are foolish and senseless, because they thus rather bring themselves to poverty.

¹ O infelix et miseranda conditio!

² Isti ædificabunt, et ego destruiam, et vocabuntur termini impietatis et populus, cui iratus est Dominus usque in æternum.—Malach. i. 4.

say to you : The Almighty will either take away from you, by a premature death, those children for whom you now sacrifice your conscience and your eternal salvation, so that your ill-gotten wealth will fall into the hands of strangers (and happy will you be, oh, children, if God deals thus with you !), or else the saying, " Ill got, ill gone," will be verified in your case. Avaricious parents generally have spendthrift children, who very soon make away with what has been unjustly acquired ; or else an angry God, who has borne your wickedness so patiently, will know how to punish you for it by all kinds of calamities, so that your children and your children's children will be brought to bitter poverty.

Proved from
Scripture.

And that is what God threatens, by the Prophet Zacharias : " This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the earth, for every thief shall be judged. . . I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall come to the house of the thief, and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it, with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof." ¹ " The inheritance of the children of sinners shall perish," so that no one will know what has become of them, " and with their posterity shall be a perpetual reproach. " ² So says the Lord by the wise Ecclesiasticus. The children of the wicked, as we read in the book of Job, " shall be oppressed with want. " ³ They will have to beg their bread some day or other, at the doors of those whom their parents wronged. " The riches which he hath swallowed, he shall vomit up, and God shall draw them out of his belly ; and when he hath the things he coveted, he shall not be able to possess them. There was nothing left of his meat," which he should have shared with the poor, " and therefore nothing shall continue of his goods. " ⁴ Read the Holy Scriptures and you will find examples enough of this kind. Achan wished to enrich his family by unjust means, when he kept for himself the gold he found in Jericho, and therefore he and his whole family were destroyed by fire. ⁵ Giezi attempted to gain money unjustly,

¹ Hæc est maledictio, quæ egreditur super faciem omnis terræ, quia omnis fur judicabitur. . . Educam illud, dicit Dominus exercituum, et veniet ad domum furis. . . . et commorabitur in medio domus ejus, et consumet eum, et ligna ejus, et lapides ejus.—Zach. v. 3, 4.

² Filiorum peccatorum periet hæreditas et cum semine illorum assiduitas opprobrii.—Ecc. xii. 9.

³ Filii ejus atterentur egestate.—Job xx. 10.

⁴ Divitias, quas devoravit, evomet et de ventre illius extrahet illas Deus ; et cum habuerit quæ concupierat possidere non poterit. Non remansit de cibo ejus, et propterea nihil permanebit de bonis ejus.—Ibid. 15.

⁵ Jos. 7.

when against the command of his master Eliseus, he received presents from Naaman, and therefore he and all his descendants were smitten with leprosy.¹ King Saul tried to become rich by having the most valuable possessions of the Amalccites from destruction, and keeping them for himself against the command of God, and therefore his children were not allowed to succeed him on the throne.² Achab had seventy sons whom he wished to enrich, and in reality he made them exceedingly wealthy, but because he defrauded Naboth of his vineyard, he brought fearful calamities on himself and his sons.³ He himself died a violent death, and the Sacred Scripture says of his sons: "Jehu slew all that were left of the house of Achab, till there were no remains left of him."⁴ Woe, then, I cry out with the Prophet Jeremias: "Woe to him that buildeth up his house by injustice."⁵ Foolish parents, that is the way in which you build when you use unlawful means to secure your children's prosperity! You can leave them no other inheritance but a malediction from God!

And even if, as rarely happens, God sometimes, in His inscrutable designs, allows your wickedness to prosper, so that you can make your children rich, and give them a good position in the world, then your desire is quite fulfilled, is it not? And I must congratulate you! I must again cry out with Salvianus: Most unfortunate men that you are!⁶ If ever I had cause to deplore your misery, I have it now. Most unfortunate people that you are! your whole thought is how others may live comfortably for a time when you die, and you never think of the unhappy death that awaits yourselves! Do you then give yourselves up to the devil, along with your children, for a handful of money? Your children, I say, for they will either restore what you have gained unjustly, or they will not. If they do their duty, to what purpose have you saved money for them? To no purpose, unless to give them the trouble of restitution, and to reduce them to poverty, while you are suffering the torments of hell. If they do not make restitution, when they learn the injustices you committed, oh, woe to them, then, for they will certainly be lost for all eternity, and there is no other alternative! Could you treat your children more cruelly than that? And suppose that, somehow or other, they save their

They lose their own souls, and cause the loss of others.

¹ IV. Reg. v. ² I. Reg. xv. ³ IV. Reg. v.

⁴ Percussit Jehu omnes, qui reliqui erant de domo Achab donec non remanerent ex eo reliquæ.—IV. Reg. x. 1.

⁵ Vae, qui ædificat domum suam in injustitia.—Jerem. xxii. 13.

⁶ Infelicitissimi hominum!

souls ; you are still lost forever. What greater folly could there be, than to ruin one's self for the sake of others, and to walk deliberately into hell, that they may live a few years in comfort and pleasure ? Most wretched people that you are !¹

Yet there
are such
foolish par-
ents.

And yet there are parents who have reached such a degree of folly and madness, that they never trouble themselves about the hereafter. They think, like the ambitious mother of Nero, Agrippina, who was determined that her son should be emperor, and who answered the soothsayers, who assured her that Nero would kill her on ascending the throne: " Let him kill me; as long as he is emperor I do not care!"² Christian parents, it is not a lying soothsayer, but the God of truth Himself, who assures you that if you leave unjustly-acquired wealth to your children, you are lost forever; and if you try to enrich them by unlawful means, you incur the sentence of eternal damnation, the eternal death of the soul! What do you think of this? Do you say, like Agrippina, if not in words at least by your actions: " Let him kill me; as long as he is emperor I do not care." It makes no matter; I do not care for my soul; it can be lost forever, as long as my children are rich; I am quite ready to give myself to the devil, if that is the only way of providing for them. Provided my son gets that employment, that benefice, and my daughter makes a good match, my soul may go to hell. What folly! What madness! Woe to you, indeed, if you go to that place which you have so blindly chosen! Once you are there you will repent and think quite differently, when it will be too late. Accursed son, or daughter, you will then say, for your sake I have come to this place of torments from which I shall never be freed! What good is it to me now, that you have inherited a little money from me, since I must suffer hunger and thirst for all eternity? What does it profit me that you can live comfortably on what I have left you, while I am tormented here on your account? Of what use is it to me that you are in a good position in the world, since that very thing makes me now a laughing stock for the demons? Accursed be the hour that I gave you life! Oh, how blind, how foolish has my mistake been!

Expained
by an exam-
ple.

Such is doubtless the useless repentance of that wretched father of whom I have heard from credible witnesses: On his death-bed, he was warned and exhorted by his confessor to restore property that he had unjustly acquired, or else he would lose his soul. But, said he, sighing deeply, if I make restitution, my

¹ Infellicissimi hominum !

² Occidat dum imperet.

children will have nothing. That may be, said the confessor, but nevertheless, restitution must be made, or you are lost forever. Well, then, said the sick man, who was beginning to be moved by the priest's exhortations, I will send for my son, and tell him to make it. You may easily imagine how glad the priest was to hear this. But when the son came into the room, and heard of the turn things had taken, he was very much displeased, and cried out: Father, what have you done? Do you want to leave me a beggar? Alas, my dear son, said the other, it cannot be helped; if I do not make restitution, I am lost forever! Nonsense; said the son; you need not trouble so much about that; when you have spent a few days in hell, you will get quite used to it; so you may leave things as they are, and let me inherit what belongs to me. Wicked and selfish son, have you allowed the thirst for money to take such possession of you, that you do not hesitate to sacrifice your father, from whom you have received your life, to eternal flames? And still more to be deplored the conduct of the miserable father, who was persuaded to change his mind by his son's words, and to die without making restitution! Wretched soul; go, for your son's sake, to that place of torments, and see whether you will get so used to it as your son pretended!

Christians, think of this now, while there is still time to correct your mistake. Often imagine yourselves to have arrived at that last moment, in which you are about to depart into a long eternity, and change now what you would wish to have changed then, like a far more prudent father, of whom Father Francis Labata tells us. This man, during his life, used to practise usury, so that he might be able to leave his son a rich inheritance; but on his death bed, he received a special grace from God (such as is hardly given to one of hundreds who defer their repentance so long): he confessed his sins, repented of them, and had already made arrangements to restore his ill-gotten goods, when, as in the other case, the son came into the room, and threw himself down on his knees at his father's bedside, complaining with tears of the poverty to which he was about to be reduced. Have pity, said he, on your unfortunate son! Yes, answered the father, I will; but you must do something for me. What is it, asked the son; I will do it willingly, though it cost me half my life blood. I want you, said the father, to take a burning coal, and hold it in your hand for an hour. The son ran to the fire at once; but hardly had he touched the coal when he let it fall again; the

Conclusion and warning to all, to act like prudent parents, and not lose their souls for their children's sake.

pain was too great for him to bear. He came back, and said: Father, I cannot do it. How, my son, replied the other; I have worked so hard for you, and you cannot hold a live coal in your hand for one hour! How then can you expect me to burn alive in hell for all eternity, body and soul, for your sake? No, I cannot do that! I am not so foolish! Away with all that does not lawfully belong to me! Provide for yourself as best you can; I wish to go to Heaven. Such, Christian parents, should be the unalterable resolution of you all, before the hour of death comes. Examine yourselves often, and imagine that you see before you the torments of hell. Ask yourselves: Am I ready to suffer hunger and thirst for eternity? Am I willing to descend into that lake of fire, and to burn there forever? Oh, no, I cannot; I will not! And make your resolution, once for all: I will never do anything for any one's sake, no matter how dear he is to me, for which I would have to go to hell? I will take all possible care of those belonging to me, and will work for them, but in a lawful manner, so as not to go against my conscience, nor injure my soul. I desire and wish for nothing for myself and my children, but what God is pleased to give us, and to bestow on my labor. And if you are not rich, say often to your children: Although we are poor, yet the will of God must be done! We have still the most precious thing of all: we are poor, but we can enjoy many goods if we fear and love God; therefore, we will live and labor together, so that we may possess eternal riches and honors, and then we shall be wealthy enough. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost:

Text.

Illi autem neglexerunt et abierunt, alius in villam suam, alius vero ad negotiationem suam.—Matth. xxii. 5.

“But they neglected and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise.”

It happens with us mortals nowadays, just as Christ says in the parable: The King of Heaven invites all to the eternal marriage feast of His Son, and how do most of those who are invited act? They disregard the invitation and go their ways,¹ “one to his farm, another to his merchandise;” that is to say, their whole

¹ *Illi autem neglexerunt et abierunt.*

attention is turned to earthly things, so that they forget eternity, and that they do, not for their own sake, but, as a general rule, for the sake of others—for their children and their posterity—so as to leave them well off. Is not that great folly and madness? In the last sermon, my dear brethren, on this subject, etc.—*continues as before.*

FORTY-NINTH SERMON.

ON THE USEFULNESS OF ALMS-GIVING FOR THE TEMPORAL WELFARE OF PARENTS AND CHILDREN.

Subject.

Parents who have many children and a small income, must for that very reason be generous to the poor; for thereby even their worldly possessions will be increased in this life.—*Preached on the sixth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Unde illos quis poterit hic saturare panibus in solitudine?—
Mark viii. 4.

“From whence can any one fill them here with bread in the wilderness?”

Introduction.

Such a great crowd of hungry people: there were four thousand of them; how could they be fed? And in the wilderness, too, where there was nothing but thorns and brambles? We have only seven loaves, and they are hardly enough for ourselves. How is it possible to satisfy so many people with such a small quantity? Thus did the disciples speak to Christ. We are nearly in the same position, my dear brethren. We are bound by the divine and natural law to help the poor and needy with alms. How can we help them all? is the question that some ask; there are such numbers of poor nowadays. And so none of them are helped. The question of others is: Who can give alms in the desert? That is, in such bad times that one has enough to do

¹ *Quis poterit in solitudine?*

to provide for himself? And thus the times become very hard, indeed, for the poor and needy. Who can give alms? is the question of most, especially married people. I have only seven loaves; that is, I have barely enough, and have a large family to support. My income is hardly enough to support us decently, so that I am bound to economize. And thus, very little Christian mercy is shown to the poor, or it is not shown as generously as it should be. That is a clear sign of a want of faith and confidence in the providence, power, and goodness of God. As if He who can produce so much from an insignificant seed that is put into the ground, could not or would not make rich compensation for what is given to the poor! The disciples of Christ, who were then men of little faith, saw that He had power so to multiply the seven loaves, that when they were distributed among the hungry crowd, there still remained more than there originally were. That is, as St. Augustine says, a symbol of the fruitfulness of alms: Christ wished to teach us thereby that alms-giving does not lessen, but increases our wealth. And that is what I shall now explain, in order to refute the excuses already mentioned, that people bring forward, and especially the last one.

Plan of Discourse

If you have many children and a small income, yet you can, and even must, give generous alms to the poor; for thereby your worldly possessions will be increased in this life. That is the whole subject of to-day's exhortation.

Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, thou wast especially the Mother of the poor, while on earth, for at the wedding of the poor people in Cana of Galilee, thou saidst to thy Son: "They have no wine."¹ There are many of whom it could now be said with truth: "They have no bread."² Thou canst intercede for these, by moving all here present to do the work of Christian mercy. May thy Son grant us that grace through thy intercession, and the holy angels guardian.

Folly of a father who, because he has many children, does not wish to sow seed.

A father of a family keeps his rye and wheat in the barn, and does not plant them in his land; his servant comes and tells him it is time to sow the seed. No, says the other, I will not sow; I have too large a family; my income is hardly enough to support them decently; the times are bad; I must keep what corn I have, or I may have none at all bye-and-bye.

¹ Vinum non habent.—John ii. 3.

² Panem non habent.

What, the servant, who is far more sensible than his master, says, what do you mean? Have you lost your senses? That is the very reason that you should sow the seed more abundantly, if you wish to support yourself and your family. The more children you have, the more crops you want; and in return for the one grain of corn you put into the ground, you will have fifty, sixty, or even more at harvest time. If you had no seed at all left, you should even buy some, so as to be able to sow, and to prevent your land from lying idle at such a loss to yourself.

A merchant gives up his business, because he has a large family, and he wishes to keep his money; you tell him there are many rich people who are willing to borrow from him at five per cent. interest, and to give him security worth ten times the money advanced to them; but he is not to be moved. He sticks to his former resolution, and says: I will keep my money to support myself and my children, and I will leave them what is over after my death; otherwise I might lose all and become poor. But you would say to him, have you lost your wits? What is the good of allowing your money to lie idle in your coffers? It will grow less every day, and never increase. Lend it at interest, and it will bring in more for you every year. Invest it, if you want to make anything for yourself and your children; for in twenty years you will receive the whole value of your capital in interest alone; and your heirs can receive five per cent. for it after your death. What is your opinion, my dear brethren, of these two people? Do you think they act for the best interests of their children?

Folly of a merchant, who for the same reason does not place his money out at interest.

But you must form the same opinion of those who are hard and stingy towards the poor, on the pretext that they want their money and bread for their children and their families. What is an alms given to the poor? It is the seed, as St. Paul tells us, that is cast into fruitful ground, and brings in a hundred-fold. "He that ministereth seed to the sower," are his words in the ninth chapter of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, in which he exhorts them to be generous to the poor. Give cheerfully and do not be afraid that you will be the losers, for He "that ministereth seed to the sower," that he may sow it, "will both give you bread to eat; and He will multiply your seed, and increase the growth of the fruits of your justice, that being rich, in all things you may abound."¹

Just as great is the folly of those who do not give alms, because they have many children, for alms are seeds planted.

¹ Qui autem administrat semen seminanti, et panem ad manducandum præstabit, et multiplicabit semen vestrum. et angebit incrementa frugum justitiæ vestræ, ut in omnibus occupetati abundetis.—II. Cor. ix. 10, 11.

And money
lent at in-
terest.

What is an alms? It is money lent at interest, *say, even a* divine interest, which returns, not five for a hundred, but a hundred for five. "He that hath mercy on the poor, lendeth to the Lord."¹ And to what lord? To some one in this world? Oh, that would be too dangerous, for even the best are not always to be trusted! How often do we not hear of people who imagine that their money is as safe as if it were under lock and key, when they have a receipt, signed in presence of witnesses by those to whom they lend it, and yet they find themselves deceived afterwards, and wait in vain for payment? And yet, in spite of all these dangers, people are so eager for gain, that they do not hesitate to lend their money. There is another Lord, however, with whom money may be invested in the shape of alms, with the most complete security. You must not imagine, oh, Christian, when a ragged, hungry man begs at your door for a piece of bread for God's sake, or when a blind or crippled man piteously implores your help as you are going along the street, or when those poor people, who are ashamed to beg, ask assistance of you through others—you must not imagine, I say, that these are the people to whom you can lend your food, your clothing, your money at interest. Oh, certainly, if you hoped for a temporal return from them, you would be disappointed; you would invest your money very badly indeed; you would not recover the interest, much less the capital.

It is Christ
who takes
this money
at interest.

No, Christian hearers; but although you cannot hope to get any return from the beggar, the blind man, or the poor citizen, do not, therefore, be afraid to intrust your money to him. It is the great Almighty God, the Owner of all things, who comes to you in the person of the beggar and the poor man; it is God who takes the alms from you, as a capital borrowed at interest, *say, at usurious interest.* Could you find a richer, safer, or more faithful Lord, to whom to lend it? Could you have the least fear of being at a loss through Him? "Can any one be richer than he, of whom God says that He is his Debtor?"² says St. Zeno. Do you, perhaps, doubt that? Certainly you do not see the person of God marked on the poor man's forehead. But hear what the Lord Himself says in the Gospel of St. Matthew, and says, too, in the clearest and most emphatic manner: "Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least breth-

¹ *Feneratur Domino, qui miseretur pauperibus.*—Prov. xix. 17.

² *Quid potest esse ditius homine, cujus profitetur Deus se esse debitorem?*

ren, you did it to Me;”¹ and what you refused them, you refused Me. St. John Chrysostom says: “Christ is in want,”² when you see a poor person; “it is Christ who is hungry and thirsty, who is a beggar and naked.”³ He stretches out His hand for an alms, and even if you give Him only a penny, a piece of dry bread, or a drop of cold water, He will not refuse it,⁴ but will receive it with gratitude. Jesus Christ, says St. Augustine, cries out at our door: Give an alms, for God’s sake, to this poor man; I will take it from you by his hand. I do not ask from you as much as I have given you. I have shed every drop of my Blood for you, and all I ask of you in return is to give a drink of water to my brethren when they are thirsty. I give you my Body as your food, and I will be satisfied with a piece of bread from you, when my brethren are hungry. I have freed you from the prison of hell, and now I ask you to visit and console Me, when my brethren are in prison. I have saved you from death, and given you life; do you in return visit Me, when my brethren are sick, etc. Such are the words of St. Augustine; what more testimony of man do you require in support of this truth? Do you not yet believe it? Then I appeal to the judgment of God Himself; for what else but that truth will be heard there, both by the good and the wicked? “I was hungry,” will Christ say, “I was thirsty, I was naked, etc.”⁵ St. Peter Chrysologus exclaims with astonishment: “How powerful with God is the love of the poor,”⁶ or rather the pleasure He has in almsgiving! “God rejoices in Heaven,” when a poor man receives a piece of bread on earth, “although the poor man is filled with shame at receiving it.”⁷

I am not surprised, now, that there were kings and queens, and emperors and empresses, who visited on foot the poorest of the sick, fed, washed, and attended to them with their own hands, and served them even on bended knees, as servants wait upon their masters. Nor am I astonished that many other persons of high position were not ashamed to walk publicly through the streets carrying in their hands a napkin containing food and

Therefore, like pious Christians, we must give alms to the poor joyfully and respectfully.

¹ Amen dico vobis, quamdiu fecistis uni ex his fratribus meis minimis, mihi fecistis.—Matth. xxv. 40.

² In necessitate constitutus est Christus.

³ Hic stetit, hic esurit, hic mendicat, hic nudus circumit.

⁴ Neque si dederis abolum, aversatur.

⁵ Esurivi enim, sitivi, nudus fui, etc.—Matth. xxv. 35.

⁶ O quid agit amor pauperis!

⁷ Glorietur in cœlo Deus, unde pauper erubescit in terra.

drink from their own table, that they were bringing to the sick poor ; nay, that they were not ashamed to beg for the poor from door to door. Ah, my dear brethren, if we had only a little real faith, if we could only see, as they did, what a great Lord is concealed under the persons of the poor, we should not wonder at all this ! And who amongst you, if he saw, as many holy people did, Christ Himself standing at the door begging for alms, would not look upon it as the greatest honor and happiness, to give Him what He would ask for ? He would even share the last piece of bread, the last penny in the house with his Redeemer. Nor would he allow a servant to do it ; he would run at once to the door himself and bareheaded, and with the greatest respect would give his alms to Christ ; as is the laudable custom with many pious Christians when giving charity. Is there one amongst you who would send Christ away from his door, with the customary " God help you," under the pretence that he cannot afford to give alms, or that he wants all he has for himself ? I do not think that any Christian could be so hard-hearted. And yet our faith assures us that Christ comes in the person of the poor, and that He receives whatever is given to them. Who, then, should not joyfully embrace every occasion of giving alms, that presents itself ?

Christ desires alms that he may reward us a hundredfold for them.

Oh, my dear Saviour, if I had no other reason for being generous to Thy poor servants, but the great happiness of giving Thee pleasure thereby, if I could hope for no other honor, but that which Thou wouldst bestow on me by deigning to take anything out of my hands, certainly I should joyfully suffer hunger and thirst, in order to help Thee with food and drink in the necessity Thou hast taken on Thyself. And do I not owe Thee all that I have, all that I am or can be ? But, to return to my subject, Thou dost not ask me to help Thee for nothing. Thou takest nothing from me as a gift, but as a loan, and at interest, that Thou mayest give me something far better and greater in return. Thou actest with us as a father with his child: if he sees that the little one has an unripe apple in his hand, he says: Give me that apple, my child, and I will give you three much nicer ones for it. In the same way, Thou, oh, Lord, askest, nay, implorest, a little from us, that Thou mayest be able to repay us for it, three, twenty, a hundred fold, in this life and in the next. And to make us sure of the great gain Thou hast promised to us, Thou hast given us Thy own written Word, the infallible Scriptures, as a testimony.

Listen now, ye of little faith, who are hard and stingy to the poor, through fear of being at a loss by them! The Wise Man already quoted says: "He that hath mercy on the poor lendeth to the Lord, and He will repay him."¹ "He that is inclined to mercy shall be blessed; for of his bread he hath given to the poor."² "He that giveth to the poor shall not want."³ "These were men of mercy, whose godly deeds have not failed; good things continue with their seed; their posterity are a holy inheritance, and their children, for their sakes, remain forever; their seed and their glory shall not be forsaken; their bodies are buried in peace, and their name liveth unto generation and generation. Let the people show forth their wisdom, and the church declare their praise." "Honor the Lord with thy substance; and thy barn shall be filled with abundance, and thy presses shall run over with wine."⁴ "Give and it shall be given to you."⁵ What shall be given to you? "Good measure, and pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall they give into your bosom."⁶ Could any promise be plainer or more certain than this? These are the words of the almighty, infallible, and faithful God; can we doubt that they will be fulfilled, or fear that we shall be at a loss by giving alms?

Proved by
the divine
promises.

If, in addition to all this, I were to bring forward the testimonies of the holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church, to prove that God has promised great rewards even in this life, to those who give alms generously, I should not finish my sermon to-day. They are hardly ever more eloquent than when they speak of this subject. Sometimes, with St. Augustine, they call alms-giving a profitable barter, by which we get gold for lead. Do you wish to make a profit? he asks: "I will give you good advice; learn how to traffic with Christ by means of the poor."⁷ St. John Chrysostom calls it a lottery in which there are no blanks, and in which a hundred pieces of gold may be drawn by giving one piece.⁸ The same Saint tells us that it is the very best way to grow rich.¹⁰

By the testi-
mony of
the holy
Fathers.

¹ *Fœneratur Domino, qui miseretur pauperis, etc.—Prov. xix. 17.*

² *Qui pronus est ad misericordiam, benedicitur: de panibus enim suis dedit pauperi.—Ibid. xxi. 9.*

³ *Qui dat pauperi, non indiget.—Ibid. xxviii. 27.*

⁴ *Illi viri misericordiam sunt. . . . cum semine eorum permanent bona.—Eccl. xlv. 10-15.*

⁵ *Honora Dominum de tua substantia. Et implebuntur horrea tua saturitate, et vino torcularia tua redundabunt.—Prov. iii. 9, 10.*

⁶ *Date et dabitur vobis.—Luke vi. 38.*

⁷ *Mensuram bonam et confertam et coagitatem, et superfluentem dabunt in sinum vestrum.—Ibid.*

⁸ *Consilium de lucrorum; discite mercari.*

⁹ *Centum hic promittitur eleemosynam expendentibus.*

¹⁰ *Ars omnium artium quæstuosissima est eleemosyna.*

St. Clement of Alexandria calls it the breasts of the Church ;¹ which, although they flow daily, yet daily receive new sustenance, so that they may continue flowing, and they never dry up until they cease to give to others.

By experi-
ence, be-
cause no one
has become
poor, as yet,
by alms-giv-
ing.

But I need not go any farther, for we have experience itself before our eyes, to convince us, if we only wish to learn from it. Tell me, my dear brethren, have you ever heard any one complain of being poorer, or of having greater difficulty in providing for his children, on account of alms-giving ? Go through the whole world, ask, if you can, all the poor, what is the cause of their poverty. Do you think you will find a single one who has been reduced to poverty through practising the works of mercy ? You will find illustrious houses decayed ; respectable families ruined ; those who inherited great wealth, now begging their bread ; but I need not tell you why. We have cases like that now and then occurring before our eyes, through excessive gambling, through gluttony and drunkenness, through unnecessary feasting, through pomp and luxury, through idleness and laziness ; these and similar things are the tools that make the beggar's staff. Nay, many a one is reduced to poverty by the very means that he used with a view of enriching himself. But I never hear of any one becoming poor through alms-giving. Show me a single instance in which a prudent man can complain that he has been deceived in this respect ; show me, if you can, children who have been impoverished by the charities of their parents.

On the con-
trary, num-
bers have
become rich
by it. Evi-
dent from
the Lives of
the Saints.

On the contrary, I can tell you of numberless cases, in which temporal goods have been increased even miraculously, and without the possessors' knowledge, in the hands of those who gave charity to the poor. Do you wish to hear of miracles ? I venture to say that at all times, almost, and in all places, miracles have happened on account of generous alms-giving. Read the Lives of the Saints, and you will find instances enough in which they, after having given away all they had to the poor, have sometimes found their barns full of corn, their cellars full of wine, and at other times their coffers full of money, although they knew that a short time before they had neither corn, wine, nor money. Metaphrastes writes of St. Gregory the Great that while he was still abbot of a monastery in Rome, a stranger came to him one day, and in a piteous voice told him how he had lost everything by shipwreck, and had nothing left but debts to pay, so that he was in danger of being imprisoned, to the great

¹ *Ubera Ecclesie.*

disgrace of his family. Gregory, moved with compassion, told the cellarer to give him six Roman crowns in gold. A few hours after, the same man returned, and begged more earnestly than before, for further help; the abbot, who could never refuse a poor man anything, gave him another six crowns. A short time after, on the same day, the same man came back a third time, and asked for more. Is it not true, my dear brethren, that many would have lost patience at the man's persistence? But the charitable Gregory spoke to him in tones full of compassion: My good friend, said he, I do not know if there is any more money in the house; but I will ask, and if there is any left, you shall have it. Whereupon he called the cellarer again, and the latter told him that there was no more to be had. Is there nothing that you can sell, asked the holy man? Nothing but a silver dish, was the answer, and that does not belong to our monastery, but to a lady in Rome who left it with us. Then, in God's name, said the abbot, give the man that dish, and I will arrange matters with the lady. When Gregory afterwards became Pope, he used to invite twelve poor people to the table with himself, every day. He one day found thirteen guests, although he knew that he had not invited that number. At the end of the meal, he asked the thirteenth, in a friendly voice, how he came there uninvited. I am he, answered the disguised beggar, to whom some years ago when you were abbot, you gave twelve crowns in gold and a silver dish; I was then only testing your generosity. I am your angel guardian, and you must know now, that in reward of your generosity, God has raised you to the highest earthly dignity, the Papal throne, and has placed so much wealth at your disposal, that you can always have enough to give to the poor. You will see yourself, afterwards, the treasure you will thus lay up in Heaven. Thereupon the angel disappeared. Ribadeneira tells us, in his *Life of St. Germanus, Bishop of Antisiodoro*, that when he once met some beggars on a journey, he told his deacon to share amongst them all the money he had left, which consisted of three ducats. The deacon, not wishing to give it all away, kept one piece back and divided the other two amongst the beggars. On the same evening Germanus received two hundred ducats as a present. See, he said to the deacon, let this be a warning to you to lay aside your avarice and to put your trust in God; you have not done faithfully what I told you to do to-day; if you had kept back nothing we should now be a hundred ducats richer, and should have received three hundred instead of two.

Confirmed
by other
examples.

Pontianus tells us of a noble named Zonzinus who was very generous towards those who tried to conceal their poverty, and used to support whole families, by sending alms to them through different channels, so that they did not know who their benefactor was. His steward told him that he ought to moderate his charities somewhat, as he had spent something like two thousand ducats in that way in a few years. Listen, said Zonzinus to him; give away what I tell you, and let me look out for myself; I know well that I shall not be left short. I keep an account book in which I write down every day whatever I give to God in the person of His poor, and also what I receive from Him in return. When I try to balance my accounts, I find that I am always in debt to Him: what I receive is always greater than what I give away. If we ever become even, or if I receive less from Him, then I will think of moderating my charities. In the same way Iodocus, who was descended from royal blood, but who became poor for Christ, experienced the wonderful effects of alms-giving. He, as Baronius writes, lived in solitude on the banks of a river with his companion Wulmar. He never refused to help the poor, if he was able to do so. One day there was nothing left for both of them but a single loaf of bread. He divided it into four parts, and gave one of them to a hungry beggar. The poor man, after having eaten his share, came back a second, third, and fourth time, until he had eaten the whole loaf. Wulmar began, therefore, to complain meekly that their whole meal was thus taken from them, and they had no chance of getting any more bread. Be of good heart, said Iodocus to him, remember that the divine generosity is not yet exhausted. He who can feed the sparrows and the ravens, will not forget us; trust in Him. I assure you that God will either give us food, or He will not permit us to suffer hunger, because we are without it. The event proved his words to be true; for immediately two boats, guided by an invisible hand, came up the river laden with bread, and stopped opposite to where the two companions were. Iodocus took the bread with grateful heart, and he and his companion gave thanks to the divine providence, that had thus so richly repaid them for what they had given to the poor. I cannot refrain, my dear brethren, from relating another very interesting example, that St. Peter Damian tells of a poor but pious workman. He had only a very little money left, with which he intended to buy something good to eat, as he had had nothing but dry bread for a long time. A beggar came to his door, and

asked for charity for God's sake, just as he was thinking what he ought to buy. The poor man then got into a great state of anxiety, and did not know what to do. He thought it very hard to refuse the beggar, and harder still to deny himself the little indulgence he was looking forward to. But charity got the upper hand of him at last, and like the widow in the Gospel who gave her mite, he bestowed all the money he had on the beggar, so that he had nothing for dinner but dry bread. A short time afterwards a servant, who was utterly unknown to him, came running up, bathed in perspiration, to his house, carrying in a napkin forty times as much money as he had given to the beggar. This, said the servant, was sent you by my master; I must hurry away, as he is waiting for me. The man, full of joy and astonishment, wished to inquire the master's name, but the servant had already disappeared. So true is the proverb: "Alms-giving never brings poverty." "He that hath mercy on the poor, lendeth to the Lord."¹

Yes, you think, my dear brethren, but these are miraculous things that happen only to holy people! But, I say they are miracles that occur almost daily, as they who are constantly charitable to the poor experience, for they are blessed in a special, though natural manner. For instance, they get a legacy that they never dreamt of. They gain a law-suit that they had almost despaired of. Their business prospers, or they are freed from losses and misfortunes. They recover lost goods, or get back what was taken from them unjustly, and so, in different ways, that they hardly notice, God rewards them for their charity to the poor. Thus their money comes back to them, as a general rule, with interest, when they lend it to God in the persons of the poor. I myself know a man who used to give his porter twenty or thirty dollars every month to give to the poor, saying to him at the same time: See whether that money will not bring us in more than we lose by giving it. And certainly, frequently during the month, his prophecy turned out true, so that he came to the porter and said to him: Do you remember what I told you? Here is payment of a debt of some hundred dollars, that I had given up as lost; a hail-storm has destroyed all the crops except mine. See what the thirty dollars given to the poor have done for us. Yes, my dear brethren, I repeat: "Alms-giving is the most profitable business of all."² Nor can it be otherwise: our

The same thing occurs daily, although we are not always aware of it.

¹ *Fœneratur Domino, qui miseretur pauperis.*

² *Ars omnium artium quæstuosissima est eleemosyna.*

God is most faithful, and the promises He makes on this head are plain enough. Even if that were not the case, He is most noble and generous, and will not allow any man to outdo Him in generosity. If you do not like to believe me, try it yourselves. Engage in that business for a time, with a lively confidence that God will repay you with interest. "Try me," says the Lord, by the Prophet Malachias, exhorting the people to pay tithes to His temple: "Try me in this, saith the Lord, if I open not unto you the flood-gates of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing even to abundance."¹

Niggardiness towards the poor is a way of becoming poor.

But if you do not wish to try it, and if you reject my proposal, through fear that you and yours might suffer loss thereby and be brought to poverty, then I tell you, in the name and on the infallible authority of God Himself, that you can find no more certain means of incurring the danger you dread, that is, of suffering losses and poverty, than by being hard-hearted or niggardly towards the poor. "He that giveth to the poor, shall not want; he that despiseth his entreaty, shall suffer indigence."² Read the History of the Church by Metaphrastes and others; there you will see how a ship, laden with grain, sank to the bottom at the very moment that the rich lady who owned it refused an alms to a poor man; how eleven ships laden with rich merchandise were wrecked at the moment that their owner refused to give a meadow to a poor man; how the devil, in the form of an ox, ate up all the corn in the granaries of another who had done nothing to help the poor in time of scarcity. Benedict Fernando, a celebrated Spanish theologian, says: "I have seen many children, of rich and miserly parents, who inherited ample patrimonies, reduced to such misery, in a short time, that they had not a servant, nor even a piece of bread: and on the other hand, I have seen many, who were charitable to the poor, grow richer every day, and their children have enjoyed abundant wealth and honors."³ Sometimes people wonder and complain that with all their labor and trouble, they cannot get on, that they fail in business, and suffer losses and misfortunes. How does that happen? I could easily discover the cause of it with some. I

¹ Probate me super hoc, dicit Dominus, si non aperuero vobis cataractas cœli, et effundero vobis benedictionem usque ad abundantiam.—Malach. iii. 10.

² Qui dat pauperi, non indigebit: qui despicit deprecantem, sustinebit penuriam.—Prov. xxviii. 27.

³ Multos equidem vidi divitum et avarorum parentum filios, quibus amplissima convenerant patrimonia, brevi tempore ad tantam redactos miseriam, ut nec famulam quicquam, sed nec panem haberent: Cum contra multos etiam viderim, pauperibus benignos, quotidie magis locupletari, et illorum sobolem fortunis et titulis abundare.

should ask them : Are you generous to the poor ? Oh, they would say, how can we give much ? We want all we have for ourselves. See, that is the reason of it all. When people are niggardly towards God, and refuse to give a penny to a poor man, they lose elsewhere, through the hidden decrees of the Almighty, twenty or thirty dollars, or more. A laughable incident occurs to me, that falls in aptly enough with our subject : A certain man in Treves lost at cards, one afternoon, a hundred dollars. He came home quite crest-fallen, and as he was leaning out the window, brooding over his ill-luck, he saw his wife at the door, bargaining with a man for some lettuce ; after much higgling, she succeeded in knocking a penny off the price. The man saw the ridiculous side of the thing at once, and called out to her : “ There you are, bargaining all that time for a penny ! You will have to bargain a long time before you save the hundred dollars that I have lost to-day.” We might say the same to those who for the sake of a little economy, or through fear of some small loss, turn away the poor from their doors. Save your penny if you wish, but you will have to save a good deal before you bring in what you lose by an unsuccessful law-suit, by an insolvent debtor, by misfortune in business ! And so it must be with you, as long as you are niggardly with God, from whom all blessings come. He will be as sparing with you as you are with Him. There can be no luck nor grace, where the poor are sent away empty-handed : “ He that despiseth his entreaty, shall suffer indigence.”¹

What becomes of your excuses now, Christian parents ? You say : I have a large family, and a small income, and I cannot give alms generously. What, says St. Cyprian, have you many children ? Then you are in all the greater need of prosperity and temporal wealth and blessings, in order to support and provide for them ; is it not so ? Therefore, invest a part of what you have, so that it may bring you in good interest. You do that sometimes, in spite of your large family, with men who can deceive you. Do you think that God is not able to repay you, if you give your money to Him in the persons of His poor ? Does He, who is the Creator and Lord of all things, who has so often and so solemnly promised to reward you a hundredfold for your charity and generosity, enjoy less credit with you, than a mere mortal ? Could you place a better Guardian and Father over your children than the Almighty God ? Do you think that He cannot, or will not, protect you and yours, although He pro-

Therefore, they who have many children, must give alms generously.

¹ Qui despicit deprecantem, sustinebit penuriam.

fects the ravens and the sparrows, that reap not? "What doubting thoughts are these?"¹ Give to God generously in the persons of His poor. "Make over to Him the property that you are keeping for your heirs. Let Him be the Guardian and Protector for your children. The inheritance that is protected by God is in safety. That is the way to provide for your children's future."² Have you two children? Then, according to St. Augustine's advice, adopt Jesus Christ as the third, and feed Him at your table. What an honor it will be for you to be the foster-father of the Son of God, to whom you owe everything! What a happiness for your children to have Jesus Christ as their companion, and to be His brothers and sisters by a new title! Have you five or six children, so that you can with difficulty provide for them? Even if another came, would you abandon it? No, you would do your very best to support it, as well as the others. Let Christ, then, be that other child, when He comes to you in the persons of the poor. Do not turn Him away; give Him to eat and drink, as if He were really amongst the number of your children. St. Augustine says: "Amongst the children that they have on earth, let them reckon one Brother whom they have in Heaven."³ It is not necessary for you to give all you have to the poor, and to keep nothing for yourself. But let Christ have His share. "That is the way to provide for your children's future."⁴ Only try it; I assure you, nay, God assures you, that neither you nor yours will suffer any loss by it. The saying still remains true: "Alms-giving never brings poverty. It is the most profitable business of all."⁵

Conclusion.

Ah, my dear brethren, I am ashamed to think that I must exhort Christians to be charitable to the poor, by such a wretched motive as temporal gain; as if I wished to make alms-giving a sort of money-making trade. Our thoughts must rise far higher. If everything in the world were lost to us, the eternal reward of Heaven ought to be more than enough for us! But I will treat of this matter especially, on next Sunday. I have begun with the less important so that the more important point might make more impression on you. And now I conclude with the

¹ Unde hæc tam incredula cogitatio?

² Illi assigna facultates tuas, quas hæredibus serves; ille sit liberis tuis tutor, ille curator. In tuto est hæreditas, quæ Deo custode servatur. Hoc est charis pignoris in posterum providere.

³ Inter filios suos, quos habent in terra, computent unum fratrem, quem habent in cælo.

⁴ Hoc est charis pignoris in posterum providere.

⁵ Ars est omnium quæstuosissima.

beautiful, oft-quoted exhortation that the elder Tobias made on his death-bed to his son: "Turn not away thy face from any poor person, and the face of the Lord shall not be turned away from thee. According to thy ability, be merciful. If thou have much, give abundantly; if thou have little, take care, even so, to bestow willingly a little. For thus thou storest up to thyself a good reward" ¹ in this world and in the next, which I wish you, my dear brethren, from my heart. Amen.

FIFTIETH SERMON.

ON THE USEFULNESS OF ALMS-GIVING FOR ETERNAL LIFE.

Subject.

Generous alms-giving increases the treasures of the next life; it is foolish, then, not to be generous towards the poor, through a desire of saving something in this life for one's self and one's children.—*Preached on the seventh Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Numquid colligunt de spinis uvas?—Matth. vii. 16.

"Do men gather grapes of thorns?"

Introduction.

"Do men gather grapes of thorns?" Literally speaking, no; that cannot be, because thorns are not of such a fruitful nature. "Do men gather grapes of thorns?" Morally speaking, yes, it is quite possible! By thorns, my dear brethren, Christ understands worldly riches, in the Parable of the 8th chapter of the Gospel of St. Luke: "The sower went out to sow his seed; and other some fell among thorns; and that which fell among thorns are they who have heard, and going their way, are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit."² We can gather precious grapes of these

¹ Noli avertere faciem tuam ab ullo paupere. . . Quomodo potueris, ita esto misericors. Si multum tibi fuerit, abundanter tribue: si exiguum tibi fuerit, etiam exiguum libenter impertiri stude. Præmium enim bonum tibi thesaurizas.—Tob. iv. 7-10.

² Exiit, qui seminavit, seminare semen suum; et aliud cecidit inter spinas; quod autem in spinas cecidit, hi sunt, qui audierunt et a sollicitudinibus, et divitiis, et voluptatibus vitee cunctes suffocantur et non referunt fructum.—Luke viii. 5, 7, 14.

thorns, if we plant them in the hands of the poor, by Christian charity; and I have proved last Sunday how generous alms-giving brings temporal prosperity. But it would not be a reward worth considering for a Christian, if he received mere temporal blessings in return for his charity to the poor. Our thoughts must ascend far higher. Alms must bring us in, along with temporal prosperity, a far greater reward. In Heaven, my dear brethren, in Heaven we expect to receive the interest of the money that we have given to the poor. There we shall be repaid a hundredfold, as I shall now further show, in refutation of the excuses of those who say that they cannot give alms, because they want their money for themselves and their children.

Plan of Discourse.

Generous alms-giving increases the treasures of the next life. That is the foundation of to-day's exhortation. Therefore, it is foolish not to be generous to the poor, through a desire of saving something in this life for one's self and one's children. Such will be the conclusion.

Christ Jesus, who goest about amongst us in the person of the poor, and receivest alms to make us rich here and hereafter, rouse the hearts of all to practise Christian mercy, which gives Thee more pleasure than all other works; this we ask of Thee through Thy merciful Mother, and the intercession of Thy holy angels.

He who makes money in a foreign land, ought to send it home as soon as possible, for safety.

When a man goes to India, or any other foreign country, intending to make money there, he does not build a house there nor purchase any immovable property. Why? Because he does not intend to establish himself permanently in that country, but to return home after some time; and therefore, his only object is to convert his wares into money, or to exchange them for something else that he can easily carry away with him, so as to have something that he and his family may live on in his own country. Still more pleased is he, if he finds any one who will give him a bill of exchange for what money he has. To a person like that he is quite ready to give all his wealth, and to pay a percentage for exchange as well. For he does not want his money in that foreign land, but in his own country. Besides that, the bill of exchange is far easier to carry than gold, there is less danger of being robbed of it, and he is just as certain of finding his money on his return home. This was the wise counsel that a citizen of Munich once gave to a Hungarian soldier,

to whom he owed a thousand pieces of gold, that the soldier obstinately insisted on having. I acknowledge the debt, said the citizen, and am ready to pay it whenever you wish. But think over the matter a little. If you get your money here in Munich, you will suffer a twofold loss: in the first place, you cannot bring it home in time of war; soldiers, as you well know, have a keen eye for plunder. In the second place, if I pay you here, I can do so only in copper, on which you will lose a great deal in your own country; but if you are satisfied to wait for the money until you reach home, I will give you a bill of exchange on a merchant who lives in Hungary, and he will pay you the entire sum in Hungarian money, so that you will be at no loss. The soldier was satisfied with this, and he would have been a fool, indeed, if he were not satisfied with a proposal that was so advantageous to him. Suppose, now, that he knew that by his bill of exchange, he could have doubled and trebled his money; what would he not have done? How joyfully would he not have given up all his money, and been content with the bill of exchange for the short time of his journey!

Oh, man, says St. John Chrysostom, "place your treasure where your country is." And where is that? Not here, certainly, nor in any place on earth; for we are only strangers and travellers in this life. "For we have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come,"¹ as St. Paul writes to the Hebrews. Heaven is the fatherland in which we intend to take up our permanent abode with those who belong to us; and it is only for that object that we live here for a short and uncertain time, in a strange country, laboring to gather together as much treasure as we can, that we may send it on to where we can enjoy it for eternity. "Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth; but lay up to yourselves treasures in Heaven,"² says Christ to us. His meaning is: It is not for you to lay up riches on earth; it is even impossible for you to do so, according to the present arrangements of divine providence. You can save something for yourselves, but in Heaven, your proper country, and not on earth. Therefore, do all you can, that you may receive your treasure there.

Heaven is our country, to which we must send on our treasure.

Therefore, oh, avaricious man, keep a tight hand on your money, lock it up well; do not give any of it away for nothing;

Folly of those who

¹ *Ibi substantiam colloca, ubi patriam habes.*

² *Non enim habemus hic manentem civitatem, sed futuram inquirimus.*—Heb. xiii. 14.

³ *Thesaurizate autem vobis thesauros in celo.*—Matth. vi. 19, 20.

are careless
of this.

let all your care be to save for yourself and your children, and you will probably have enough to live on in this foreign land, this vale of tears. Probably, too, you will be able to leave your children something; probably, I say, because I have already shown from the Word of God, that niggardliness to the poor brings, as a general rule, neither luck nor grace, and causes temporal wealth to melt away insensibly. But suppose that you grow richer by your stinginess, what will you have for eternity, when you begin the journey to your proper country? That which, according to the Psalmist, all men find, who set their hearts upon riches. "They have slept their sleep," are his words, "and the men of riches have found nothing in their hands." You have saved for others, but not for yourself; you have built houses, bought properties, and made money, but in a foreign country, where you have no permanent dwelling, and you have nothing to send before you to your true fatherland. What great folly it is, says St. John Chrysostom, to leave all our property here on earth, although we know that we must soon travel hence! "Thither should we send all our property," or a good part of it, at least, "where we must dwell forever."¹ What good is it to us to heap up riches here on earth, since we must soon leave it, to find ourselves bare and naked in eternity?

The poor are
the sailors
and mer-
chants that
can most
safely trans-
fer our prop-
erty to
Heaven.

But, you ask, how can we transfer our possessions to Heaven? Where is the tower that reaches to Heaven, or the ladder of Jacob that we can ascend on, so as to bring up our treasure and place it there? We require neither tower nor ladder, my dear brethren; if we wish, we can send what we have to Heaven in a ship; we can transfer our property thither by a bill of exchange, and we have opportunities of doing so daily and hourly. And what is the ship? Where are the merchants who will make the exchange for us? There are enough of them everywhere in the world. The hands of the poor and needy are ships that, if you intrust your money to them, will bring it safely, without fear of loss, and for nothing, too, to your heavenly country. The holy martyr, St. Lawrence, used those ships when he distributed the goods of the Church to the poor. Hear what he said to the tyrant who asked him where the treasures were: "You ask for the riches of the Church, but you are too late; they are already in another country,

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

² Stultitia extrema! Illic præmittantur omnia, ubi et nos semper posthac habitaturi sumus.

and are in good keeping; the hands of the poor have brought them to the treasury of Heaven.”¹ The poor are the merchants who can at once transfer your money to the country to which you properly belong; for they act as agents for their Principal who is in Heaven, and they will give to Him, for your benefit, a bill of exchange, which He will pay you a hundredfold, when you come to Him. And this is the usual wish that poor people express when they receive an alms: “May God reward you hundredfold in Heaven!” That wish will at once be acknowledged by the King of Heaven, and will be ratified by His own hand. Christ said to the young man in the Gospel of St. Matthew: “Sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven.”² If they intrusted the payment of your money to another man, or to a poor person like themselves, I should not advise you, then, to risk your property in their hands, although they gave a hundred acknowledgments for it. If I tried to persuade you to lay up treasure in Heaven in that way, you might say to me, as Nabal said to the messengers that the fugitive David sent to him, to ask him for food: “Who is David?”³ I know nothing about him. “Shall I then take my bread and my water, and the flesh of my cattle, which I have killed for my shearers, and give to men whom I know not whence they are?”⁴ In the same way, I say, might you answer me: Must I then give my money and food and drink as exchange to people whom I know not, and who are utterly unable to repay me?

No, my dear brethren, such is not the case with the poor. It is God to whom they give the exchange for you; it is Jesus Christ, as I said in my last sermon, who receives the alms in the persons of the poor, and changes them into an eternal treasure for you. St. John Chrysostom says: “It is Christ who stands at your door ready to receive your alms by the hands of the poor, and to keep them for you; and not to keep them merely, but to multiply them;”⁵ so that you may have enough for all eternity. The same Saint, explaining the words: “He that hath mercy on the poor, lendeth to the Lord,”⁶ asks why God says, “lend-

For it is God who receives it by the hands of the poor, and keeps it for us. Proved from the holy Fathers.

¹ *Facultates Ecclesie, quas requiris, ccelestes in thesauras manus pauperum deportaverunt.*

² *Vende, quæ habes, et da pauperibus, et habebis thesaurum in cœlo. — Matth. xix. 21.*

³ *Quis est David? — I. Kings xxv. 10.*

⁴ *Tollam ergo panes meos, et aquas meas, et carnes pecorum, quæ occidi tonsoribus meis, et dabo viris quos nescio unde sint? — Ibid. 11.*

⁵ *Est Christus elemosynas suscipere paratus, et deposita tibi servare. Nec tantum servare, sed et multiplicare.*

⁶ *Fœneratur Domino, qui miseretur pauperis.*

eth to the Lord." He answers: "Because God knows our avarice,"¹ and our desire of always adding to our wealth. He knows, too, that no one lends money unless he is assured that he will suffer no loss thereby. "For a creditor requires either a mortgage, or a pledge, or a security,"² before he lends his money. Now God sees that the poor can give none of these, and therefore: "He acts as security for the poor man, and as a mortgage or pledge for the creditor."³ "You do not trust in him, He says, on account of his poverty. Trust, then, in Me, for I am wealthy; be not afraid; you lend to Me."⁴ So far St. Chrysostom. "The hand of the poor man is the treasury of Heaven," such are the words of St. Augustine and St. Peter Chrysologus, "because whatever he receives, our heavenly Father takes possession of. And where does He place it? In Heaven; and lest, perchance, you might fear that you would make no profit, you will receive a hundredfold all that you have sent on to Heaven by the hands of the poor."⁵ Such is the conclusion that St. Augustine draws. See what interest you will receive: give to God, in the person of His poor, something of your temporal wealth, and you will receive eternal riches.⁶ Give Him a little of this earth, and He will give you the kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you give to the poor will be yours and will remain yours a hundredfold, according to God's infallible promises: "He hath distributed, he hath given to the poor; his justice remaineth forever and ever; his horn shall be exalted in glory."⁷

Shown by
an example.

When Alexander the Great was intending to conquer the whole world, before quitting Macedon, he caused all that he had to be divided amongst his officers and soldiers; one of his friends reproved him for this, and asked him why he gave everything away, and kept nothing for himself. You are mistaken, said Alexander; "I have kept the best part for myself,"⁸ namely, the hope of conquering the world by means of my

¹ Quoniam novit avaritiam nostram.

² Petit enim creditor vel hypothecam, vel pignus, vel fidejussorum.

³ Medium se et quasi sequestrum præstat, pauperi quidem sponsorem, pignus autem vel hypothecam creditori.

⁴ Non habes, inquit, huc fidem propter inopiam; mihi crede propter copiam, ne time, mihi fœneraris.

⁵ Thesaurus cœli ut manus pauperis, quia quidquid pauper acceperit, pater cœlestis suscipit. Et ubi recondit? In cœlo. Et ne forte perdidisse te doleas usurem, centuplum in cœlesti fœnere recipies, quidquid in cœlum paupere transmissis pervenit.

⁶ Vide quam late crescat fœnus tuum; da temporalia et accipe æterna, da terrena et accipe cœlum.

⁷ Dispersit, dedit pauperibus; justitia ejus manet in sæculum sæculi; cornu ejus exaltabitur in gloria.—Ps. cxi. 9.

⁸ Plurimum mihi reservavi.

soldiers. Oh, certainly, that was a deceitful and uncertain hope, for it depended upon a changeable fortune! It is a much better, greater, and more beautiful kingdom, my dear brethren, that you may hope for with the greatest certainty, if you distribute your goods amongst the poor and needy. In support of this, I will tell you a far more edifying story: Evagrius, as Saphronius tells us, once heard that Christ had promised a hundredfold, partly in this life and partly in Heaven, to those who are generous to the poor. He immediately brought three hundred crowns in gold to the Bishop, Synesius, to be distributed amongst the poor, and the Bishop gave him a note written with his own hand, to the following effect: "I, Synesius, almoner of Jesus Christ, have received from Evagrius three hundred crowns in gold, and I have promised to pay him a hundred for each one of them. So do I, Synesius, Bishop, promise in the name of Jesus Christ." Evagrius wished to be buried with this note in his hand, and his wish was fulfilled. Three days after his death Evagrius appeared to the Bishop and gave him the note, with the following words added to it: "I, Evagrius, am quite satisfied with the principal and with the interest promised. Everything has been duly paid. So I testify. Evagrius." Another almsgiver caused the following epitaph to be engraved on his tomb: "I have now what I gave away, and I have lost what I kept."

Not to waste too many words on the subject, my dear brethren, I again appeal to the judgment-seat of God, before which we must all appear. For what other reason will Jesus Christ, the Judge of the living and the dead, bestow on the just the kingdom of Heaven, if not on account of their alms-deeds and other works of mercy? And why will He condemn the wicked to hell, if not because they were wanting in those works? He will say: "Come, ye blessed of my Father,"¹ enter into the kingdom that is prepared for you. And why prepared for you? I was hungry, I was thirsty, I was naked, a stranger and sick, and you have given Me to eat² and drink; you have clothed Me, and visited Me when I was sick and in prison, and therefore the eternal treasures of my heavenly kingdom are prepared for you. But you, ye wicked, have not done those things; therefore, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire!"³ For it

Will be made manifest on the last day to the whole world.

¹ Habeo, quod dedi; perdidit quod servavi.

² Venite, benedicti Patris mei.—Matth. xxv. 34.

³ Esurivi, sitivi, nudus, hospes, infirmus eram, et dedistis mihi manducare, etc.—Ibid. 35.

⁴ Discedite a me maledicti in ignem æternum.—Ibid. 41.

was I whom you so unmercifully turned away from your door, when I asked you in vain for a piece of bread ; it was I whom you sent away empty-handed and with harsh words ; it was I who privately suffered hunger and want at home ; you knew of it, and did not help Me. “ Away with you, accursed,”¹ into everlasting fire. And when could that have been the case ? Perhaps when Christ was on earth with His poor foster-father and His poor Mother in the cottage at Nazareth. Oh, no ; for then but very few would have been able to purchase Heaven by such works of mercy ! If that were the case, the majority of people would have reason to make excuses. Lord, what sayest Thou ? When have we seen Thee hungry, thirsty, naked, poor, sick, and in prison ?² We have never had the happiness of seeing Thee. Certainly, the answer will be, you have that happiness every day, as often as you see a poor person: “ As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to Me.”³

To the great
misery of
the avari-
cious.

Oh, how the sinner will then gnash his teeth with rage ! How the avaricious man will rave and curse the greed of gold that prevented him from helping the poor, when he sees the just going to Heaven, and that, too, because they acted differently to him with regard to alms-giving ! Imagine, my dear brethren, that a splendid property is offered for sale ; a miser would willingly buy it, but refuses to do so because he cannot knock a few cents off the price ; another man comes up, pays the price required, and recovers all his outlay in the first year, from his newly acquired property. How the miser would grieve, then, because he lost such a splendid chance for the sake of a few cents ! And so, too, as the Prophet David tells us, will the avaricious and miserly grieve, when they see the glory and happiness of those who were generous in giving alms, as described in the words already quoted : “ He hath distributed, he hath given to the poor ; his justice remaineth forever and ever ; his horn shall be exalted in glory ;” while the wicked man, “ shall gnash with his teeth and pine away,”⁴ for he shall see and shall be angry. With a little money, he will think, which they have given to the poor, those others have acquired the eternal treasures of Heaven ! Could I not have made the same purchase as cheaply ? The kingdom of Heaven was also offered to me

¹ *Ita maledicti !* ² *Domine, quando te vidimus ?*

³ *Quodcumque uni ex minimis meis fecistis, mihi fecistis.—Matth. xxv. 40.*

⁴ *Dispersit, dedit pauperibus, justitia ejus manet in sæculum sæculi. . . Dentibus suis trahet et tabescet.—Ps. cxi. 9.*

for sale! Oh, fool that I was! I wished to spare a few pence or a piece of bread, and now I have lost all! It is useless for me now to try to gain that treasure; I shall have no part in it for all eternity! "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God."¹ Such are the words with which Christ concludes the parable of the rich man in the Gospel of St. Luke, who said to his soul: "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thy rest, eat, drink and make good cheer," but who had to hear the words: "Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee, and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God."²

And now I come to the customary excuse of avaricious Christians: how can I give alms generously? What will become of my children, and what shall I leave to my heirs? Oh, man of little faith! You ask what will become of your children? Remember what I proved to you last Sunday from the inspired Word of God, that namely, generosity towards the poor is the surest way to gain riches for yourself and your children, even in this life, and that it is the best legacy you can leave your heirs and descendants; nay, that niggardliness towards the poor is the surest road to want and poverty. But I speak now only of heavenly treasures. Supposing, then, that you and your family suffer loss through alms-giving, and that it even brought you to want, which would be contrary to the divine promises; is not your soul of more value in your eyes than your bodily ease and comfort? Are you not of more importance to yourself than your children? Do you not think more of eternal life, than of the short and uncertain time that you must spend in this vale of tears? Ah, God help you, says St. Augustine, you make no difficulty of spending a large sum of money in building a house here on earth, or in buying a piece of land, and you will not give away a trifle to build a mansion in Heaven, where you should live for eternity with your children; you will not part with a small sum to purchase your own country in Heaven! How many prisoners are there not, who say to the judge: Take everything I have, only let me live a little longer! But you do not think: Let Jesus Christ take the tenth, the fourth part, the half of my goods by the hands of the poor, if I can only live forever! You are

This shows the folly of those who are hard to the poor, that they may be able to leave more to their children.

¹ Sic est, qui sibi thesaurizat et non est in Deum dives.

² Stulte! hac nocte animam tuam repetunt a te, et quæ parasti, cujus erant? Sic est qui sibi thesaurizat, etc.—Luke xii. 20, 21.

ready to give away even the necessaries of life, even your last piece of bread, and to beg for the rest of your days, if that were required to save your life ; but you will not give even of your abundance to Christ, that you may reign with Him forever ! “Have pity on your soul !”¹

Such people
are cruel to
themselves.

What will be left for my children ? Are you, then, so anxious to leave your children and descendants something in this strange land, that you are ready to appear empty-handed in the land of the elect, and to be banished from it bare and naked ? That would be to disinherit yourself, so as to be able to leave something to others. That would be to hate, persecute, nay, murder yourself, as Salvianus says.² If your children get married, you give them a part of your wealth, but you are too prudent to give them the whole of it ; you keep the better and greater part of it for yourself, so that you may be able to live decently in your old age. And are you so improvident with regard to eternity that you keep nothing for yourself to live on, when it shall have dawned for you ? And what sort are the people you are so anxious about here below ? Do you know ? No, you cannot know it ; and the words of God in the Psalm are still true : “He storeth up, and he knoweth not for whom he shall gather these things.”³ For my children, you answer. “Truly,” says St. Augustine, “but for whom will your children lay up treasure ? For their children, and these again for their children, and these last also for their children. What have you for Christ, and for your soul ?”⁴ I am saving for my children ; do you know how things will be with them when you are dead ? Do you know what they will do with your money ? Perhaps they will squander in a short time what you scraped together with a great deal of trouble, and by sacrificing your true riches, nay, they may even use it to offend God. Perhaps they will never be in the least grateful to you for it ; perhaps, when you are buried, they will forget you, and not even say an Our Father for your soul. You save up your money for children, who will turn out, you know not how, and for people who must soon die and follow you into eternity, where you and they will perhaps be separated forever. Provide for yourself, then, first of all ! “Have pity on your soul !” As St. Jerome advises, you should at least treat

¹ Miserere animæ tuæ !

² Non est hæc persecutio, aut esse alia major potest, exheredari hominem a seipso.

³ Thesaurizat, et ignorat cui congregabit ea.

⁴ Sed quibus et isti servant ? Filiis suis, et illi filiis, et tertii filii. Quid Christo, quid animæ tuæ.

your soul as well as your children, and not deprive it of what belongs to it. What you are now storing up is for all your children, is it not? But your own soul should be the most beloved child of all; give it, therefore, the best part; make over your property to your true fatherland,¹ by the hands of the poor.

And what a poor excuse that is; what will become of my children? I know better, and I am quite well aware that you are not always so very anxious about your children that you can find a valid excuse for your hard-heartedness to the poor. For, if I consider your mode of life, I can find no cause for your niggardliness, except your want of faith and confidence in God, or your carelessness of your property, or your idleness. You can spend half the day in gambling, and often lose a quarter, half a dollar, five dollars, or even more; but you never think, then, what is to become of my poor children? If you had given a quarter to the poor instead of losing it at cards, would your children have been any worse off? You can pass the whole day in visiting, walking about, and idling; what will become of your poor children? If you had employed your time more profitably, you could have given some trifle to the decent poor, who have to work hard from morning till night and yet can hardly get enough to eat; and if you had done so, would your children be any worse off? You can dress in the latest fashions, and clothe yourself in silk and velvet, and very often beyond your means, too; what will become of your poor children? If you gave away some of your old clothes for God's sake, to a poor person who has hardly enough rags to cover himself with, let alone to protect himself against the cold, would your children be any worse off? You can give unnecessary entertainments, and press your guests to drink more than is good for them; you can fill your table with the most costly viands, and spend a considerable sum every day on wine, tea, and coffee; you can spend fifty or a hundred dollars in making presents, in order to obtain some honor that you do not want, or in giving balls and concerts; and what will become of your poor children? You should think of that! If you had given away, every day, a part of what was left at your meals, or if you had sent, every month, even five dollars to some poor person who is hardly able to support himself and his children, would your children be any worse off on that account? You can, and it is an intolerable thought, give to your bird, or dog, or other pet animal, abundance of food, and often even dainties, like king Achab,

They often spend their money on unnecessary things, and forget their children.

¹ *Ibi substantiam colloca, ubi patricam habes.*

who during the three years' famine, was concerned only about how to feed his horses and asses ; and what will become of your children? If you had given that food to some poor orphans, who are your brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, in whose persons the Son of God Himself suffers hunger, and who could say with reason: Would that I were that lady's lap-dog, or that gentleman's hound, and I should eat, drink, and sleep better. I should think myself very fortunate if I had what those dumb and often useless brutes frequently refuse through sheer repletion. If, I say, you sent a part of that food to those people, would your children have less on that account? You can afford, and it is a terrible thing to think of, to spend money to avenge yourself on an enemy, to carry on an expensive law-suit against some one you hate, so that you are determined to gratify your hatred, even if you should be reduced to beggary in the attempt ; you can find money enough to keep up an improper intimacy, to commit sin, to lose Heaven, and to send your soul to hell for all eternity; and what will become of your poor children? If you spent half the amount on the poor, who, unnoticed on account of their poverty, are to be found in the churches every morning, keep God before their minds during the day, by a supernatural intention, and who would pray earnestly for yourself and your family, if you gave them charity, would your children be any worse off on account of that charity?

They refuse to help the poor, for their soul's sake, because they have many children.

You see now how it is: to gamble and lose money, and have many children; to be idle and have many children; to be extravagant in dress, to spend large sums on useless entertainments, on eating and drinking, to give balls and parties, to feed birds and dogs, to spend money on sin and vice, and to support many children withal; that can be done very easily; but, what a shame it is! To enrich one's soul, and provide for many children, to lay up treasure for eternity, to give food and drink to Jesus Christ, and to provide for many children, oh, no, that cannot be done; that requires rigid economy; a single penny spent on that would be too much. Then, indeed, it is time to think: What will become of my poor children? and Christ is sent away from the door with the customary, "God help you," if He is not turned away from it with abusive words. When the Israelites wished to make a golden calf to worship it as their God, Aaron, thinking thereby to dissuade them from their wicked purpose, asked them for all their gold and silver ornaments. "Take the golden ear-rings from the ears of your wives,"

he said, "and your sons and daughters, and bring them to me."¹ But the people unhesitatingly did as he requested them, and joyfully brought him their treasures. "And the people did what he had commanded, bringing the ear-rings to Aaron."² If he had asked as much from them to build an altar to the true God, or to help the poor, he would hardly have received a single ear-ring. Such is the case, too, among Christians nowadays. If a false idol is to be honored, if a sacrifice is demanded by pride, sensuality, love of comfort and the vain usages of the world, or by vanity and foppery, there is money enough, and there are not too many children! But come here, you poor brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, stretch out your hands, cry out your wants, beg in the name of God, and promise a hundredfold reward in the kingdom of Heaven, on the authority of the written Word of God. Oh, there is nothing for you, nothing for Christ! People want all they have; they have too many children and a small income; God help you! Christians, where is our faith? What are we doing to gain Heaven?

I hope that there are no such hard-hearted people amongst you. My design is merely to exhort and encourage you to be more and more generous to the poor. Lay up treasure, then, in Heaven³ as well as you can, by the hands of the poor. Listen again to what St. Augustine says: "God," when He asks you to give alms, "does not require you to deprive yourself of your wealth, but merely to transfer it to another place."⁴ If a friend of yours, he continues, came to your house, and saw that you had stored up all your corn in a damp place, he would say to you: What have you done? You will lose all your corn, after having had so much labor and trouble with it. "You have put it in a damp place, and in a few days it must rot away."⁵ "Put it higher up,"⁶ in a dry place. And you would follow your friend's advice and store up your corn better. "Do you, then, refuse to hear Christ, when He tells you to lift up your treasure from earth to Heaven,"⁷ where it can remain with you forever? With regard to your children and your posterity, you need not be anxious, says St. John Chrysostom: "If you wish to leave

Conclusion and exhortation to be generous towards the poor.

¹ Tollite in aures aureas de uxorum filiorumque filiarum vestrarum auribus, et afferte ad me.—Exod. xxxii. 2.

² Fecitque populus, quæ jusserat, deferens in aures ad Aaron.—Ibid. 3.

³ Thesaurizate autem vobis in cælo.

⁴ Noluit Deus, ut perdas divitias tuas, sed ut locum illis mutes.

⁵ In loco humido posuit tibi, paucis diebus ista putrescant.

⁶ Leva in superiora.

⁷ At non audis Christum monentem: "theaurum tuum levas de terra ad cælum?"

great wealth to your children, place them under the protection of God.”¹ Teach them, by word and example, to be charitable and kind to the poor, for that is a property that never remains fruitless or profitless. If they inherit that from you, they are rich enough. If there are any miserly people here, who would rather cut off a finger than give a trifle to a poor person, then I ask them, at all events, to do, for their soul’s sake, what the disciples of Christ did, as we read in last Sunday’s Gospel, after the four thousand were fed in the desert: “And they took up that which was left of the fragments.”² I ask those people to do the same. If you are not generous enough to deprive yourself and your family of something, for the sake of the poor, then, “gather up the fragments, lest they be lost.”³ I mean that when you have eaten and drunk your fill, many a piece of bread, or a bit of meat, or a spoonful of broth is left over, that you, in your anxiety for the future, save up most carefully, and that gets lost after all, or is destroyed by the carelessness of servants, or otherwise, so that it is of no use to any one, and must be thrown away. Many a worn-out article of clothing, or piece of cloth has been lying in your house for years, until it is almost eaten up by the moths; make use of these fragments, and give them to Christ in the persons of the poor. Ah, my dear Saviour, I am grieved to think that I must beg such crumbs for Thee! And yet I should be satisfied if I could get even that much, as a beginning, for Thy poor servants! Begin now at once, offer those things to the Lord; He will accept them from you and make you more generous and kind-hearted, so that you will have a pleasure in giving; even for such things as these you can purchase an eternal kingdom in Heaven.⁴ Amen.

¹ Si vis filiis multas relinquere divitias; Deo tutelam relinque.

² Sustulerunt, quod superaverat de fragmentis.—Mark viii. 8.

³ Colligite fragmenta, ne pereant. ⁴ Habebis thesaurum in cœlo.

FIFTY-FIRST SERMON.

ON THE JUST CLAIMS THAT THE POOR SOULS IN PURGATORY HAVE ON OUR HELP.

Subject.

To help the souls in Purgatory is a most excellent act of the love of our neighbor, and therefore all Christians should try to help them.—*Preached on the twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Filia mea modo defuncta est.—Matth. ix. 18.
“My daughter is even now dead.”

Introduction.

It is a very common saying among people, when they meet each other: Such a one is just dead; the man, or woman, the son or daughter, who lived in that house, is dead. And that is generally all that is said about it; no one thinks that he, too, must follow in the same way, and die when his time comes. But it is not of that I intend speaking to-day, my dear brethren. The Gospel of to-day can be very well applied to the poor souls in Purgatory, although the Church defers till to-morrow the special commemoration of them. Do we often think of them? Oh, I could wish to speak now in the most impressive manner, in order to move your hearts to charity and mercy towards those poor souls, and excite you to help them in every way possible, for you would thus exercise one of the most excellent works of Christian charity towards your neighbor, as I shall prove in to-day's sermon.

Plan of Discourse.

To help the souls in Purgatory is a most excellent act of the love of our neighbor; therefore, dear Christians, let us try to help them. Such is the whole subject.

Mary, Mother of mercy, holy angels guardian, help, by your intercession, and you, holy souls in Purgatory, help us, too, by

your prayers, that we may be all aroused to exercise that act of love towards you!

To help the souls in Purgatory is a better work of charity than helping the living.

It is not necessary for me to prove that it is an act of charity to help the souls in Purgatory, for they are our brothers and sisters, they have been redeemed by the same Blood of Jesus Christ, and created for the same heavenly inheritance that we hope and desire one day to possess; so that there can be no doubt that it is a work of charity to mitigate their pain and to free them from it altogether. I have said that it is a most excellent act of the love of our neighbor, and indeed, it far surpasses anything we can do to help our neighbor on earth. To console the afflicted, to give food to the hungry, to clothe the naked, to visit the sick and help in their recovery, to free prisoners and save their lives, nay, even to convert sinners and free them from the slavery of the devil, are indeed great and most meritorious works of Christian charity and mercy; but, says St. Bernard, they are all as nothing compared to the charity that hastens the release of a soul in Purgatory. And why so? For many reasons: The greater the necessity from which one is freed, the less one can do to free himself; the more certain and undoubted the help afforded, the greater, too, is the benefit received by it, and the greater, too, without doubt, are the love and mercy shown. Now, all these circumstances are found to be true in the highest degree of the poor souls in Purgatory.

Because those souls are freed from far greater necessity.

In the first place, they are in the most extreme necessity, in comparison with which all imaginable earthly pains and miseries are but shadows. They are shut up in a gloomy prison of fire, and that, too, a fire which is kindled not by mere natural causes, but by the almighty power of God: in a word, they are immersed in a sea of torments, which differ from the pains of hell only by their being unmixed with despair and by their not being eternal, as I shall explain more at length elsewhere. If you wish to hear a short description of them now, listen to what happened in the year 1590, according to what Father James Hantinus writes.

Shown by examples.

Father Stanislaus, a great servant of God, of the Dominican Order, as he was once saying the Rosary, saw a soul surrounded by flames of fire, standing before him sighing and complaining of the fearful torments it had to suffer for some slight faults; whereupon he asked the soul whether the fire of Purgatory is more intense than our fire upon earth. And the soul answered that the greatest earthly fires are like a gentle and refreshing

breeze compared to the fire of Purgatory. No mortal man could endure the slightest part of that terrible torment without losing his life. If you wish to have a proof of it, hold out your hand. Stanislaus immediately stretched forth his hand, and the soul allowed a single drop of perspiration to fall on it, whereupon the servant of God experienced such intense pain that he fell fainting to the ground, screaming out most piteously and writhing in agony, until his brethren came up and found him almost at the last gasp. He lived for a year afterwards, suffering great pain from the wound that the drop of perspiration had caused him; and he made a point of narrating to every one he saw what had happened, warning them, at the same time, to avoid even the least sin, so as to escape the fearful torments of Purgatory, and exhorting them to help the poor souls detained there, by every means in their power. Father Charles Rosignuoli gives many such examples. I cannot refrain from telling you one of them that is narrated also of a Religious, who was warned on his death-bed by an angel that he would have to go to Purgatory, but would be freed by the first Mass said for his soul. The dying man was full of joy and consolation at the thought of being so near eternal happiness, and he begged of his brethren to say Mass for him as soon as possible after his death, that he might be liberated from Purgatory. His wish was punctually fulfilled; for as soon as he breathed his last on the following day, one of his brethren hastened to the altar and said a Mass for the dead with great devotion. Hardly had he left the altar, when he saw his deceased brother, with joyful, but still somewhat angry countenance. How is it, brother, said the latter, that you have so long delayed to fulfil your promise? You deserve that God should show little mercy to you. Why so, asked the other? Because, replied the deceased, you have not kept your promise; you assured me that you would say Mass for me immediately after my death, and now you have left me a whole year in Purgatory, without you or anybody else thinking of me during Mass. How can that be, asked the other astonished; it is hardly an hour since you died, and I have just left the altar where I said the Mass I promised you; come with me and I will show you your body that still lies in the coffin unburied. When the departed soul saw that, he cried out: Alas, is it possible? How terrible those torments must be, that can make an hour seem like a whole year! Unite with me, brother, in praising the divine mercy, which has freed me so soon from those fearful torments. The writer finishes his ac-

count with the remarkable opinion of St. Augustine, who says that the pains of Purgatory, although endured only for the time that it takes to shut and open the eyes, are worse than those which St. Lawrence suffered on the gridiron during the whole time of his martyrdom. You may see from that, my dear brethren, what a great charity it is to help the poor suffering souls and to release them from their torments.

Because they cannot help themselves.

Again, that charity is still greater, because those souls can do nothing to help or free themselves. There was in former times a controversy between the learned and celebrated men, Bertrand and Benedict, of the Dominican Order, as to whether it was more pleasing to God to perform good works for the souls in Purgatory, or to try to convert a sinner. Bertrand took the latter view, because the sinner was in danger of eternal damnation, while the souls in Purgatory were sure of salvation. That is true, answered Benedict, who defended the other side; but suppose, now, that there are two beggars, the one strong and healthy, who is quite able to work, but is unwilling to do so through laziness, while the other is sickly and a cripple, although he would be willing to work if he could, and is therefore obliged to beg his bread. Which of these two is the more deserving of pity? Which is the more in need of help? Certainly, you would say that the sick man is more in need of charity, than the other. But it is just the same with the subject of our dispute. Sinners are willing captives of the devil, and slaves of hell; they can always save themselves by the grace of God, which is never denied them; but they remain obstinate in their sins; while the poor souls in Purgatory, on the contrary, must suffer the most fearful torments, and cannot help themselves, because no part of them is free, so to speak, except their tongues, with which they cry out to the living for mercy and help: "Have pity on me, have pity on me; because the hand of the Lord hath touched me!"¹ Therefore, well-ordered charity requires us to help them in preference to sinners.

Because help given to them is more sure of being effectual.

And in the third place, we should do this all the more eagerly, the more certain we are that our efforts to help them will be effectual. How often all our trouble with the living turns out to be in vain! How many poor people we try to help by our alms, and they remain as poor as ever! How much labor and trouble we undertake with the best will and intention, to convert sinners and save them from hell, and all is to

¹ Misereamini mei! Misereamini mei! Quia manus Domini tetigit me!—Job xix. 21.

no purpose, because they refuse to listen to us! But if I give an alms for the souls of the departed, my good work is never without fruit; they look out for it with the greatest eagerness, and receive it with the greatest thankfulness; and if, through the divine decrees, it does not profit one particular soul, it will at least help another. Therefore, a certain theologian says, that to give our good works to the living would be like placing our riches in a ship that is sailing over a stormy sea and is always in danger of being lost; while to give anything to the souls of the departed is like investing money at good interest on immovable property, for it is a sure gain to those souls and to ourselves also.

Finally, what raises this charity to the highest degree, is the great good done to the souls who are freed by our means from the fiery prison of Purgatory. If I convert a sinner, oh, certainly, I have done a great work, for I have been the cause, or I have given him the opportunity of freeing himself by sorrow and true repentance from the slavery of the devil, and raising himself to the state of grace which is proper to the children of God; yet I have not helped him for all time, because, as is the case, alas, with most people, he may fall again into mortal sin. If I free a prisoner by interceding for him, I have merely given him his liberty, but have not necessarily made him a great man. If I give a generous alms to a beggar, I merely enable him to live comfortably for a week or two, for my charity does not enrich him any further. But on the other hand, if by prayer, or alms-deeds, or works of penance, or hearing holy Mass, I free a soul from Purgatory, I have conferred on it a benefit of infinite worth, which it never can lose, for it enters Heaven immediately on its liberation. When the Emperor Theodosius raised the poor and lowly maiden Athenais to the imperial throne, his act was looked upon as a miracle of love and affection. David thanked the great goodness of God a thousand times, for having raised him from the shepherd's crook to the sceptre, and from the care of sheep to be the king of Israel. But what was it all worth? How much greater and more intense is the charity which gives to a soul eternal riches and happiness in the kingdom of God's glory! If the greatness of a benefit is proportioned to the good conferred, then it must be, so to speak, an infinite act of charity to free a soul from Purgatory.

We cannot form a just idea of this, because we know nothing of the great happiness of Heaven. But the souls in Purgatory know well what it is to see God, our last End, face to face.

Because we
can do them
much more
good.

Which they
are always
imploing
us to do.

They know what it is to be joined with the angels and Saints in the possession of the most amiable Good, which is also infinite and eternal. They know their own unspeakable desire to enjoy that Good, from which they are now violently separated, and that separation causes them more pain than the fire that torments them. Tertullian mentions Job as a lively figure of a soul in Purgatory. The whole body of that patient man was covered from head to foot with sores and ulcers, but what caused him the greatest sorrow was the fact of his not being able to see his future Saviour. He says: "My eye abideth in bitterness; deliver me, O Lord, and set me beside Thee."¹ Why dost Thou hide Thy Face? As if he wished to say: The greatest pain that I have to suffer comes, O Lord, from the fact that Thou hidest Thy Face from me! In the same way, a soul in Purgatory finds no torment so great as to be deprived of the sight of its greatest Good, and all other torments, in comparison with this, are as nothing.

Therefore
they ask
the living to
help them.

Hence come the doleful sighs that they continually send forth from their prison, to beg us to have pity on and help them. St. Bridget once heard, as she was in an ecstasy, several voices crying out in a most doleful manner: "Oh, Lord Jesus Christ, inspire religious, priests, and good Christians with the spirit of true charity, that they may help us in our torments with prayers, the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and indulgences, so that we may come all the sooner to Thee, for whom we long so earnestly!" As the Blessed Stephana Quinzina was seated praying at the coffin of one of her deceased sisters in religion, the latter raised up her hand, in which was a crucifix, seized that of Stephana and held it so fast that she could not free it, until the Superioress commanded the deceased sister, through obedience, to let it go. During the time, Stephana could hear nothing but the words: "My dear sister, I who was formerly your beloved sister, beg of you to fast and do penance, that I may be allowed to see God." The celebrated John Gerson tells us of a letter that God permitted a mother to send from Purgatory to her son on earth; it is full of woeful lamentations and earnest prayers for help, but it is too long to be quoted here in full; the beginning, written in Latin, is as follows: "My dear child, for God's sake, think of your poor mother! Hear my sighs!

¹ In amaritudinibus moratur oculus meus; libera me, Domine, et pone me juxta te.—Job xvii. 2, 3.

² Cur factem tuam abscondis?

Hear my prayers !” It ends thus: “ This is sent to you by your mother from Purgatory.”

Christian hearers, what would you think if you received such a letter, or heard the sad complaints and cries for help that those poor souls utter ? Would not your hearts melt with pity ; would you not try in every way to help those suffering souls by works of charity, that are also very profitable to yourselves ? But why should we wait to hear their cries ? We already know for certain that they earnestly implore our assistance in their extreme necessity. St. Theresa, as Hantinus writes, introduced into all the convents she founded the pious custom of having all her sisters assembled together on All-Souls’ day, after the Mass for the Dead had been sung (according to the custom of the Carmelite Nuns) when the Superior, or Superioress, gave a short exhortation, setting forth the necessities of the souls in Purgatory, and then the whole community begged help for them from the priests of the Order. Each one then mentioned some good work, that he or she intended performing during the year for the poor souls. One presented a long list of all kinds of prayers, another a great number of mortifications, others again so many Masses and Holy Communions, others a great number of indulgences to be gained during the year, and others all the works of satisfaction they should perform during the year, reserving nothing for themselves, but giving it all up in favor of the poor suffering souls. Oh, how those holy souls rejoiced on that day ! My dear brethren, we can give them the same joy now. As it is now All-Souls’ day, if I were to ask you all, in the same manner, to contribute your share for the relief of those souls, and if I were to go to each one of you to make that request, I am sure that you would all contribute most nobly.

Exhortation to be charitable to the poor souls.

If I had before me now those heroes of charity, who at different times have lived in the Church of God, what a noble treasure of alms I might collect ! Amongst others, that time does not permit me to mention, there would be the holy Carmelite nun, Francisca, so celebrated for the sanctity of her life, who would offer up all her works of satisfaction for that purpose, not merely for a year, but for her whole life. She had such great compassion for the suffering souls, that she got the name of being their friend, and of being most intimate with them. She used to fast for them the greater part of the year on bread and water ; she often gave herself the discipline so as to draw blood ; day and night she wore a rough hair-shirt ; all her duties, labor,

Wonderful charity of pious Catholics to the souls in Purgatory.

thoughts, all her difficulties and anxieties of soul, and her bodily fatigues and pains, all the persecutions she suffered from the evil spirit, and all the indulgences she gained, were offered up for the departed souls ; in a word, she deprived herself of the atoning power of her meritorious works for the benefit of those poor souls. The wicked enemy who could not bear to see such charity, took occasion from it frequently to make her anxious and uneasy about herself. He represented to her that as she gave away everything, she would have to suffer for many years in Purgatory for her own faults and failings. But all his suggestions could not induce her to change in the least, as we read in her Life by Father Joachim, a Sancta Maria of the Carmelite Order.

Father John
Fabritius, of
the Society
of Jesus.

A still greater generosity would be shown by Father John Fabritius, of the Society of Jesus, who died at Munster in Westphalia, in 1656, and who gave to the suffering souls, not only all his own works of satisfaction, but also whatever he might hope for from others; and when he was dying he made a will in which he left to those poor souls all the Masses and prayers that would be offered for him after his death by his brethren in his own Province, and over the whole world, according to the custom of the Society. Charity can hardly go farther than that.

Father Eusebius
Nieremberg, of
the Society
of Jesus.

Yet Father Eusebius Nieremberg, celebrated for the spiritual books he wrote, found out a still more wonderful way of showing his charity, for he offered himself to God to suffer the same torments that a certain soul was suffering in Purgatory, provided that soul was thereby released. His prayer was at once heard, and he fell into a complicated and grievous illness that tormented his whole body and kept him, as it were, in the midst of a raging fire. While he was in this miserable state, nothing could give him the least relief, and he had to suffer those unspeakable torments for sixteen years, nor had he any consolation during that time, except the thought that he was a martyr of charity, and had thus sent a soul to God in Heaven.

The Blessed
Christina
Mirabilis.

It would seem incredible, if such a trustworthy historian as Surius did not vouch for it, what he relates in the Life of St. Christina, who was called Mirabilis, the wonderful. After her death she was brought to Purgatory by an angel, and was there shown what the poor souls had to suffer ; she was then taken up to Heaven and was there spoken to by God Himself, as follows : Christina, you are now in a place of happiness, in a Paradise of all imaginable pleasures ; I give you your choice, either to re-

main where you are, and live eternally with Me, or to return to earth and there spend some years longer in great pain, for the relief of the suffering souls in Purgatory. Christina did not take long to reflect : I will go back, she said, and suffer for the poor souls. Thereupon she came to life again, and began to inflict most terrible mortifications on herself. She fasted, often for several days in succession, without taking the least thing; she threw herself amongst thorns, and scourged herself so as to draw the blood, but even these torments did not satisfy that martyr of charity. She cast herself into the fire and allowed herself to burn there slowly, while God miraculously preserved her life. On one occasion she pierced herself with a sharp-pointed iron. She sometimes suspended herself to a beam by the arm, and often threw herself under a mill-wheel, so that her limbs were fearfully crushed. I cannot bear to describe the other fearful torments that Christina inflicted on herself.

What do you think of all this, my dear brethren? Have you the mind to make such a sacrifice for the poor souls? I do not think so; and as the saying is, he who asks too much, will get nothing, so that it seems to me you will say to yourselves: What, torture myself in that fashion? Why, the bare idea of it makes me tremble! No, I cannot do that; but if I give away to the poor souls the patience with which I shall bear all the troubles and difficulties that will arise during a whole year, will not that be something worth while? If I offer up my weekly or fortnightly Communions, and all the indulgences I gain thereby, for their relief; if I offer up all the Masses I shall hear during the year; or if I mortify myself, by getting up early in the morning and attending devotions in the Church, for their sake; or make over to them all my ordinary penances and mortifications—would not that be enough for me? Others, again, are so generous as to give up to the suffering souls all their works of satisfaction of every kind. Do you, then, make those presents to the poor souls, my dear brethren? If so, I accept them in their name with pleasure. Listen, ye poor souls, and be comforted: There is no one, in this numerous congregation, who does not promise you some alms or other during the whole year. And all, when they go home, will exhort the other members of their families, who are not present, to follow their example. We agree, then, to do this, do we not, my dear brethren? Nor have those who give away all their good works any cause to be uneasy, or to fear that they will leave their own sins unatoned for, for hear

We ought to follow their example, at least in some degree.

what St. Denis the Carthusian writes of the holy virgin, St. Gertrude : After having given all her good works during her whole life to the souls in Purgatory, she was greatly troubled on her death bed by the devil, who was filled with hatred and envy at the thought of the many souls she had freed. Oh, woe to me, she sighed; I am at the point of death, and what will now become of me ? How shall I be able to bear the fearful torments that are due to my sins and daily faults, for I have always given away the atonement that I could have made for them, and have bestowed it, with the greatest extravagance, upon the suffering souls ! How long and how severe my sufferings must be, since I have no satisfaction to offer for my sins ! While she was suffering this great anxiety, Christ appeared to her with a friendly countenance, and said : Be comforted, my daughter, for that you may know how pleased I am with your great love and charity for the poor souls, I now, as a reward, remit to you all the suffering that was still owing to your sins and faults ; and, moreover, since I always repay a hundredfold, I will reward your good works far beyond what they deserve, and all those whom you have freed from Purgatory shall come, full of joy and gratitude, to bring your soul to Heaven. Therefore, my dear brethren, keep the promise you have made. Holy angels guardian, remind your charges every day of doing what they have now promised, so that many souls may be thus released from their prison, and may join you in Heaven to pray for us, that when we are called out of this vale of tears we may unite with you in praising, loving, and enjoying God for all eternity. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Feast of All Saints :

Text.

Beati misericordes, quoniam ipsi misericordiam consequentur.
--Matth. v. 7.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.”

Do not be surprised, my dear brethren, that of all the countless number of Saints and elect, whose feast we celebrate to-day, I mention only the merciful ; for as God Himself tells us that His mercy is above all His works, ¹ as the Prophet David says, so amongst all the meritorious works with which the Saints gained their eternal salvation, the most illustrious were the works of

¹ Miserationes ejus super omnia opera ejus.—Ps. cxliv. 9.

Christian charity and mercy ; nay, as we have seen already, it is on account of these works that the just will receive an eternal reward on the last day ; therefore, when I speak of the merciful, I mean all the Saints of God. Yet I do not intend now to eulogize those merciful souls in Heaven, since that could not add to their happiness. My design is to animate you, and myself also, to imitate here on earth the mercy that earned eternal glory for them. And still I speak of the charity and mercy that we must have for the Saints. For the Saints ? Are they, then, in want of charity from us ? Do they not enjoy all possible happiness in the presence of God ? But, my dear brethren, I do not speak of those ; there are other Saints who are sure of Heaven, but who are excluded from it for a time, and therefore they sigh and long for it most eagerly ; they are the poor souls in Purgatory, for whom the whole Catholic Church will pray to-morrow ; and since there will be no sermon here then, I will act as their advocate to-day, that they may receive our help all the sooner, and be admitted into the number of the Saints in Heaven. I could wish, etc.

—continues as before.

ON THE MUTUAL OBLIGATIONS OF SUPERIORS AND INFERIORS.

—
FIFTY-SECOND SERMON.

**ON THE DUTIES OF SUBJECTS TO THEIR SPIRITUAL AND TEM-
PORAL SUPERIORS.**

Subject.

1st. Spiritual and temporal superiors have their lawful authority from God ; therefore all are bound to obey them. 2d. They exercise their authority instead of God ; therefore all are bound to obey them with reverence.—*Preached on the first Sunday after Epiphany.*

Text.

Et erat subditus illis.—Luke ii. 51.
“ And He was subject to them.”

Introduction.

The wisdom of the eternal Father, the Incarnate Word of God, the Lord of hosts, Jesus Christ, “ was subject to them ” !¹ He who a short time before was teaching the doctors in the temple, now allows Himself to be instructed by a poor Virgin, and by a lowly carpenter, just as if He were an unreasoning child, incapable of governing Himself ! He whose nod the angels in Heaven are ready to obey, according to whose will the sun, moon, and stars keep up their ordinary course, allows Himself to be ruled and commanded by poor mortals, He obeys their will, and directs His actions according to their pleasure ! And why did He do that ? He was the Son of God who came into the world,

¹ *Erat subditus illis.*

as He Himself said, to do the will of His heavenly Father in the most perfect manner; and He recognised and honored that Father in the persons of His Mother and foster-father, and therefore He was subject to them. Children, learn from the example of Jesus Christ, how humbly and readily you must obey your parents. Servants, learn from it to obey your masters and mistresses. Christians, you should all learn from it how you are bound to show proper submission to spiritual and temporal authority. I have already treated of the duty of children towards their parents; that of servants towards their masters and mistresses I will speak of on a future occasion. But I have long been seeking an occasion to speak of the third kind of duty, as our holy Founder St. Ignatius lays it down as a special rule for preachers often to exhort inferiors to respectful obedience towards their superiors. That I will speak of to-day, and I say—

Plan of Discourse.

Spiritual and temporal superiors have their lawful authority from God; therefore, all are bound to obey them. The first part. They exercise their authority instead of God; therefore, all are bound to obey them with reverence. The second part.

Give us grace to do this, O Jesus; we ask it of Thee through the intercession of Thy Mother Mary, who had authority over Thee, and through the holy angels, who always obey Thee.

We know it to be a fact that there are temporal and spiritual superiors, who have authority and power over others, and who can make laws for them, command and prohibit them, and punish those who disobey; but there have been some who denied that this authority comes from God. In the time of Theodoret, Bishop of Syria, the heathens taught that God is not at all concerned about the world, that He does not govern it, nor interfere with it in any way, and that He has left men at perfect liberty to live and act as they please; while they attributed prosperity and adversity to mere chance, or to the plans of men. They founded this opinion on an argument that should rather have convinced them that divine providence rules the world, namely, on the differences that there are in individuals. Has not God, they said, made us all alike according to human nature? We all come from the one father Adam; we must all leave the world in the same way, by death; why are we, then, unlike in our lives? What is the reason of the great diversity there is amongst us?

Error of those who deny either divine providence in the affairs of men, or the authority of superiors.

Why are some masters, others slaves and servants ; some superiors, others inferiors ; some have to command, others to obey ; some punish, others lie in prison ; what is the cause of that ? Must we not conclude from it that God has withdrawn His hand from the world, so that he who is stronger and able to overcome others, can command them and make laws for them ? We see plainly enough that kingdoms and governments have passed in that way from one king to another, and he wears the crown who, sword in hand, is able to drive away his opponent. Besides, if God ruled those events, the best and most skilful would always be lords and masters ; but experience tells us that such is not the case. How could such a perverted order of things come from an all-knowing and just God ? No, God remains in Heaven and allows things on earth to take their own course. Such was the opinion of the heathens of those days, who not only denied the existence of any authority in human superiors, but also refused to acknowledge the authority of divine providence. Later on there were certain heretics called Beghards, who taught that Christians were granted such freedom, by Jesus Christ their Saviour, that they need acknowledge no man as their superior, and must obey God alone. The Roman Empire experienced much trouble and disturbance, and suffered much from murder and rapine, on account of that heresy, especially in Germany, during the time of the heresiarch Luther, when the peasants of the different countries rose up in rebellion against lawful authority. It was by means of these disturbances and tumults that Luther established his false religion. The providence of God was maintained, but the authority of lawful superiors was denied. Both errors, that of the heathens, and that of the heretics, are damnable.

The difference between superiors and inferiors is necessary for the general welfare of the world.

It is true that God has made all men alike ; true that we are all descended from Adam, and if human nature had remained as it was first created by God, that is, in original innocence, justice, and perfection, there would not be superiors and inferiors, as there now are. There would be no necessity for any one to make or to obey a law, because reason itself would have been sufficient to teach every one his duty, since there would have been nothing in us to contradict its light and its inspiration. But when this happy state was destroyed by the first sin of Adam, that we all inherit, our nature was corrupted, the light of reason was darkened, the beautiful order of things, according to which the flesh obeyed the spirit, and the spirit obeyed God in all things, was

disturbed. Evil desires and inclinations began to rise up against reason and against the spirit, and the whole man, from childhood upwards, was inclined to evil. Under those circumstances it was certainly absolutely necessary to appoint superiors to maintain order amid such confusion, to punish evil, and to restrain corrupt propensities by fear of chastisement; and of course it also became necessary for inferiors to obey their superiors. What would become of the world without this arrangement? If each one were at liberty to do as he pleases, how could men live together in community? If there is no one to take charge of a clock, and to wind it up at the proper time, what good will it be? It will be merely a box full of wheels, the hands of which will point to twelve o'clock when they ought to point to three. If the ship is without a helmsman, what will become of her? She will be blown about by the winds, hither and thither, until she is wrecked. If there is no general to conduct the war, what will become of the army? It will simply be a crowd of disorderly soldiers, who work for different aims, and with different intentions. If there is no master in the school to punish the idle and naughty, what will be the case? The school will simply be a room full of wilful, noisy, and naughty children. Such are the words of the Holy Ghost in the Book of Proverbs: "Where there is no governor, the people shall fall."¹ St. John Chrysostom says: "If you take the rulers out of a state, we shall lead a more irrational life than brute beasts;"² no one will trust his neighbor nor have anything to do with him; no one will be sure of his property, nor even of his life.

No, oh, God of infinite wisdom, we adore and acknowledge Thy all-ruling and most just providence, with which Thou governest the world! Thou art He of whom the Wise Man says: "Thou hast ordered all things in measure, and number, and weight."³ Thou hast created countless hosts of angels, and yet hast divided them most harmoniously into nine choirs, one above the other, and so that one enlightens the other. In the same order Thou hast created the heavens, one in which the moon rules, the other in which the morning star is the chief, the third ruled by Mars, and the fourth in which the sun governs. These again are subject to the fixed stars; these latter in turn are inferior to the so-called crystal heavens, and all together are subject

God has made the same order in Heaven.

¹ Ubi non est gubernator, populus corruet.—Prov. xi. 14.

² Si principes in civitatibus abstuleris, feris irrationabilibus magis irrationabilem agemus vitam.

³ Omnia in mensura et numero et pondere disposuisti.—Sap. xi. 21.

to the superior heaven, so the lowest is ruled by the intermediate, and the intermediate by the superior, like the wheels of a mechanism.

So also
amongst
men, ac-
cording to
the natural
Gospel law.

How much more necessary and becoming is not such order and harmony amongst men ! And certainly the God of infinite wisdom has not forgotten it. From the very beginning of the world, He placed Adam over Eve, when He said to the latter : “Thou shalt be under thy husband’s power, and he shall have dominion over thee.”¹ Both man and woman were superiors over their children. These latter had authority over their descendants, so that according to the natural law, one was subject to the other, and all had to live in a certain order of superiority and inferiority. In the written law, when men were divided into different nations, God placed a superior over each and published this command : “Thou shalt do whatsoever they shall say, that preside in the place, which the Lord shall choose, and what they shall teach thee, according to His law, and thou shalt follow their sentence ; neither shalt thou decline to the right hand nor to the left hand. But he that will be proud, and refuse to obey the commandment of the priest, that man shall die and thou shalt take away the evil from Israel ; and all the people hearing it shall fear, that no one afterwards swell with pride.”² In the New Law Jesus Christ Himself has also confirmed this, when He commanded the Jews as subjects to pay tribute to Cæsar : “Render, therefore, to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s.”³ With these words He wished to refute the erroneous opinion of the Jews, who thought that, as the chosen people of God, they should obey God alone, and not be subject to king or emperor. No, said Christ, that is not the case ; no man is exempted from obedience to authority : the emperor is your superior, and you must obey him, and pay him tribute. On another occasion He said to His Apostles and disciples : “The Scribes and Pharisees have sitten on the chair of Moses ; all things, therefore, whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do.”⁴

And super-
riors have

Therefore, according to the command of God, and the testi-

¹ Sub viri potestate eris, et ipse dominabitur. —Gen. iii. 16.

² Facies, quodcumque dixerint, qui præsent loco, quem elegerit Dominus, et docuerint te juxta legem ejus, sequerisque sententiam eorum, nec declinabis ad dexteram neque ad sinistram. Qui autem superbierit, nolens obedire sacerdotis imperio, morietur homo ille, et auferes malum de Israel, cunctusque populus audiens timebit, ut nullus deinceps intumescat superbia.—Deut. xvii. 10-13.

³ Reddite ergo quæ sunt Cæsaris, Cæsari.—Matth. xxii. 21.

⁴ Super cathedram Moysi sederunt Scribæ et Pharisei. Omnia ergo quæcumque dixerint vobis, servate et facite.—Ibid. xxiii. 2, 3.

mony of Jesus Christ, superiors have lawful authority to govern and command, while inferiors are bound in justice to obey. And whence have they this authority? Not from chance nor accident, nor from the plans and schemes of men, nor from their own strength and power, but from the Lord alone, who is the Ruler of the world, from the Almighty God Himself. Hear what St. Paul says so plainly in his Epistle to the Romans: "Let every soul be subject to higher powers;" and he immediately adds the reason: "for there is no power but from God, and those that are, are ordained of God." Mark the words "every soul;" no one is exempted; all must obey their superiors—the wife must obey her husband, the son his father, the daughter her mother, the servant his master, the citizen his magistrate, and all subjects their spiritual and temporal superiors. If you ask who made that law, God Himself answers: "For there is no power but from God."¹ "By Me kings reign, and law-givers decree just things; by Me princes rule, and the mighty decree justice."² There are many kinds of superiors: there are kings, princes, law-givers and other men possessing power. Kings are superiors who are subject to no one in temporal things; princes are rulers of certain countries who are subject in some things to a king or an emperor; magistrates and senators have to administer the law; and besides these, there are many others who possess authority of different kinds in different countries; all these have their authority from God. Mark the way in which the Apostle speaks, says St. John Chrysostom: he does not say there is no king, no prince, no law-giver who does not receive his authority from God, but: "There is no power but from God." There are many who assume authority against the will of God, against justice and right, by unlawful means, by violence and the sword, by simony and bribery; such as these are not appointed by God; but once they are superiors, they receive their authority from Him, as well as their influence and power to command.

this authority from God alone.

Hence all subjects are bound to obey them, and to honor and respect the divine authority in their persons. All subjects, no matter who they are, "every soul." What is the meaning of that? I will tell you, says St. Chrysostom, writing on the Epistle

Therefore all must obey them.

¹ Omnis anima potestatibus sublimioribus subdita sit, non est enim potestas, nisi a Deo, quæ autem sunt, a Deo ordinatæ sunt.—Rom. xlii. 1.

² Omnis anima.

³ Non est potestas, nisi a Deo.

⁴ Per me reges regnant, et legum conditores iusta decernunt; per me principes imperant, et potentes decernunt justitiam.—Prov. viii. 15, 16.

to the Romans : “ Although you are an Apostle, an evangelist, a prophet, a priest, whoever you may be, you must be subject to, and obey superior authority, because Jesus Christ commanded His Apostles to show this obedience to the Scribes and Pharisees.”¹ St. Paul concludes : “ Therefore, he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.”² Therefore, Christians: “ Be obedient to them that are your lords according to the flesh with fear.”³ Imagine that you hear God saying to your superiors what Pharaoh formerly said to Joseph, when he made him Viceroy over the land of Egypt : “ Without thy commandment no man shall move hand or foot in all the land of Egypt ;”⁴ what you say all must do, for they must know that I have placed you over them. How blindly and exactly all the people of Egypt obeyed Joseph, although he was a stranger, and had only recently been freed from prison, and they obeyed him merely because he had received authority from the king ! How much more, then, should we obey the superiors who are placed over us by the Supreme Monarch of Heaven and earth ! Nay, inasmuch as they use their authority instead of God, we must obey them with reverence, as we would God Himself, as we shall see in the

Second Part.

Superiors
rule instead
of God.

As we have often seen already, when treating of other subjects, the ambassadors and representatives of a king are entitled to the same honor and respect that is due to the king himself whom they represent. Now all superiors, spiritual and temporal, are representatives of God, and exercise authority on earth in His Name, as St. Paul expressly says, when exhorting the Romans to obedience and reverence towards their superiors: “ Fear, for he beareth not the sword in vain. For he is God’s minister.”⁵ In the 8th chapter of the First Book of Kings, we read that the people were discontented with Samuel, who had been placed over them as judge, and that they wished to have a king. Samuel complained of this to God, but God said to him: “ For they have not rejected thee, but Me, that I should not reign over them ;”⁶

¹ Etiam si sis Apostolus, si evangelista, si propheta, si sacerdos, sive quisquam tandem fueris, etc.

² Itaque, qui resistit potestati, Dei ordinationi resistit.—Rom. xiii. 2.

³ Obedite dominis carnalibus cum timore.—Ephes. vi. 5.

⁴ Absque tuo imperio non movebit quisquam manum aut pedum in omni terra Ægypti.—Gen. xli. 44.

⁵ Time, non enim sine causa gladium portat. Dei enim minister est.—Rom. xiii. 4.

⁶ Non enim te abjecerunt, sed me, ne regnem super eos.—I. Kings viii. 7.

the injustice they offer to you affects Me, inasmuch as you exercised your authority as judge, not in your own name, but in mine. He showed the same displeasure when the rebellious people rose up against Moses and Aaron: "How long will this people detract Me? How long will they not believe Me? I will strike them, therefore, with pestilence, and will consume them."¹ But why, O Lord, dost Thou complain of them? They have not detracted Thee, nor spoken against Thee, nor refused to believe in Thee; they have only rebelled against Moses and Aaron, they have not even thought of rebelling against Thee! But whoever attacks my ministers, attacks Me: I have placed Moses and Aaron over the people, and therefore, when the latter rebel against them, it is my authority they despise; therefore I will not bear with them any longer, "I will strike them with pestilence, and will consume them." In the same sense we must understand the words of Christ in the Gospel of St. Luke: "He that heareth you, heareth Me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me, despiseth Him that sent Me."² Therefore, St. Paul says in his Epistle to the Ephesians: "Be obedient to them that are your lords according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the simplicity of your heart, as to Christ; as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with a good will serving, as to the Lord, and not to men."³ For they represent God, and exercise authority in His place, and in His name.

From all this we must now come to the conclusion, my dear brethren, that we are bound to show the same reverence and obedience to all superiors, no matter what they may be personally, or whether they are of poor and lowly descent, or not. Amasis, King of Egypt, as Herodotus writes, when he saw that the Egyptians did not think much of him, because he was born of poor parents, caused a golden vessel, in which he and his ministers used to wash their feet, to be melted, made into an idol, and exposed to public veneration. When the people had shown it the customary honor by bending the knee before it, he called them together and said to them: "Do you know what that was, which you have just adored? It was a common vessel used for bathing

Therefore they must be honored, even if they are of lowly birth.

¹ Usquequo detrahet mihi populus iste? Quousque non credent mihi? Feriam igitur eos pestilentia, et consumam.—Num. xiv. 11–12.

² Qui vos audit, me audit, qui vos spernit, me spernit, qui autem me spernit, spernit eum qui misit me.—Luke x. 16.

³ Cum timore et tremore in simplicitate cordis vestri sicut Christo. Ut servi Christi, facientes voluntatem Dei ex animo, cum bona voluntate servientes, sicut Domino, et non hominibus.—Ephes. vi. 5–7.

the feet in; but since it is turned into a god, you are quite right to show it honor. It is the same case with me: I am of lowly birth; but since I am placed on the throne as your ruler, you owe me as much reverence and submission, as if I were of royal blood." Thus, too, my dear brethren, should we treat all superiors. We must not look at what they were before, nor at what they now personally are; but we must honor, respect and fear in them God, whose place they hold.

Even if they are wicked and contemptible.

We owe honor and obedience to all superiors, although they may be corrupt, wicked, sinful, giving bad example, and are thus more worthy of contempt than honor, for in spite of their unworthiness, they possess authority from God and wield it in His stead. The power that God has given them is not bestowed on their holiness of life, for otherwise how could we know who is our lawful superior, since we cannot see into the hearts of others, nor always distinguish the good from the wicked? It is given to them on account of the office they have to fill, on account of the duty they must perform. Therefore, says Christ: "All things, therefore, whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do."¹ Of whom dost Thou speak, O Lord? "The Scribes and the Pharisees have sitten on the chair of Moses,"² and those you must obey. But could any one more wicked than they be found at that time? Hast Thou not threatened them with eternal woe in the very place where Thou wast exhorting Thy disciples to obey them? "Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. Because you shut the kingdom of Heaven against men; for you yourselves do not enter in; and those that are going in you suffer not to enter. Woe to you, hypocrites. Because you devour the houses of widows. Woe to you, foolish and blind! Woe to you, blind guides. Because you make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish; but within you are full of rapine and uncleanness. Woe to you, hypocrites. Because you are like to whited sepulchres. Outwardly, indeed, you appear to men just; but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. You serpents, generation of vipers, how will you flee from the judgment of hell?"³ See, O Lord, so hast Thou spoken

¹ Omnia ergo, quæcunque dixerint vobis, servate et facite.

² Super cathedram Moysi sederunt Scribæ et Pharisei.—Matth. xxiii. 2.

³ Væ vobis Scribæ et Pharisei, hypocritæ. Quia clauditis regnum cælorum ante homines, vos autem non intratis, nec introeuntes sinitis intrare. Væ vobis, quia comeditis domos viduarum. Væ vobis stulti et cæci. Væ vobis duces cæci, quia mundatis quod deforis est calleis et paropsidis; intus autem pleni estis rapina et immunditia. Væ vobis: quia similes estis sepulchris dealbatis. Aforis quidem paratis hominibus justi, intus autem pleni estis hypocritæ et iniquitate. Serpentes, genimina viperarum. Quomodo fugietis a iudicio gehennæ?—Ibid. 13-33.

of the Scribes and Pharisees ; and dost Thou command obedience to such people ? Thou hast certainly warned Thy disciples not to imitate their conduct and manner of life : “ According to their works do ye not ; for they say and do not. ”¹ Must obedience, then, be rendered to such wicked, impious men, in every command they give ? Certainly, answers Christ, for it still remains true : “ They have sitten on the chair of Moses. ”² That alone suffices for them to have lawful authority from God, and to command and govern in place of God ; and therefore, whatever they say to you, ³ you are bound to do, although you must not imitate their wicked conduct. Christ Himself, the Son of God, the Lord of lords, obeyed Pilate, that most unjust judge, as having authority from God over His person, and He obeyed him with respect too, when He said : “ Thou shouldst not have any power against Me, unless it were given thee from above. ”⁴

Finally, we are bound to show honor and obedience to our superiors, even if they are harsh, unbending, and unmerciful to their inferiors. “ Be subject, ” is the divine command, given by the Apostle St. Peter, “ to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. ”⁵ Our Lord Himself publicly acknowledged of the Pharisees and Scribes that they were harsh and froward with the people : “ For they bind heavy and insupportable burdens, and lay them on men’s shoulders : but with a finger of their own they will not move them. ”⁶ Nevertheless, “ Whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do. ”⁷ For they sit on the chair of Moses, and have authority from God, and can use it in His stead. How respectful David was to King Saul, who persecuted him so unjustly and sought so often to take his life ! He once had it in his power to destroy his cruel persecutor and be fully revenged on him, when he found him alone in the cave, as we read in the 24th chapter of the First Book of Kings ; but he allowed him to go away without doing him any greater injury than merely cutting a piece off his cloak : “ He secretly cut off the hem of Saul’s robe. ”⁸ And

Even if they are harsh to their subjects.

¹ Secundum opera eorum nolite facere, dicunt et non faciunt.—Matth. xxiii. 3.

² Super cathedram Moysi sederunt.

³ Omnia ergo.

⁴ Non haberes potestatem adversum me ullam, nisi tibi datum esset desuper.—John xix. 11.

⁵ Subditi estote in omni timore dominis, non tantum bonis et modestis, sed etiam dyscolis.—I. Pet. ii. 16.

⁶ Alligant enim onera gravia et importabilia et imponunt in humeros hominum : digito autem suo nolunt ea movere.—Matth. xxiii. 4.

⁷ Quaecunque dixerint vobis, servate et facite.

⁸ Præcidit oram chlamydis Saul silenter.—1. Kings xxiv. 5.

he repented bitterly of having done so, and said to his men: "The Lord be merciful unto me, that I may do no such thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, as to lay my hand upon him, because he is the Lord's anointed;"¹ whom I, no matter how unjustly he treats me, must always fear and honor as God's representative.

Many Christians sin against this.

This should be a lesson for all Christians, who in any way sin against the respect and obedience they owe their spiritual or temporal superiors, and who, although, through fear of punishment, they do not commit any overt act of disobedience or rebellion, yet murmur and complain against their superiors and nourish hatred towards them, or desire to be revenged on them, or curse them, or wish them evil from their hearts, or envy their position, influence, and happiness, or speak disrespectfully of them to others, or talk of their faults and shortcomings in such a way as to lessen the respect and honor due to them; or even go so far as to calumniate them, through sheer envy and vindictiveness, because they imagine their own rights are interfered with, and therefore call them unjust, avaricious, ignorant, unfit for the position they occupy, so as to make others look down upon them. Alas, how frequently that happens! Woe to those who thus set themselves against the authority and order established by God, and who despise the divine majesty in the persons of those who are invested with power! "They have not rejected thee, but Me,"² says God to superiors nowadays, with the same displeasure towards disobedient subjects as in the days of Samuel. They have despised, contemned, and cursed Me. They have murmured against Me, and complained of Me. They have spoken against Me and brought Me into disrepute, by their evil conduct towards my representatives, to whom I have given authority.

They must expect severe punishment from God. Proved from Scripture.

Kings and princes are not in the habit of leaving unpunished any insults that are offered to their ambassadors or representatives, but exact full satisfaction, and if they cannot get it otherwise, they declare war against the offenders. And do you think that the great God will allow an insult offered to His representatives to go unpunished? Do you wish to know how deeply He feels such an insult? Read the 11th chapter of the Book of Numbers, and you will see what happened to those Hebrews who

¹ Propitius sit mihi Dominus, ne faciam hanc rem domino meo, christo Domini, ut mittam manum meam in eum, quia christus Domini est.—I. Kings xxiv. 7.

² Non te abjecerunt, sed me.

complained of the fatigue they were enduring, and rebelled against Moses, their judge: "And when the Lord heard it, He was angry. And the fire of the Lord being kindled against them, devoured them that were at the uttermost part of the camp."¹ The same thing happened to Core, Dathan, and Abiron, when they tried to excite the people against Moses by their murmurs and complaints: "The earth broke asunder under their feet, and opening her mouth, devoured them with their tents and all their substance. And they went down alive into hell, the ground closing upon them, and they perished from among the people."² And so it happened also to the Jews when they began to murmur against Moses and Aaron, on account of their long sojourn in the desert: "Wherefore the Lord sent among the people fiery serpents, which bit them and killed many of them."³ And what is still more surprising is what we read in the 12th chapter of the Book of Numbers about Mary, the sister of Moses. She had a spite against him and spoke of him as she should not, not publicly, nor amongst the people, but merely with her brother Aaron. And God was so angry with her that He immediately smote her with leprosy, so that she had to be separated from the people: "And behold Mary appeared white as snow with leprosy."⁴ Yes, and although Moses otherwise used to obtain all he asked from God, even when he besought the Lord to pardon the idolatry and other grievous crimes the people were guilty of, yet in this instance his prayer for Mary was not heard: "And Moses cried to the Lord, saying, O God, I beseech Thee, heal her."⁵ But God refused to grant his prayer, and said to him: "If her father had spit upon her face, ought she not to have been ashamed for seven days at least? Let her be separated seven days without the camp. . . . Mary was therefore put out of the camp."⁶ Christian hearers, we do not hear nowadays of any such terrible punishment being inflicted upon those who murmur against their superiors. Otherwise the world would witness sad tragedies every day. But listen again

¹ Quod cum audisset Dominus, iratus est. Et accensus in eos ignis Domini devoravit extremam castrorum partem.—Num. xi. 1.

² Dirupta est terra sub pedibus eorum, et aperiens os suum devoravit illos cum tabernaculis suis, et universa substantia eorum. Descenderuntque vivi in infernum, operit humo, et perierunt de medio multitudinis.—Ibid. xvi. 31-33.

³ Quamobrem misit Dominus in populum ignitos serpentes, etc.—Ibid. xxi. 6.

⁴ Et ecce Maria apparuit candens lepra quasi nix.—Ibid. xii. 10.

⁵ Clamavitque Moyses ad Dominum, dicens: Deus, obsecro, sana eam.—Ibid. 13.

⁶ Si pater ejus spuisset in faciem illius, nonne debuerat saltem septem diebus rubore suffundi? Separetur septem diebus extra castra. . . . Exclusa est itaque Maria extra castra.—Ibid. 14, 15.

to the words that St. Paul writes to the Romans: "He that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God."¹ And what has such a one to expect? "They that resist purchase to themselves damnation."²

Conclusion
and exhortation
to
obey superiors
with respect.

My conclusion is, in the words of St. Peter, be subject to your masters and to all superiors,³ at all times, in all places, under all circumstances, privately as well as publicly, with proper respect and reverence, as to God Himself, because they have their authority from God, and they exercise it in His stead. Honor and fear them, yet not so much them, as God in their person. Honor and obey them for God's sake, whose holy will and commandment is that you honor and obey them. But if you sometimes complain of and murmur against your superiors, think to yourselves at once, with humble reverence: They are God's representatives, and they must be honored as God Himself. Honor and obey them for the love of Jesus Christ, who gives us an example of the most humble obedience, not only towards His poor Mother and foster-father, but also towards those who had spiritual or temporal authority in His time on earth. Honor them with a ready and constant obedience, unless they command you to do anything against the will of God, so that you may reap the exceeding great reward of obedience in the kingdom of God's elect, where all superiority will be at an end, and where, as the Prophet Isaias says, "and the Lord alone shall be exalted,"⁴ to whom we shall all become like when we see Him as He is, and with whom we shall live and reign forever. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Fourth Sunday in Advent:

Text.

Anno quinto aecimo imperii Tiberii Cæsaris, procurante Pontio Pilato Judæam, factum est verbum Domini super Joannem.—
Luke iii. 1, 2.

"In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, the Word of the Lord was made unto John."

What could have been the reason, my dear brethren, that the Scripture notes so exactly, and gives the names of the temporal

¹ Qui resistis potestati, Dei ordinationi resistit.

² Qui autem resistunt, ipsi sibi damnationem acquirunt.

³ Subditi estote in omni timore dominis.

⁴ Elevabitur Dominus solus.—Isai. li. 17.

and spiritual authorities of the time, for of course the Word of God says nothing without a reason? It tells us in the text quoted who the emperor was, who was governor of Judea, who was prince of Galilee, Iturea and Abilina, and who were the high priests in Jerusalem. And these were all men who did not deserve to have their names recorded in the written Word of God. Tiberius was a heathen, Pontius Pilate an unjust judge, Herod, Philip, and Lysanias were just as bad; Annas and Caiphas were wicked priests, as they showed afterwards, when, through sheer hatred and envy, they condemned the Son of God to be crucified. Why, then, are their names written in the Bible? Perhaps to mark the time at which John commenced to preach penance. Yes, but it would have been enough for that purpose to mention merely the year of the reign of Tiberius. It seems to me that there is another mysterious meaning hidden under these words; for it was a general error amongst the Jews of that time to look upon themselves as not being bound to obey any foreign king or emperor, since they were the chosen people of God, and had received their law immediately from Him. This error is refuted by to-day's Gospel, which proves that the emperor, as well as certain princes, governors, and high priests, had authority over them at that time. And in all probability, too, God wished to show that all must honor their superiors, although the latter may be heathens, or unjust or wicked men. These considerations, my dear brethren, have given me the opportunity that I have been seeking for a long time, namely, that of speaking of the obligations of inferiors towards their superiors; and all the more so, since our holy Founder, St. Ignatius, etc.—*continues as before.*

FIFTY-THIRD SERMON.

ON THE DUTIES OF THE LAITY TOWARDS PRIESTS.

Subject.

The priests of Jesus Christ must be held in the highest honor by all.—*Preached on the thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Ite, ostendite vos sacerdotibus.—Luke xvii. 14.
“Go, show yourselves to the priests.”

Introduction.

In almost every part of the Gospel in which we read of the miraculous cures of leprosy effected by Jesus Christ, we read also that He sent those whom He healed to the priests. Thus, in the 8th chapter of St. Matthew, when the leper said to Him: “Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean,” and Jesus answered: “I will, be thou made clean.” He told him to tell no one, but commanded him, at the same time, to go to the priest: “Go, show thyself to the priest.”¹ And why was that? “To prove that He wished to honor priests,”² as St. Jerome says. Such is also the opinion of St. Thomas Aquinas. Speaking of the law mentioned in the 14th chapter of Leviticus, in which God commands the priests to say whether a leper was made clean or not so that the latter might again live amongst the people in case he was cured, the Saint asks: How was it, if the priest was wrong in his judgment, as was doubtless often the case? He answers: “If the priest was mistaken in his judgment, the leprosy was healed miraculously by the legal observances.”³ See how highly God esteems the priestly dignity, so that He is ready to cover the mistakes of the priest by a miracle, rather than let them be lowered in the people’s estimation. Christian hearers, if God chose to hold the imperfect priesthood of the Old Law in such honor, what are we to think of the perfect priesthood of the New Law?

¹ Vade, ostende te sacerdoti.—Matth. viii. 4. ² Ut sacerdotibus deferre honorem videatur.

³ Contingebat, ut divino miraculo per ritum legis lepra corporalis mundaretur, quando sacerdos in iudicio decipiebatur.

It is of this that I will speak to-day, to the honor and glory of Jesus Christ, for it is a matter in which many Christians err grievously.

Plan of Discourse.

The priests of Jesus Christ, no matter what sort they are, must be held in the highest honor by all. Such is the whole subject.

Jesus Christ, Eternal High Priest, who wishest to be honored in the persons of Thy anointed priests, enlighten our understandings, that we may see this truth, and henceforth honor Thee and Thine as we ought. We ask this grace of Thee through the merits of Thy Mother Mary and the holy angels guardian.

“Honor to whom honor is due,”¹ writes St. Paul to the Romans. But honor is due to a person for different reasons, either on account of the high position and dignity that God has given him above others, and thus a king or prince is deserving of far greater honor than what is due to an ordinary citizen, although the latter may be a very rich man; or on account of the excellence of the office he fills, and thus the judge must be honored above a lawyer or clerk; or on account of the person whom he represents; thus the ambassadors and plenipotentiaries of a king have a right to the same honor that would be shown to their royal master, although they may be of lowly birth; and indeed it is often the case that the lowly born succeed in raising themselves to such a position that they are sent by their sovereign on embassies. All this is a well-known fact.

Three reasons which make one deserving of honor.

Oh, priests of the Lord, it is not without cause that people give to you alone the distinguishing title of reverend, very reverend, or most reverend!² You have every right to those titles, and to the honor and respect that people show you thereby! For, if I consider the dignity to which God has raised you, I can hardly find a greater in the whole world; if I consider the duty you have to perform, not only must I honor you above men, but above the angels; if I look at the Person whom you represent, there is none greater in Heaven nor on earth.

Priests are entitled to honor for all three reasons.

And in the first place, let us hear what the Word of God in the Holy Scriptures says of the dignity of priests: it calls them the light of the world, the salt of the earth, the trumpets of the Lord, the walls and pillars of the Church, the gate of Heaven,

On account of their dignity.

¹ Cui honorem, honorem.—Rom. xiii. 7.

² Reverendi, admodum reverendi, reverendissimi!

the privy-councillors and courtiers of God, kings, angels of the Lord, gods on earth. The Prophet Joel says: "Between the porch and the altar, the priests, the Lord's ministers, shall weep."¹ Therefore, in processions they always walk next to the Blessed Sacrament, just as courtiers are accustomed to do with their sovereigns, while the people walk behind them, as lackeys do with their king. "But you are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood."² Hence St. Ambrose and other holy Fathers maintain that the priesthood far excels the dignity of royalty. St. Ambrose says: "If you compare the priestly dignity with that of a king, you will find that the former exceeds the latter more than gold does lead."³ The holy Martyr St. Ignatius, in his Epistle to the Christians at Smyrna, tells them to observe the following order: "Honor is due, first of all, to God, then to priests, and after them to kings."⁴ The Prophet Malachias calls them angels: "For the lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth, because he is the angel of the Lord of hosts."⁵ Nay, God Himself gives them a divine name, for in addition to other passages, we read in the Book of Exodus: "Thou shalt not speak ill of the gods, and the prince of the people thou shalt not curse."⁶ St. Paul says, in the Acts of the Apostles, 23d chapter, that these words are to be understood of priests; and therefore he calls the injurious words that the Jews used towards himself and the other Apostles, real blasphemies: "We are blasphemed and we entreat."⁷ What more proof do we require? It should suffice for us to know that when the Eternal Father wished to make known the glory of His only-begotten Son Jesus Christ, He gave Him this title and confirmed it with an oath: "The Lord hath sworn and He will not repent; thou art a priest forever, according to the order of Melchisedech."⁸ Such was the oath sworn by the great God. Could there be anything greater said or imagined of the dignity of the priesthood?

¹ Inter vestibulum et altare plorabunt sacerdotes, ministri Domini.—Joel ii. 17.

² Vos autem genus electum, regale sacerdotium.—I. Pet. ii. 9.

³ Si sacerdotalem dignitatem regum fulgori compares, longe erit inferius quam si plumbi metallum ad auri fulgorem compares.

⁴ Primo loco Deo debetur honor, secundo sacerdotibus, tertio regibus.

⁵ Labia enim sacerdotis custodient scientiam, et legem requirunt ex ore ejus, quia angelus Domini exercituum est.—Malach. ii. 7.

⁶ Dis non detrahes, et principi populi tui non maledices.—Exod. xxii. 28.

⁷ Blasphemamur et obsecramus.—I. Cor. iv. 13.

⁸ Juravit Dominus, et non poenitebit eum: tu es sacerdos in æternum secundum ordinem Melchisedech.—Ps. cix. 4.

Do you think, my dear brethren, that I have said too much and made too much of the priesthood? If you do, then consider the other source of dignity: see what an office and duty the priest has to perform. You will then see clearly enough that what I have said up to this, of the dignity of the priesthood, is really true. In what does the priestly office consist? In teaching men and showing them the right way to Heaven, in acting as mediators between God and man, and in something far more excellent still, which is the twofold power that is given to every priest in his ordination, and which imprints an indelible character on his soul, the power that he has over the souls of Christians, and that which he has over the Body and Blood of Christ.

Priests alone have power over the souls of Christians in the sacramental tribunal of Penance, in which they, as judges with full powers, pronounce judgment with regard to the souls, even of emperors, kings, and rulers, and declare them to be either true children of God and in His grace and friendship, or slaves of the devil, groaning under the yoke of sin, and thus decide whether they belong to Heaven, or to hell; for to priests alone do Christ and His representatives say: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."¹ Oh, ye mighty princes of Heaven, angels and archangels, here you must yield to poor mortals! You can move Heaven and earth at the nod of your Creator, you can turn the whole world in any direction, you can put to flight all the legions of the evil spirit; but you cannot say to a sinner and an enemy of God: "I absolve thee from thy sins;"² I forgive the evil thou hast done, I restore to thee the sanctifying grace that thou hast lost, and make thee again the friend of God; I free thee from the flames of hell, and make thee an heir to Heaven; that, you must kindly acknowledge, is beyond your power. "Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" was the question that the Pharisees in astonishment asked our Lord, when they heard Him say to the man sick of the palsy: "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." How? they asked in surprise; "who can forgive sins, but God alone?"³ Certainly I can do it, although I am only a sinful man, and so can every priest, no matter how poor and lowly he may be in the eyes of the world.

On account of the office they hold.

For they have power over the souls of Christians.

¹ Accipite Spiritum Sanctum: quorum remisieritis peccata remittuntur eis, et quorum retinueritis, retenta sunt.—John xx. 22, 23.

² Ego te absolva peccatis tuis.

³ Homo remittuntur tibi peccata tua. Quis potest dimittere peccata, nisi solus Deus?—Luke vi. 20, 21.

“What power on earth can be greater than this?”¹ asks St. John Chrysostom.

Nay, over
God Him-
self.

But the priest has a still greater power, not merely over the souls of men, but over the Almighty God Himself, in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, for as often as he pleases, he can offer the Son of God to His heavenly Father, and with a few words he can change bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. Where is the angel in Heaven, or the other man on earth to whom God has given such power? The world still wonders at the Prophet Elias, who could make fire come down from Heaven in obedience to his command; at Josue, who commanded the sun to stand still, and who was obeyed; at different Saints at whose command mountains changed their position. But what are all these miracles compared to what the priest does at the altar daily? He need say only the four little words: “This is my body,”² and behold, the great God of Heaven and earth is obedient to his voice. Jesus Christ comes down upon earth with His divinity and humanity, body and soul, and is present wherever and whenever the priest wishes. St. Ambrose compares the transubstantiation of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, to the creation of the world; for just as before the creation there was neither Heaven nor earth, nor any creature, and all things were called into existence by the word of the Almighty God, “let it be,”³ “he spoke and they were made,”⁴ in the same way, before the consecration there is nothing in the Host but the substance of bread, and when the priest says the words, “This is my body,” the bread is annihilated, and the Body of Christ takes its place. Yet there is this difference between the divine “let it be,” and the words of the priest, that the former created all things, while the latter bring forth, so to speak, Him of whom St. John says: “All things were made by Him.”⁵ Now, since St. Anselm, too, does not hesitate to say that in the Incarnation God gave greater power to the words in which Mary signified her consent to that mystery, when she said, “Be it done,” than to His own *fact* in creation of the world, since the latter brought forth mere creatures, while the former brought forth the Creator Himself,⁶ we may say, for the same reason, that Christ has given to the words of the priest the same power that He gave to those of His own most holy Mother, and therefore

¹ Quænam, obsecro, potestas hac una major esse potest?

² Hoc est corpus meum.

³ Fiat.

⁴ Ipse dixit et facta sunt.—Ps. cxlviii. 5.

⁵ Omnia per ipsum facta sunt.

⁶ Majus aliquid Deus attribuit Fiat virginis quam suo

the words of the priest in the consecration have greater power than the fiat of God in the creation of the world. Could any office be greater or more divine than this, my dear brethren? St. Ephraim, when he thinks of it, cries out: "Great, immense, infinite, is the dignity of the priest!"¹

Finally, who is the Person whom priests represent? It is again the highest Person in Heaven and on earth, Jesus Christ the Eternal Son of God. Hear what St. Paul writes to the Corinthians: "For Christ we are ambassadors, God, as it were, exhorting by us."² Christ Himself says to priests: "As the Father sent Me, so I also send you,"³ in my stead: "he that heareth you heareth Me, he that despiseth you despiseth Me."⁴ What the priest does outwardly, Christ does inwardly, and all is done in the Person of Christ. The priest says in the confessional: "I absolve thee from thy sins;"⁵ he says at the altar, during holy Mass: "This is my body, this is the chalice of my blood;"⁶ nor can he say those words otherwise than as a plenipotentiary and ambassador of Jesus Christ, just as if Jesus Christ Himself spoke them, for if He spoke them in his own person they would evidently be false and untrue, since it is quite clear that the body and blood of the priest are not hidden under the appearances of bread and wine. You may see from this that no dignity can exceed that of the priest, that no power can be more excellent, that no person can be greater than He whom the priest represents. Oh, priests of Jesus Christ! I tremble when I consider what an extraordinary and edifying life is required in us by the dignity of the state to which God has raised us! What an angelical, pure, and chaste life is required by the office we fill! What a holy and heavenly life by the Person whom we represent! Ah, think of this daily, and be convinced that your lives ought to be a source of edification to all men, as St. Augustine says, speaking of priests: "Their lives should be a constant source of instruction and a continual exhortation to holiness for others."⁷

But I am not preaching now to priests, but to you, Christian hearers; learn from this how you must respect and reverence all priests. The command that God gives by the Wise Ecclesiasti-

On account of the Person whom they represent.

They must therefore be held in great esteem.

¹ Magna, Immensa, Infinita dignitas sacerdotis!

² Pro Christo legatione fungimur, tamquam Deo exhortante per nos.—II. Cor. v. 20.

³ Sicut misit me pater, et ego mitto vos.—John xx. 21.

⁴ Qui vos audit me audit, qui vos spernit, me spernit.

⁵ Ego te absolvo a peccatis tuis.

⁶ Hoc est corpus meum; hic est calix sanguinis mei.

⁷ Illorum vita aliorum debet esse eruditio et assidua salutis exhortatio.

cus, is: "With all thy soul fear the Lord, and reverence His priests;"¹ that is, esteem them as the consecrated of the Lord. This was understood even of the priests in the Old Law, who only foreshadowed and prefigured our priesthood of the New Law; just as their sacrifices were mere figures of our most holy sacrifice of the Mass, and of the sacraments instituted by Jesus Christ. And yet, in what great honor they were held!

Men used to show great honor to the priests of the Old Law.

By divine command, priests were forbidden even to uncover their heads in presence of the people; as we read in the 21st chapter of Leviticus: "The high-priest, upon whose head the oil of unction hath been poured, and whose hands have been consecrated for the priesthood, and who hath been vested with the holy vestments, shall not uncover his head."² Lyranus tells us that priests were allowed to marry into the royal family. The highest court of justice, from which no appeal was allowed, was that of the priesthood alone, according to the divine command: "But he that will be proud and refuse to obey the commandment of the priest, who ministereth at the time to the Lord thy God, . . . that man shall die."³ The very name and presence of the priest inspired all with reverence and respect. When Anna, the mother of the Prophet Samuel, was praying with bitter tears in the temple at Jerusalem, that God might take away her barrenness, the high-priest Heli came in, and thinking she was intoxicated, he said to her the reproachful words: "How long wilt thou be drunk? digest a little of the wine of which thou hast taken too much."⁴ Certainly, that was a great calumny, as St. John Chrysostom says; it was a shameful crime of which to accuse a good, innocent, and respectable woman, who had already sorrow enough to bear, and had sufficient reason therefore to be very angry. In our days we should not expect any woman to bear patiently such a grievous insult, without making any effort to defend her good name and to prove her innocence. She would soon find words enough to defend herself. But how did Anna act in those circumstances? She thought to herself: It is a priest who is speaking to me; and therefore she answered in a humble manner, with down-cast eyes and the greatest reverence:

¹ In tota anima tua time Dominum, sacerdotes illius sanctifica.—Ecc. vii. 31.

² Pontifex, super cuius caput fustum est unctionis oleum, et cuius manus in sacerdotio consecratæ sunt, vestitusque est sanctis vestibus, caput suum non discooperiet.—Levit. xxi. 10.

³ Qui autem superberit, nolens obedire sacerdotis imperio, qui eo tempore ministrat Domino Deo tuo . . . morietur homo ille.—Deut. xvii. 12.

⁴ Usquequo ebria eris? digere paulisper vinum, quo mades.—I. Kings i. 14.

“Not so, my lord, for I am an exceeding unhappy woman, and have drunk neither wine, nor any strong drink, but I have poured out my soul before the Lord. Count not thy handmaid for one of the daughters of Belial.”¹ Mark, my dear brethren, how she calls him her lord, and herself his handmaid: “Would to God thy handmaid may find grace in thy eyes.” So great was the respect she had for one who unjustly accused her, because he was a priest of God! St. Paul, although he knew that the Jewish priesthood had ceased, and had become a mere empty name, had still a great respect for it; for when he was beaten on the mouth by order of Ananias the priest, he said, full of zeal for the glory of God: “God shall strike thee, thou whited wall. For sittest thou to judge me according to the law, and contrary to the law commandest me to be struck?”² What? asked the bystanders: “Dost thou revile the high-priest of God?”³ Whereupon St. Paul was shocked and excused himself humbly, saying: “I knew not, brethren, that he is the high-priest. For it is written: Thou shalt not speak evil of the prince of thy people.”⁴

Even Christ Himself was always very respectful to the Jewish priests, although He knew their hypocrisy and impiety. We read in the 2d chapter of the Gospel of St. John that He made a scourge and with it drove out of the temple those who were profaning it. And who were they? “Buyers and sellers.”⁵ Why not rather the priests, who were really to blame for the desecration of the temple, and who tried to make profit for themselves out of it? No, He left them alone because they were priests, so as to show the people the respect He had for the bare name of priest. Once only did the meek Saviour complain as He stood before His judge, and that was when He received a blow on the cheek. He asked the servant of the high-priest: If I have spoken well, “why dost thou strike Me?”⁶ Strange, indeed, that Jesus, who bore so many injuries and insults, and even the terrible scourging, the crown of thorns, and the nails, without opening His mouth, should complain of being unjustly struck on the cheek! Why was that? Not, as interpreters of the Holy

Nay, even
by Christ
Himself.

¹ Nequaquam domine mi etc. Ne reputes ancillam tuam quasi unam de filiabus Belial.—1. Kings i. 15, 16.

² Utinam inveniat ancilla tua gratiam in oculis tuis.—Ibid. 18.

³ Percutiet te Deus, paries dealbata. Et tu sedens iudicas me secundum legem, et contra legem jubes me percuti?—Act. xxiii. 3.

⁴ Summum sacerdotem Dei maledicis?—Ibid. 4.

⁵ Nesciebam fratres, quia princeps est sacerdotum. Scriptum est enim: principem populi tui non maledicet.—Ibid. 5.

⁶ Vendentes et ementes. ⁷ Quid me cædis?—John xviii. 23.

Scriptures tell us, merely because that blow was struck unjustly, for His scourging, crowning with thorns, and crucifixion were still more unjust; but because He was struck on the pretext of His having been disrespectful to the high-priest, for the servant who gave Him the blow, said: "Answerest Thou the high-priest so?"¹ That deserves a blow! Jesus could not bear to be accused of irreverence towards the priest, and therefore, lest any one should be scandalized in that respect, or take occasion from that false accusation, of being irreverent towards priests, He said: "If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil;² but if well, why strikest thou Me," as if I had been guilty of saying anything disrespectful?

How much more honor is due to the priests of the New Law.

And from that I must again conclude, my dear brethren, that if the priests of the Old Law were by divine command held in the highest esteem by all the people, if the Apostles and Jesus Christ Himself showed such respect towards them, although they only foreshadowed the priesthood of the New Law, and even when their priesthood had altogether ceased, what honor, then, must we not show to the true and holy priesthood of Jesus Christ, and to His priests in the New Law, who are invested with such a great dignity, and who represent the Person of the Holiest of the holy!

Good Christians acknowledge that.

It is that thought that makes good and pious Christians humble themselves in the presence even of poor and lowly priests. St. Anthony the Great, whenever he met a priest, used to throw himself down on his knees, kiss the priest's hand respectfully and remain there until he got his blessing. St. Catherine of Siena thought herself unworthy of kissing the priest's hand, but she used to kiss the ground on which he walked. In the General Council of Matiscona a special decree was made to the effect that if a layman on horseback met a priest walking, he should at once dismount in order to show his respect for the sacerdotal character, as Baronius writes of the year 588. The story of the holy Bishop Maxentius is well known: he was invited to table by Maximus the Emperor, and he brought with him as his companion an ordinary priest; when drinking, according to the custom, he first drank to his companion and then to the emperor, thereby showing that he had a greater esteem for the priestly than for the imperial dignity, since the former represented the divine Majesty in a special manner. The Seraphic Father, St. Francis, used to say that if he met a priest still living on earth

¹ Sic respondes pontifici?

² Si male locutos sum, testimonium perhibe de malo.

and a Saint from Heaven who was not ordained priest, he would first greet the priest and then the Saint. Nor must you be surprised at that, for the heavenly Princes themselves give the preference to the priests of Jesus Christ. Thus, St. Francis de Sales tells us of one of his Canons who was allowed by God to enjoy a special familiarity with his guardian angel; before he became a priest, he used to see his angel standing at his right hand, but after his ordination, the angel always remained at his left hand.

Nor can I wonder any longer that even crowned heads bowed down humbly before priests. The Emperor Constantine took the lowest place at the Council of Nice, below all the priests and on a low stool; he also decreed that priests should be honored above all lay-people, no matter what the rank, dignity, or position of the latter might be. Baleslaus, King of Poland, never sat down in presence of a priest. In the same way, the Emperor Theodosius refused to sit down when in the choir with the priests, although the Patriarch tried to compel him to do so, because he thought that by doing so he would be wanting in respect to the priesthood of Christ. The Emperor Basil spoke publicly to the people on the dignity of the priesthood, as Baronius tells us of the year 869, and among other things, he said as follows: An earthly lord, no matter how clever, learned, rich, or noble he is, is still only a sheep of the fold of Christ; on the other hand, a priest, no matter how poor, lowly, and simple he is, is a shepherd of the fold of Christ, and therefore must be honored above all those who are not priests.

Even crowned heads bowed before them.

You will think, my dear brethren, that I say all this because I, as a priest, would willingly be held in great honor. And you are quite right; it is true that I desire the honor that belongs to the priesthood; but not for the person of the priest, so much as for the Person of Jesus Christ whom he represents, and who wishes His ministers and ambassadors to be honored; just as the honor we show to the crucifix is not given to the wood or stone of which it is made, but to Him whom it represents. For I readily acknowledge that the priest is only a weak, miserable, and unworthy mortal like all others, and although he represents the Person of Christ, although he is invested with great power and dignity, such as are not given to the angels, yet he has not laid aside his human nature which is inclined to evil. I know that priests are often very sinful men and full of faults, and I must say with St. Paul, I am the chief of them.¹ I must acknowl-

There are, indeed, wicked priests.

¹ Quorum primus ego sum.—I. Tim. 1. 15.

edge, with heartfelt regret, that now and then there are priests in the world who far surpass all others in wickedness; for they lead bad, immoral, and scandalous lives, unworthy of their dignity, and if such do not repent betimes, they will be amongst those of whom one of the holy Fathers says: "The crowns of priests will be the pavement of hell;"¹ for since they are during their lives raised to the highest dignity on earth, but disgrace it by their sinful ways, they will be sent after death to the deepest pit of hell, in punishment of their crimes.

Although the lives of bad priests must not be imitated, yet honor is due to them.

Not without cause did Christ say to all: "According to their works do ye not."² For it is a grievous error of some to imagine that they can do everything that a priest does or approves of. No; not everything that good and seemingly pious, religious and secular priests approve of is to be taken as an infallible rule of conduct; because even holy people have their faults and failings. Hence St. Paul, when exhorting the Corinthians to imitate him, says these remarkable words: "Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ;"³ by which he meant, if you see that I imitate Christ, then you can and you must do as I do. But, my dear brethren, no matter how wicked, faulty, or despicable a priest may be, he is still a priest of Jesus Christ; the Holiest of the holy, whom he represents, is still worthy of honor, so that he is to be honored just as if he were good and pious. I cannot show less respect to the ambassador of a king, because he is not very clever or skilful, than if he were a miracle of knowledge, since I must honor the person of his master in him; nor must I hold a crucifix of wood in less esteem than a gold or silver one, for it represents Jesus Christ, whom I am always bound to honor.

Shown by an example.

St. Francis of Assisi understood that very well; he once entered a Church the priest of which was leading a very bad life; a heretic came to him, and said: What shameless priests you have in your religion; how could any one believe what is said by a man who leads such a bad life? St. Francis, in order to confound the heretic, and to show the people that they must honor even wicked priests, went up to the priest of the Church, knelt before him, and said: That this hand is soiled with many crimes, as that man says, I know not; but I do know that, in any case, it can dispense the sacraments and many benefits of God to the

¹ Pavimentum inferni erunt coronæ sacerdotum.

² Secundum opera vero eorum nolite facere.—Matth. xxiii. 3.

³ Imitatores mei estote, sicut et ego Christi.—I. Cor. xi. 1.

people ; therefore I kiss it with the respect and reverence that I owe to Him in whose Name and by whose authority it dispenses the sacraments. Thus speaking, he respectfully kissed the priest's hand, and by his humility induced him to amend his life.

Oh, how the example of this holy man puts to shame, not merely heretics, but many Catholics of our days ! For how many there are who are grievously neglectful of their duty in this respect ! Where is the honor due to Jesus Christ, that you should pay to His representatives ? I speak to you, who do not hesitate to call priests by opprobrious names, and to ridicule everything they say ; is that the way to honor Jesus Christ in His priests ? I speak to you who have the habit of looking down upon priests, who are ashamed to be seen with them because the most of them are of lowly birth ; you have just as much reason to be ashamed of crucifixes because they are mostly made of paper or wood ! Is that the way to honor Jesus Christ in His ambassadors ? I speak to you who often expect priests to perform services for you that are only fit for menials to render ; is that the way to honor Jesus Christ in His representatives ? I speak to you who publicly laugh at and ridicule priests ; and to you, especially, who take a delight in speaking ill of them and in making known their faults. What a terrible crime it is to take away a priest's character, and thus to injure the reputation of a whole parish and give the people the greatest scandal ; if we are ever bound to conceal our neighbor's faults, we must certainly cover those of a priest as well as we can. The great Emperor Constantine received letters in the Council of Nice, complaining of some priests, but he threw them unopened into the fire, saying: It is not right to make known the faults of priests. A favorite saying of his, too, was: If I saw a priest doing wrong, I would cover him with my imperial mantle, so as to hide his sin as far as possible. Jesus Christ Himself, when the adulteress was accused before Him by the priests in the temple, wrote their sins on the ground that they might be ashamed to stone the woman to death ; and why, we might ask, did He write them on the ground ? Lyranus tells us that He did so because they were the sins of priests, and our Lord wished to conceal them on that account, and therefore He wrote them so that the words would be at once rubbed out.

Many Christians sin in this particular.

I conclude, my dear brethren, with the words of the Sacred Scripture that I have already quoted : " With all thy soul

Conclusion and exhortation to

honor
priests.

fear the Lord, and reverence His priests.”¹ Whenever you meet a priest, or speak of one, or hear one speak, think of Jesus Christ, whose ambassador he is, and no priest will ever seem too poor, too lowly, or too despicable to be treated with due respect. Think, also, of Him whom you dishonor if you are in any way disrespectful to a priest. A king takes to himself the insult offered to his ambassador, and will not allow it to go unpunished; and Jesus Christ also will punish all who offer insults to His priests, for He says: “He that despiseth you, despiseth Me.”² “I will be the revenger.”³ If I had time I could give you instances to prove that a sudden death is often the punishment of those who even slightly mock priests; some who have raised their hands to strike them, have been suddenly lamed. Nicius Erythræus gives an example of the latter kind. A lady of noble birth who was staying in a village, sent to the priest who was about to say Mass for his congregation, to tell him that he must not commence until she should find it convenient to come; the priest agreed to do so, but since she spent too long a time in dressing, he could not wait any longer, and began the Mass, which he finished before the lady came. She got into a great rage when she heard of this, spoke very insultingly to the priest, accused him of being ill-mannered, and at last raised her hand to strike him. But God did not allow the insult offered His minister to go unpunished; for that lady afterwards gave birth to a daughter who was lame in one hand her whole life, and was for many years a visible proof of the evils caused by her mother’s vanity and presumption. I repeat, my dear brethren: “With all thy soul fear the Lord, and reverence His priests.” Remember what our Lord has promised to those who honor His ambassadors and representatives: He who honors Me, I will glorify him⁴ in eternity. Amen.

¹ *In tota anima tua time Dominum, et sacerdotes illius sanctifica.*

² *Qui vos spernit, me spernit.*

³ *Ego ultor existam.—Deut. xviii. 19.*

⁴ *Quicumque glorificaverit me, glorificabo eum.—I. Kings ii. 30.*

FIFTY-FOURTH SERMON.

**ON THE DUTIES OF MASTERS AND MISTRESSES TOWARDS
THEIR SERVANTS.**

Subject.

1st. Masters and mistresses are bound to look after the salvation of their servants. 2d. How they must do that. 3d. What advantage they may derive from doing so.—*Preached on the twentieth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Credidit ipse, et domus ejus tota.—John iv. 53.
“Himself believed, and his whole house.”

Introduction.

Happy, indeed, is the family of the head of which it may be truly said: “Himself believed, and his whole house.”¹ The father and mother believe, the sons and daughters believe, the servants believe, the whole household believes in God and serves Him! Christian masters and mistresses, that this may be said of your households, depends mostly on how you lead on your children and your servants to serve God and to save their souls. What your duty is in this respect, with regard to your children, has already been sufficiently explained to you; would to God that all parents performed it exactly! But, due proportion being observed, it is your duty also to take the same care of your servants, and alas! there are many who think very little of that duty, on which the welfare of a Christian family depends, and which God Himself has commanded, as I shall show in to-day’s sermon.

Plan of Discourse.

Masters and mistresses are bound to look diligently after the salvation of their servants. That I will briefly show in the first part. How they must do that. The second part. What ad-

¹ *Credidit ipse, et domus ejus tota.*

vantage they may derive from doing so. The third part. The subject is not so circumscribed as might appear at first sight; it chiefly concerns parents with regard to the training of their children; it concerns all housekeepers who are placed by their masters or mistresses in charge of servants; it concerns grown-up daughters who, generally speaking, have to help in housekeeping. Children, servants, and laborers may also learn from it, so that it is useful for all.

O Holy Ghost, we ask this advantage from Thee by Thy light and grace, through the intercession of Mary and that of our holy angels guardian, so that it may be true of every Christian family, "Himself believed, and his whole house."

Masters and mistresses are placed over servants for the advantage of the latter.

What St. Ambrose says of princes and kings who have to rule a country, must be also understood of masters and mistresses, and housekeepers who have charge of children or servants. Subjects, says St. Ambrose, are not placed in obedience for the advantage of their rulers, but rather the rulers are placed over subjects to look after them, to protect them from their enemies, and by wisdom and prudence, to secure to them peace, harmony, and prosperity; therefore, subjects owe their rulers far more gratitude, on account of the charge that God has laid upon them, than rulers owe their subjects for services rendered, and honor shown. What else is a family but a kind of government, or kingdom, in which commands are given and obeyed? And what is a kingdom but a large family, so to say, in which many individuals are bound to obey the same laws under one superior? What a king or ruler is for the state, that you are, masters and mistresses, for your households. Just as kings get their authority from God, not so much for their own good as for that of their subjects, so you are placed by God over your households, not merely for your own sakes, nor that you may be obeyed and waited upon, and seek your temporal profit and convenience by the labor of others; but also that you may have a parental care of their interests and especially of their eternal welfare. You have a right to exact obedience, respect, and service from them, and it is their duty to obey and respect you, because God requires them to do so. But they in turn have a right to be cared for and looked after by you, because that is the duty that God expects you to fulfil, and for which He will one day exact an account from you.

They must use their

That a master is bound to give sufficient board and lodging to

his servants, according to the general custom ; that he must attend to their wants with Christian charity when they are sick, and do his best to restore them to health, although they cannot work nor earn anything for him while in that state ; that he is bound by the law of justice to pay them their full wages at the proper time—these duties are recognized all over the world, and even Turks and heathens fulfil them. But the necessary care does not consist in that alone. I speak now to you, Christian masters and mistresses, and I tell you that there is a far higher obligation incumbent on you. You must be Apostles in your own households, you must act as preachers and priests to your servants, and take the greatest interest in their eternal salvation. Hear what St. Gregory says : In what, he asks, does the authority that a master has over his servants consist ? It is a part, he answers, of the authority of God Himself ; and hence, he concludes, a master must use it towards his servant in the same way that God makes use of His authority over all men. And what way is that ? He uses it for our sanctification and salvation, as St. Paul says : “ For this is the will of God, your sanctification.”¹ The Almighty God, as every one must acknowledge, could command all men to serve Him, without His being obliged to give us any reward for doing so. In fact, we should look upon it as a great honor to spend even a thousand lives in His service, although we should never get the least reward from Him ; but that is not His intention. We have in Him a most generous Lord, who never imposes the least command or law upon us, except for the good of our souls, and in order that we may be freed from eternal sorrow, and rejoice with everlasting joy in Heaven. See, continues St. Gregory, there is the foundation of your duty and obligation, Christian masters. Your servants are subject to you and must obey you ; but they are not more subject to you than you are to God, and you must confess that. Now, God will not exercise any authority over you unless on the condition that He has imposed upon Himself, of furthering thereby your eternal salvation. To this end His plans are directed, for this He has pledged His own divine word. Is it not, then, only just and right for you to use your authority in the same way, that is, to take a deep interest in the eternal welfare of your servants ?

But why should I look for arguments to convince you of this duty, when it is explained so clearly by the Holy Ghost Himself

power as
God uses
His, for the
good of
souls.

Such is the
command of
God.

¹ Hæc est enim voluntas Dei, sanctificatio vestra.—1. Thess. iv. 3.

in the Sacred Scriptures? St. Paul says to the Hebrews: "Obey your prelates, and be subject to them." My dear brethren, if divine providence has placed you in such a position that you must give your liberty and your service to another man, be not afflicted on that account, be subject to your masters and true to them, obey them readily in all that is not contrary to the law of God, because you have much to expect from them: not only are they bound to give you food and wages, but something far more precious. And what is that? "For they watch as being to render an account of your souls." If they are careless in doing so, God will demand your souls at their hands on the last day. It is then certain that every master is bound to look after the eternal welfare of his servants, in virtue of a tacit contract which he makes with them. Serve me, says the master, and do what I tell you, and I will bind myself not only to give you food and wages, but also to take all possible care of the welfare of your soul, since I must give an account of it to God in judgment. "For they watch as being to render an account of your souls." But how must they fulfil this duty? We shall see in the

Second Part.

They must give them good instruction, correction, and example.

There are three things principally in which a master must attend to the spiritual welfare of his servants: he must give them good example, instruction, and correction. Charitable correction, where it is necessary, in the same way as I have already explained, when speaking of the duty of parents to their children. Good example, so that he never allows his servants to see anything in his conduct that could give them scandal, or lead them into sin. Good instruction, by which he must often exhort them to good. He must chastise them with charity when they sin against God, or when they are idle and lazy, or when they are in dangerous occasions or company, so as to save them from sin and vice. If he is wanting in any of these three things, he does not perform his duty, and will be punished by God as an unfaithful steward.

Most fall grievously herein.

Oh, if I could visit all the Christian households of our days one after the other, how many would I find in which this important duty is not even thought of, much less fulfilled exactly! In which men and maid-servants have just reason for complaining, as the disciples of Christ did long ago, when they were on the

¹ *Obedite præpositis vestris, et subjacete eis.*—Heb. xiii. 17.

² *Ipsi enim pervigilant, quasi rationem pro animabus vestris reddituri.*—Ibid.

point of perishing in the storm : “ Master, doth it not concern Thee that we perish ? ”¹ Master, mistress, is it nothing to you that we are leading a bad life and will be lost ? Truly we might say of such masters and mistresses what God says by the Prophet Zacharias : “ Oh, shepherd and idol : ”² for they stand like graven images and let themselves be waited upon and served by others for whom they do nothing ; they have heads and understand not, they have eyes and see not, ears and hear not, mouths and speak not, hands and feet which they do not make use of. That is to say, their whole idea is to be waited upon by their servants, and to get as much work as possible out of them. But they never try to find out the moral faults and failings of their servants ; they have no eyes to watch over their lives and conduct, no mouths to exhort them to serve God, no hands to chastise them when necessary, no feet to go before them with good example. Nay, in place of watching over their salvation, they rather help them to eternal ruin ; in place of showing them the way to Heaven, they lead them to hell. In place of being the shepherds of their souls, they are thieves and murderers who kill their souls and destroy them !

Is it not, alas, only too true ? What kind of teaching is sometimes given to servants ? What use is made of the servant, who is already indifferent enough about pleasing God, as long as he can satisfy his temporal master ? He is simply the tool, the instrument with which his master commits sin ; he must carry sinful letters and help to keep up an improper correspondence for his master ; he must learn how to lie and cheat, to get drunk, to be vindictive and unjust. What use is made of that maid-servant, who is already little inclined to learn her catechism ? She must help in everything that an idle, worldly life and wicked desires suggest to her mistress ; or she is made an accomplice in the sin of her master. How many girls there are who go into service innocent, pure, and leave it disgraced and dishonored ! O useless shepherds ! O false images !

And what kind of example do they get ? Do they see their masters, if not in the morning, at least in the evening, kneel down with them to say their prayers ? Do they often hear their masters speak of God and holy things ? Do they see in them an example of Christian humility and meekness, of peace and unity, of resignation to the will of God, of the frequent re-

They lead their servants into wickedness.

Who give them bad example.

¹ Magister, non ad te pertinet, quia perimus?—Mark iv. 38.

² O pastor et idolum.—Zach. xi. 17.

ception of the sacraments? That is the way in which a Christian household should be governed. For all the servants would follow the good example, and the words of the Gospel might be affirmed truly of the master of the house: "Himself believed, and his whole house."¹ But, oh, Christians, we know the force of bad example, especially when given by one whom we must honor and respect. Tell me, now, how will it be with simple, uneducated, ignorant people, as most of those are who must earn their bread by waiting on others, when they see that their masters and mistresses, with whom they are in daily contact, lead bad and wicked lives; that they have little taste for piety, but much for vice; that they are constantly quarrelling with each other and cursing and swearing at their children; that they are prone to back-biting and calumny? What, think you, must be the effect of example like that, on souls that are already inclined to evil? Is it not natural to expect that in a short time they will be like their masters and mistresses, and that they will learn from them to speak ill of others, to curse and swear, and to be slothful and lazy in the service of God? Certainly, if they were innocent and virtuous when entering into service, they would leave it full of vice and wickedness. Oh, shepherds and disgraceful idols!

Their sins
against God
are not chas-
tised.

And how are they corrected of their faults? Oh, if they displease their masters and mistresses, no punishment is too severe for them! The advice of the Wise Ecclesiasticus would then come in very well indeed: "Be not as a lion in thy house, terrifying them of thy household, and oppressing them that are under thee."² But if the offence be against God alone, the masters and mistresses are indifferent. If the man-servant, through mere carelessness, is not in his place at the proper time; if the maid-servant forgets a message, or breaks anything by accident, then the master or mistress is angry enough; there is no end of cursing, swearing and abuse; the poor servant is turned away or deprived of a part of the wages agreed upon, so that such a fault may never be committed again. But if the man-servant is slothful in the divine service, and given to cursing and swearing; if the maid-servant is given to frequenting dangerous company, very little is thought of that, as long as they do their work well otherwise. Nay, no account at all is taken of such faults; masters do not even wish to examine into them for fear of disagree-

¹ *Credidit ipse, et domus ejus tota.*

² *Noli esse sicut leo in domo tua, evertens domesticos tuos, et opprimens subjectos tibi.—*
Ecl. iv. 35.

able consequences, until at last there is a public scandal, and the only excuse is, I knew nothing about it; if I had heard of it sooner, I should have prevented it, etc. And how does it happen, asks St. Bernard, that you knew nothing of it? Was it not your duty to have known of it? Should you not have kept a watchful eye on your servants? It is indeed a strange thing that sins are committed in your own house, almost under your eyes, and you are the last to hear of them! These are the words of the Saint. You know very well how your servants attend upon you, and whether they are lazy or diligent. You cannot be too sharp in seeing whether they ever take anything out of the house by stealth; that you are sure to find out, for you spy about with lynx-eyed vigilance for faults of that kind; nay, if you have any grounds for suspecting them of dishonesty towards you, you lay traps for them, in order to prove their guilt; thus you tempt the simple souls, and place them in the occasion of sin, for according to the proverb, "Opportunity makes the thief." See how careful you are to correct the faults that your servants commit against yourself; but you know nothing and care to know nothing, of the sins that are committed against God by those subject to you, over whose souls God has placed you as shepherd and guardian. Is that Christian conduct? Oh, shepherd, or rather betrayer, of souls!

How ashamed Christian masters must be when they read of the zeal that the heathen emperor Dioclesian had for the honor of his dumb idols! He never allowed a single member of his court, from the highest to the lowest, to be absent when he offered incense to the gods; all were obliged to join with him in showing them that honor; a single fault in this respect was enough to bring down severe punishment on the offender's head. What a shame that heretics should be more careful in this respect than Catholics, and should insist on their servants going regularly to church morning and evening, and joining in the usual devotions and psalm-singing, as I myself have often seen with astonishment! I cannot help thinking to myself, when I consider that, that amongst the black sheep and those who have apostatized from the Church, there is more care and watchfulness with regard to servants, than amongst true Christians. And thus every day verifies the saying of St. Paul to Timothy: "But if any man have

Heathens
and heretics
put Catho-
lics to
shame
herein.

¹ Ut vitta domus tue ultimus nescias.

² O pastor et Idolum!

not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”¹

For the latter rule as if the salvation of their servants was of no concern to them.

It seems to me that I hear many say in their own minds what the high-priests said to Judas, when he repented of having betrayed to them the innocent Jesus: “What is that to us? Look thou to it.”² “What is that to us?” thinks the master or mistress sometimes. What have I to do with the consciences of my servants? What difference does it make to me whether they lead a good or a bad life? If they wish to go to Heaven, it is their own affair; they are old enough to understand what they are about; if they are lost forever, it is their own fault. I have not to look after their souls; I have made no agreement to instruct them and lead them on to virtue. I give them food and wages if they serve me properly; they cannot expect anything more from me. But what sort of talk is that? Christians, is the salvation of your servants, then, nothing to you? Is it a matter of indifference to you whether they are lost or saved? What becomes of the law of Christian charity which binds every one to help his neighbor’s salvation as much as possible?³ Hear what St. Paul writes to the Romans, and learn from him what an important matter it is for you: “A servant,” he says, “to his own lord standeth or falleth.”⁴ Have you made no contract with him to look after his soul? It is bad for you, indeed, to forget all about it! Know, then, that the Almighty God, the Sovereign Master, has made that contract with your servants in your name, and woe to you if you do not fulfil it faithfully! He will one day require their souls at your hands, and not only your own sins, but the sins of your servants that you could have prevented, will be the cause of your damnation. And to prove this more clearly to you, I will take up that extraordinary question: What is the salvation of our servants to us?⁵ What good or harm is it to us, whether they live well or ill? Certainly it is a matter of great importance to you; it is a great advantage for you if they live piously, and if you look after their souls. Therefore, your own advantage requires you to take care of their spiritual welfare, as we shall see briefly in the

¹ Si quis autem suorum, et maxime domesticorum curam non habet, fidem negavit, et est infidelis deterior.—1. Tim. v. 8.

² Quid ad nos? Tu videris.—Matth. xxvii. 4.

³ Mandavit illis unicuique de proximo suo.—Eccl. xvii. 12.

⁴ Domino suo stat, aut cadit.—Rom. xiv. 4.

⁵ Quid ad nos?

Third Part.

I will not speak now of the great merit to your own souls, oh, fathers and mothers of families, which you lay up in Heaven, by being co-operators and helpers of Jesus Christ, and laboring with Him to further the honor and glory of God in the souls of your dependants; for there is nothing more God-like than to work for the salvation of souls that have been redeemed at such a great price.¹ And what a splendid opportunity you have of doing so! I will consider merely the temporal advantages you may derive from that. The quiet, peace, unity, security, industry, profit, and prosperity of your whole household depend on the care you take of the souls of your dependants. I will bring forward my own complaints to prove this. How often do you not complain that you have so much trouble with your servants? I do not mean to say that your complaints have no foundation. I grant, even, that you have cause enough to make them. One servant is a quarrelsome, ill-humored fellow, who can leave no one in peace. Another is slothful and lazy at work, but quick enough in coming to his meals. You must be always looking after them; if you turn your back, they will do nothing. And this one cannot be depended upon, he is never around when he is wanted. The maid-servant is obstinate; she will do nothing at the proper time, but takes up now one thing, now another, just as it suits her humor. She must be told to do a thing ten times before she obeys. If you venture to speak a serious word to her, she has twenty answers ready. You have reason to suspect another of being unfaithful to you, as she is in the habit of going with people of doubtful reputation. You cannot leave anything in her hands. Whatever occurs in the house she tells the whole neighborhood. It must be one of the servants, you say, who began that talk and spread it about among people whom it does not concern. My children, too, sometimes say things they cannot understand, as they are so young; I do not know where they learned them; there must be some one in the house who indulges in improper conversation. Such are the daily crosses that one has to bear from one's own servants. In a word, my servants are the cause of all my uneasiness, chagrin, impatience, cursing, and sinfulness. How fortunate people are who have good and faithful servants! You may continue with your complaints, for you know more about them than I do. And indeed, I must acknowl-

The temporal welfare of a household depends on what is done for the salvation of the servants.

¹ *Nihil divinius, quam cooperari ad salutem animarum.*

edge that it is a most intolerable, vexatious and wretched thing for servants to be so untrue to their duty. But do you know whence that comes? They do not lead pious and Christian lives; they do not fear and love God as they ought; they have no inclination for piety, and are not encouraged nor exhorted to it by any one. If they go once or twice a year to confession and communion, and hear a short Mass on Sundays and holy-days, that is all that their masters ask them to do for their souls, or all that they, through want of encouragement and instruction, care to do for God and for Heaven. In other things it seems almost as if they were excommunicated. They never hear a sermon, never come to catechism, and so never have a chance of learning how to fear the Lord, and to acknowledge their own faults. Is it, then, any wonder, that since they are so lazy and unfaithful in the service of God, they are also wanting in fidelity to their earthly masters?

For when servants are pious they commit no faults, and their masters have no cause for complaint.

Do you wish your servants to amend? What is the best way to effect that? To put away your present servants, as some do, and hire new ones who will be just as bad as the former, so that they, too, must be sent away? No, I can give you far better advice than that. You have only to see that those who are now in your service lead pious and Christian lives. Then your complaints will cease at once, for if they are good Christians, they will live in peace with each other, and there will be an end to quarrelling and disputes; they will be ready to help each other, and will vie with each other in readiness to fulfil your wishes. If they are good Christians, they will always show you proper respect and obedience, and they will consider your commands as if they came from God Himself, whom they will see and honor in your persons. If they are good Christians, you need never be afraid that they will scandalize your children, or teach them wickedness, nor will you have to fear bad company, unfaithfulness, or thieving. If they are good Christians, they will not murmur against, nor complain of you, and they will toil and labor with the greatest zeal for your advantage. And why so? Because the Christian law requires all this from them, and they know that it pleases God if they fulfil that law. Therefore, some miserly masters trouble themselves uselessly with certain thoughts: If I send my servants to Mass every morning, they will lose too much time, and I shall lose a whole hour's work. What? And if they lost two hours in that way, would you be any worse for it? For if they make the proper intention of serv-

ing God, in the morning, they will do their work during the day all the more earnestly and diligently, because they will remember the intention they made. I do this for the honor of God, therefore I must do it properly. In a word, servants who are good in the sight of God, are also true and diligent in the service of their temporal masters and mistresses. In that way one could in a short time say of your household, what our Lord said of that of Zacheus: "This day is salvation come to this house." Peace and harmony reign therein, and there is no one to disturb them. Master and man-servant, mistress and maid-servant are of one mind; the servants are only glad to obey; the master and mistress have hardly any occasion to command, because each servant knows his or her duty, and is ready to do it with a good intention for God's sake. The servants are like children in the house, they honor and love their master and mistress as they would their own parents. And in such a household as that, where all lead pious and Christian lives, what else can there be but happiness, prosperity, and a copious blessing from God? All good things come into a house together with piety.' Oh, certainly, such a household is a dwelling place of angels and Saints on earth! "Himself believed, and his whole house."

My dear Christians, and you, especially, fathers and mothers of families, do you wish to have such a happy household to dwell in? Then see, first of all, that you yourselves are good and pious, and after that, see, with all possible diligence, that your children and servants also lead good and holy lives. Often call to mind that God has placed you over them as the pastors of their souls, and that you must one day render a strict account as to the manner in which you have performed that duty. If this thought does not move you, then remember that your welfare and that of your whole family depend on whether you all lead holy lives or not. Take as your example that wise woman, of whom the Wise Man says: "She hath looked well to the paths of her house;"¹ that is, she knew everything that occurred in the house, and what her dependants were doing; nay, so great was her watchfulness that it sometimes interfered with her night's rest: "She hath risen in the night and given a prey to her household, and victuals to her maidens."² And not only did she provide

Conclusion and exhortation to heads of families to urge their dependants to piety.

¹ Hodie salus domui huic facta est.—Luke xix. 9.

² Venerunt mihi omnia bona pariter cum illa.—Sap. vii. 11.

³ Creditit ipse, et domus ejus tota.

⁴ Consideravit semitas domus suæ.—Prov. xxxi. 27.

⁵ De nocte surrexit, deditque prædam domesticis suis, et cibaria ancillis suis.—Ibid. 15.

sufficiently for their bodily nourishment, but also she looked after their souls: "She hath opened her mouth to wisdom, and the law of clemency is on her tongue."¹ That is to say, she opened her mouth to teach her dependants true wisdom, to give them instruction regarding their eternal salvation and the practice of virtue, and thereby she gained great fame, and was looked upon as the most fortunate woman in the world: "Her children," and her servants, "rose up and called her blessed."² Imitate her example, Christian fathers and mothers, and happiness will reward your zeal for souls, if not here, at least hereafter, where master and servant, mistress and maid, will differ only according to their different merits, where we shall all be masters, since we shall have everything we desire and wish for; and where we shall all be servants of our great God, in whom we shall also have a most loving Friend, and whom we shall love in eternity in His household, that is, in the kingdom of Heaven. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Second Sunday of Advent:

Text.

Mittens duos de discipulis suis, ait illi: Tu es, qui venturus es?—Matth. xi. 2, 3.

"Sending two of his disciples, he said to Him: Art thou He that art to come?"

Did not John know that Jesus was the Messias? Had he not seen with his own eyes, when baptizing Him, the Holy Ghost descend on Him in the form of a dove, and heard the voice of the heavenly Father saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased?"³ Has he not often pointed Him out to the people as the Lamb of God?⁴ Why then does he ask: "Art thou He that art to come, or look we for another?"⁵ Had he, perhaps, begun to doubt whether Christ was the long-promised Saviour of the world? There were really some who entertained that erroneous opinion. But Cornelius à Lapide, commenting on to-day's Gospel, refutes that error, and holds with Saint Hilary, Cyril, Theophylactus, Enthymius, Rupert, John Chrysostom, and others, who do not ascribe that question to ignorance,

¹ Os suum aperuit sapientiæ, et lex clementiæ in lingua ejus.—Prov. xxxi. 26.

² Surrexerunt filii ejus, et beatissimam prædicaverunt.—Ibid. 28.

³ Hic est filius meus dilectus, in quo mihi complacui.—Matth. iii. 17.

⁴ Ecce agnus Dei! ⁵ Tu es qui venturus es? An alium expectamus?

much less to doubt, but to the great care that John took to instruct his disciples in the way of salvation. Cornelius à Lapide says: "John sends his disciples to ask Jesus if He were the Messias; not because he doubted it, but because, as he was near death, he wished to put an end to the doubts of his disciples, and to give them over to Christ."¹ Christian parents, fathers and mothers of families, there you have a fine example to show how careful you must be in looking after the salvation of your children and of your hired servants, and in leading them to Christ and to Heaven. That you are bound to do this for your children, no one, I think, will doubt; but that you are also bound to do it, due proportion being observed, for your servants, is, also, etc.—*continues as before.*

FIFTY-FIFTH SERMON.

**ON THE DUTIES OF SERVANTS TOWARDS THEIR MASTERS
AND MISTRESSES.**

Subject.

Servants must serve their masters and mistresses. 1st. With fidelity. 2d. With ready and patient obedience.—*Preached on the fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Nemo potest duobus dominis servire.—Matth. vi. 24.

"No man can serve two masters."

Introduction.

I readily admit that no one can serve two masters at the same time; for when one commands a thing, and the other commands the contrary, and both with equal right to be obeyed, it is not possible for the same servant to fulfil the will of both at once. But it is easy enough to serve one master. And would to God that all servants did so, as they ought! If I were to inquire about

¹ Joannes mittit discipulos, ac rogat Jesum, an ipse sit Messias: non quod de eo dubitaret, sed quod morti vicinus discipulos de eo dubitantes voluerit instrui et ad Christum traduci.

the matter, many masters and mistresses would have to complain to me that they have a great deal of trouble and annoyance with their servants. The cause of that is sometimes to be found in the faults of the masters and mistresses themselves, who do not know how to manage their households properly; and sometimes in the servants, who cannot or will not do their duty. I have already spoken, my dear brethren, of the duty of the former, and now I must not forget the latter, especially since they are more in need of instruction, and have not such opportunities of coming to sermons and other devotions, as their masters and mistresses. Therefore I will now explain to them, in a way they will understand, the duty they owe their employers, and how they are to perform it so as to please God and satisfy their own consciences.

Plan of Discourse.

They must serve their masters and mistresses with fidelity. The first part. They must serve them with ready and patient obedience. The second part. Nearly all the rest of you who are present will find that you can learn something useful from this sermon.

Great Lady and Queen of the world, Mary, thou hast the name of a handmaid of the Lord; heavenly spirits, holy guardian angels, you are called, "Ministers of the Lord, who do His will,"¹ nay, you even attend on us, poor mortals—obtain now, for all whom this subject concerns, light and grace to know their duty, and to fulfil it constantly.

In what the fidelity of a servant consists.

It is an evident and undoubted truth that no one can call in question that servants must serve their masters and mistresses. The very name of servant proves that; it is the will and law of God; it is required by the contract they made when they entered into service. But there is a great difference between serving and serving. There are some to whom Christ says with love and favor: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."² What a beautiful commendation that is! There are others whom the same Lord will drive away with anger and displeasure, saying to them: "Wicked and slothful servant."³ What a terrible condemnation! He who wishes to belong to the first class, must

¹ Ancilla Domini.

² Ministri ejus, qui factis voluntatem ejus.

³ Euge, serve bone et fidelis.—Matth. xxv. 23.

⁴ Serve male et piger.—Ibid. 26.

before all serve his master with honesty and fidelity ; he must be exact in performing the work and the duty intrusted to him, just as if he were doing it for his own profit and advantage ; he must be faithful in guarding, and if possible, in increasing his master's goods ; he must be faithful in protecting his master's household, as well as he can, from all hurt and harm. Two commands are given to all men by God : " Decline from evil, and do good." ¹ I can sin grievously against either, and so lose my soul. It is not sufficient for the service of God for me to abstain from evil, I must also do the good that is required of me. The same thing is to be observed, in due proportion, by all servants towards their masters and mistresses. To rob your masters, and carry off, or wilfully destroy their property, is, as all admit, very wrong and unjust, and you would be bound to bring back or make restitution for the stolen or injured property, if you could do so, before getting pardon for your sin. But supposing one does none of those things, is he, therefore, a good and faithful servant? By no means ; that is not near enough ; otherwise, the servant in the Gospel would have been unjustly treated. He was intrusted by his master with a talent, which he neither spent in drink nor made away with otherwise, but hid carefully in the ground, and gave back again to his master, when the latter returned ; and yet because he did not use it to his master's profit, he was treated as a wicked and unfaithful servant, and was cast into exterior darkness. But, he could have said, I have done no wrong to my master ; I have not injured his property, and I have given him back what belouged to him. No matter ; you are a bad servant, ² because you should at least have laid out the talent at interest, that your master might have received it back with profit.

In the same way those servants sin against this duty, who are lazy and careless in doing their work, and who are indifferent as to how they perform it ; or who, when they see any act of unfaithfulness in their fellow-servants, do not make it known to their masters ; or otherwise do not protect the household from injury when it is in their power to do so. As a general rule, that negligence and laziness may be traced to the fact that they consider their masters as strangers. What is it to me ? they say ; I gain nothing by that profit, and suffer nothing by that loss. That is true, if you consider your master alone ; his goods do not belong to you ; but your master is not a stranger to you in the sight of God, who has called you to your state of life that you may

Idle and
careless ser-
vants sin
against this.

¹ Declina a malo, et fac bonum.—Ps. xxxvi. 27.

² Serve male !

look after your master's interests as carefully and diligently as you can, according to the duty imposed upon you, and a strict account will one day be required of you, when God will say to you: "Give an account of thy stewardship."¹

Still more
dishonest
servants.

Still greater is the sin committed by those servants who secretly make away with their master's property, or give it to their friends and relations under the pretext that their masters are rich enough and will not miss what they give away, or that what is of little use to them will be of great service to those to whom they give it; and by those who now and then keep something small for themselves, or use it for their own purposes. Ah, my dear people, that will not do; such acts are unjust, and are worse than the thefts committed by robbers. How so? Because one can protect himself against a robber with bars and bolts, but not against those whom he does not even suspect, because they are his domestics and he trusts in them. You say, my master has enough already; what I take from him will do him no harm. Has he enough? Has he therefore asked that something be taken away from him? Is it therefore allowed for you to make away with his property without his consent? If that were the case, all poor people could, with clear consciences, rob the rich, and excuse themselves by saying: Oh, they are rich enough, they will not miss it. No, Christians, that will not do. But, you say, suppose it is something trifling, that I now and then keep for myself, or steal; I will make up for it by being more diligent in my work. If your master has made that agreement with you, that provided you are diligent in your work, you can now and then take some trifle for yourself, then it is all right, you can do so. Ask him, however, if he wishes to make such an agreement, and if he says no, then your excuse is of no avail; your master does not require extraordinary diligence from you on such terms. Do your daily work well, look after your own concerns, and let your master manage his. Again, if it is a trifle that you take away, it is certainly only a trifling act of unfaithfulness, a small theft, a venial sin. But when it occurs often, it becomes greater, and when small thefts are added together they make up matter enough for a grievous sin; and when you cause your master serious injury, you commit a mortal sin of theft, unless inculpable ignorance excuses you, and you incur the obligation of restitution when you are able. More than that: if you intend to take away little things now and then,

¹ Redde rationem villcationis tue.—Luke xvi. 2.

and to keep them until you have something considerable, you commit a mortal sin, not merely when you commit the last of the series of thefts, but also in every single theft; such is the general teaching of theologians. The reason thereof is that you have each time the will and intention to commit a grievous theft, and of course each time you renew your intention of committing a grievous sin. The same is to be said, too, of all shopkeepers who use short measures or light weights; every slight theft that is committed by such means, although it does not do much harm to the person on whom it is committed, yet in the course of time amounts to a considerable sum. In all these cases, unless ignorance excuses, a grievous sin is committed, and restitution must be made to the public, to atone for the injustice committed, and that, too, in the place where the unjust profit was made. If those who have wronged their neighbor in that way, wish to make restitution, they must ask a competent confessor for advice.

Moreover, sin is committed also by those servants who privately supplement their wages, either because they think they are paid too little for the work they do, or because other servants are better paid for doing less work; or because they have helped their employers in some way that did not enter into their engagement; or because a part of their yearly wages has been kept back in punishment of a fault. For these and similar reasons, they try to pay themselves secretly, and as they think, without doing any wrong. Again, my dear people, I must tell you that that will not do. No one is a judge in his own cause. If every one could pronounce according to his own opinion, with regard to himself, what disturbance that would cause in the world! Who could then trust his neighbor? For, in the first place, you think your wages too small in comparison with the work you do, or that others are better paid; why then did you agree with your master for such wages? You could have demanded different wages if you liked; and if you did not think that the work would turn out to be as hard as it really is, you must represent the matter to your employer and ask for more wages. In the second place, if you have done something for him, that you were not bound to do, certainly decency requires him to repay you in some way for that service, but if he refuses to do so, he is only acting as he has a right to act, because you rendered the service of your own accord, at his desire. In the third place, if something is taken away from your wages, I know that it is a sin crying to Heaven,

Also they
who pri-
vately
pay them-
selves.

to do so without just cause, and if you are innocent you can complain to your master; if you are guilty, you must bear the consequences of your own act. Occult compensation (and I say this for all) is never allowed unless when all the following circumstances certainly occur together: First, there must be no doubt about the debt owed to me by another, and this circumstance is wanting in the excuses already brought forward; secondly, I must be certain that he who is in my debt will never pay me, although I have often asked him to do so, or at least I must have reason to believe that my asking will have no effect; thirdly, if after having employed all the lawful means in my power, I find that I cannot get what is due to me in any other way, I am allowed to pay myself privately, yet with the obligation of warning those who belong to me that they cannot hereafter ask my debtor to pay.

Even they who give alms without the knowledge and consent of their employers.

Finally, those servants sin against the fidelity due to their employers (here, oh, my God, the law of justice and the obligation to tell the truth compel me to speak against my inclination), who without their knowledge and consent give alms out of their property to the poor. But, you say, that is a work of Christian charity and mercy that is shown to Jesus Christ Himself, whom the poor person represents. Can I not even venture to give a piece of bread to my poor and needy Saviour? Certainly it is a work of mercy, and I am ready to do all in my power to urge men to practise it, but it is not a good work unless you give the alms from what belongs to yourself, or from what you are allowed to give away that belongs to others. It is not allowed to steal leather and give away the shoe made with it, as is falsely related of a certain Saint. I say, without the knowledge and consent of your employers; for if your master and mistress are in the habit of giving alms on certain days, you can, in their absence, reasonably presume that you have their permission to give also; or if they know that you give away the remnants of the food, and they say nothing to you about it, they give a tacit consent to what you do. In other cases, when the master and mistress are displeased with you for speaking to them on behalf of the poor, although they sometimes sin through want of charity, still you are not allowed to give alms even to Christ, of what belongs to others. You will think, now, that I am rather hard upon your state of life. Oh, no, the love I have for your souls compels me to speak the plain truth.

Instruction for

If there are any who have sinned against justice in any of these

points, they must explain the matter clearly to their confessor ; they must tell him what they took, how much, how often, and with what intention they did it; he will then know how to advise them and to tell them how they are to set matters right. With regard to those who have given alms with their master's property, in good faith, they need not be anxious, nor are they bound to declare it in confession as a sin; for what was not a sin then through inculpable ignorance, cannot become a sin afterwards, when they know better; nay, they should rather rejoice that, by that inculpable ignorance, they were enabled to do a good work of Christian charity, and to gain merit in Heaven. St. Cæsarius, when he was a boy, if he saw a poor man who was ill clad, used to pull off his clothes and give them to him, and when on his return home his parents asked him what he had done with them, he would say that they were taken from him by force. There is no doubt that he did a good work, although he thus gave alms without his parents' consent, because he knew no better, and acted through a charitable desire to clothe the naked. Servants who act thus in good faith, are not bound to make restitution, because they gave the alms with a clear conscience and did not become richer thereby; and besides, what they gave is already consumed by the poor. What I have said up to this, my dear brethren, is also true, due proportion being observed, of the children of the household, and of all who in any way administer the property of others. "Well done, good and faithful servant." ¹ If you wish to deserve that praise, be honest and faithful to your employers. Serve them also with ready and patient obedience; and that is the duty, too, of all subjects towards their spiritual and temporal superiors, as we shall see in the

Those who have hitherto sinned in this way.

Second Part.

Two things are to be observed here, namely, a ready obedience, and a patient obedience. A ready obedience in all things that masters and mistresses justly command, just as if the command came from God Himself. Hear what St. Paul says on this point, when he explains the duties of different states of life, as well as those of servants: "Servants," he says in his Epistle to the Ephesians, "be obedient to them that are your lords according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the simplicity of your heart, as to Christ," and not otherwise; not because they are looking at you,

Servants must obey their employers with ready obedience, because they thus serve Christ.

¹ Euge, serve bone et fidelis.

not because you wish to please men, "but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with a good will serving, as to the Lord, and not to men,"¹ certain that you will receive your reward from the same Lord. In these words the Apostle explains the dignity of your state and duty. Servitude is generally looked upon by men as undesirable, contemptible, and despicable, and they who serve others think that their state is the lowest and most unfortunate of all. But St. Paul says, for your consolation, that such is not the case; you are servants of Christ, attendants on the Most High God; and whenever you obey your masters on earth, with ready submission and a good intention, God accepts your obedience as if it were offered to Him, and in addition to the yearly wages you receive on earth, He will give you the eternal joys of Heaven. Certainly that is great encouragement to obey readily, willingly, and joyfully! What greater dignity can a poor man have, than to be able to call himself, with the Apostle, "a servant of Jesus Christ,"² an attendant on the Almighty God, who is served and honored in the persons of master and mistress?

Because
they thus do
the will of
God.

What a happiness for servants to be thus always certain of doing the will of God, whenever they obey the lawful commands of their employers during the day! It is in doing that holy will that all our piety, devotion, and holiness consist, as I shall prove more in detail further on. What a consolation for servants on the day of judgment, when many other people will have to give a strict account of the good works they omitted, such as alms-deeds, charity, reading spiritual books, often hearing sermons, frequent prayer, and other devotions, while the former will simply have to say to their Judge: I did what my master and mistress told me the whole day long, and Thou hast desired me to obey them, since Thou hast placed me in that state, just as I should obey Thee. I have only been able to hear Mass daily; sometimes a whole day passed without my being able to go once to Church, but I could not help it, for such was the will of my employers. I have hardly ever said a whole rosary in the day, because I was kept busy with other things. I have often lost the sermon on Sundays and holy-days, because I was told to remain in the house. I have often been obliged to send Thee, my Saviour, away, when Thou camest in the persons of the poor;

¹ *Servi, obedite dominis carnalibus cum timore et tremore, in simplicitate cordis vestri, sicut Christo. Non ad oculum servientes, quasi hominibus placentes, sed ut servi Christi, facientes voluntatem Dei ex animo, sicut Domino et non hominibus.*—Ephes. vi. 5-7

² *Servus Jesu Christi.*—Rom. i. 1.

my heart was full of pity for Thee, but I could not help it, because I had not permission to give alms. On Sundays and holy-days I have often, with the approval of my confessor, spent an hour in sewing or other manual labor, but I could not help it, because my employers gave me no other time during the week to mend my own clothes. In Lent I have often used the general dispensation to eat meat, because my employers gave me nothing else. But Thou, oh, my God, hast told me by Thy servant, that it was Thy holy will for me to obey my employers in all lawful things. Behold, I have done as Thou hast commanded,¹ I have done it with a good intention for Thy sake, and I have renewed that intention often during my daily work, so that I have fulfilled Thy holy will, and Thou canst require nothing more from me. And now I expect the reward Thou hast promised me.² "Servants, obey your masters!"³ Oh, how fortunate you are! Your masters can sin by their commands or prohibitions, but you cannot go astray by obeying them, as long as what is commanded is not against the law of God. Such is the will of God, and you always do a holy work, that is pleasing to Him, and meritorious of eternal glory, as long as you do not forget the good intention, nor lose the state of grace by a mortal sin. Therefore, obey your employers gladly and joyfully, with readiness, and in the simplicity of your hearts, "as to Christ."⁴

Now, there are two sorts of servants who sin against this obedience. Some are not obedient enough, others are too obedient. The first class consists of those who must be told a thing three or four times before they do it, and who thus generally cause their employers much annoyance and anger, and give occasion for impatience, and cursing or abuse; or who do what they are told, when it is against their will, with a great deal of grumbling and discontent, slowly and unwillingly; or, what is very disrespectful indeed, who answer their employers back and give them abuse for abuse, and curse for curse. If you would only remember, for a moment, that it is Jesus Christ whom you thus treat disrespectfully in the persons of your employers! Listen to what St. Paul writes to Timothy, 6th chapter: "Whosoever are servants under the yoke, let them count their masters worthy of all honor; lest the name of the Lord and His doctrine be blasphemed."⁵ They must humbly obey, even as St. Peter

They who are not obedient enough, sin against this.

¹ Feci, quod jussisti.

² Redde, quod promissisti.

³ Servi, obedite dominis!

⁴ Sicut Christo.

⁵ Quicumque sunt sub jugo servi, dominos suos omni honore dignos arbitrentur, ne nomen Domini et doctrina blasphemetur. - 1. Tim. vi. 1.

says, the froward, wicked, and ungodly, ' even those who command harshly and angrily. St. Paul continues : " But they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but serve them the rather, because they are faithful."² If one obeys only commands that are given in kind and gentle words, or when the command is to his liking ; if the master and mistress, in order to keep peace in the house, must give in to the humor of a servant, and not venture to ask him to do what he does not like to do, such an obedience as that is not worth much ; in that way one does his own will, and not that of his master, and of course will have little merit in the sight of God.

Shown by a
smile.

I will give you a simile to explain this, in the shape of a story taken from the books of the Spanish Inquisition. A certain gentleman was very intimate with a sorcerer ; on one occasion he saw that the latter, when he wished anything to be done, put his hat on a broom, drew a small circle around it, and muttered a few words, whereupon the broom became a servant and offered at once to do its master's will, saying : What do you wish me to do, master ? What are your commands ? The broom fulfilled the sorcerer's wishes most exactly : it ran hither and thither, and did everything, and when its master required its services no longer, it retired into its corner, and became a broom again. The gentleman was astonished at all this, and wished to have a similar servant ; he therefore paid great attention to the words used by the sorcerer, and when he returned home, he ordered a large new broom to be brought. He admired it very much, and took it into his hands, turning it around, and saying to it jestingly : What a fine servant you will make ; then, speaking the magic words, he changed it into a servant, who immediately asked him : What do you command ? Go, said the gentleman, and bring me some water, and put it in this basin. The new servant at once went out, brought in the water and filled the basin to the brim. Now, said the gentleman, I have water enough ; go to the forest and bring some wood ; but the servant went this time to the sea and brought in more water. I told you, said the gentleman, that I had water enough ; I want wood to make fire in the stove ; but the servant brought water a third time, and no matter what he was told, he continued to bring nothing but water, until the room was flooded. At last the sor-

¹ Etiam dyscolis.

² Qui autem fideles habent dominos, non contempnant, quia fratres sunt ; sed magis servant, quia fideles sunt.—1. Tim. vi. 1.

cerer was called in, and by a few words that the gentleman had not remarked before, he put an end to the matter. There can be no doubt that this servant was an evil spirit. But there are many servants who seem to wait on their employers in just the same manner : instead of bringing wood, they bring water. The man-servant is away on some message that he forgot, instead of attending on his master ; the maid-servant is busy among the pots and pans in the kitchen, instead of being at work in the parlor, as she should be ; everything is topsy-turvy, according to the humor they are in. In a word, there are servants who obey, but only in things that are easy, agreeable, and suited to their taste ; in other matters they follow their own inclinations. Such servants as that are not worth much. No, they should obey in all things, exactly as their masters and mistresses wish, even if they have to act against their own will, their own comfort or convenience ; and even if their obedience entails upon them difficulty, mortification, and humiliation ; this is the proper kind of obedience, in which Christian virtue consists, and which increases one's merits and rewards in Heaven.

The other class is still worse, and consists of those who are too obedient, and who, through human respect, or to please their employers, do everything that they are told, even if it be unlawful and against the laws of God or of the Church. Thus, for instance, servants sometimes consent to engage in servile work on Sundays and holy-days. They tell lies, when ordered to do so, so as to cheat others in business. They carry letters to and fro, and thus help to keep up a criminal intercourse, or do other things for the same unlawful purpose. They help their masters to take revenge on an enemy, or try to ruin that enemy's character by calumny and detraction. They allow improper liberties to be taken with themselves, as is sometimes the case in taverns, where shameless servants are employed in the hope of attracting customers. In a word, they obey in things that are contrary to the law of God, and against their own consciences. Certainly, their employers are guilty of sin, and of a two-fold sin, when they command or advise them to do things that are unlawful, for they sin against the duty imposed on them by God, according to which they are bound to exhort their dependants to virtue, and to help them in every way possible to save their souls. Nevertheless, the servants, too, are guilty of sin, by obeying their wicked commands, or following their bad advice, through fear or human respect, and by thus preferring their temporal masters to

They who
are too obe-
dient.

God, the Supreme Lord of all. The tyrants who persecuted the Christians so cruelly, and tried to rob them of their faith, are lost forever. But so, too, are those Christians who were terrified by them into denying Christ. Ah, unhappy servants, or rather slaves of hell! Of what good will the favor of your masters be to you, if you lose the grace and friendship of God? Will they be able to defend you on the day of judgment, and to save you from the flames of hell? Or will you be able to excuse yourselves by saying: My master or my mistress told me to do so? What! the Judge will say to you, am I not your Supreme Master? Were you not bound to prefer my command to that of your earthly masters?

God must be obeyed, rather than men, after the example of holy servants.

No, a true servant of Jesus Christ does not hesitate to think and say what St. Peter and the other Apostles said to the high-priest, who forbade them to preach the name of Jesus Christ: "We ought to obey God rather than men."¹ A faithful handmaid of Christ thinks and says with undaunted courage: I will obey in all things lawful, but I will not depart a hair's-breadth from the law of God. She would rather sacrifice her wages, allow herself to be ill-treated and turned out of the house, nay, would give up her life, rather than act against her conscience, or disobey the law of God, her Supreme Lord and Master. Read the Lives of the Saints, and you will find beautiful examples of how you should obey. Amongst many other you will read that of St. Arnalph, who was servant to a nobleman. His master, who was very avaricious and severe towards his dependants, told him once to go to certain subjects of his and take their corn from them. Arnalph, who was otherwise most obedient, could not obey that unjust command, for he was more anxious to obey the law of God forbidding injustice, than the will of his master. So he absolutely refused obedience, and could not be moved thereto by the anger and rage of his master, for he was indifferent to both, as long as he did nothing against the will of God, his Supreme Master. Yet he thought he had found a way of avoiding an offence against God, and of appearing at the same time to satisfy his master. Whenever he was sent to extort corn from the peasants, he brought away certain quantities of it from his master's granaries, as if he had taken it from the people. This plan succeeded for a time, until an envious fellow-servant found it out, and reported to his master that there was hardly corn enough left for the support of the house. Arnalph was at

¹ Obedire oportet Deo magis quam hominibus—Acts v. 29.

once condemned to be punished ; but when the granaries were again examined, they were found to be full of corn—an evident proof that God always comes to the assistance of those who, for His sake, and to keep His commandments, refuse to obey the unlawful commands of their temporal masters. Thus write the Bollandists in the Lives of the Saints under the 29th of January. Let this be taken note of by those men and maid-servants who are told in taverns to charge the guests double, or in shops to use unjust weights and measures. Read the history of St. Matrona, who allowed herself to be sentenced to a most cruel death, rather than renounce the faith, or disobey the law of God. Her mistress was a certain fanatical Jewess named Plantilla, who lived in Thessalonica. Certainly, it is not at all advisable for a Catholic to take service with those opposers of our faith, but in those days it was difficult to find service with a Christian family, on account of the bitter persecutions, so that Matrona had to seek employment with this Jewess. She adored Christ secretly, and as often as she found time after her work, she stole into the Church to perform her devotions (would to God that all servants were thus careful of their salvation, and that they gave to God whatever time was over from their work !). But she could not long hide what she was doing, so that Plantilla found it out. One day, as the latter was going to the synagogue, accompanied by Matrona, she remarked that her companion went with her only as far as the door, and then went off to the Christian Church. She then commenced to persecute Matrona in different ways, in order to make her deny Christ ; at first she tried mildness, and then severity, but when she saw that all her efforts were in vain, she gave full vent to her fury, and caused Matrona to be tied down and cruelly scourged, after which she had her thrown into a corner of the house, and left four days without food or drink. At the expiration of that time Matrona was again brought out, but as she still courageously refused to do as her mistress wished, she was again beaten most cruelly. This torture was repeated until she gave up her victorious spirit, while engaged in prayer. The detailed account of this martyrdom may be read in Henschen, under the 15th of March. The same fidelity to God was shown by two maid-servants in Japan, of whom Cornelius Hazart writes in his history of the Church in Japan. These two heroically suffered death by the sword ; the one because she would not deny Jesus Christ at the command of her heathen master, the other because she refused to gratify her master's lust : " I am a

Christian," she said, in answer to every promise and threat; "and I would rather die than offend God by such a sin." Servants, take pattern by this. Obey your employers,¹ but only when their commands are not against the will of God, your Supreme Lord.

They must
obey pa-
tiently.

Finally, you must obey contentedly and patiently. There is no doubt that you have many difficulties and annoyances to put up with every day, especially when your employers are hard, fault-finding, captious and suspicious, and many of you might truly say, with the Prophet David: "Thou hast made us a reproach to our neighbors, a scoff and derision to them that are round about us!"² But you must think to yourselves: this is the state in which God wishes me to serve Him during my life; this is the cross by which He wishes to bring me to Heaven. Other people have their crosses to bear; my master has his troubles and difficulties with the household; my mistress has her trials with the children, or elsewhere, of which I know nothing, and perhaps she has more to bear than I; therefore I will carry my cross, and bear it patiently for God's sake. I shall always say in my heart: Lord, "Thy will be done!"³ The trouble is slight and will soon be over; the reward that awaits me is exceeding great, and will last forever. But you must be careful not to lose your great merit and reward in the sight of God, by impatience, or murmuring, or secret discontent, which will not do you a bit of good, but rather make matters worse. Much less should you act like those, of whom there are many in the world, who give vent to their impatience, or take revenge on their employers, by complaining to others, or talking of the private faults of their masters or mistresses. In God's name, what is the use of that? What can you gain by such tittle-tattle? Can you correct those faults by it? If not, why do you speak of them to those whom they do not concern? You thus make yourself guilty of detraction against your employers, and are bound to restore their good name as far as you can. You have offended God, and are bound to do penance sincerely; and besides that, all your trouble goes for nothing, because you lose the merit of your labor and suffering, and cannot hope to be rewarded for them. A fine way to act, indeed! If, in place of murmuring and back-biting, you bore your trouble with

¹ Servi, obedite.

² Posulisti nos opprobrium vicinis nostris, subsannationem et derisum his, qui sunt in circuitu nostro. —Ps. xliii. 14.

³ Fiat voluntas tua!

patience and a good intention, what a beautiful crown you would prepare for yourself in Heaven, and what a comfort it would be for your conscience to know that you were thus willingly bearing the cross with your suffering Saviour! Remember that the God whom you serve in the person of your employers is, as He says Himself, “a God of patience,” but also, “a God of consolation,” as the Apostle calls Him, who will lighten, with His heavenly consolations, the burden you have to bear.

I conclude by repeating the exhortation of St. Paul: “Servants, obey them that are your lords according to the flesh, with fear, in the simplicity of your heart, as to Christ.”¹ Serve them faithfully, obey them patiently! Encourage yourselves to do this by the example of the great King of Heaven and earth, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who for our sake “took the form of a servant;”² who says of Himself, in the Gospel of St. Matthew, “I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister;”³ who was not only obedient to His heavenly Father even unto death,⁴ but was also subject to poor mortals, to a poor virgin and a poor carpenter: “He was subject to them.”⁵ That is all we read of Christ in the Gospel, from His twelfth to His thirtieth year. Ah, if you only knew how fortunate you are, you would not change with any master or mistress, but would rejoice and congratulate yourselves that you have the Son of God as a companion in your state of life, and that you can thus more easily resemble Him whom we must all be like, if we wish to enter Heaven. In fact, if you do your duty well, and for the love of God, you are much better off than many rich lords and ladies, and on the day of judgment you will take precedence of the highest potentates of earth, for then no notice will be taken of earthly rank. You will not be asked whether you were master or servant, mistress or maid, but whether you lived a just and pious life, according to your state, and fulfilled your duty properly, as the Apostle says, speaking of servants: “Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man shall do, the same shall he receive from the Lord, whether he be bond or free.”⁶ As far as the per-

Conclusion and exhortation to servants to obey their employers in the manner described.

¹ Deus autem patientiæ et solatii.—Rom. xv. 5.

² Servi, obedite dominis carnalibus cum timore, in simplicitate cordis vestri, sicut Christo.

³ Formam servi accipiens.

⁴ Non veni ministrari, sed ministrare.—Matth. xx. 28.

⁵ Factus obediens usque ad mortem.—Philipp. ii. 8.

⁶ Erat subditus illis.—Luke ii. 51.

⁷ Scientes, quoniam unusquisque, quodcumque fecerit bonum, hoc recipiet a Domino, sive servus, sive liber.—Ephes. vi. 8.

son is concerned, one is as good in the sight of God as another. If your employers do not perform their duty well and in a Christian manner, they will be separated from you, to their unspeakable confusion, and will be cast into exterior darkness. If you do your duty, and lead a pious, Christian life, serving your masters with fidelity, patience, and obedience, you will be placed on the right hand of your Judge, and will hear the consoling words from the mouth of your Heavenly Father: "Call the laborers and pay them their hire,"¹ and with what indescribable joy you will hear Jesus Christ say to you: "Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful," for a short time, to Me, and to thy temporal master, "I will place thee over many things;" come now, "enter into the joy of thy Lord,"² a blessing that I wish you with all my heart. Amen.

FIFTY-SIXTH SERMON.

ON THE EVIL OF BEING TOO MUCH OCCUPIED.

Subject.

A life that is too full of earthly cares and troubles is, in the sight of God, an idle, useless, and therefore unchristian life.—*Preached on the second Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Et cœperunt omnes simul excusare.—Luke xiv. 18.
 "And they began all at once to make excuse."

Introduction.

The lives of many men resemble stagnant water, that, because it has no motion, can generate nothing but worms and vermin. Such is the life of the idle man who wastes his precious time in mere trifles, and is of no use to any one in the world, neither to God, to his neighbor, nor to himself. The lives of many other men resemble a raging torrent that is always hurrying on its

¹ *Voca operarios, et redde illis mercedem.*—Matth. xx. 8.

² *Euge, serve bone et fidelis, quia super pauca fuisti fidelis, super multa te constituam.* Intra in gaudium Domini tui.—Matth. xxv. 21.

course without rest or repose ; such are the lives of those who are involved in a multiplicity of labors, cares, and unceasing occupations, and whose efforts are directed solely to temporal things, with a view to gaining possession of perishable goods, or of increasing those they possess already, so that they have no time left during the day to think of working for the welfare of their souls, or for Heaven. The parable of to-day's Gospel gives us an exact picture of this kind of people. The guests who were invited could not even spare time to come to the great feast (by which is meant partly the Blessed Eucharist, and partly the kingdom of Heaven). And why was that ? " I have bought a farm," said one, " and I must needs go out and see it." ¹ Said the second : " I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to try them." ² The third said : " I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." ³ Thus, " they began all at once to make excuse," ⁴ and not one of them tasted the supper to which they were all invited. Now, my dear brethren, although a life of that kind does not seem to lead to sin as much as an idle life, yet it is not a Christian life, and cannot lead to Heaven, as I shall now show.

Plan of Discourse.

A life that is too full of earthly cares and troubles is, in the sight of God, an idle, useless, and therefore unchristian life. Such is the whole subject. Let us, then, so manage our temporal business, that we do not lose eternal goods.

That is the conclusion, which we beg of Thee, O God, to effect in us through the merits of Mary and our holy angels guardian.

I do not speak now of those occupations which are unlawful and contrary to the Christian law, such as undertaking and defending unjust law-suits, making money by dishonest tricks and usurious contracts, cheating in buying and selling, or offering bad books and pictures for sale, and similar sinful occupations ; for as a matter of course such things are wrong and cannot lead to Heaven. I speak of temporal cares that are usual amongst men, and are not bad in themselves, nor are used for a bad purpose ; of domestic employments that are lawful and even necessary for

What is understood by a too busy life.

¹ Villam emi, et necesse habeo exire, et videre illam.—Luke xiv. 18.

² Juga boum emi quinque, et eo probare illa.—Ibid. 19.

³ Uxorem duxi, et ideo non possum venire.—Ibid. 20.

⁴ Cœperunt omnes simul excusare.

the support of one's family and to keep up one's position ; of occupations such as are usual among servants in their daily work and attendance on their masters, among workmen in their workshops, among traders in their business, among lawyers and attorneys in the cases intrusted to them, among officials in their employments, among the higher authorities in their efforts for the common weal, in a word, among all men in what concerns their daily temporal occupations.

A life of that kind is an idle one in the sight of God.

Now, when a man gives himself to such occupations so much that he has his hands and his thoughts full of them, so that he has no time to recollect himself during the day, and to do something for the service of God and the salvation of his soul, such a life is an idle, useless, and therefore unchristian life in the sight of God ; not because the time is spent in doing nothing, but because too much is done, so that there is no leisure for the most important occupation of all, and that which ought to be done first. I will now prove that to you, my dear brethren.

For our one most important business is the care of our souls.

The end for which alone we are created and placed in this world is to serve God, to know Him, to love Him above all things with our whole heart, and thereby to work out our salvation, to seek the kingdom of God, to gain Heaven, as even little children know who have learned their catechism. This is the chief business of all men, without exception, no matter what may be their age, state, or condition. This is the business that must be undertaken and carried on every day by the higher authorities in their government, by officials in their employment, by lawyers in their cases, by merchants in their business, by workmen in their daily labor, by servants in their situations. All are here on earth for the one sole purpose, to know God, to love Him, to serve Him, to save their souls and to gain Heaven. Nor can any one doubt this truth. Besides, you must all confess that the greater and more important a business is, the more time, diligence, care, labor, and attention it requires ; the greater the good we hope to gain by success, the greater the loss and injury we have to dread if we fail. Is not that so ? Certainly, and I repeat, there can be no doubt of it. Further, you must also admit that a man, no matter what he may be, can have no greater or more important business in the world, than the care of his soul and the service of God, for on that alone it depends whether he is to rejoice forever with his God in a place of endless delights, or to be tortured forever with the demons in an abyss of all imaginable torments. Can any other business be compared with this ? Certainly not. Pru-

dence in managing a business, cleverness in conducting law-suits, daring undertakings in war, wise and prudent legislation,—all these things could be called mere child's play in comparison with the business of our souls. "For what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul," after all his labor and trouble? "Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul?"¹ Such are the infallible words of the Son of God. So far, my dear brethren, we are dealing with undoubted truths.

And now I ask you, is it credible that those men who, as I have said, are too much given to worldly cares and occupations, and who spend day after day and year after year in them, can give the necessary care to the great and most important business of their souls? How is it possible for them to do so? If a man takes any business really to heart, he devotes his time and attention to it. If I want to work out something that is of great importance to me, I think and study about it for hours to see how I shall begin it; it is in my mind almost all day and all night; I go about and am always busied about it without feeling tired; no time is too long, no expense too great, no work too hard for me to work out my plan. Now, how much thought, consideration, care, labor, and diligence do men who are busied with worldly things give to the business of their souls during the day? They give the least possible time, nay, they can hardly spare a serious thought for it; nor can it well be otherwise because our understanding is limited and cannot attend to two different things at the same time, so as to give both the proper share of attention; so that when a man is wholly occupied with temporal and earthly things, he must necessarily neglect the business of his immortal soul, and put it aside.

This cannot be consistent with a too busy life.

When the Israelites were a source of great trouble to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and were asking leave, through Moses their prophet, to go into the wilderness to worship God, what did Pharaoh do to distract their minds from that thought? He told his officers to double the tasks of the Israelites, so that they should not have a moment's idleness: "Let them be oppressed with works," he said; "for they are idle, and therefore they cry, saying: Let us go and sacrifice to our God." Therefore, "let them be oppressed with works, and let them fulfil them, that

Proved by a simile from Holy Scripture.

¹ Quid enim prodest homini, si mundum universum lucretur, animæ vero suæ detrimentum patiatur? Aut quam dabit homo commutationem pro anima sua?—Matth. xvi. 26.

they may not regard lying words,"¹ that they may not have time to think of their God and of sacrificing to Him. The infernal Pharaoh uses the same crafty plan to keep most men of the world away from the service of God and the care of their souls; he thinks: I will give them plenty of work.² Early in the morning, when they awake, I will fill their minds with all sorts of business and domestic cares, and so I will take away from God the best part of the day, which He especially wishes for. During the whole day they must remain busied in their shops or offices, so that they will have no time to think of God and of their immortal souls seriously and earnestly. And so it is in reality, says St. Augustine, with all those who devote themselves excessively to worldly cares. He says, referring to the above-quoted text: "Whereby it seems to me to be meant that when the mind is too much occupied with merely earthly things, it is void of God and of heavenly things."³ Out of the twenty-four hours of the day these men can hardly find one in which to hear Mass for the honor of God; they have no time to collect their thoughts so as to make the good intention of offering up their work to God and thereby increasing their merit; no time in the evening before going to rest to thank God, to examine their conscience and to purify it from sin by renewing their contrition; no time on Sundays and holy-days to hear a sermon; no time during the month to approach the sacraments, to cleanse themselves from sin and to strengthen their souls with the Bread of life. In a word, their temporal cares and occupations are so numerous that they have hardly any time left to seek the Kingdom of God, and yet, that is the most important affair of all and requires all one's time.

Explained
by another
simile.

The miserable condition of such souls is explained in the 9th chapter of the Book of Judges, by the parable of the trees; such are the words of the Sacred Text: "The trees went to anoint a king over them;"⁴ as if they had held a council among themselves and said: See, all living creatures have their superiors: men have kings and princes; four-footed beasts have the lion, birds have the eagle as their king; even serpents and bees

¹ Opprimantur operibus, vacant enim, et idcirco vociferantur, dicentes: Eamus, et sacrificemus Deo nostro: opprimantur operibus, et expleant ea, ut non aequiescant verbis mendacibus.—Exod. v. 8, 9.

² Opprimantur operibus.

³ Ut mihi videtur significari nimis intentum humanis actionibus animum Deo quodammodo vacuari.

⁴ Jerunt ligna, ut ungerent super se regem.—Judges ix. 8.

have a sovereign ; and we, too, who have life and who produce such pleasant fruit, must not be without a king. No, it is time for us to elect one. "And they said to the olive tree : Reign thou over us," but the latter excused itself, and why ? "Can I leave my fatness, which both gods and men make use of, to come to be promoted among the trees ?" Its meaning was : If I were king, I should be too much occupied with the affairs of government, and should lose the oil which I have hitherto produced for gods and men ; no, I cannot make up my mind to do that ; select what king you will ; it is better for me to remain as I am, and to continue to work for the good of mankind. Thus spoke the olive tree.

Mark, my dear brethren, in this answer, the first bad quality of those souls who are too much given to worldly occupations. The prayer of the Prophet David to God was : "Let my soul be filled as with marrow and fatness,"¹ that is, with a special zeal and a tender devotion for Thee and Thy heavenly goods, for in the same Psalm he describes how he watched to the Lord his God at break of day, and how his soul thirsted for Him ; how he always blessed God, and stuck close to Him, etc. Find now, if you can, the spirit of devotion amongst those Christians who are buried in worldly cares ! Devotion, indeed, zeal and love for God ! Where could you discover a trace of that in such people ? Certainly not in their daily occupations, for they savor of the earth, and of earthly things, and of course can awaken only earthly love and desire. Even in the very devotions they now and then perform, there is no true piety ; the confessions and communions they make, if they do even that much for God and their souls ; the Masses they hear because they are bound to do so on Sundays and holy-days, and are driven to it through fear of hell ; the vocal prayers they say on their beads or out of their books during Mass ; how do they get through all that ? Without savor or salt, without fervor or love of God, with a hundred distractions that come from their daily occupation, like the sleep of a hunter, who in his dreams follows the game over hill and dale. St. Gregory compares such people, as far as devotion is concerned, to a sick man who is suffering from consumption, and who is almost wasted away, with pale countenance, deeply sunken eyes, prominent nose, hollow cheeks and short breath ;

Such men cannot have true devotion towards God.

¹ *Dixeruntque olivæ : Impera nobis. Quæ respondit : numquid possum deserere pinguedinem meam, qua et dñi utuntur et homines, et venire, ut inter ligna promovear ?—Judges ix. 8, 9.*

² *Sicut adipe et pinguedine repletur anima mea.—Ps. lxxii. 6.*

the whole man is nothing but skin and bone, because the disease slowly dries up all the marrow and vigor of the body. In the same state, he says, is the soul of one whom too many worldly occupations deprive of all devotion and design of heavenly things.

Nor true
peace and
repose of
heart.

Let us return to the simile of the trees, my dear brethren. Since the olive tree refused to govern them, because it did not wish to leave its fatness, they addressed themselves to another tree: "And the trees said to the fig-tree: Come thou and reign over us."¹ No, was the answer again, that duty is too difficult for me. "Can I leave my sweetness and my delicious fruits, and go to be promoted among the other trees?"² There are many trees and plants in the mountains and forests, in the valleys and gardens. If I have to look after them all, I should very soon lose the sweetness of the repose that I now enjoy. "Can I leave my sweetness?"³ No, I cannot and will not. There we have another great misfortune that the soul suffers by being too much taken up with earthly things. It can, as a general rule, have no peace or joy of heart, since it is continually disquieted and distracted from morning till night. It enjoys no peace in its understanding, which is filled with all sorts of thoughts and schemes. No peace in its will, which is disturbed by different desires and wishes. No peace in its body, which has neither rest nor repose, and is continually fatigued in its search after riches. No peace in its conscience, which is stained with all kinds of faults and sins. So that poor slaves of this kind have no peace with God nor themselves, and generally speaking, not even with their fellow mortals, from whom they expect and fear many an annoyance and difficulty in their business.

Nor time
nor oppor-
tunity to re-
ceive the di-
vine inspira-
tions.

"And the trees said to the vine," continues the parable, "come thou and reign over us,"⁴ you are the best of all the trees. But what answer did they get? A reasonable excuse, as before: "Can I forsake my wine that cheereth God and men, and be promoted among the other trees?"⁵ Wine, my dear brethren, when it is not taken in excess, invigorates and cheers us, and drives away melancholy. Such, too, is the effect of the divine inspirations and graces, by which the human un-

¹ *Dixeruntque ligna ad arborem flem: veni, et super nos regnum accipe.*—Judges ix. 10.

² *Quæ respondit eis: numquid possum deserere dulcedinem meam fructusque suavissimos, et ire, ut inter cætera ligna promovear?*—Ibid. 11.

³ *Numquid possum deserere dulcedinem meam?*

⁴ *Locutaque sunt ligna ad vitem: veni, et impera nobis.*—Ibid. 12.

⁵ *Quæ respondit eis: numquid possum deserere vitum meum, quod lætificat Deum et homines, et inter ligna cætera promoveri?*—Ibid. 13.

derstanding is enlightened with heavenly knowledge, and the will, otherwise inclined to evil, is driven with a gentle violence to abandon evil and do good, and to rejoice in doing so. This precious wine is seldom tasted by those who wear away their lives in a multiplicity of earthly cares. For their thoughts are so full of those cares, their souls are so blind and so deaf to good, that the divine inspirations, which are absolutely necessary to help in the salvation of the soul, can find no entrance to, no influence over them.

As I have said elsewhere, and according to the general teaching of theologians, the Almighty God does not give His lights and graces at all times, nor in all places, but in certain circumstances, namely, when the soul is prepared and disposed to receive those graces. At least, it is certain that the good thoughts and inspirations suggested by the Holy Ghost, at a time when one is ill prepared for them, have not near as much power and influence to move the human heart to good and to effect that good in it, as when the heart is willing and ready to receive them. The great light and grace that in such a wonderful manner made St. Ignatius Loyola the Founder of the Society of Jesus, and changed him from a soldier of the world into a valiant champion of Jesus Christ, if it had come to him when he was still an officer in the army and full of the distractions and disquiet of a military life, trying to defend the fortress of Pampelona against the enemy, could we imagine that that grace would have conquered his heart in such circumstances? That would have been a fine time, indeed, for grace to work in his heart! But afterwards, when he was lying wounded in bed, away from all human conversation, and was engaged in reading the Lives of the Saints (which was the only book he could get, though he asked for some other history to read), that was the proper time in which his heart was really prepared to receive light and grace from God, and to follow the heavenly call in a most heroic manner, as the event proved.

Now, tell me, my dear brethren, what time or place for convenient entrance do the divine inspirations and graces find, in the hearts of people who are too much occupied with the world? When they are asleep at night wearied with their work? No, because their reason is then asleep too. When they are hearing Mass on Sundays? No, for though their bodies are present in the Church, their hearts, as we have seen already, are busied elsewhere with a thousand distracting cares. Perhaps during the

For these inspirations require a heart prepared to receive them.

Which they can hardly have in the constant turmoil of business.

day, in the midst of their schemes and plans and undertakings, grace may find its way to them. No, because they are not then engaged in heavenly things, and their hearts are not prepared or disposed to receive supernatural lights and graces. The only opportunity they might give to the divine goodness of enlightening their hearts and bringing them to a knowledge of themselves, would be in the sermons on Sundays and holy-days, but they seldom or never come to hear a sermon, because they have some business to attend to at the time. Or else they may now and then hear a part of a sermon, which can make no impression on them. Another chance they might give to the Almighty to speak to them, would be by frequent confession and communion. But they have no time for that, they very seldom approach the Sacraments during the year. And would to God that they received them even at Easter with the proper dispositions! Again, a proper time would be during morning prayer, and especially in the holy sacrifice of the Mass. But their manifold occupations take that time from them. They might read a spiritual book, or think of some of the truths of faith, of death, of the strict justice of God, of the joys of Heaven, of the torments of hell, and so on, but they know nothing of those things, they have no time for them, and of course they seldom or never taste the divine wine, that is, the inspirations and graces that God would give them to work out their salvation, if they were prepared to receive them.

Therefore
they lead a
useless life
before God.

At last the trees succeeded in getting a king. And what one did they get, do you think? "And all the trees said to the bramble: Come thou and reign over us."¹ It was the only one that immediately accepted the troublesome office offered it. "If indeed you mean to make me king, come ye and rest under my shadow."² Mark that; a dry and useless bush that can produce nothing but sharp thorns, accepts authority over others. That is a true symbol, my dear brethren, of one who is too much involved in worldly cares, who can bring forth no fruit worthy of eternal life, whose labor produces only sharp thorns that incessantly pierce his heart and his mind, that is, only thoughts, cares, and labor that are useless for Heaven, and with which he plagues himself day and night. Certainly that is a troubled and dangerous state for a soul to be in! And an idle life that must

¹ *Dixeruntque omnia ligna ad rhamnum: veni, et impera super nos.—Judges ix. 14.*

² *Quæ respondit eis: si vere me regem constituistis, venite et sub umbra mea requiescite.—Ibid. 15.*

be in the sight of God, which cannot by any means lead to Heaven !

But what, they ask, is the meaning of that? I must do what I have to do. How could I act otherwise? The daily cares, trouble, and business that I am occupied in from morning till night, are required by my state of life, the office in which I am employed, the duties intrusted to me, the trade I follow, the profession I exercise, the family I must support decently and respectably, render this necessary, and you have often told us that it is the will and decree of God that we should be thus occupied. How can I leave my business that must be attended to, to spend my time in works of devotion? That is a fine excuse indeed, and is suggested by self-love, by the concupiscence of the eyes, by insatiable avarice, and by sloth and laziness in the service of God ! I admit that I have often told you that you must diligently perform the duties of your state of life, but you should remember that I told you at the same time to perform them with your hearts constantly raised to God. Is that the case with those who are buried in worldly business? I will not urge against you what generally happens with people like you, that you can find time enough to spare from your business for things that suit your own inclinations. If there is an interesting conversation at home, if you are invited out to meet pleasant company, or for an evening entertainment, if your self-love easily persuades you that another hour's sleep in the morning will do you no harm, oh, then you can easily put aside your cares and your business till later on, while you have hardly any time left for the one thing necessary, for which alone we are on this earth, the service of God and the salvation of your soul.

You must know, my dear brethren, that the will and decree of the Almighty God bind no one to a duty, business, or occupation, that would leave no time for the divine service and for working out one's salvation, for all other cares and occupations, no matter what they are, must be used solely as means to serve God, and to save one's soul. Everything that cannot be directed to this end, is useless and worthless. In a word, the state, office, employment, or business that hinders me, generally speaking, from hearing daily Mass (except in the case of workmen who must begin their work early in the morning and cannot interrupt it, and they should make up for not hearing Mass by often renewing their good intention and raising their hearts to God), or that prevents me from hearing sermons, as a general rule,

They cannot excuse themselves by pleading necessity.

Because it should not hinder the business of the soul.

on Sundays and holy-days, or that keeps me away from catechism, or from the frequent reception of the sacraments, or prevents me from sometimes during the day thinking of God and my salvation, and renewing my good intention,—such a business as that would be, once for all, a hindrance to my eternal salvation. As a general rule, I say, for sometimes a necessary work of Christian charity, or other sudden emergencies incidental to my occupation or state of life, that demand immediate attention, may prevent me from practising my usual devotions; that is quite another thing. But if such hindrances were to arise as a general rule, they would be obstacles in the way of my salvation, and therefore, if I am concerned about that, I should resign my employment, or give up my business, or manage matters so that I can attend to my devotions without difficulty. Not without cause does St. Paul warn the Corinthians in the 7th chapter of his First Epistle to them: “This, therefore, I say, brethren: the time is short,” that we have to live on this earth. “It remaineth that they also who have wives, be as if they had none; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as if they used it not;”¹ that is to say, they who are engaged in worldly pursuits, must keep their hearts as detached from them, as if they did not care much about them, and reckoned the business of the soul as the only important one.

Folly of those who thus give themselves excessively to worldly business.

And what a folly it is to devote one's self to worldly things to such an extent as to lose eternal joys! To weary one's mind, to fatigue one's body, to live in constant turmoil, and to forget one's soul that must live forever! We might say to such people as St. Paulinus said to one who was too much given to study, so that he had no time left to serve God: “You have time to be a philosopher, but you have no time to be a Christian.”² The same thing, I repeat, might be said to those people: You have time enough, you labor and toil to become a good tradesman, a thriving merchant, an industrious servant, a skilful lawyer, a provident householder; but you have no time to be a good Christian,³ a true servant of God, a careful guardian of your own soul, an heir of eternal riches! Unhappy martyrs of the world! you wear yourselves out, and spend your lives in working for the world, for something that you must soon leave behind, and you

¹ Hoc itaque dico fratres: tempus breve est. Reliquum est, ut et qui habent uxores, tanquam non habentes sint, et qui emunt tanquam non possidentes, et qui utantur hoc mundo, tanquam non utantur.—I. Cor. vii. 29-31.

² Vacat tibi, ut sis philosophus, et non vacat, ut sis Christianus.

³ Et non vacat, ut sis Christianns.

forget that on which everything depends—to work for the kingdom of Heaven ! And for whose advantage do they thus toil and labor ? For their children, their heirs and descendants ; because they certainly do not require to work so hard and so excessively to support themselves. And what folly that is : to plague and wear one's self out for the good of others, and forget one's self, meanwhile ! What good will it be to you that others can live and enjoy themselves on what you earn by your hard labor, if you yourself must go into the house of your eternity poor in merits, bare and naked of good works, and in extreme want ? Tell me ; would you allow one of your veins to be opened, until all your blood was exhausted, so as to be able to give some of it every day to your children and your heirs ? I do not think you would be so foolish, for you would think more of your life, which is dearer and more necessary to you ; and yet, you give away the precious time of your life, which you should use for the benefit of your immortal soul, and for no other purpose, you give it away every day, for the use and profit of others who belong to you, until it is all gone, and there is nothing more left for your own eternal life.

Alas, what a poor consolation it will be for you to remember on your death-bed that you have enriched others by your labor, but have nothing for yourself for all eternity ! How will you appear before the judgment-seat of God, when He will demand a strict account of every moment of your life, and will ask you how, and in what you employed it ? Will your children, your descendants, your heirs, or your masters, whom you have enriched at the expense of your soul, be then able to answer your Judge for you, to defend you, and to prove their gratitude for the wealth you left them by gaining Heaven for you ?

They will condemn it too late on their death-bed.

Alas, how you will then howl and weep, like the dying soldier, of whom Vincentius Belluacensis writes. In his last moments he was visited by a great man, whom he had served for many years with great diligence and faithfulness. His master asked him if he could do nothing to comfort him, and said that he would be willing to do all in his power. Ah, said the sick man, be so kind as to give me strength to live only a single hour without the intolerable pain that I now suffer ; or if I must die, then see that I shall be able to enjoy happiness in the next life. I ask nothing more from you as a reward for having served you so long and so faithfully. My dear man, said the other, I cannot do that ; it is not in my power. God alone can grant a request of that

Proved by an example.

kind. Oh, woe to me, then, said the sick man ; unhappy and foolish wretch that I am, I have lost all my labor and trouble for nothing ! See, he said to those who were standing round, how uselessly I have squandered the precious time that God gave me to work out my salvation, how I have wasted it in the service of one who cannot free me for one hour from the pain I suffer, nor help me to escape the eternal torments that I have such good reason to fear in the next life. Oh, my dear people, learn wisdom from my folly ; give the years of your lives to God, and to God alone, for He alone can free you from the pain and anguish of death, He alone has power to save you from eternal torments. He alone can give you eternal glory in Heaven, as a reward for the slight service you render Him for a short time. Thus speaking, and full of repentance and sorrow, he breathed his last. Such, too, will one day be the case with all who, through excessive worldly cares, spend their lives for the advantage of others, and neglect their own souls.

Conclusion
and exhortation
to be
zealous in
the business
of the soul.

I conclude, my dear Christians, by exhorting you all, in the words of the Wise Ecclesiasticus : “ Have pity on thy own soul, pleasing God.”¹ Have pity on your own souls first of all ! Whatever your business may be, do it well and faithfully, as your duty requires, but do not forget yourselves ; let your first and principal care be the business of your immortal souls ! When engaged in your daily occupations, often raise up your hearts to God, renew your good intention, and say in your own minds by a rapid thought : Lord, this is for Thy sake, because it pleases Thee, I do it, etc. You will thus serve God faithfully, and work out your salvation in the midst of your labor and your worldly occupations. The Catholic Church prays : “ May we so pass through temporal goods ; ”² mark these words, so pass, not fixing our desires on them, much less filling our hearts with them, but passing through them, like a traveller who cares little for the countries he goes through, because he does not intend to live in them. Let us, then, so pass through those temporal things, “ that we may not lose eternal riches.”³ Amen.

¹ Miserere animæ tuæ placens Deo.—Ecccl. xxx. 24.

² Sic transeamus per bona temporalia.

³ Ut non amittamus æterna.

FIFTY-SEVENTH SERMON.

ON THE GUILTINESS OF A TOO BUSY LIFE.

Subject.

A life that, in any state or condition, is too busy, cannot be without guilt, nor can it lead to Heaven, although each and every occupation of the day may be in itself lawful, and without sin.—*Preached on the third Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Quæ mulier, habens drachmas decem, si perdiderit drachmam unam, nonne accendit lucernam, et everrit domum, et quærit diligenter, donec inveniat?—Luke xv. 8.

“What woman having ten groats: if she lose one groat, doth not light a candle and sweep the house, and seek diligently, until she find it?”

Introduction.

Is it worth while to go to so much trouble to find a miserable coin? Is it worth while to light a candle, to sweep the house from top to bottom, and to search every hole and corner until it is found? By this simile Jesus Christ wished to show the envious Pharisees, who were murmuring against Him, because He received sinners, what good reason He had to seek a soul lost in sin, with the greatest eagerness and with unceasing toil, and to rejoice with the whole court of Heaven at finding it when it does penance. For, His meaning was: If the children of the world give themselves such trouble, and work so hard for a worthless thing, such as a single sheep, or a groat, have I not far greater reason to trouble myself, and to use the utmost diligence, in order to save a soul that is made to my own image, and that I will redeem with my precious Blood? This conclusion, my dear brethren, is evident, but it also condemns the folly and blindness of most men who, for the sake of finding, keeping, or increasing earthly and transitory goods, give themselves no end of trouble, while they shamefully neglect their precious souls and their eternal happiness, on which everything depends. On last

Sunday I said something about this folly and blindness, when I showed that the life of a Christian, who is so much occupied with temporal cares and labor, that he has little time during the day to serve God properly, and to attend to his soul, is an idle and useless life in the sight of God, and, consequently, is not a Christian life and cannot lead to Heaven. And now, you might ask, why is it an unchristian life? The daily business and occupation of my life is not sinful, nor contrary to the divine law; how, then, can there be any harm in it, so that it cannot lead me to Heaven? That is the question, my dear brethren, that I will now answer.

Plan of Discourse.

A life that in any state or condition, is too busy, cannot be without grief, nor can it lead to Heaven, although each and every occupation of the day may be in itself lawful and without sin. Such is the subject, which will be followed by an instruction as to how and in what manner we must perform the troublesome duties of our state and occupation, so that they may be no obstacle to our attending to the business of our souls.

Grant us Thy light and grace to this end, O Holy Ghost! We expect it from Thee through the intercession of Mary and the holy angels guardian.

A multiplicity of works, each of which is lawful, can be sinful.

In order to explain clearly the basis of my subject, I must remind you that theologians reckon it an invalid and illogical conclusion to say: Each work that I perform is in itself lawful, therefore it is lawful for me to perform many such works together; or, if I live in a certain way for one day without committing sin thereby, I can live every day in the same way without sin. Such a conclusion is thoroughly illogical. I will prove it to you: for instance, there are a hundred glasses of wine on the table, any of which may be drunk without sin, nay, several of them may be drunk without exceeding the bounds of Christian temperance. Now, if I were to argue from that as follows: since I can drink any of those glasses of wine to-day without sin, therefore I can take the whole hundred of them without sin; what would you think of that kind of reasoning, my dear brethren? Of course you must say that the conclusion is wrong, for any one who drinks such an enormous quantity of wine would certainly lose his reason and get drunk, and that is not at all lawful. The drunkenness is not caused by the first, nor second, nor third

glass of wine, nor by any glass in particular, but rather by the number taken. Nay, it would be a mortal sin to take even one glass with the intention of taking the others also, and so of getting drunk.

To stick to our subject. Consider a person who leads an idle, luxurious life ; he sleeps late every morning, spends hours before the glass dressing, receives and pays numbers of visits, goes out walking, spends his time in amusing and enjoying himself, and these are the principal occupations of his life. What think you of it ? Is it lawful ? Can such a life lead to Heaven ? But if you consider each of these occupations in itself, you cannot say that any one of them is unlawful or sinful ; for it is not a sin to sleep an hour longer than the usual time, nay, it is often useful and necessary, in order to refresh the wearied body ; it is no sin to look at one's self in the glass, nor to dress becomingly ; becomingly, I say, because it is never lawful to dress in a scandalous manner, even if it be the fashion to do so ; it is not a sin to eat and drink what one is fond of, and what tastes well, and if one has a proper intention in doing so, it becomes a work meritorious of eternal life ; it is not a sin to visit a friend, nor to be visited by him, for that is often required by courtesy, nay, by Christian charity and mercy ; it is no sin to take a walk, nor to play an honest game in company, nor to amuse one's self lawfully ; nor is it unlawful to spend a whole day, or even three or four days, in that apparently idle, useless, and luxurious manner, for that is often required in the way of recreation, or to recover one's health or good spirits, and of course, when the good intention is not wanting, it will conduce to eternal salvation. You may see now, that a person who leads a luxurious life may do nothing the whole day long that is unlawful in itself, nay, that he might merit Heaven by everything he does. But to make a rule of living in that fashion, to make it one's only occupation, to spend weeks, months, and years in that way,—could a life like that, I ask again, be excused from sin ? Certainly not ; because it is not a Christian life ; it is not a penitential life, according to the Gospel ; it is not the rough and narrow way that alone leads to Heaven ; it is not the way of the cross, on which the elect of Jesus Christ travel ; it is not doing violence to one's self to gain Heaven, which the violent alone can bear away ; it is not a life like that of Jesus Christ, who bore hunger, poverty, humiliation, persecution, scourging, thorns, nails, thirst, and a cruel and miserable death on the Cross. to gain eternal life for us,

Proved by
an idle, lux-
urious life.

whom His heavenly Father has given as an example to all men, that they may follow Him to the best of their ability, and who, as St. Paul says, elects no one to share in His eternal life, unless those who, as He foresees, will live conformably to His example. A life of that kind is evidently an idle, luxurious, effeminate, and of course, vicious life, that follows the broad road "which leadeth to destruction."¹ Therefore, they who live in that way, cannot excuse themselves by saying : We do no harm; all that we do during the day is lawful, and not forbidden, etc. By all means, I admit that everything you do is lawful in itself ; but if you reckon all up together, and make up your lives of such actions alone, you live in an unchristian and vicious manner. And that is evident enough from the fact that you do little or nothing of what you ought to do to gain Heaven.

In the same way, we must speak of a too busy life.

You see now, my dear brethren, that the same answer must be given to the excuses of those who are too much wrapped up in worldly cares. Who can accuse me of leading a sinful life ? they ask. I do nothing wrong by being careful in my duty, profession, office, or employment. I answer, as the schoolmen say : "Granted;"² I admit that everything you do is lawful ; it is lawful for you to run about here and there, and to be diligent in the service of your temporal master ; it is lawful to buy and sell, and to make honest profit ; lawful to write, and study, and practise law, and hear what is to be said on both sides of a case ; lawful to be careful in the duty one has undertaken to perform ; and I grant you even more than that, for not only are these things lawful, but they are necessary to you, and if you do them with the right intention, you will merit Heaven by them. But taking them all together, if you are so buried in them that you neglect the business of your immortal soul, that you have no time to hear a daily Mass, or to listen to a sermon on Sundays and holy-days, nor to read a spiritual book now and then, nor to approach the holy Sacraments often during the year, nor to say your evening prayers and settle your accounts with God, by the examination of conscience, nor to think seriously of God frequently during the day—as I said before, that cannot be consistent with a Christian mode of life, nor can it be excused from sin. Your employments, I repeat, are in themselves good, but the fault is that there are too many of them : too much corn tears the sack.

This is sinful, because

It is not always the nature of the food that causes illness of

¹ Quæ ducit ad interitum.

² Concedo.

the body ; generally speaking, the stomach is overloaded by excessive eating and drinking, and cannot digest the food properly. Fevers, apoplexy, and other diseases follow from the corruption of the blood that is caused by such excess. But it often happens, too, that there is so much blood in the veins that it cannot circulate freely. In the same way, it is not the nature of worldly occupations, but their multiplicity that distracts the human heart from heavenly things, chains it down to the world, prevents us from serving God and working for our souls as we ought, and consequently causes the illness and eternal death of the soul. Those men who were invited to the feast, as we read in the Gospel of last Sunday, had also their lawful and important business to attend to, and therefore they excused themselves from coming. I must needs see the farm I have bought ; I must try the five yoke of oxen I have lately purchased ; I must celebrate my marriage feast.¹ Who would not look upon such excuses as valid ? And yet, God, who compares Himself to the master of the house, was so angry at the refusal these men gave Him, that He declared solemnly : “None of those men that were invited shall taste of my supper,”² that is, shall gain Heaven. And why ; they had lawful business to excuse them from coming ? But the excuse was invalid ; no business, no matter how lawful or important it is, should hinder a man from coming, when the Lord invites him to come ; it should be abandoned, or else be interrupted or moderated.

It distracts the heart from heavenly things. Shown by a simile.

In the book of Exodus we find an example that will illustrate this. When Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, saw that the latter was always occupied with the government of the Jewish people, he said to him : “What is it that thou dost among the people ? Why sittest thou alone, and all the people wait from morning till night ?”³ “The people come to me to seek the judgment of God,” was Moses’ answer ; mark, my dear brethren, what a holy and important business it was : “And when any controversy falleth out among them, they come to me to judge between them, and to show the precepts of God and His laws.”⁴ What did Jethro say about these holy and important occupations ? Had he not cause enough to approve of them ? Hear his answer :

Shown by an example from Scripture.

¹ Villam emi ; juga boum emi quinque : uxorem duxi.

² Nemo virorum illorum, qui vocati sunt, gustabit coenam meam.—Luke xiv. 24.

³ Quid est hoc, quod facis in plebe ? Cur solus sedes, et omnis populus preestolatur de mane usque ad vesperam ?—Exod. xviii. 14.

⁴ Venit ad me populus querens sententiam Dei . . . et ostendam precepta Dei, et leges ejus.—Ibid. 15, 16.

“But he said : The thing thou dost is not good : Thou art spent with foolish labor, both thou and this people that is with thee. The business is above thy strength, thou alone canst not bear it.¹ But hear my words and counsels and God shall be with thee. Be thou to the people in these things that pertain to God, to bring their words to Him ; and to show the people the ceremonies and the manner of worshipping, and the way wherein they ought to walk, and the work they ought to do. And provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, in whom there is truth, and that hate avarice, and appoint of them rulers of thousands, and of hundreds, and of fifties, and of tens, who may judge the people at all times : and when any great matter soever shall fall out, let them refer it to thee, and let them judge the lesser matters only. That so it may be lighter for thee, the burden being shared out unto others.” Mark the motive he brings forward, my dear brethren : “ If thou doest this, thou shalt fulfil the commandment of God, and shalt be able to bear His precepts.”² Now think of this for a moment : Moses was called to the office he held, by God Himself ; all the duties he had to perform, the guiding and governing of the people, were imposed upon him by God ; and yet he saw the necessity of following Jethro’s advice ; the Sacred Scripture says : “ And when Moses heard this, he did all things that he had suggested unto him,”³ and immediately shared the heavy burden of his occupations with others, so that he might have more time to commune with God in prayer. Now if he acted thus, how can they think themselves free from sin who are overwhelmed with business to which they are not always called by the Almighty God, but rather by self-love, worldly vanity, pride, human respect, concupiscence of the eyes, and avarice, so that they hardly find time to serve God and to work for their salvation ? No, that cannot be, says St. Augustine ; it is quite evident, from the conduct of Moses, that a man who is too much occupied with worldly affairs, cannot serve God and work for his salvation as he ought.

By the doctrine of St. Bernard.

St. Bernard wrote five whole books, which he called *Libros de Consideratione*, to Pope Eugenius, to teach him how he should order his life in the position to which he was called as Head of

¹ At ille : Non bonam, inquit, rem facis : stulto labore consumeris, . . . ultra vires tuas est negotium, solus illud non poteris sustinere.—Exod. xviii. 17, 18.

² Si hoc feceris, implebis imperium Dei et præcepta ejus poteris sustentare.—Ibid. 23.

³ Quibus auditis, Moyses fecit omnia, quæ ille suggesserat.—Ibid. 24.

the Church. They are very interesting books to read, especially for those who are much occupied. In the beginning of the first book he describes the unhappy condition of a hard heart which never has any tenderness or devotion towards divine things, no devotion in prayer, no devotion in hearing Mass, or even in Holy Communion; in a word, which does not fear nor love God as it ought. He then addresses Eugenius as follows; mark his impressive words, my dear brethren, and try to remember them: “Eugenius, I speak to you with the respect and reverence I owe you as the Head of the Church, but at the same time with the well-meaning openness of heart which a father must have who loves his son. See, then, that in the midst of the many occupations which the government of the Church entails, you do not forget yourself, nor deprive yourself of the time and the quiet necessary to hold communion with your God. Otherwise, you would be wretched indeed, and it would have been better for you to have remained as a poor monk in your convent. Tell me, I beg of you, what sort of a life is it that consists in giving audiences to strangers the whole day, in receiving and considering petitions, in deciding disputes, in examining ecclesiastical documents, in sending briefs here and there?¹ What will be the end of such a life? If you once devote yourself completely to such accursed occupations,² how can you think of your soul? If you continue to bury yourself, in these occupations, so that you have no time for yourself, you will lose all piety, all thought of God, all care of your soul, and you will be like an obdurate Pharaoh in the chair of St. Peter.³ I have no doubt that you know this already, and that you sometimes weep bitter tears over the distractions that your occupations cause you. But your tears are no good, unless you change your life.⁴ You will perhaps say that it is impossible to do so;⁵ that the whole world is resting on your shoulders; that you must open the gate of Heaven to Catholics, heretics, heathens, and infidels; that this requires unceasing care, trouble, and occupation. All very true, Eugenius, but remember that you, too, are one of the many, and that while you are working for others, you must not forget yourself, nay, you must look after yourself first of all; otherwise, what good will it be to you, as our Lord says, to gain all, if you lose your

¹ Quæso te, quale est illud, de mane usque ad vesperam litigare, vel litigantes audire, etc.

² Ex quo trahere te habent hæ occupationes maledictæ, etc.

³ Si pergis, ut cepisti, ita dare te totum illis, ut nihil tibi relinquant, etc.

⁴ Ut frustra deploraveris, si emendare non studueris.

⁵ Impossibile id fortasse dixeris.

self? ¹ How much better off will you be if you open the gate of Heaven to the whole world, but close it against yourself? I tell you again, honestly, that if you do not lessen the number of your occupations, and set apart more time to serve God and to work for your salvation, you will never be a Saint in Heaven, although you may be called your Holiness on earth." So far St. Bernard.

This applies
to many
men of the
world.

Now, let us think a little on this, my dear brethren, in a way that may be understood even by little children, who are beginning to use their reason. If a saintly and learned man like St. Bernard confesses before God that he must write several books to a Pope, on whom God has placed, so to say, the care of the whole world, and to speak in those books of nothing else than that Pope's obligation in conscience to reduce the number of his occupations, and to set aside more time for prayer, meditation, spiritual reading, examination of conscience, asking light and grace from above, and communing with God; and that, too, because the first, most important, and only business of our lives, is that of our souls; if the holy and learned St. Bernard says that there is no hope of Heaven for the Vicar of Jesus Christ, unless he lessens the number of his daily occupations; if the holy and learned St. Bernard condemns the occupations of a Pope, and calls them accursed, although they are imposed by the Almighty God, although they are necessary for the spiritual government of the Church, and have for their object, among many other important things, the spread of the Catholic faith, the conversion of heretics and infidels, the settling of disputes among the members of the Church, etc.; and although these occupations are not only lawful in themselves, but even holy and meritorious in the highest degree, yet, if St. Bernard condemns them on account of their multiplicity, and because they prevented the Pope from attending to his soul, what name must we give to those multifarious occupations that have no spiritual nor holy end in view, and that are of the earth, earthly? What can we say of the business that has for its sole object to make money, to show off before others, to hold a higher position in the world, to please men, to gain the favor of the great ones of the earth, to care for the mortal body, or to leave one's heirs well off, since such business is, of its very nature, apt to take away the thoughts from God and from salvation? How can they, who are overwhelmed with such occupations, hope to gain Heaven? What words can preachers find impressive enough to arouse the

¹ *Attoquin quid tibi prodest, juxta verbum Domini, si universos lucreris, te ipsum perdens?*

consciences of such people, and to remind them of their duty and of their obligation to change and amend their lives? But alas, such people do not come to sermons, because they have too much to do; their hearts are too much attached to earthly things, and they do not care for the Word of God, which is, however, most necessary for them. See, there you have a proof of my subject, that, namely, a too busy life, although each of its occupations may be lawful, is not a Christian life, nor is it free from sin, nor can it lead to Heaven.

And such is indeed the case, my dear brethren, for that must be an infallible truth which the Holy Ghost Himself speaks by the Prophet Ezechiel, when addressing the king of Tyre: "By the multitude of thy merchandise, thy inner parts were filled with iniquity."¹ And again He warns all, by the Wise Ecclesiasticus; or as Vatablus reads still more clearly: "My son, meddle not with many matters, and if thou be rich, thou shalt not be free from sin."² That is, sin must be committed in a life that is distracted with incessant care and occupation; for under such circumstances one hardly understands clearly; as St. Gregory says: "One can hardly know how often one falls into sin."³ And if no other sin were committed, which is almost an impossibility, humanly speaking, yet a life of that kind, taken in its entirety, is an idle, useless, and guilty life in the sight of God, for it is an obstacle to the service of God and to the salvation of the soul.

Confirmed
by Scrip-
ture.

Therefore, if any of you here present lead a life of that kind, and of course I do not know if such is the case, I conclude by addressing you in the words of St. Bernard to Pope Eugenius: "Let this warning now suffice for you, so that you will not give yourself always, nor altogether, to external occupations, but will keep some of your heart and some of your time to consider the state of your soul."⁴ In the same way I say to each one of you: Be careful in fulfilling the duties of your state, employment, or occupation; but never forget that you have another most important duty to perform, and that is, to save your soul and gain eternal happiness. See, therefore, that you do not employ too much

Conclusion
and exhor-
tation to all
to look after
their souls'
welfare.

¹ In multitudinis negotiationis tuæ repleta sunt interiora tua iniquitate.—Ezech. xxviii. 16.

² Fili, ne in multis sint actus tui.—Ne in multis negotiis impliceris:—Et si dives fueris, non eris immunis a delicto.—Eccl. xi. 10.

³ Per quanta delinquat, ignorat.

⁴ Sufficit admonitum esse, nec totum te, nec semper dare actioni, sed considerationi aliquid et cordis et temporis sequestrare.

care and diligence in the former, or else you will forget the latter. As long as you are in the stormy sea of this life, says St. Gregory, you must follow the example of those fishes that, by means of their fins, can sometimes raise themselves up near the surface, and sometimes sink down into the depths. You must not resemble those fishes that always remain in the mud and consequently lose the proper flavor of fish, nor yet those that always swim near the top, and are consequently in danger of being caught. A man whom divine providence has called to a busy life must be always able to swim with two fins: sometimes he must sink into the depths of worldly business, and at other times he must raise himself on high to commune with God; nor must he forget either of these duties for the sake of the other.

Instruction
as to how
occupations
are to be or-
dered.

If you ask me how you must arrange your occupations, so as to perform these two duties properly, and not exceed in either, I will answer you in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice." There you have the proper order of things; of two duties that must be preferred, and must have the first place, which is the more important and necessary; reason itself tells us this, and no one can deny it. Now the most important and necessary business that man has to perform in this life is to serve God and to save his soul. Even children who know anything of their catechism, could tell you to what end man is created; so that this business must have the first place and must be preferred to all others. That conclusion is valid enough. Therefore the first hour of the day should be given to God by prayer, and if possible, by hearing Mass; the first thought, on commencing any business during the day, must be given to Him, by renewing the good intention; the first day in the week (and thereby I mean Sundays and holy-days) must be devoted to God and to the soul alone, by hearing the Word of God in sermons, by spiritual reading, and other pious practices; the first Sunday of every month should certainly belong to God and to the soul, by confession and communion, as is the custom with pious Christians, nor is it forbidden to receive those holy sacraments often during the month, for they are the channels by which the necessary grace of God flows into our souls. And as God must be the beginning, so should He be the end of all our daily labor, by the evening examen of conscience, if we wish to be truly pious and to take due care of our souls.

Even for our
temporal
profit.

Ah, my dear brethren, if this order were constantly observed,

¹ *Querite primum regnum Dei et justitiam ejus.*—Luke xii. 31.

What a great advantage it would bring, not only to our souls, but also to our temporal concerns! How many do we hear complaining and lamenting that with all their labor and trouble they get on very badly; their incomes dwindle away year by year; their salaries are reduced; their debtors do not pay them; they are not able to pay their own creditors; they find it more difficult every day to keep house, etc. What is the cause of all that? Do you wish to know? Then tell me, first, how do you manage your affairs? Do you give to God what belongs to Him? Do you observe due order in your occupations? "Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice,"¹ for it is He alone who can bless your labors. Do you do that? Then hear the promise of infallible truth: "And all these things shall be added unto you."² But if you invert this order and give to God the last, or even no place at all, on account of your many occupations, what wonder is it that He refuses to bless your work, since you refuse to give what belongs to Him? "Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice," look after your soul first of all! If you say to me as St. Bernard represents Pope Eugenius as excusing himself: I cannot observe that order, because I must attend to my business or work; then I answer with the same Saint: For that very reason you have too much work, and you ought to moderate it, if you hope to gain Heaven.

Have you, then, more to do and to hinder you from serving God and attending to your soul, than a Pope, a king, or an emperor, who has the care of a whole country, or of the whole world? We know already the order that one Pope was advised to follow. St. Francis Borgia, who knew Charles V., the celebrated Roman emperor and king of Spain, tells us that that renowned sovereign never allowed a single day to pass without spending a whole hour in the meditation of heavenly things, besides his ordinary prayers and works of piety; and this holy custom he never interrupted, whether he was in his palace in the midst of important state matters, or in the field with his army in all the turmoil of war. One day, while he was engaged in meditation, an ambassador from a powerful sovereign was announced, who desired to see him at once on most important and necessary business that could not be deferred; but Charles sent word to him that he was engaged in a matter of still greater importance, since he was speaking with the divine Majesty about his soul. The same

Great sovereigns observed that order. Shown by examples.

¹ *Quærite primum regnum Dei et justitiam ejus.*

² *Et hæc omnia adjicientur vobis.*

great and holy emperor used to keep his coffin in his room, constantly before his eyes, so that he might remember his last end, despise earthly goods, and live in the fear and love of God. That is the way to seek God first.¹ The historian of the Emperor Theodosius the Second relates the following story: A holy hermit, who had spent forty years in the desert, leading a very holy life in the practice of all kinds of austerities, once had a great desire to know whether there was in the world any servant of God who surpassed him in perfection, so that he might learn something from him. God revealed to him that there was such a person, and that was the Emperor Theodosius. The hermit was filled with astonishment on learning that a man who was raised to the summit of earthly glory and happiness could be so holy, and he could not rest until he went to Constantinople and saw that prodigy with his own eyes. The emperor received him kindly and when the hermit asked him how he ordered his life, he answered at once: The government of the empire is intrusted to me by the Almighty God; I try to carry it on as well as I can, for His honor, seeking justice in everything, first of all; otherwise, God receives the first share of everything by prayer. My food is of the commonest kind; I often chastise my body by wearing a hair-shirt; when I have to be present at plays, comedies, and tournaments, in order to keep the people in due bounds, while others are feasting their eyes and ears, I find my own pleasure in secret communion with God. Enough, said the hermit; I can understand it all now; and he went away full of astonishment at finding such sanctity in an imperial court. That is the way to seek first the kingdom of God.

Resolution
to imitate
them in fu-
ture.

Now, if this order could be followed by those who had to rule country and people—and who ruled them well, too—amidst all the turmoil and confusion of a court; why, each one of us must conclude, my dear brethren: Why cannot I too observe the same order, and give to my God the first of everything I do, for my cares and labors are not near so great as theirs? I will, then, begin to-day to observe this order, and will continue to do so punctually. I will often call to mind the impressive words of Jesus Christ: “What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?”² If I amass great wealth by my incessant care and labor, what will it profit³ me, if my

¹ *Querite primum regnum Dei.*

² *Quid prodest homini, si mundum universum lucretur, animæ vero suæ detrimentum patiatur?—Matth. xvi. 26.*

³ *Quid prodest.*

soul is poor in merits? If I make a great name for myself before the world, by my diligence, and gain the favor of the great; what will it profit me, if I can find no grace nor favor with God, the Supreme Lord of all? If by my constant labor I can rear my family and leave much wealth to my children and heirs; what will it profit me, if I lose my own soul? No, my soul must be the first and most special object of my care; it must be preferred to everything else. Let my worldly affairs go on as they may, I shall have gained enough, if I can bring my soul to eternal happiness. Amen.

ON THE STATE OF THE RICH.

FIFTY-EIGHTH SERMON.

ON THE GOODNESS OF GOD TOWARDS THE RICH.

Subject.

God shows His good will towards the rich by bestowing on them temporal goods and wealth. Therefore, they owe Him special gratitude and love.—*Preached on the Feast of St. Andrew, Apostle.*

Text.

At illi continuo relictis retibus secuti sunt eum.—Matth. iv. 20.
“And they immediately leaving their nets, followed Him.”

Introduction.

A great thing, indeed, we might say, that was which Peter and Andrew did when they heard the invitation of Christ, and did as He asked them! For, what had they to leave? “They left their nets;”¹ their worthless fishing nets, with which they had to work hard every day to earn their bread; that was all they had to leave. It is true, as St. Jerome says: “Peter was a poor fisherman who had to work for his daily bread;”² but, “Because it is not enough to leave all things, he added that which belongs to perfection and said: We have followed Thee; that is the true sign of Apostles, and believers.”³ In the same way the Gospel of to-day speaks of Peter, and Andrew his brother: “They left their nets and followed Him.” And they left them, too, with their whole hearts, so that they were quite detached from all earthly things, and had not even a desire of possessing the least thing in future.

¹ Relictis retibus.

² Petrus piscator erat, dives non fuerat, cibos manu et arte querebat.

³ Quia non sufficit tantum relinquere, jungit, quod perfectum est: et secuti sumus te quod proprii Apostolorum est, atque credentium.

Now, my dear brethren, if these Apostles had been rich and wealthy, who knows whether they would then have been so ready to leave all things and to follow the poor Christ? It would in all probability have been with them, as it was afterwards with the young man, of whom St. Matthew writes elsewhere, and who went away sad, when Christ invited him to leave all things; why did he do so? "For he had great possessions."¹ All the holy Fathers say, therefore, that God bestows a great benefit on many men, by causing them to be born and to live in poverty, lowliness, and labor, because if they were rich, they would never go to Heaven, and even though they hear the voice of God inviting them to follow Him, they would refuse to do so, because, as Christ says in the parable of the sower: "They would be choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and would yield no fruit."² But, the wealthy will think, is it, then, such a dangerous thing to be rich? If so, God has not meant well with me in bestowing worldly goods upon me; it would have been better for me if He had not been so generous to me in that respect. No, you must not say that; you should rather thank the good God, in the most humble manner, for His merciful dealing with you. As I have hitherto spoken of different states of life, I will now consider your state, or rather, I will prove and maintain the beneficence and goodness of God towards you, and all who are present may learn something useful in this sermon.

Plan of Discourse.

God shows His good will to the rich by bestowing on them temporal goods and wealth; therefore they owe Him special gratitude and love. Such is the whole subject of to-day's sermon.

Help us all, O God, to love Thee and give Thee thanks; we ask of Thee light and grace to this end, through the intercession of Mary and the holy angels guardian.

"Woe to you that are rich!"³ thus I hear Jesus Christ speak Christ says:
woe to the
rich. in a voice of thunder; and do I dare to maintain that God means well with the rich when He gives them many worldly goods? "Amen, I say to you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."⁴ And I say in a tone of congratulation: Oh, how good God is to the rich, by bestowing wealth upon

¹ Erat enim habens multas possessiones.—Matth. xix. 22.

² Et a sollicitudinibus, et divitiis, et voluptatibus vitæ euntes suffocantur etc.—Luke viii. 14.

³ Væ vobis divitibus.—Ibid. vi. 24.

⁴ Amen dico vobis, quia dives difficile intrabit in regnum cælorum.—Matth. xix. 23.

them! "And again I say to you," says Christ, "it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of Heaven;"¹ and do I, a poor, ignorant mortal, dare to assure the rich of the favor and good will of the Almighty, precisely because He bestows riches on them? And why do I speak of those who actually possess worldly wealth? Even the very desire of it, as St. Paul writes to Timothy, is a snare of the devil: "They that will become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil."² Nearly all the holy Fathers agree with the Apostle when they call riches an occasion of eternal ruin. St. Ambrose says that money is "a most crafty plotter against souls."³ St. Isidore calls it "a great temptation,"⁴ and yet, in the face of all this testimony, I come forward and say that the rich are happy; rejoice, I cry out to them, and return thanks most humbly to God, for the great benefit He has conferred on you in giving you much money and property! How can these two conflicting statements be reconciled? On the one side riches are called a temptation, a snare of the devil, an almost insuperable barrier to eternal happiness, and God threatens woe to the rich; on the other, they are called a special benefit and a convincing proof of the goodness of God.

Not because riches are by divine decree, or in themselves bad.

It is true, my dear brethren, that these two statements cannot be reconciled, if they are to be understood of every rich person in the world. I admit that superfluous wealth is for many, nay, for most men an occasion of temptation, of many sins and vices, of losing Heaven, and of eternal damnation; but whence comes that? Is it from the will and intention of God in bestowing temporal wealth? No; such a thought would be blasphemy. He has a far greater, higher, and happier end in view for those on whom He bestows riches, for He intends that they shall use His gifts to save their souls. It was for this reason that He gave great wealth to His faithful and loving servants, such as Job, the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Joseph, David, St. Edward, St. Louis, St. Gregory, and countless others, who were very rich. Whence comes the misery of the rich, then? Why should their wealth be the occasion of their eternal ruin? Perhaps there is something in the nature of riches to account for it.

¹ Iterum dico vobis, facilius est camelum per foramen acus transire, quam divitem intrare in regnum cœlorum.—Matth. xix. 24.

² Qui volunt divites fieri, incidunt in temptationem, et in laqueum diaboli. —I. Tim. vi. 9.

³ Blandissimum animi insidiatorem.

⁴ Grande patrimonium grandis tentatio est.

No; because riches are neither good nor bad in themselves, and they can be used for either good or evil, according to the intention of him who possesses them.

Socrates, the philosopher, used to say that wealth is a source of good or of evil, according to the disposition of him into whose hands it comes. With a perverse and wicked man, who does not fear nor love God, it is like a drawn sword in the hands of a madman, who can use it only to injure himself and others; while with a virtuous man, who wishes to save his soul, it is like a sheathed sword at the side of a brave and faithful warrior, who knows how to use it at the proper time to defend his life, and to protect the honor of his sovereign. That we may understand this still more clearly, my dear brethren, just think of the different uses that can be made of a ladder. I can ascend or descend, according as I place my foot on it. The carpenter or mason uses it to climb to the summit of the roof of a house; the miner uses it to descend into the deepest abysses of the earth, and if he is not careful, he will fall and break his neck; but if he does so, it is his own fault, and not that of the ladder. It is the same with riches and worldly goods: worldly men who are content to grovel on the earth, use them as a ladder to descend into the pit of hell; while good Christians, whose hearts and desires are centred on high, use them as a means of ascending to Heaven and gaining eternal goods. Riches hurled into hell the rich man of the Gospel, who spent his life in all kinds of luxury, drunkenness, and gluttony. "The rich man died and was buried in hell."¹ While the faithful servants of God, who could say like Job: "I was an eye to the blind, and a foot to the lame; I was the father of the poor,"² made use of riches as a means of attaining greater holiness, and greater glory in Heaven.

Is it, then, the bad use alone of riches that causes the misery of men? Not a doubt of it, as St. Chrysostom remarks on the words of St. Paul to Timothy: "Charge the rich of this world not to be high-minded,"³ that is, not to think too much of themselves on account of their wealth, nor to look down upon others. St. Chrysostom asks: "Why did not Paul say: Charge them to become poor, charge them to give up their superfluous wealth, and not charge them not to be high-minded?"⁴ "He knew that

They can be used for good or evil, as their owner wishes. Shown by a simile.

So that it is only the bad use of wealth that brings woe.

¹ Mortuus est dives, et sepultus est in inferno.—Luke xvi. 22.

² Oculus fui cæco, et pes claudo. Pater eram pauperum.—Job xxix. 15, 16.

³ Divitibus hujus sæculi præcipe, non sublime sapere.—I. Tim. vi. 17.

⁴ Quare non dixit: præcipe depauperari, præcipe quæ habent exhaurire, sed præcipe, non sublime sapere?

not riches," is the answer, "but the bad use of them is forbidden; just as wine is not a bad thing, but drunkenness, so wealth is not bad, but avarice, and it is a bad thing to be high-minded;"¹ it is a bad thing to be extravagant, etc. Remember the words of the Apostle that I have already quoted, my dear brethren: "They who will become rich, fall into temptation and into the snare of the devil."² He does not say, they who are rich, but they who wish to be rich, whose hearts and desires are centred on riches, so that they place their whole happiness in them, who are full of anxiety to amass wealth, and use all kinds of means to do so; who love to display their riches by ostentation, unnecessary pomp, useless pleasure, and a worthless and idle life, as is, alas! only too often the case. These fall into the temptations and snares of the devil, and it is of them that Jesus Christ speaks the dreadful words: "Woe to you that are rich!"³ How difficult, how impossible, almost, it is for you to escape hell and to gain Heaven!

Otherwise, riches are good for the welfare of the body.

Otherwise, he who uses riches to the end for which God has bestowed them on him, has nothing of this kind to fear, and they can bring him many advantages, both for soul and body. First, as to the body: who does not know that health is the greatest benefit that God can bestow on the body, for without it, nothing else can give either comfort or enjoyment? Now, it is clear that when riches are employed with due moderation, they are the best means of preserving health; for by their means, one can procure everything that is necessary or useful for the nourishment, clothing, care, delight, and comfort of the body. Ye poor and needy, ye fathers and mothers who suffer from want, of whom there are some in every town and village, how I pity your miserable and wretched condition! When I see many of you unable to work through weakness, and through want of nourishment, clothing, bedding, and proper shelter; when I behold you covered with rags and patches, sometimes half-naked, braving heat and cold, going from house to house, and getting often abuse instead of bread; when I think of others who are poor and at the same time grievously ill, without any one to attend on them, without a doctor, without medicines, abandoned by all, lying in some stable or some out-of-the-way corner of

¹ Novit non prohibitas esse divitias, sed qualis earum sit usus; sicut non mala res vinum, sed ebrietas, ita non mala res divitiæ, sed mala avaritia, malum, alti sapere.

² Qui voluit divites fieri, incidunt in tentationem et in laqueum diaboli.

³ Væ vobis divitibus.

a house, on a bundle of straw ; when I think that there are many citizens and peasants who must toil from early morning till late at night, and withal can hardly earn bread enough to keep themselves from going to bed hungry ; when I remember the many decent poor who are surrounded by a houseful of starving children for whom they cannot get anything to eat ; oh, woe to you, I must think, if in those wretched circumstances you have not great patience, resignation, and fear and love of God ; for how grievously you must be tempted to theft, robbery, blasphemous thoughts, despair, and many other sins !

Meanwhile, you wealthy Christians may learn from this how well God means towards you by allowing you to be born of rich parents, or at least by blessing your work and bestowing on you temporal goods, so that you can support yourselves comfortably. Tell me, why are you so much better off than those others ? Why are you better clothed ? Why have you not to suffer hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness, misery and wretchedness like them ? Oh, you think, we have money and a good income, so that we can support ourselves and those belonging to us, and avoid the evils you mention. Very good ; but I ask you again, where does your money come from ? Why have they received less and you more ? They have hardly enough to support life, while you have more than you can use. Do you think, perhaps, that it comes from your own nature ? But how could that be, for they have the same nature as you ? Are they not reasoning human beings like you ? Do they not come down from the same father, Adam, from whom you descend ? Are they not created by the same God to His image and likeness, and redeemed by the Son of God ? Do they not, as they are children of God and co-heirs with Jesus Christ, belong to the same Heaven, which you hope for ? Why, then, are they in poverty and suffering, and you in wealth and comfort ? You may think that your wealth is your own lawful property, which you have acquired by inheritance, or by your own labor ; and that is true, nor can any one take away your property from you, without committing an injustice. But I ask you again : How is it that you are born of wealthy parents, and not those others, or that you have not become poor like them in course of time ? Do you ascribe that to mere chance, or to your own industry ? If so, you are the most ungrateful of men, for you do not acknowledge the true cause of your prosperity. Even the heathen philosopher Seneca says : “You are the most ungrateful of men,

Therefore,
they are a
great bene-
fit.

because you say you have from nature what you owe to God alone.”¹ No, you must learn that there is another and a greater Father, who distributes His goods amongst men in so many different ways; it is from God that prosperity and adversity, riches and poverty, comfort and misery, come. Hear what God Himself says by the Wise Sirach: “Good things and evil, life and death, poverty and riches are from God.”² And now I ask you finally: What greater merit have you in the sight of God, than others have, on account of which He has allowed you to be born of wealthy parents, or has bestowed wealth on you afterwards? And what crime have those others committed, that by divine will they are born to poverty and misery? See, now, how you are bound with thankful and humble hearts to acknowledge the special goodness of God towards you, and conclude therefrom what a debt of love and gratitude you owe Him!

Riches help also to the good of the soul.

But this is only the least part of the divine beneficence. It certainly would be a poor favor that would merely confer on me the comforts of life, while it places my soul in the greatest danger of eternal misery. No, my dear brethren, such is not the intention of the Almighty God; the salvation of the soul is the first thing that the heavenly Father seeks, even when He distributes temporal wealth and worldly goods in abundance. And indeed, if we think over the matter, we shall find that riches well used can do a great deal for the salvation of the soul.

The rich have more time for practising piety.

For, in the first place, you must admit, wealthy Christians, that since you have not to work hard, you have all the more time and convenient opportunity to devote to spiritual matters, to the service of God, and to all kinds of piety, than if you had to earn your daily bread by hard labor. What do you think of this, poor citizens, workmen, servants, and laborers? How glad would you not be if you could often visit the Church, hear holy Mass, and the Word of God in sermons, often receive the Sacraments, and be present at public prayers and devotions! How gladly would you not occupy yourselves with reading spiritual books and the Lives of the Saints, with visiting and consoling the sick, with helping the poor and abandoned, and with similar works of Christian mercy and charity, in order to advance daily in the love and service of God, to gain merit for your souls, and to increase your glory in Heaven! How willingly, I say, would you not do all these things, if you only had the necessary time

¹ *Nihil agis mortalium ingratisime, qui negas, Deo debere, sed nature.*

² *Bona et mala, vita et mors, paupertas et honestas a Deo sunt.—EccI. xi. 14.*

and opportunity, and if you were not obliged to work hard and constantly, in order to support yourselves and those who depend on you ! And that, too, is no doubt the reason why you often envy the rich, and complain that you can hardly find time to hear Mass in the morning. But be comforted ; for if you are of good will, and keep in the friendship of God, then you may be satisfied and contented with the most just and wise decrees by which He has called you to that state, and you can offer your daily labor to Him. Offer to Him, also, your wants and necessities, by frequently renewing your good intention for His honor and glory, and you will serve God in the very manner in which He most wishes you to serve Him, as I shall show hereafter. Meanwhile, what I have said to you, rich people, still remains true : You have more frequent, better, and more convenient opportunities than others to enrich your souls with graces and merits by the works of devotion already mentioned, and by frequenting the sacraments ; and therefore you are again forced to the conclusion that you owe to God a far more zealous service, love, and gratitude.

In the second place, your wealth gives you a certain and powerful means, if you wish to use it properly, of freeing yourselves from all anxieties and troubles of soul. The things that are most apt to disturb and frighten us, and that really drive many to despair, are the mortal sins of our past lives, of the forgiveness of which we are not certain, and for which, although their guilt may be remitted, we may still have to suffer severe punishment ; the uncertainty and terror of the moment of death, for we do not know whether it will be a happy or a miserable one for us ; the strict and inscrutable judgment of God, which will exact an account of every idle word and thought, nor can we have any idea of how that judgment will turn out for us ; the eternal pains of hell, that most of us know in our hearts and souls we have deserved by mortal sin ; the eternal joys of Heaven, of which we are not by any means certain, and which most of us have great reason to doubt of attaining. These are the things, I repeat, which can fill most souls with fear and anxiety, when they consider them. But you, oh, rich and wealthy, if you only earnestly desire it, can easily get rid of all these troubles by making a good use of your wealth. How so ? Is it possible to appease an offended God, who has all imaginable riches in His possession, and who is not in want of any creature ? Is it possible to appease death, which has no respect for persons, and

They can free themselves from all anxiety of soul.

makes no difference between a king and a beggar? or that inflexible Judge who will pronounce sentence on all men, according to their works, without regarding their persons? Is it possible to close the gates of hell, that are always yawning wide to receive sinners? or to open the gates of heaven that will not admit anything defiled? Can all this be done, I say, by money, and can the faults of the past be repaired by it? Yes, as the proverb truly says: "Money can do everything."¹

That comes
from the
remem-
brance of
past sins.

For, is there any one of you who is troubled by his past sins, and by the remembrance of the manifold debts he has contracted with the divine justice, which he cannot pay? Let him follow the beautiful advice that the Prophet Daniel gave to King Nabuchodonosor, after he had predicted, in the name of God, the terrible punishment that was in store for him, that he would be deprived of his kingdom and condemned to eat grass like a wild beast; he said: "Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to thee, and redeem thou thy sins with alms, and thy iniquities with works of mercy to the poor."² You see now what a powerful and easy means God has given you, in preference to others, to atone fully for all the punishment due to your past sins; to atone fully, I say, no matter how numerous your sins may have been; for, "alms-deeds are works of charity," says St. Leo, "and we know, from St. Peter, that charity covereth a multitude of sins."³ Nay, if you are even now in the unhappy state of sin, you can use the same means to receive the grace of repentance and pardon from God. "Those unhappy men," says St. Maximus, "who are dead by sin, can come to life by alms-deeds; and for those to whom avarice was a cause of death, charity becomes a source of life, if they extinguish the flames they kindled by their sins and purchase innocence for themselves, as they before purchased guilt."⁴

From the
fear of
death.

If you are terrified and afraid at the thought of death, you can easily console yourselves; you have only to open your coffers, and you will find therein a powerful medicine against an unhappy death, one far more powerful than any doctor in the world could

¹ Pecuniæ obediunt omnia.

² Quamobrem, rex, consilium meum placeat tibi, et peccata tua elemosynis redime, et iniquitates tuas misericordias pauperum.—Dan. iv. 24.

³ Eleemosynæ sunt opera charitatis, et scimus, quia charitas operit multitudinem peccatorum.

⁴ Miseri homines, qui in mortem peccatis aruerant, ad vitam elemosynis reviviscunt. Estque illis misericordia fons salutis, quibus avaritia fuerat mortis incendium, ut flammæ, quas sibi peccando incenderant, largiendo restinguant, et emant sibi quodammodo innocentiam, qui sibi emerant aliquando peccatum.

give you. The day of death is called, in the Sacred Scriptures, an evil day,¹ a day full of anguish and dread. Now hear the Holy Ghost Himself telling you how you may free yourselves from this evil day, by making a good use of your wealth, that is, by sharing it with the poor and needy; He says by the Prophet David: "Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor."² Why blessed? "The Lord will deliver him in the evil day."³ He need not even fear that day, as St. Peter Chrysologus says: "He need not fear the evil day, who makes good days for the poor."⁴ St. Gregory Turonensis tells a story of a citizen of Antioch, who was very generous to the poor; he had the pious custom of never sitting down to table without having a poor man as his guest. He once went through the whole town looking for a poor man to sit at table with him, and because he could not find any one, he went outside the gates, where he found a man dressed in white, accompanied by two others. He asked them if they were strangers and begged of them, if such was the case, to come and eat with him; whereupon the oldest of these said: Can you not by your prayers save this whole town from destruction? Saying these words, he unfolded his handkerchief and shook it in the direction of the city. Immediately a great noise was heard, and half the city tumbled down and buried numbers of people under the ruins. The citizen was so terrified that he fell half fainting to the ground, but the stranger raised him up, and said to him: Fear not and return home; you will find your wife and children and your whole family in good health, not one of them has perished: "Your constant prayers and the alms you give every day to the poor have saved you and yours."⁵ The three men then disappeared from his sight. On his return he found half the city turned into a heap of stones, and nearly all the people who inhabited it crushed to death, while his house and all its inmates were, as the angel said, quite unhurt. So true is it: He will not see an evil day who has made good days for the poor.

Alms-giving and generosity to the poor will also free you from the fear caused by the thought of judgment; although the Judge is inexorable after this life, and deals with the soul in strict justice, yet He allows Himself to be bribed and appeased with money

From the
strict judgment.

¹ Dies mala.

² Beatus, qui intelligit super egenum et pauperem.—Pa. xl. 2.

³ In die mala liberabit eum Dominus.—Ibid.

⁴ Non videbit diem malum, qui dies bonos habere fecit pauperem.

⁵ Oratio assidua et eleemosynæ, quas quotidie in pauperes distribuas, te tuosque servarunt.

beforehand, as St. John Chrysostom assures us: "Give to the poor," are his words, "and you will appease your Judge."¹ Appease Him? Nay, you will gain something for yourself in judgment, as St. Peter Chrysologus says, inasmuch as you can thus make your Judge your Debtor: "Give bread, give drink, give clothing, if you wish God to be your Debtor, not your Judge."² "Alms shall be a good confidence before the most high God, to all them that give it."³

From the
eternal
pains of hell.

Finally, the most terrible thing of all, that we have most to fear, and on account of which alone all the other things are to be dreaded, is the eternal fire of hell, the dwelling-place of all possible torments. Now, you rich people can, if you wish, engage a sentinel, who will stand at the gates of hell and keep them shut fast so that you cannot enter. "Mercy stands at the gate of hell, and does not allow any merciful man to be cast into that prison."⁴ Such is the opinion of St. Augustine, based on the words that Jesus Christ will say on the last day: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you:"⁵ "For I was hungry and you gave Me to eat,"⁶ and partly, too, on those words of Tobias to his son: "Alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness."⁷ Drexelius says: "O desirable change! Formerly a cherub stood at the entrance of Paradise with a flaming sword in his hand. Now mercy watches at the gate of hell, and allows none of its own to enter!"⁸ Therefore, in your temporal goods you have a powerful means of protecting yourselves against the greatest anxieties and evils of the soul.

And can
gain the
highest good
in Heaven.

Now that this fear is removed, what remains for you but the joys of Heaven? And these, too, you can purchase with your money. Hear what St. John Chrysostom says: "We can purchase Heaven; give bread to the poor, and you will gain Paradise."⁹ I need not say much about this, my dear brethren, because I

¹ Da pauperi, et judicem mitigabis.

² Da panem, da potum, da vestimentum; si Deum debitorem, non judicem vis.

³ Fiducia magna erit coram summo Deo eleemosyna omnibus facientibus eam.—Tob. iv. 12.

⁴ Ante fores gehennæ stat misericordia, nullum misericordem permittit in carcerem illum mitti.

⁵ Venite, benedicti Patris mei, possidete paratum vobis regnum.—Matth. xxv. 34.

⁶ Esurivi enim et dedistis mihi manducare.—Ibid. 35.

⁷ Eleemosyna ab omni peccato, et a morte liberat, et non patietur animam ire in tenebras.—Tob. iv. 11.

⁸ O bene mutatas vices! Olim paradisi aditum princeps cherubicus romphea flammæ interclusit: nunc ad inferorum portas excubat misericordia, et neminem suorum ingressum sinit.

⁹ Mercatura est cœlum: da panem, et accipe paradisum.

have already spoken of it in another sermon, and shown how we can gain Heaven by alms-deeds. What a great happiness it is for you who are wealthy, to be able to obtain such immense riches at so little cost ! St. Peter Chrysologus says: "Give, oh, man, a piece of ground to the poor, and you will receive Heaven ; give a little money, and you will gain a kingdom."¹ And indeed, if you consider the matter attentively, you must admit that the temporal wealth with which God has blessed you should serve to raise up your hearts to heavenly things, and to encourage you to seek and to gain them, not only by alms-deeds, but also by many other good works. For, if the God of mercy gives His servants, in this miserable life, such treasures and comforts, what will He not bestow on them in their true country, in His own eternal kingdom, in the true home of all imaginable happiness, where they will always remain faithful to Him ? If even the servants and attendants in a royal palace are clad in rich garments, and feast sumptuously every day, how costly and sumptuously must not the ministers and councillors of the king live, since they are in communication with their royal master ? Now, during this life we are, so to speak, only servants and lackeys of the great King of Heaven, who has sent us here to labor, and if our Master provides for us so richly now, what will He not do for us after this life, when we shall become His intimate friends, and when, according to His promises, we shall reign with Him forever ? Therefore, I will serve that good and beneficent Lord during my life, with the greatest care and zeal, that I may be certain of possessing the kingdom of Heaven with Him hereafter.

Does not all this prove to you, oh, wealthy Christians, how good and how kind God is to you, and how well He looks after both your spiritual and temporal interests, since He has given you such a large share of the good things of this life ? Is it not, then, your bounden duty to be especially grateful to so good a God, and to be specially zealous in His service ? Have you been so always ? If not, you must acknowledge your base and black ingratitude towards such a good and generous God, and I will call your attention to that on a future occasion. But now say with thankful hearts in the words of the Psalmist : What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me ? " Ah, my good God, what shall I give Thee for all that Thou hast bestowed on me in preference to so many thou-

Therefore,
God means
well with
the rich, and
they are
bound to
love and
serve Him
especially.

¹ Da pauperi terram, ut accipias cœlum ; da nummum, ut accipias regnum.

² Quid retribuam Domino pro omnibus, quæ tribuit mihi ?—Ps. cxv. 3.

and others? I fully admit that the goods Thou hast bestowed on me, although they are transitory, come from Thy special bounty towards me. What a beautiful opportunity Thou hast given me of working out my salvation! Thou hast freed me from the miseries of poverty and labor, that I might have more time to serve Thee and to devote to piety. That I have more than others, is due to Thee; my prosperity is Thy work alone, and Thou hast blessed me with it, that I may help the poor and needy, and feed, clothe, and care for them, and thus atone for my past sins, secure to myself the grace of a happy death, escape the rigor of Thy justice and the flames of hell, and gain eternal happiness! Oh, what do I not owe Thee, my God! Unceasing gratitude, praise, and honor be to Thy mercy! Pardon me my past ingratitude in having so often offended Thee whom I should love more than others! Henceforward, I will use my wealth to the end for which Thou hast given it to me, that is, to serve Thee with zeal, to help Thee in the persons of Thy poor servants, and to purchase the eternal goods Thou hast promised in the kingdom of Heaven. Amen.

FIFTY-NINTH SERMON.

ON THE INGRATITUDE OF THE RICH TOWARDS GOD.

Subject.

Vile ingratitude of the rich and wealthy towards God, when they do not serve Him faithfully.—*Preached on the first Sunday in Lent.*

Text.

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

“All these will I give Thee, if falling down Thou wilt adore me.”

Introduction.

What the devil could not effect with the Incarnate God, he succeeds in doing with countless men of the world. He said to Christ, when he showed Him all the riches of the world, from

the top of a high mountain : “ All these will I give Thee, if falling down Thou wilt adore me.”¹ Oh, the wicked spirit need not offer all that to many men ! He has only to say to them : I will give you a dollar, or a few cents, if you bend the knee before me, and his offer will be accepted at once, and they will be prepared to violate the law of God by mortal sin, and to bow down in homage to the devil. Oh, my Lord and my God, how can that be ? Thou offerest to all men an infinitely greater good ; Thou dost not show us this miserable earth, but Thy glorious Heaven, with all its treasures and happiness ! Thou sayest to each one of us : Behold, I will give thee all these things² for eternity, if thou wilt adore and serve Me faithfully. But how few there are who serve Thee for the great reward Thou hast promised ! No ; they do not care for heavenly goods. But promise them earthly things. Say to them, I will give you this fine property, and many treasures and great riches, if you will serve Me, and Thou wilt find many who will respond to Thy call. But what am I saying ? The devil can find adorers enough for such things. But Thou, oh, my God, canst secure only a small number of faithful servants by the same means ! And is it not true ? How many rich and wealthy people there are in the world to whom Thou hast not only promised worldly riches, but hast really given them most generously ! And yet, do not the most of them forget Thee and Thy service on account of their wealth ? What black ingratitude that is ! I have already shown, my dear brethren, how well God means with the rich, by bestowing temporal wealth on them, and how they ought, therefore, to serve Him with special zeal. Now I say, on the other hand—

Plan of Discourse.

Vile is the ingratitude of the rich and wealthy towards God, when they do not serve Him faithfully ! Such is the whole subject. Constant zeal in the love and service of God should be the fruit of this sermon.

Help us thereto, oh, most generous God, by Thy light and grace, which we ask of Thee through the intercession of Mary, and the holy angels guardian.

The greater and more numerous the benefits that one receives, the more gratitude, love, and service he is bound to show his benefactor. Consequently, he is guilty of vile ingratitude, if

The rich have received more from God

¹ Hæc omnia tibi dabo, si cadens adoraveris me.

² Hæc omnia tibi dabo.

than many
others.

he does not acknowledge those benefits, nor show special love and service to him from whom he has received them. But how great would be his guilt, if in addition to being ungrateful, he were to take occasion, from those very benefits, to turn against his benefactor, to ill-treat, offend, and offer him every kind of insult and annoyance! That is an ingratitude that even unreasoning animals would be ashamed of. See, wealthy Christians, so basely do you act towards God, when you do not serve and love Him faithfully! You cannot deny that you have received more numerous and greater benefits from His well-meaning generosity towards you, than many thousand others. If you refused to admit that, your ingratitude would be great indeed. For, besides the benefits you enjoy in common with all Christians, such as creation to the image of God, redemption from eternal death by the Passion of Christ, cleansing from original sin in baptism, and the sanctification of the soul by the Blood of Jesus Christ, preservation up to the present moment, and vocation to the one true faith,—besides all these, you have been provided with temporal goods, so that you lead a much more quiet, comfortable, and pleasant life, than many others, and also gain great merit in Heaven, while there are many who have hardly anything, and who suffer hunger, want, and poverty, or who must employ their miserable lives in constant toil and labor.

Therefore,
it is very
wicked of
them to be
unfaithful
to God.

Is it not just, therefore, that you should be more zealous than others, in loving and serving that God who has been so much more generous to you? The Prophet David does not seem even to imagine it possible that a reasoning being could act otherwise; for he says: “Glory and wealth shall be in his house; and his justice remaineth forever and ever.”¹ Even the devil is not surprised at seeing a rich man fearing and loving God; for when God spoke to him of His servant Job in these words: “Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a simple and upright man, one that feareth God, and avoideth evil?”² Yes, answered the demon, but that is not to be wondered at; remember the care Thou hast of him! “Doth Job fear God in vain? Hast Thou not made a fence for him and his house, and all his substance round about, and blessed the works of his hands, and his possession hath increased

¹ Gloria et divitiæ in domo ejus: justitia ejus manet in sæculum sæculi.—Ps. cxi. 3.

² Numquid considerasti servum meum Job, quod non sit et similis in terra, homo simplex et rectus, ac timens Deum, et recedens a malo?—Job i. 8.

on the earth?"¹ Is it, then, a great wonder that he is pious? Is he not compelled to fear, love, and honor Thee? Thus spoke the evil spirit. Learn therefrom, ye wealthy, how inconsistently, how wickedly you act towards your good God when you do not love and fear Him in a special manner.

But what are we to think of your conduct when, instead of thanking, loving, and fearing God, you misuse the riches and the gifts He has bestowed on you, to forget, despise, and offend Him? We could hardly imagine any one acting thus towards another man from whom he has received benefits. Joseph in Egypt considered it an impossibility. You all know, my dear brethren, as we read in the 39th chapter of Genesis, how Joseph was tempted by the wife of Putiphar his master, whose house he had charge of. How did he act in that temptation? There was one reason that he put forward for not complying with the desires of his wicked mistress; he said with astonishment: "Behold, my master hath delivered all things to me, and knoweth not what he hath in his own house; neither is there anything which is not in my power, or that he hath not delivered to me, but thee who art his wife; how then can I do this wicked thing, and sin against my God?"² Mark these wise words, my dear brethren: My master has given all things into my hands, how is it possible for me to offer him this injury? Where would my gratitude and fidelity be? Would I not be the most base and ungrateful of men, if I were to repay the trust he reposes in me, by committing such a sin? "How can I?"³ No, I cannot, and will not be so base! In the same way should every rich and wealthy man act in the occasions or temptations to sin. No; he should think, how can I do that and be unfaithful to my God? Behold, the good God has meant so well with me; He has given me so many goods and possessions, that I may live comfortably and at my ease;⁴ how, then, can I be so shameless as to do this evil thing, and to sin against God⁵ who has been so good to me? It is a crime that I could not answer for before God nor man. If the Supreme Lord had made me like

Still more
wicked
when they
use the gifts
of God to
offend Him.

¹ Numquid Job frustra timet Deum? Nonne tu vallasti eum, ac domum ejus, universamque substantiam per circuitum: operibus manuum ejus benedixisti, et possessio ejus crevit in terra?—Job. i. 9, 10.

² Ecce dominus meus omnibus mihi traditis ignorat quid habeat in domo sua, nec quidquam est, quod non in mea sit potestate, vel non tradiderit mihi præter te quæ uxor ejus es: quomodo ergo possum hoc malum facere et peccare in Dominum meum?—Gen. xxxix. 8, 9.

Quomodo possum? ⁴ Ecce dominus meus omnibus mihi traditis, etc.

⁵ Quomodo ergo possum hoc malum facere et peccare in Dominum meum?

so many others, so that I should have to earn a scanty living, by the sweat of my brow; if He had given me nothing in this world but the beggar's staff, so that I should be obliged to beg my bread from door to door; even then I would be bound to fear and love God, and would deserve the eternal flames of hell if I offended Him by mortal sin; how much more ought I not to fear and love Him now that He has given me so many comforts, and bestowed so many blessings on me? How, then, can I dare to commit sin and to act with such vile ingratitude towards such a generous Benefactor? No, my God; I would rather give up all that I possess, than offend Thee by one sin. Such, I repeat, should be the dispositions of all men, but especially of the rich and wealthy.

Most people
are not like
this.

But alas, oh, God of love, how is it in reality with, I will not say the majority, but as Thou knowest, very many, at least, in this respect? Thou hast ere now boasted to Satan of the virtue of Thy servant Job, whom Thou hast blessed with great riches, and whom Thou hast called "a simple and upright man, one that feareth God, and avoideth evil;"² and Thou hast said that the like of him was not to be found on earth. "Hast thou considered my servant Job?"³ If Thou hadst now to ask the same Satan what he thinks of many Christians, could he not say to Thee: Seest Thou not that rich man, that rich lady, that wealthy merchant or citizen? "Thou hast made a fence for him, and his house, and all his substance round about; Thou hast blessed the works of his hands and his possession hath increased upon the earth;"⁴ Thou hast filled his storehouses with corn, his cellars with wine, his coffers with gold; and how does he love and thank Thee for having done so? See how he lives. He is proud and unjust, and fears neither God nor man; he abstains from good works, but not from evil; he serves me faithfully, although I have not given him a single penny; how little honor Thou derivest from Thy generosity to him! Thou hast certainly no reason to boast of him, but rather to complain of him as Thou didst formerly of Thy ungrateful people the Hebrews: "The beloved," he to whom I have been so generous, "grew fat and kicked," like a well-fed horse that kicks at its master,

¹ Quomodo ergo possum hoc malum facere tibi peccare in Dominum meum?

² Homo simplex et rectus, ac timens Deum, et recedens a malo.

³ Numquid considerasti servum meum Job?

⁴ Tu vallasti eum ac domum ejus, universamque substantiam per circuitum; operibus manuum ejus benedixisti, et possessio ejus crevit in terra.

“he grew fat, and thick, and gross,” and therefore he has abandoned God, to whom he owes everything.¹

And is it not all true, my dear brethren? What kind of thanks and love does the Almighty God receive from those wealthy people, who do not even acknowledge that their riches are a gift and a benefit from Him, but ascribe them, either to their parents, from whom they have inherited them, or to their own cleverness, talents, energy, skill, and industry, or even to what they consider as blind chance and good luck, that have hitherto accompanied their labors? Such people never think that it is to the divine generosity that they owe their prosperity, nor do they ever thank God for His goodness to them. They are like fattened swine that gorge on acorns the whole day, and never look up to the tree that supplies them with their favorite food.

Who do not look upon riches as a divine benefit.

In making them rich, God has given them more convenient opportunities, more time and leisure to attend to their souls, to practise good works, and to gain great merit for themselves in His sight, as we have seen in the last sermon. But they think very little of that! The rich man mentioned in the Gospel of St. Luke, when he had filled his barns and provided himself with everything for many years to come, thought of nothing but enjoying himself; he said exultingly: “Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thy rest, eat, drink, make good cheer.”² This is only a parable, my dear brethren, but it is evidently literally true of many wealthy Christians nowadays, who, instead of thinking of their salvation, and spending the most of their time in the service of God, waste their precious time in idleness, sleeping, dressing, eating, and drinking, and giving useless entertainments for no other purpose than to enjoy themselves here below.

Who are lazy in the service of God, and attend only to the body.

When poor workmen and citizens rise early in the morning to offer the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ to His Eternal Father in the holy Mass, the rich are lying in their comfortable beds until late in the day. *Their* morning prayer is drinking tea and coffee; *they* cannot hear Mass on week-days because they take too long a time to dress. The poor can often spare an hour from their necessary labor to assist at public devotions, while the rich cannot spare a moment from their parties and amusements to think of God and Heaven. The former often read spiritual

They have less piety and love of God than the poor

¹ *Incrassatus est dilectus, et recalcitravit: incrassatus, impinguatus, dilatatus, dereliquit Deum factorem suum.*—Deut. xxxii. 15.

² *Anima, habes multa bona posita in annos plurimos: requiesce, comede, hibe, epulare.*—Luke xii. 19.

books and the Lives of the Saints on Sundays and holy-days, while the latter spend their time in playing cards and amusing themselves. The poor often find time to visit and console the sick and afflicted; but who would dare to suggest such a disagreeable work of charity to many a rich gentleman or lady? They must pay and receive visits of ceremony. The poor, although they have not always the best of food on their frugal tables, would yet feel anxious and uneasy in conscience if they ate meat during Lent, even when a general dispensation is given; the rich, although they feast sumptuously every day, cannot mortify themselves for the good of their souls and for the sake of their suffering Redeemer, so far as to observe the forty days' fast according to the law of the Church, even when no dispensation is given, and they are clever enough in finding out excuses and reasons for asking to be specially dispensed from such a severe law. While the poor, ill-protected as they are against the cold, are regular in their attendance at sermons, even in mid-winter, because they sincerely wish to receive some encouragement in the divine service, the majority of the rich are hardly ever seen at a sermon, as if the grace of God were not necessary for them; and if they come now and then, it is with them as Christ says in the Parable of the Sower: "They hear the word, and are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit."¹ Cardinal Bellarmine compares the poor to dry, and the rich to green wood, and says that the Word of God in sermons is the fire of which Christ speaks in the Gospel of St. Luke: "I am come to cast fire on the earth; and what will I but that it be kindled?"² Now dry wood will take fire immediately, while green wood smokes a long time before it gets alight. In the same way, the poor are readily inclined to profit by sermons, but the majority of rich people are not easy to be persuaded of the truth, because they are full of the moisture of bad humors. The former, after having often renewed their good intention and thus worked for God the whole day, are generally amongst the number of those good Christians who every evening, before they retire to rest, say their evening prayers and make the examen of conscience on their knees with their families, although they are worn out by fatigue, and every fortnight, or at least every month, they go to confession and communion. But the latter think it a great thing if they fold their hands to say an Our Father before

¹ Et a sollicitudinibus et divitiis et voluptatibus vitæ euntes suffocantur.—Luke viii. 14.

² Ignem veni mittere in terram: et quid volo, nisi ut accendatur? Ibid. xii. 49.

and after meals, and to approach the sacraments four times a year; otherwise, they hardly think of God during the day; where their treasure is, there are their hearts also; so that a certain painter who once made a picture representing the prayer of the rich and that of the poor, was not far wrong in his idea. He represented the rich man as sending forth from his heart many rays of light, one of which was directed to his money, another to his farm, a third to his cellar, a fourth to his barn, a fifth to his family, etc., but not one was directed to God; the poor man, on the contrary, had a single ray proceeding from his heart, which went straight to Christ crucified. In a word, the majority of the rich seldom have that tender devotion and zealous love in the service of God that are seen in ordinary citizens and work-people.

In making them wealthy God has given the rich the best means of atoning for their past sins by generosity towards the poor and needy, and also of meriting even the grace of sincere repentance and pardon; but many of them increase the number of their sins day by day, by using the gifts of God to satisfy their pride and contempt for others, their vanity and extravagance in dress, their avarice and injustice, their usury and oppression of the poor, their gluttony and drunkenness, their impurity and lust. Instead of saying with Joseph: My Lord and my God has endowed me with great wealth, and enabled me to live in comfort; how can I commit sin and offend Him? ¹ they invert the sentence, so to speak, and say by their acts: My Lord and my God has given me much more than He has given to thousands of others; how then can I ² live according to the laws of the Gospel like poor people? My Lord and my God has given me a certain and rich income, how then can I be humble, modest, temperate, sober, and chaste? How can I fast and deny myself creature comforts? How can I allow the insult offered me by my enemy to go unavenged? Why should I fear to spend my money? And thus they either incur much unnecessary expense by their luxury, extravagance, and pride, so that they have nothing left to atone for their sin by helping the poor and needy, or else they are so avaricious and hard-hearted that they have no pity for the poor. There are few ordinary citizens who will turn a poor beggar away from their doors empty-handed, or who will not at least have a good word for him,

Who daily
add sin to
sin.

¹ Quomodo possum hoc malum facere, et peccare in Dominum meum?

² Quomodo ergo possum?

while he may knock at the doors of ten wealthy people, one after the other, without getting anything; nay, he will often be sent away with harsh words. This is the gratitude shown to Thee, oh, God, by those whom Thou hast chosen as special objects of Thy generosity! What dost Thou think of such vileness and baseness? I know what Thou thinkest of it, for Thou tellest me by the Prophet Zacharias: "I am angry with a great anger with the wealthy nations,"¹ who misuse my benefits to offend Me; and the anger that I feel is not an ordinary one, but is exceeding great.

They thus
prepare for
themselves
a terrible
death.

I conceal this anger for the present, and allow them to go on as they please, and to enjoy my gifts and benefits; but woe to them hereafter! They will feel it in the hour of death, when they must leave the world behind them; thy will feel it after death, when they shall appear before my judgment seat; they will feel it for all eternity in the flames of hell! Hear this, and tremble with fear, ye wealthy people who do not serve God faithfully! As I have said before, you can use your riches to save yourselves from the evil day, and to prepare yourselves for a happy death; but instead of that, you are preparing for yourselves a death full of terror, bitterness, and anguish, and it will be with you as it was with the rich man in the Gospel, who thought only of eating, drinking, and enjoying himself: "Fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee, and whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"² What use have you made of the benefits that God has bestowed on you? To you may be applied the words that the Lord spoke to His people by the Prophet Joel: "Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Did this ever happen in your days, or in the days of your fathers? Tell ye of this to your children, and let your children tell their children, and their children to another generation."³ Now, it must be something of great importance that God wished to be thus handed down to future generations. And what was it: "That which the palmer-worm hath left, the locust hath eaten; and that which the locust hath left, the bruchus hath eaten; and that which the bruchus hath left, the mildew hath destroyed."⁴ And He adds immediately after:

¹ *Ira magna ego irascor super gentes opulentas.*—Zach. 1. 15.

² *Stulte, hac nocte repetent animam tuam a te, et quæ parasti, cuius erunt?*—Luke xii. 20.

³ *Audite hoc, senes, et auribus percipite omnes habitatores terræ, si factum est istud in diebus vestris, aut in diebus patrum vestrorum? Super hoc etc.*—Joel 1. 2, 3.

⁴ *Residuum erucæ comedit locusta, et residuum locustæ comedit bruchus, et residuum bruchi comedit rubigo.*—Ibid. 4, 5.

“Awake, ye that are drunk ;”¹ as if He meant, he who does not understand this, must be drunk or foolish. We shall pass over the literal meaning of these words, my dear brethren, and explain their mystic sense. What happens in tilled lands when the crops are eaten up by all kinds of insects, can also be affirmed of the possessions of wealthy people who do not employ their riches for the service of God, and the salvation of their souls ; for what is left over by gluttony and drunkenness, is generally consumed by idleness and folly ; what idleness leaves intact is devoured by extravagance in dress ; what this latter does not consume, is swallowed up by a host of servants and hangers-on ; in a word, the corrupt world, vanity, sin, and vice, make away with all the wealth, so that the soul, and God and Christ in His poor receive no part of it. “Fool,” so will it be with you when the decree is pronounced, “this night do they require thy soul of thee.”² What is become of your wealth and money ? You have nothing left for eternity ; go away, then, naked and poor as you are !

Whither ? Before the judgment seat of Him who gave you your riches, and who so often, in the person of His poor, stretched out His hand to you in vain for alms. You could appease this divine Judge, and dispose Him to be favorable to you, if you were generous towards the poor ; but you continue to be slothful in the service of God, to lead sinful lives, to be hard and unmerciful to the poor, and thus to embitter your Judge against you more and more every day. Woe to you ! Your sentence is already pronounced : “Depart from me, you cursed For I was hungry, and you gave me not to eat ; I was thirsty, and you gave me not to drink. . . . I was naked, and you have not clothed me ; I was in prison, and you did not visit me : depart from me, ye cursed !”³

An inexorable Judge.

Whither ? I ask again. Ah, if you used your worldly wealth to the end for which God bestowed it on you, you might, by giving alms generously, make friends for yourselves among the poor, who would hereafter receive you into eternal tabernacles, according to the words of Christ : “Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when you shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings.”⁴ You, on the contrary, make for yourselves enemies who will one day cry out against you, and

Heaven closed against them.

¹ *Expergiscimini ebril.*—Joel i. 5.

² *Hac nocte repetent animam tuam a te.*

³ *Discedite a me maledicti ! . . . Esurivi enim, et non dedistis mihi manducare ; sitiivi . . nudus fui . . . in carcere fui . . . Ite, maledicti !* Matth. xxv. 41-43.

⁴ *Facite vobis amicos de mammona iniquitatis, ut, cum defeceritis, recipiant vos in eterna tabernacula.*—Luke xvi. 9.

when the gate of Heaven is shut upon you, will say with your Judge : "Depart, ye cursed !"¹

Deeper
damnation.

Whither ? I ask for the last time. "Into everlasting fire,"² which, instead of being extinguished for you by your alms-deeds, is made hotter for you by your pride, avarice, and hard-heartedness ; and there you will find your eternal dwelling with the rich glutton, of whom the Gospel says : "And the rich man died, and he was buried in hell."³

Conclusion
and exhortation
to the
wealthy.

Merciful God, have pity upon us ! Things have not yet gone so far with us ! Thou hast ere now sent Thy Prophet Nathan to King David, who had offended Thee and acted most ungratefully to Thee, and Thou hast commanded him to speak these impressive words : "Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel : I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee from the hand of Saul, and gave thee thy master's house." Ungrateful man, what hast thou done ? "And if these things be little I shall add far greater things unto thee. Why, therefore, hast thou despised the word of the Lord, to do evil in my sight ?"⁴ These words made such an impression on the heart of David, that he cried out, full of repentance for his ingratitude : Alas, what have I done ! "I have sinned against the Lord."⁵ Merciful God, I beg of Thee to speak now with Thy powerful grace to the hearts of the rich ! Reprove them in the same manner : "Thus saith the Lord : " Ungrateful man, "I have anointed thee"⁶ and blessed thee ! I have given thee the magnificent house in which thou dwellest, and the other houses from which thou derivest thy income ; I have given thee money in thy coffers, crops in thy lands, wine in thy vineyards, and all that thou hast is a gift that I have bestowed on thee in preference to so many thousand other men, who must labor hard to earn their daily bread ; and if this is not enough, I will give thee still more, for my eternal kingdom of Heaven is prepared for thee, if thou wilt serve Me faithfully. "Why, therefore, hast thou despised the word of the Lord, to do evil in my sight ?" Why hast thou dealt so meanly with Me, and trampled my law under foot ? I expect-

¹ *Ite, maledicti !*

² *In ignem æternum.*

³ *Mortuus est dives, et sepultus est in inferno.—Luke xvi. 22.*

⁴ *Hæc dicit Dominus Deus Israel : Ego unxi te in regem super Israel, et ego erui te de manu Saul, et dedi tibi domum domini tui, . . . dedique tibi domum Israel et Juda, et si parva sunt ista, adjiciam tibi multo majora. Quare ergo contempsisti verbum Domini, ut faceres malum in conspectu meo?—II. Kings xii. 7, 8, 9.*

⁵ *Peccavi Domino.—Ibid. 13.*

⁶ *Hæc dicit Dominus Deus : Ego unxi te etc.*

ed that thou wouldst serve and love Me all the more zealously, but in spite of my benefits, thou hast shamefully forgotten Me, since thou hast not hesitated to offend Me on account of them.

Christians, who know you are guilty in this respect, hear, not the voice of a Prophet Nathan, but that of your merciful God. Have you any love of honor and honesty? Then what else can you do but imitate the penitent David, and say: Alas, I confess it, "I have sinned against the Lord."¹ I have done wrong, and I must acknowledge my vileness and baseness in ill-using the benefits that have been bestowed on me, and in offending and insulting Thee, my God! But, praise and thanks be to Thy infinite mercy, that Thou hast given me the grace to see my ingratitude, so that, although I am as guilty as the rich man in the Gospel, yet I may escape the punishment he now suffers. I have sinned most shamefully against Thee, my sovereign benefactor; it is only too true that I have made a very bad use of Thy gifts! But Thou seest my heart, and Thou knowest that I repent sincerely of my past wickedness, and from this moment I firmly resolve to lead a different life, to serve and love Thee more faithfully and zealously, to be more diligent in the practice of devotion, to share with Thee, in the persons of Thy poor, the goods Thou hast bestowed upon me, and thus to atone for my past ingratitude, and to merit the grace of a happy death, a favorable judgment, and the eternal joys of Heaven. Amen.

Repentance
and resolu-
tion of
amendment.

Another Introduction for the Feast of St. Stephen, Proto-Martyr:

Text.

Ecce, relinquetur vobis domus vestra deserta.—Matth. xxiii. 38.

"Behold, your house shall be left to you desolate."

Whom does Christ thus threaten? The inhabitants of the great city of Jerusalem, and as we see from the Gospel, He speaks in particular to the chief priests, whom He reminds of the favor conferred on them in preference to other nations, by His sending them prophets, and by coming Himself to show them the way to true happiness, and whom He also reproves for their shameful ingratitude in misusing His gifts to their own eternal ruin and in stoning the prophets and those who were sent to them, as they afterwards did the holy Martyr, St. Stephen. Ungrateful Jerusalem, how well I have always meant to thee! How

¹ *Peccavi Domino.*

often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings! "And thou wouldst not! Behold, your house shall be left to you desolate." Alas, how many Christians there are nowadays, whom God might reprove in the same manner! And that is the case, especially with those on whom He confers benefits in preference to many others, and who are blessed by Him every day with temporal prosperity. How well I have meant to you, and yet you repay Me for my goodness by shameful ingratitude! I have shown already, my dear brethren, etc.—*continues as before.*

SIXTIETH SERMON.

ON THE DUTY OF THE RICH TOWARDS THE POOR.

Subject.

It is the bounden duty of the rich to help the poor with alms. Therefore, they who can afford to give alms, and refuse to do so, cannot be excused from sin.—*Preached on the second Sunday in Lent.*

Text.

Domine, bonum est nos hic esse: si vis, faciamus hic tria tabernacula.—Matth. xvii. 4.

"Lord, it is good for us to be here: if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles."

Introduction.

I can easily believe that Peter would gladly remain in the place where Christ manifested His glory; but I can see from what he said that he thought only of himself, and did not care how others fared; for he wished to build tabernacles for Christ, Moses, and Elias, while he was indifferent as to the fate of the other Apostles, who were not so fortunate as he was. He should rather have said: Lord, it is good for us to be here; if Thou wilt, I will go and call my brethren, and will build many tabernacles, so that we may all live here together. But Peter never thought of that;

¹ Quoties volui . . . et nolui. Ecce relinquitur vobis domus vestra deserta.

he felt happy, and that was enough for him. Such, too, my dear brethren, is, generally speaking, the way of the world; each one looks after himself and those who belong to him, and cares little for what becomes of others. There are many poor people in the world, some of whom are publicly known as such, while others try to conceal their poverty, all of whom have received from the Almighty God a very small share of the goods of this world. And on the other hand, there are many rich and wealthy people on whom God has bestowed far more than is necessary for their support. The former suffer hunger and want, cold and nakedness, misery and wretchedness; while the greater number of the latter are satisfied with enjoying their superfluous wealth, and thinking with Peter: It is good for us to be here; we are satisfied with the arrangements of providence; let others look to themselves, and provide for themselves as well as they can! But, Christians, that is not right; for the rich are bound in conscience to help the poor and needy with alms. Many, however, do not admit this, and they allow themselves to become victims to a most fatal mistake by imagining that alms-giving is a work of pure generosity, and not a matter of duty. I will now show them their mistake, and I say—

Plan of Discourse.

It is the bounden duty of the rich to help the poor with alms. Therefore, they who can afford to give alms and refuse to do so, cannot be excused from sin. Such is the whole subject. It is not so much my object to reprove the avaricious and hard-hearted, for such people do not care much about hearing the Word of God, as to encourage you, my dear brethren, to still greater charity towards the poor and needy. An additional reason for my doing so is the fact that now, during Lent, they who make use of the general dispensation for the use of meat, are bound to make up for the fast they do not observe, by giving alms to the poor.

Do Thou, oh, Lord, help us by Thy light and grace, through the merits of Mary and the holy angels guardian.

What do I care about others? Let them look out for themselves; I have enough to do to provide for myself. My money is my own property, I can use it as I think fit; if I do not offend God otherwise, no one can accuse me of sin, if I do not wish to share my wealth with strangers, and therefore I am not

The etc. generally think that alms-giving is a work of pure generosity.

¹ Bonum est nos hic esse.

bound in conscience to give alms; if I do so, then I can follow my own inclination, and give when and how I please, etc. That is the way in which many Christians, who are wealthy, but avaricious or extravagant, think and speak. But it is not difficult to prove that they are grievously mistaken. What do I care about others? you say. Remember that Cain made the same mistake, when God asked him what had become of his brother Abel, and he answered: What is that to me? "Am I my brother's keeper?"¹ It was the mistake, too, of the foolish and avaricious Nabal, who said, when David asked help from him: "Who is David?"² What is he to me? I know nothing about him. "Shall I then take my bread and give to men whom I know not whence they are?"³ But what a miserable end they both brought upon themselves by their hard-heartedness!

It is an obligatory law.

Certainly, you must care for others, and even for the poor and needy, although they may be utter strangers to you, for they are your brothers and sisters in the Lord and have the same heavenly Father. They are created by God from the same material as you, and are redeemed by the Blood of Jesus Christ, as well as you. They are co-heirs with you to the kingdom of Heaven. They belong to those whom God, by the Wise Ecclesiasticus, commands every one to help in their corporal and spiritual necessities: "He gave to every one of them commandment concerning his neighbor."⁴ You must not imagine, says St. Thomas of Villanova, that alms-giving, and helping the poor according to one's means, is merely a matter of generosity, or of counsel. It is a command by which the rich are bound to share with the poor their superfluous wealth, according to their state and means. "The rich are not merely advised, but commanded to give alms."⁵ Alms-giving, in the Book of Ecclesiasticus, is called by the Almighty God a debt that is owing to the poor: "Bow down thy ear cheerfully to the poor, and pay what thou owest."⁶ This command is founded on three different laws, any of which by itself would be enough to create an obligation, and they are the law of justice and right, the law of Christian charity and mercy, and also a special law to the Supreme Legislator, which He promulgates in the clearest and most impressive manner.

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

² Quis est David?

³ Tollam ergo panes meos et dabo viris quos nescio unde sint?—I. Kings xxv. 10, 11.

⁴ Mandavit illis unicuique de proximo suo—Ecc. xvii. 12.

⁵ Eleemosyna quippe divitibus non consilio monetur, sed præcepto indicitur.

⁶ Declina pauperi sine tristitia aurem tuam, et redde debitum tuum.—Ecc. iv. 8.

In the first place, the law of justice and right, which is written The law of justice. by nature in the heart of each individual, and commands us to give every one what is due to him, binds us also to give alms and to help our needy brethren. You say : I am master of my own property, and can use it as I think fit, without asking any one's leave. But I say to you, with the Supreme Lord of all : No, you cannot do so. " Pay what thou owest." ¹ You are the owner of your property in the human sense of the term, and no farther. You are not absolute lord of it, so that you can do with it whatever you like, and use it merely for your own profit and pleasure. If you did so, and gave none of it to others, you would not indeed be guilty of injustice before the world, nor could the tribunals of the world punish you ; but you must know that there is another tribunal in Heaven which does not give you such absolute dominion, and according to which you would be condemned. St. Thomas of Villanova brings forward the same objection. He says: " It is a hard thing to have to share my property with others. Can I not do as I like with what is my own ?" ² But hear how well he answers it: " How, I ask you, can you prove that all those things are really yours ?" ³ On what title do you possess them ? Have you created them yourself ? Do the earth and the trees bring forth fruit for you alone ? The difference between *mine* and *thine* is allowed to subsist only for peace' sake, and that men may be able to traffic and trade with each other. Otherwise, we are not absolute owners of our property. We are stewards who have the use of it, and who are bound to use it according to the will of the Supreme Lord. St. John Chrysostom says : " I have often been forced to laugh when I read wills leaving the ownership of lands or houses to one person, but their usufruct to another." ⁴ There is no meaning in that : " For we all have merely the use of things, but not their absolute ownership. Our wealth belongs, not to us, but to God. God wishes us to act as dispensers of riches, not as owners." ⁵

God alone is the true Owner of everything that belongs to man. Because God is the lawful Owner of all Do you know what Job said when God took away all his property from him ? " The Lord hath given," he said, full of patience

¹ Redde debitum tuum.

² Durum est hoc, numquid de meo non possum facere, quod volo ?

³ Et unde, obsecro, illa tua sunt ?

⁴ Sæpius risi, testamenta legens, dicentia ; ille quidem habet agrorum vel domus dominium, usum vero alius.

⁵ Omnes enim usum habemus, dominium autem nemo. Divitiæ nostræ non sunt, sed Dei : Deus enim dispensatores nos divitiarum voluit esse suarum, non dominos.

things, and distributes them to all.

and resignation, "and the Lord hath taken away."¹ Mark those words; for he does not say: "God hath given, God hath taken away;"² but, "the Lord hath given," etc., not only that we may thereby see that whatever happens in the world is in accordance with the arrangements of providence, although we think that many things happen on account of the efforts of men; not only to give us an example of patience and resignation to the divine will in poverty and affliction, in crosses and trials, but also to teach us that if God gives us wealth, and takes it away from us, He has the right to do so as the absolute Lord and Master of all. The example of Job teaches us that no man is lawful owner of his property, but merely a steward and servant of God; therefore, if God takes away from me what He has given to me, I should say, not God, but the Lord hath taken away;³ the Owner of my property has taken it from me. Hence St. Thomas of Villanova says that God, as the Lord of all things, has given temporal goods to men; and if He makes a distinction of property for the sake of peace and that men may traffic with each other, He also imposes on us the duty of sharing our superfluous wealth with those who are in want, so that he who uses his riches only for himself, is guilty of an injustice in the sight of God.

Therefore, more is given to the rich, that they may share with the poor.

And, to take a common-sense view of the matter, my dear brethren, if it is true that there is a God who has created all men, it follows that He has provided what is necessary for the support of all; because he who gives life, must also supply the means of supporting it. Now, all the goods of this world are already portioned out, and there are countless numbers of people who possess absolutely none of them. How does that come to pass? Has God forgotten to provide for these latter? Either that must be the case, or the necessaries of life for the poor must be in the hands of the rich; either the providence of God is defective, and does not care for those who are in want, or else God must have placed that care on those who have superfluous wealth; in a word, either there is no God, or a part of the temporal riches of the wealthy belongs to the poor. The conclusion is perfectly logical. Now, you who say: I am not bound to give alms; if you believe that God has given you all that you have, why do you think He has been so generous to you, while He has given to so many of your brethren and sisters nothing but the beggar's staff as their portion? Do you imagine that Infinite Wisdom has conferred so

¹ Dominus dedit, Dominus abstulit.—Job 1. 21.

² Deus dedit, Deus abstulit.

³ Non Deus sed Dominus abstulit.

many temporal blessings on you, only that you may become rich? Do you believe that the good and merciful Father of all has left so many of His children without any inheritance, only that you may live a more comfortable and pleasant life, and have more money to squander? It is the providence of God which throws money by handfuls, so to speak, into certain families; can it be the only object of that generosity to enable some individuals to live luxuriously and magnificently? Would that end be suitable to the divine Wisdom? Why, then, does He lavish temporal blessings on some, if not that they may in His place look after the poor and help them according to their necessities? Why does God give great riches and few or no children to certain married people, who are best able to provide for them? It is evident that He wishes them to act as fathers and mothers to poor widows and orphans. In the creation God collected all the waters into the sea, not only to fill up the abysses of the deep, or that the sea-monsters might have more room to disport themselves; but that all this water might be distributed over the whole earth in different streams and rivers. In the same way, He has placed all light in the sun, and fixed that orb in the heavens, not because He wishes the earth and all the other heavenly bodies to be in darkness, but that the moon and stars might share its light, and that the earth, receiving the benefit of it at the proper times, might have reason to praise and bless Him who caused such a wonderful thing to exist. So also in an army, he who receives the money to pay the soldiers, cannot use it merely for his own profit, but must give to all the soldiers their proper share of it at the appointed time.

Now, what follows from all this, my dear brethren? It follows that if you refuse to give alms to the needy, although you can easily afford to give them on account of the divine goodness to you, you make a wrong use of your property, and act against the will and command of God who is the true Owner of it, and who has intrusted it to you as His stewards, that you may distribute it amongst your poor brothers and sisters who are in want; you use your property contrary to the rights of the poor, to whom, by divine decree, a part of it belongs, and therefore you evidently act against the law of justice, which forbids a man to do as he likes with what belongs to another, unless he acts for the benefit, or at the command of the lawful owner. Such is the teaching of all theologians, and of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church. If I were to give you, in my own words, their opinion of the duty of the rich towards the poor, the majority of you

Therefore, they who give no alms act unjustly.

would think me too severe and exacting, and would refuse to believe me, as I know by experience in other subjects. He who refuses to share his superfluous wealth with the poor, says St. Augustine, is evidently guilty of keeping what belongs to another ;¹ nay, he adds, “if you refuse to give, you must know that you take away the property of others, and keep it unjustly.”² And again : “Whatever is left over, after you have made becoming provision for your clothing and support, must not be spent in luxury, but should be placed in the treasury of Christ by charity to the poor. If we refuse to do so, we make away with other people’s property.”³ Such is also the opinion of St. Basil ; you commit a theft, he says, every time you do not help the poor when you are able. Do you know what kind of a sin you commit, when you refuse to give the necessary alms to the needy ? It is the same, says St. Ambrose, as if you snatched out of a poor man’s hand the piece of bread that is necessary to sustain his life. “It is not a greater sin to take away what belongs to another, than not to help those who are in necessity, when you have superfluous wealth.”⁴ “The bread you have in store belongs to the hungry ; the clothing you lock up belongs to the naked ; the money that you hide in the earth, should be used to redeem poor captives.”⁵ St. Thomas of Villanova agrees with this holy Doctor, and says that he who refuses to help the poor out of his superfluous wealth, is not only a thief, but a murderer ; and he expressly declares that they who have abundant means must supply the wants of those who have not enough ; if they refuse to do so, they are robbers and murderers. “You murder the hungry man whom you refuse to feed, and you steal from him what you refuse to give him.”⁶ St. John Chrysostom, in his second sermon on the poor Lazarus, calls the rich glutton a murderer. He says : “The rich man did not take away the poor man’s money, but he refused to share his own with him, for it is robbery not to give away anything of what you possess.”⁷ Do not be surprised at

¹ Res alienas possidentur, cum superflue possidentur.

² Si nolueris dare, noveris te res alienas auferre, et injuste retinere.

³ Quidquid excepto victu et vestitu rationabili superfuit, non luxui reservetur, sed in thesauro Christi per eleemosynam reponatur. Quod si non fecerimus, res alienas invasimus.

⁴ Neque enim plus est criminis habenti tollere, quam, cum possis et abundes, indigentibus denegare.

⁵ Esurientem panis est, quem tu detines : nudorum indumentum est, quod tu recludis ; miserorum redemptio est et absolutio, quam tu in terram defodis.

⁶ Si non supplet, raptor et homicida est ; quia, quem non pavisti, occidisti : quæ non dedisti, rapuisti.

⁷ Non illius pecunias usurparat, sed suas non impertivit, si quidem et hoc rapina est, non impertiri de tuis facultatibus.

this, he continues, for the Sacred Scripture bears testimony to it; the Lord Himself says by His prophet, to the Jews: "The earth brought forth its fruit and you have not paid tithes, but the plunder of the poor is in your houses. Let us learn from this, that when we refuse to give charity, we incur the same punishment that is due to theft."¹ Therefore, I beg of you to remember always, "that what we do not share with the poor, we rob them of, and thereby we shorten their lives and keep, not our own property, but theirs."² Such are the words of St. John Chrysostom. Almost all the other Fathers speak in the same manner, and they are so unanimous on the subject, that there is hardly any difference in the words they use.

Ah, my dear brethren, I am not surprised that so many are lost forever! For what wonder is it that Heaven should be closed on those who are guilty of theft? Why should we be astonished that eternal damnation is the lot of those hard-hearted masters who refuse to pay their servants and laborers their proper wages; of those wicked judges who ruin whole families by unjust sentences; of those insatiable harpies who fatten on the tears of poor widows and orphans; of those greedy usurers who make their profit out of the difficulties of others? Is it matter for surprise, I ask, that such people should go to hell? But to the number of those belong all who possess superfluous wealth, and refuse to give alms to the poor. For, according to the unanimous teaching of the holy Fathers, there is no difference between stealing the property of another, and refusing to give charity to the poor. And how many Christians there are who have no idea of giving alms, or at all events, do not give them according to their means!

Therefore,
so many are
lost.

This is one of the snares by which the devil entraps numbers of souls, and drags them down to hell. A pious hermit once thought to himself: Which of the evil spirits did the most harm to souls? Certainly, he said, it must be the demons of impurity, because experience teaches that impurity is the most common vice in the world. While occupied with these thoughts, he saw three Moors sitting under an oak-tree; the first had a shoemaker's awl and a thick thread in his hand, while several human heads lay on the ground beside him; these he took up, one after the

Shown by
examples.

¹ *Produxit terra proventum suum, et non intulit decimas, sed rapina pauperum est in domibus vestris. Propter hoc discamus, quod quoties eleemosynam non præstiterimus, partem cum his, qui spoliant, supplicio afficemur.*

² *Quod non communicare pauperibus, est rapina exercere in illos illorumque fraudare vitam, quodque non nostras, sed illorum res detinemus.*

other, and sewed the lips together. What are you doing? asked the hermit. I am a much more powerful spirit than those others of whom you are thinking, replied the Moor, and my name is, "He who shuts the mouth;"¹ my duty is to close the mouths of sinners, that they may not declare their sins in confession. The second Moor had a great number of hearts which he threw into a sack and fastened up. What are you doing? asked the holy man. I am a devil, was the answer; my name is, "He who shuts the heart;"² no matter how much my companions may labor for the destruction of souls, as long as the heart remains open to sorrow and repentance, the soul can easily escape, and the mouth will at once open to make a good confession; therefore, I shut up the heart, that it may not escape from me. Still, my neighbor is more powerful than I. The hermit then saw that the third Moor was occupied in shutting up a number of bags and boxes with many locks and bolts. What are you doing? he asked. I also am a devil, was the answer; my name is, "He who shuts the purses;"³ no one is so powerful as I in ruining souls. I go to those with whom my companions can do nothing, and who are not subject to any great vices or sins; I allow them to go often to confession and communion, and to hear Mass every day; I even encourage them to all kinds of pious practices, that they may imagine themselves to be good and holy; but I take care to tie up their purses, and lock up their coffers, that they may not pay their lawful debts, or that they may refuse the proper wages to the laborers whom they employ, or that they may not give alms to the poor out of their superfluous wealth. In that way I manage to bring many souls to eternal ruin. This devil succeeded in betraying the rich citizen of whom Cæsar Baronius writes, under the year 553. The citizen lay sick at Constantinople, and as he had a great fear of death, he caused thirty pounds of gold to be distributed among the poor, although he had always been very niggardly towards them. When he recovered his health, he repented of his generosity, and openly manifested to one of his friends his sorrow thereat. His friend said to him: You should rather be glad, since you may now expect a great treasure from God in return. But if you like, come with me to the Church, put me in your place and say to God: "Lord, not I, but this friend of mine gave the charity;"⁴ and when you do that I will pay you the thirty pounds back out of my own money. The wretched man

¹ *Clandens os.*² *Clandens cor.*³ *Clandens crumenas.*⁴ *Domine, non ego, sed iste dedit eleemosyna.*

accepted the proposition with joy ; he went to the Church, but did not return from it, because after he had spoken the words agreed upon, before the altar, and received the money from his friend, he fell dead at the Church door, with the money still in his hand, to the great terror of all who were present. "Wretched man," says Father Drexelius, writing about this occurrence : "Wretched man, thou hast lost thy soul for the sake of thy money; and now thou hast lost both money and soul forever !"¹ Would to God, my dear brethren, that the unfortunate man had not so many imitators among Christians nowadays, for there are only too many whose purses the devil closes against the poor !

But, some may think, why does not God distribute the goods of this world equally amongst men ? If He were to do so, there would be an end to all this trouble ; they who are now poor, would have enough, and need not trouble the rich ; every one would be better off, and no one would be obliged to concern himself about others. Why, then, has He placed such a number of poor people in the world, that one hardly knows what to do ? Could not He provide for them ? Away with such thoughts ! God wills it ! God decrees and appoints it ! Who will dare to find fault with it ? What God does is well done and cannot be better. St. Basil and St. Ambrose assign the following reasons for this most wise arrangement of providence : First, that each one may have an easier way of gaining Heaven, the rich, namely, by practising charity and alms-giving, the poor by patience and resignation to God's will. Secondly, that we may be united more closely together, for the rich must look on the poor as their foster-children, while the poor must look on the rich as their foster-fathers, provided they fulfil their duty. Thirdly, it shows how wonderfully and how lovingly God deals with us ; for if He had given us all an equal share of wealth, none of us would think of being specially grateful to Him for His goodness, for we are not apt to look upon that as a favor which others have as well as we. Who thanks God for the light of the sun during the day ? Yet it is a great benefit ; but as all enjoy it, no one thinks of being specially grateful for it. On account of the difference in the distribution of worldly goods, the rich can see that the divine generosity places them under a special obligation ; while the poor have occasion to praise the fatherly goodness of God, who appoints the rich as their guardians to pro-

Who complain unwisely of this decree of providence.

¹ O miser, ut servares pecuniam, perdidisti animam ; ita et pecuniam et animam æternum perdidisti.

vide for their wants, and thus in most unexpected ways supplies them with what they are in need of. Fourthly, if this inequality were wanting, and all were sufficiently wealthy, there would be no servants, no laborers, no one to till the land, to bake the bread, etc., so that every one would be badly off, as I shall prove more in detail, in another sermon. Such is the law of justice and right, my dear brethren, which obliges us to give alms and to help the poor according to our means.

Alms-giving
required by
the law of
Christian
charity.

Is not this enough? Then I will tell you of another law which is not less obligatory than the first, and that is the law of Christian charity. Let us examine this law briefly, to see whether we are free, or not, to refuse to give alms: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor," and thou shalt love him, "as thyself."¹ Mark these words; if God had simply said: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor," that ought to suffice to make us always generous in helping our poor brethren. For, as all experience who love truly, love is not merely generous, but extravagant, and it gives and gives, until the beloved person is completely satisfied. Now, nothing is required from the wealthy but what is necessary for the proper support of the poor according to their state; and if there was such a thing as true Christian love among the rich, they would not be content with merely doing that much; they would be ready to take the bread out of their own mouths, to share it with their poor and beloved fellow-creatures. Good and pious Christians (as we all should be), how do you act? You have often fasted that you might feed the hungry; you have often stripped yourselves to clothe the naked; you have slept on the bare earth and given away your beds to the sick poor; you have sold all your goods, and given the money to the needy; you have become slaves and sold yourselves, when you had nothing else left, that you might redeem poor captives; and you did all that through charity! So that, I repeat, it ought to be more than enough if God had said merely: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor."² But He adds to that, thou shalt love him, "as thyself."³ Now, can that command be fulfilled without giving alms? Could I persuade any reasonable man that I love my neighbor as myself, when I see him going about in the depth of winter in miserable rags, while I have all kinds of fine clothes to show off in before the world, and my wardrobe is filled with things that I have no use for? Do I love my neighbor as myself, when

¹ Diliges proximum tuum, sicut teipsum.—Matth. xxii. 39.

² Diliges proximum tuum. ³ Sicut teipsum.

my table is loaded with all sorts of exquisite viands that the satiated stomach refuses, although there are numbers of poor people whose tears are perhaps their only food? Is that the way to love my neighbor as myself, to treat him as I could reasonably wish him to treat me, if I were suffering from poverty? No; that is more like deadly hatred than brotherly love. It sometimes happens that when two or three persons are travelling together in winter time, they are obliged to seek shelter in a hut, where they have barely enough covering during the night. Now, if the three love each other as they ought, and are not too selfish, they will be able to manage well enough to keep themselves warm, but if one of them takes all the covering to himself, the other two will suffer from the cold. Such is, generally speaking, the conduct of the rich and wealthy: they take all the covering to themselves, nor do they trouble themselves in the least about others who are left without any covering, as long as they themselves are warm and comfortable. But, my dear Christians, the commandment that God has given us, and one of His principal commandments, too, says: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,"¹ not merely in words, but, as St. John says: "In deed and in truth."² Now where is that love? Acknowledge, therefore, that you sin against the law of charity when you refuse to assist your neighbor who is in want, although you are able to do so.

Finally, that no one may try to excuse himself from this obligation under any pretext, God has, in addition to the two laws of justice and charity, published another in which He especially commands us to give alms. A wealthy man asks me: Am I guilty of sin if I do not give alms to the poor? I ask him in return: Can any one be condemned to hell unless on account of sin? No, he says, because that is the punishment for sin, and in fact, for mortal sin; and such is indeed the case. But now I reply, a man can be condemned to hell for not giving charity, and what is still more, for that alone, although he has no other mortal sin on his soul. Amongst the reprobates who will stand at the left hand of the Judge on the last day, there will not be one who will not have sinned against this law; for the words of the Judge, after passing sentence, will be spoken to all the reprobates in general: "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire;"³ "For I was hungry, and you gave Me not to eat,"⁴ etc.

The law
command-
ing alms-
giving un-
der pain of
hell.

¹ *Diliges proximum tuum, sicut teipsum.*

² *Opere et veritate.*—I. John iii. 18.

³ *Discedite a me, maledicti, etc.*—Matth. xxv. 41.

⁴ *Esurivi enim, et non dedistis mihi manducare.*—Ibid. 42.

On the other hand, among the elect of Christ, there will be many who will have committed all kinds of grievous sins; but there will not be one who will not have practised charity towards the poor; otherwise, how could Christ truly say to all whom He will call to His eternal kingdom: "For I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat"?'¹

Therefore, there is a grievous obligation to help the poor.

"Do you still believe," is the conclusion of St. Gregory Nazianzen, "that charity to the poor is not a matter of necessity, but of choice, and that it is not a law but a counsel? I wish I could agree with you, but I am frightened at the left hand, the separation of the sheep from the goats, and the sharp reproof the Judge will give to the latter, not because they have stolen, but because they have not helped Christ in His poor;"² so that I can have no doubt of the obligation. Could He command alms-giving more impressively than by threatening punishment on those who neglect it? Could He command it under a more severe penalty than that of hell-fire? Therefore, my dear brethren, it is clearly not a matter of mere choice with us, to give alms or not, for that we are obliged to give them is evident from the law of justice, from the law of charity, and from the special law commanding us to do so. Is it not strange, then, that there are still Christians who do not acknowledge this obligation? I know very well what most of them say; they pretend that they have no superfluous wealth; that their state in life requires all the money they have, and therefore, they maintain that they can give little or no alms; but I will deal with their excuses on a future occasion.

Cannot determine by general rule how much alms one is bound to give.

Meanwhile, conscientious people, who are generally the most liberal to the poor, will perhaps become troubled and uneasy, and will think to themselves: How have I fulfilled this obligation hitherto? How much alms am I bound to give to the poor? I do not wish to give too much, nor yet too little, that things may go well with me in judgment. Yes, my good people, that is indeed a weighty question! But it is one to which a general answer cannot be given; and no theologian, or preacher, or confessor can lay down any rule in this case; for there are many circumstances to be taken into consideration. For instance, one must consider the necessity of the poor, whether it is extreme or

¹ Esurivi enim, et dedistis mihi manducare.—Matth. xxv. 35.

² An benignitatem hanc non necessariam, sed tibi liberam esse putas, ac non legem, sed consilium? Hoc quoque et ipse velle m, sed me sinistra manus terret, et hædi et proba, quæ in eos a iudice conjiciuntur, non quia bonis alienis manus intulerunt, sed quia Christum per pauperes minime curaverunt.—St. Gregory Nazianzen, Orat. 6. *De Pauperum Amore.*

serious, or merely ordinary; the means that one possesses, whether his income is large, or small, or moderate, whether he has much superfluous wealth, or none at all, and whether his family is large or small, and different circumstances of the kind. In extreme necessity, which rarely occurs, that is, when a poor person is in danger of death through want, all theologians agree in saying that one is bound to succor such a poor person, even if one has not superfluous wealth, and has to deprive himself of something necessary in order to do so. In serious necessity, when, for instance, a respectable man or woman would be reduced to beggary through want, theologians generally agree with St. Thomas in saying that one who has superfluous wealth, is bound, under pain of mortal sin, to give alms in such a case, unless the poor person can get help elsewhere. In the ordinary, every-day necessities of the poor, no one, even if he has superfluous wealth, can be accused of grievous sin, if he refuses alms to those who beg from door to door; especially if he thinks that he can find more deserving objects of charity among the decent poor. Otherwise, theologians agree in teaching that he who has superfluous wealth is in a very dangerous state if he makes up his mind to give no alms at all, or to give them only to those who are in extreme or serious necessity; nay, many are of the opinion that such a person could not be excused from actual sin; not that he is guilty of sin every time he refuses to give charity, but on account of his determination not to give it unless to those who are in extreme or serious necessity. St. John Chrysostom says: "They will perish, who do not support Christ."¹

The best and most salutary advice that can be given in the matter, is this: Let each one give so much to the poor, that considering his means and position, he will merit the name of a generous and charitable Christian. That name would be deserved, for instance, by a tradesman who has to support himself and his family from day to day, and who now and then gives a piece of bread to a poor person; but such would not be the case with one who is richer. He who has the proper love of God and of his neighbor, and who is therefore determined to fulfil his duties as a Christian exactly, will be enlightened by the grace of God, and by his own sound reason, as to how much he ought to give away in charity. One thing is certain, and that is, that the world knows by experience how easy it is for people to be reduced to want by luxury and extravagance, while no one can point

Conclusion
and exhortation to be
generous
towards the
poor.

¹ Peribunt, qui Christum non aluerunt.

to an instance of poverty being caused by alms-giving; and therefore I say that we need not be anxious as to whether we give too much, although we may well be anxious as to whether we give too little to the poor. "According to thy ability be merciful,"¹ is the advice of Tobias to his son; and it is the salutary advice I give you all to-day, by way of conclusion. Remember also the divine threat: "Judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy,"² and on the other hand: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy,"³ here in time, and in eternity also. May it be so with us all! Amen.

Another Introduction for the Feast of the Holy Apostles, Simon and Jude:

Text.

Hæc mando vobis, ut diligatis invicem.—John xv. 17.

"These things I command you, that you love one another."

This command is given not merely to the Apostles and disciples of Christ, but to all men, that they must love one another. This love must be general, and extend to every one, no matter who he may be, great or small, rich or poor, relation or stranger, friend or enemy. For the words: "These things I command you, that you love one another,"⁴ are said of all. Nor must this love consist merely in words and outward behavior; it must be, as St. John says, in deed and in truth: "My little children, let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth."⁵ Have we all that love, my dear brethren? Do they possess it who, in these hard times, could readily give proof of it to poor mendicants and to the decent poor, and yet refuse to do so? No, certainly, for, as St. John says: "He that hath the substance of this world, and shall see his brother in need, and shall shut up his bowels from him: how doth the charity of God abide in him?"⁶ But many wealthy people do not understand this, and they make a serious mistake by imagining that it is a matter of pure generosity to help the poor, etc.—*continues as before.*

¹ Quomodo potueris, ita esto misericors.—Tob. iv. 8.

² Judicium sine misericordia illi, qui non fecit misericordiam.—James ii. 13.

³ Beati misericordes, quoniam ipsi misericordiam consequentur.—Matth. v. 7.

⁴ Hæc mando vobis, ut diligatis invicem.

⁵ Filii mei, non diligamus verbo, neque lingua, sed opere et veritate.—I. John iii. 18.

⁶ Qui habuerit substantiam hujus mundi, et viderit fratrem suum necessitatem habere, et clauserit viscera sua ab eo: quomodo charitas Dei manet in eo?—Ibid. 17.

SIXTY-FIRST SERMON.

**ON THE VAIN EXCUSES OF THE RICH WITH REGARD TO
ALMS-GIVING.**

Subject.

Many wealthy people say: I cannot give any alms, or, I can give very little. A vain and empty excuse.—*Preached on the third Sunday in Lent.*

Text.

Qui non est mecum, contra me est: et qui non colligit mecum, dispergit.—Luke xi. 23.

“He that is not with Me, is against Me: and he that gathereth not with Me, scattereth.”

Introduction.

In different ways men can be with Christ or against Him. In the first place, he who is in the grace and friendship of God and serves Him faithfully, is with Christ, but he who is in mortal sin, is against Christ, and all the good works he performs in that state, are scattered without merit, and without any gain for the next life. Again, and to speak more to my subject, he is with Christ, and gathers with Him, who keeps as his friends those whom Christ has left on earth to represent Himself, and of whom He says: “Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to Me,”¹ and of whom He will also say on the last day, after passing sentence: “For I was hungry and you gave Me to eat,”² in the persons of the poor and needy. I showed on last Sunday, my dear brethren, that alms-giving, according to one’s means, is not a good work of mere generosity, but one of obligation that binds under pain of sin, and if it is neglected, that neglect will be brought forward on the last day as the chief cause of the damnation of the wicked. But I am well aware that many try to excuse themselves from

¹ Amen dico vobis, quamdiu fecistis uni ex his fratribus meis minimis, mihi fecistis.—*Matth. xxv. 40.*

² Esurivi enim, et dedistis mihi manducare.—*Ibid. 35.*

that obligation; the times are so hard now, they think; one must keep what he has; we do not know what will happen; I cannot give alms, or I can give but very little. Ah, I must say to them, as Christ said to Peter when the latter was afraid of sinking into the sea: "You of little faith,"¹ what are you thinking of? You are not suffering from want of means, but from want of Christian hope and confidence in God. Can He not always support and provide for us all? Will He be less generous to us, if we share liberally with the poor what He has given us? But if I cannot persuade you to have that confidence, I will at least show how invalid is the excuse you bring forward, and I say—

Plan of Discourse.

Many wealthy people say: I cannot give any alms, or I can give very little. A vain and empty excuse. Such is the whole subject. Therefore, be generous to the poor, and heap up treasure for yourselves with Christ in Heaven.

Such is the conclusion that we beg of Thee, O Lord, through the intercession of Mary and the holy angels guardian.

The first excuse. I have nothing superfluous, proved to be false.

I cannot give much charity, because I have nothing superfluous; I want all that I have for myself and my family. This is the first excuse, and it is made by the spendthrift and the miser alike. But hear what the Holy Ghost says by the Wise Ecclesiasticus: "Three sorts my soul hateth, and I am greatly grieved at their life." What are they? "A poor man that is proud; a rich man that is a liar; an old man that is a fool and dotting."² Mind, God does not say that He hates a rich man who is proud or cruel, but a rich man who is a liar.³ Now what does that mean, a rich man who is a liar? A poor man comes to a rich man and asks him for alms, and the latter says: I cannot give any, I want all I have for myself. He is a liar, says St. Augustine; he can give if he likes, but he will not. "That rich man is a liar who always repeats the same heartless, I cannot, whenever there is question of serving God."⁴ If he were to say, I cannot mortify my flesh; I cannot bear hunger and thirst; I cannot fast so often; I cannot

¹ Modice fidel.—Matth. xiv. 31.

² Tres species odivit anima mea, et aggravor valde animæ illorum. Pauperem superbum, divitem mendacem, senem fatuum et insensatum.—Ecl. xxv. 3, 4.

³ Divitem mendacem.

⁴ Dives mendax est, qui in his, quæ ad Deum pertinent, suum illud frigidissimum toties repetit: non possum.

sleep on the bare ground ; I cannot kneel so long ; I cannot pray so much, etc., there might be some excuse for him ; but when he says, I cannot give alms, he is a liar, and deserves to be loathed by God and man. I will say nothing now of a subject that I have already treated in detail, namely, that charity to the poor is a capital laid out at interest, that will bring in a hundred-fold even in this life, according to the divine promise : " Give, and it shall be given unto you." ¹ For all charitable people experience the truth of this ; while the avaricious are afraid of being at a loss, and so are unwilling to trust to the chance of making a profit by alms-giving, which is an uncertain one in their eyes. But, be that as it may, the rich man is a liar, says St. Augustine, because God has given him more than he has need of. He is able enough to give away money for things that are not at all necessary to him. ²

Do you wish me to prove this to you, my dear brethren ? There is many a one who says : I cannot help the poor ; I have no superfluous wealth ; I want all I have for my own family. But, how is it that you give away so much for vanity's sake, or to gain some distinction, or to enjoy some pleasure ? St. Bernard says : " They can find means enough to gratify their own curiosity, but they have nothing to help the poor with." ³ You have money in abundance for gluttony, and drunkenness, and unnecessary entertainments, but you are not able to give a piece of bread to a poor hungry brother, and when he asks you for it, your only answer is, " I cannot." ⁴ You are able enough to support yourself, although you spend the day in sleep, in paying and receiving visits, in playing cards and losing your money, although you are thus hindered from looking after your household, and lead an idle, and, what comes to the same thing, an unchristian life. And thus you cannot help a poor man who has to work hard from morning till night to earn a scanty subsistence for himself and his children. You say : I cannot. You have money enough to spend on costly hangings and furniture for your house, and to adorn your table with plate, but you can give nothing to the poor citizen who has neither chair, nor table, nor bed, nor house, nor anything to eat : I cannot, is your only answer. You can follow the latest fashions, and dress yourself and your children in a way that cannot fail to suggest immodest

For the rich have money enough for unnecessary things.

¹ Date, et dabitur vobis.— Luke vi. 38.

² Potest enim in his, quæ vult.

³ Inveniunt curiosi, quo delectentur, et non inveniunt miseri, quo sustententur.

⁴ Non possum.

thoughts in others, and you can thus be the occasion of leaving to your children and descendants no other inheritance but extravagance in dress, so that they must in the end be reduced to beggary ; and you are able to continue your extravagance, despite the hard times, when you have far more reason to go about in sackcloth and ashes like the Ninivites, in order to appease the anger of God. You and your daughters, I say, can do all this to show off before the world, but you have nothing for the poor of Jesus Christ, who suffer and lament, who have hardly a whole shoe or stocking or dress to put on. You have nothing for them but your, "I cannot." You can find money enough to fatten your horses and hounds, to gratify your passions and prepare an eternal hell for yourself, but you have nothing to feed the members of Jesus Christ and to purchase for yourself the joys of Heaven. You say : I cannot. I have no superfluous wealth to give to others. "O rich man, you are a liar,"¹ and are hateful to God !

They thus wilfully make themselves unable to give alms. Shown by a simile.

Still, I can quite believe that you have nothing superfluous ; for if you live in that way, how could you have anything left for others ? A father once asked an account from his son, whom he had sent to study in a foreign country, of the money he had given him. Three times, he said, during the year, I have sent you money ; a hundred and eighty crowns in all ; what have you done with all that ? Oh, father, said the son, we cannot live sparingly at the University ; you must know that I have been obliged to borrow, in your name, a hundred and forty crowns more ; I could not manage otherwise. What, said the father in a rage, have you spent three hundred and twenty crowns in one year ? But consider, my dear father, said the other, that in a foreign land we cannot have anything without paying for it : food, drink, lodging, clothing, washing, wood, light, books, pens, and paper cost a considerable sum. Show me your accounts, then, said the father. Willingly, answered the son ; I am quite ready to do so. Beginning with the smallest item, I spent ten crowns on pens and ink. That will do, cried out the father ; at that rate your expenses must certainly amount to more than three hundred crowns. Many rich people also make false accounts in that way, when there is question of giving charity to the poor. My income is barely sufficient, they say ; I must spend so many hundreds yearly for new clothes ; so many for entertainments, so many for gifts and presents, for servants and attendants, for

¹ O divitem mendacem !

balls and parties, for amusements and recreations, etc. Oh, enough, I must also cry out, I quite believe that you can get through your whole income in that way ; if you had the treasures of the Indies, you could spend them, and still your vanity would not be satisfied. If you were satisfied with what really is required by your state of life, and by Christian humility, modesty, and mortification, you would have a great deal over and above your expenses ; you might put by half of what you now spend in extravagant dressing, and in eating and drinking, and you could help many a poor person as well. But if you maintain that decency and necessity require you to live in a manner that any Christian would call wilfully extravagant, then, indeed, you will not have much left, and you make alms-giving impossible to yourself. When Holofernes, the general of the Assyrian army, was besieging Bethulia, he cut off the supply of water from the town, and let it flow away in different directions, whereby he reduced the citizens to great extremities, as we read in the 7th chapter of the Book of Judith. The devil often uses the same stratagem with the rich ; he cuts off the canals ; that is to say, he tries to exhaust their income by all kinds of unnecessary expenses, so that they may have nothing left for Christ and for His poor, and must always be forced to answer the petitions of the poor with the heartless, "I cannot."¹ But they will see hereafter how far that excuse will help them before the judgment seat of God.

Good Christians who fear God and are concerned for the welfare of their souls, act in a totally different manner ; to say nothing of many others of both sexes, who appear to have possessed earthly goods, only that they might act as fathers and mothers to the poor. Cardinal Bellarmine gives us a notable example in this way:² In addition to giving two thousand scudi every year to the poor, he used to examine most carefully everything he had in the house, to see whether he had any clothes, plate, or bedding that he could do without; if he found anything of the kind, he immediately gave it to the poor. He had in his palace a sundial, the hand of which was broken ; he ordered a new one to be made, but when he heard that it would cost several scudi, he said: Let it be, then, I do not want the sun-dial, but the poor are in want of the money. He once had a swollen leg, and was ordered by the doctor to wear a wider stocking, but he would not go to the expense of having one made, that he might not take way so

Good Christians act otherwise. Shown by examples.

¹ Non possum

² Jacob Fuligattus in Vita Bellarm. l. vii. c. 1

much money from the poor, and thought that if he had one of his old stockings widened with a piece of cloth, it would do. His servants told him that the stocking was now eighteen years old, and that a new piece could not be sewn on to it. While this was going on, a young man came in to beg some charity for his poor mother; the Cardinal, who was so much afraid of spending a trifle for his own convenience, gave the young man two scudi at once. He never had a fire in his room, even in the depth of winter, and what he saved in that way he gave to the poor. A stranger who was suffering from hunger, once desired to have an audience with him; Bellarmine at once stood up from table and gave a share of his own frugal meal to the stranger. A poor citizen once asked him for twelve scudi that he was in want of; the charitable Cardinal, who had no money at the time, gave his ring to the poor man with a note authorizing him to sell it. On another occasion he gave his silver writing-materials to a poor person, and when he was Archbishop of Capua, he told his coachman to sell his horses and carriage, that he might help the poor. He used often to say to him, and to others also: "He who is generous towards God, will find that God will be much more generous to him."¹

Amadeus the Third, Duke of Savoy, was once asked by an ambassador if he had good hunting dogs. I have the best in the world, he answered, and I will show them to you to-morrow. On the following day he brought the ambassador into his dining-hall, and pointed out to him a number of long tables at which many poor people were being fed. See, he said: "These are the dogs with which I go in chase of God and of Heaven. That is a better way for me to employ my bread and meat, than if I used it merely in pursuit of game."² He certainly was a sensible and pious prince!

All rich people could easily do the same, but the contrary happens.

Ah, would that all wealthy Christians imitated these charitable men; so that if they were asked, where is your magnificence, your pomp and splendor, they could point to the poor, and say with truth: See, these are clad with it, that they may prepare a mantle of glory for me in Heaven! Where is the money you spend in carousing and feasting? These decent poor buy bread with it, that they may purchase for me the Bread of eternal life. Where is your gold and silver plate? I have already sent it on to the next world by the hands of the poor, and there I will have it

¹ Qui liberalis erga Deum est, is erga se Deum multo liberaliorem experietur.

² Atque hi sunt mei canes venatici etc.

forever. But I am expecting too much altogether ; I must come down a good deal in my demands. In ancient times it was the custom among the Romans for overseers to go around from house to house, in order to see if there were moths in the clothes, worms in the meat, or mice in the corn. How necessary it is to have such overseers in our days, when so many superfluous things, that ought to be given to the poor, are consumed by moths, worms, and mice ! God help us ! If many a poor-servant and brother of Jesus Christ had the bread and meat that are given to lap-dogs, to cats, and to other pets, and that those animals refuse often to eat through sheer repletion ; if they had the wine to drink that is often forced upon guests against their will at banquets, or that is spilled out on the ground ; if they had the clothes that are mouldering away in wardrobes, because they are no longer in fashion ; oh, certainly, poor brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, you would rejoice ! And if you had the fourth part of the wood that is used during the bitter cold of winter, to make fires in the houses of the rich, for unnecessary parties, you could boil your weak broth, and warm your shivering limbs ; if you had the twentieth part of the money that is so freely spent on such occasions, you could have bought bread with it, to keep the hunger from yourselves and your children ; if the cast-off clothes that were used in unmeaning masquerades, in which so much money is spent, had been given to you, you might be better clad and protected against the cold ! Such is the way of the world, even in the hardest times ! Once, during a great scarcity in Rome, Augustus gave a splendid feast, at which he appeared as the god Apollo ; the other guests also were dressed up to represent different deities ; on this account it became a saying among the people, that the Romans were suffering from hunger because the gods and goddesses had eaten up all the food. These were heathens, my dear brethren ! I must sigh, when I consider how Christians act, who are bound to honor Jesus Christ in the persons of His poor, and see how much money is spent on useless vanity, extravagance, and pleasure-seeking, while so many poor people are pining away in misery, as St. John Chrysostom sighed in his time. He says : “ Your dog is fat and sleek, your servant is filled to repletion, but your Lord and His suffer hunger, your Christ has not the necessaries of life, and is perishing of want.”¹ In a word, there is money

¹ *Canis tuus cibo fartus est, famulus tuus sattetate rumpitur, at vero tuus et illius Dominus esurivit, Christus tuus alimento caret necessario, fame perit.*

enough for worldly pomp ; but when one is reminded of the command : "What is over and above, give to the poor,"¹ if Jesus Christ in the person of His poor asks for anything, then there is no bread left, the wine is all gone, the purse is empty ; "I cannot,"² is the word, I want it myself. Oh, lying rich man !³ I could say the same to you in another way, what Socrates said to one of his pupils who was too fond of talking : "My boy, we must first learn to be silent, and then to speak."⁴ My dear Christians, I might say, let us first learn to economize, and then it will not be so difficult for us to give alms.

Second excuse: the poor can apply to other rich people, refuted.

There are many others who can help the poor; they are richer than I, and the poor can apply to them. Such is the second excuse with which the poor are often sent away empty-handed. But if there are people richer than you, who can better afford it, are you, therefore, excused from giving alms? If they acted like you, what refuge would poor Christians find? Would they not be turned away at once from every door? Others give them enough, you say; be it so, but leave out the word enough, for I do not think that many poor people would agree with you in using it, otherwise they would not be so badly off. But suppose that such is the case; are you, therefore, freed from the obligation of practising Christian charity and giving alms? Because others do their duty as they ought, does that excuse you from doing yours? Others can give alms, if they like, I cannot. Is that really the case? Then you may say also: Others can atone for their sins, but I cannot; others may gain the favor and friendship of God, but not I; others may earn for themselves a favorable sentence from the divine justice by their generous charity, but not I; others can save themselves from eternal death and damnation, but not I; others may send their treasures on to eternity before them, by the hands of the poor, but not I; others can gain Heaven, but not I. Do you really desire that? I think not, and therefore, you should help the poor according to your means.

Even the poor can give alms. How?

But I cannot give alms because I am poor myself, and would willingly accept alms from others; this is the third excuse that many make. And it is true enough that where nothing is, nothing can be given, and that is enough to free one from all obligation. Yet, mark this, all of you: even you who live on alms, are

¹ Quod superest, date eleemosynam.—Luke xi. 41.

² Non possum.

³ O divitem mendacem!

⁴ Mi adolescens, prius tacere, dein loqui discamus.

not therefore excused from practising Christian charity towards others. And how is that? Share with your brethren, now and then, the trifle you have, that has been given to you, and God will be pleased with you. That was what the elder Tobias commended to his son as a most important matter: "According to thy ability be merciful. If thou have much, give abundantly; if thou have little, take care, even so, to bestow willingly a little."¹ His meaning was: Always give according to your means; if you are rich you must give a great deal of charity; if you are poor, and have little, except what is necessary to you, even then, God wishes you to give a little to other poor people. And no matter how small your gift is, it will suffice, under the circumstances, if you have a good intention, to purchase Heaven for you. The words of our Lord in the Gospel of St. Matthew are full of consolation: "And whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple: amen, I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."² Why, my dear brethren, does our Lord say: "A cup of cold water," and not warm water? Hear the beautiful answer that St. Thomas Aquinas gives to this question: "Some one might say: I am poor, I have nothing to give; and therefore our Lord says, a cup of cold water; He does not say warm water, on account of the want of fuel; so that a poor person might not excuse himself,"³ by saying I have no wood to boil the water with. St. Augustine, speaking of the words of the prophet Isaias: "Deal thy bread to the hungry,"⁴ remarks that people, even of poor and lowly condition, are not freed from the obligation of giving alms. He says: "The prophet does not command a whole loaf to be given away, for a poor person might perhaps have only one; but he says: deal thy bread;" that is: "If you are so poor that you have only one loaf, break a piece off, and give it to some poor person."⁵

In the 17th chapter of the Third Book of Kings, we find an interesting example of this in the widow of Sarephta. When there was a great scarcity amongst all the people of Israel, God

The widow
of Sarephta
an example
of that.

¹ Quomodo potueris, ita esto misericors. Si multum tibi fuerit, abundanter tribue; si exiguum tibi fuerit, etiam exiguum libenter impertiri stude.—Tob. iv. 8, 9.

² Quicumque potum dederit uni ex minimis istis calicem aquæ frigidæ tantum in nomine discipuli: amen dico vobis, non perdet mercedem suam.—Matth. x. 42.

³ Posset aliquis dicere: pauper sum, non habeo quod dem: ideo addit calicem aquæ frigidæ. . . . Non dicit aquæ calidæ, propter inopiam lignorum ne posset se sic excusare.

⁴ Frange esurienti panem tuum.—Isai. lviii. 7.

⁵ Non dixit, ut integrum daret, cum forte pauper alium non haberet, sed frange panem tuum. Etiamsi tanta paupertas tibi est, ut non habeas nisi unum panem, ex ipso tamen frange et pauperi tribue.

commanded His Prophet Elias to go to Sarephta, where he would receive hospitality from a widow. "Arise and go to Sarephta, a city of the Sidonians, and dwell there, for I have commanded a widow-woman there to feed thee."¹ The Prophet went, and found that the widow was so poor that she had hardly enough food for a single day. Is not this a strange thing, my dear brethren? Were there then no rich people in the country, and none in Sarephta, to whom God could have sent His servant? No doubt there were many of them. And why, then, did God send Elias to a widow who was so poor that she had barely enough for herself? Elias came to her house and asked for a drink of water: "Give me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink."² It was not so easy as one might think, to grant this request, for there had been no rain in the country for a long time;³ so that the wells and springs were all dried up, and water was very dear; yet the charitable woman went at once to fetch some for Elias. Wait a little, he called out after her: "Bring me also, I beseech thee, a little bread in thy hand."⁴ Alas, said the good woman, I cannot do so. "As the Lord thy God liveth, I have no bread, but only a handful of meal in a pot, and a little oil in a cruse; behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it, for me and my son, that we may eat it and die,"⁵ because we have nothing more left. Certainly an answer like that might well have touched the Prophet's heart, and make him think that he ought to go elsewhere to look for hospitality. Yet he repeated his request: "Fear not, but go and do as thou hast said; but first make for me of the same meal a little hearth-cake, and bring it to me; and after make for thyself and thy son."⁶ How selfish his request seems: first for me!⁷ Man of God, what are you thinking of? Let the good woman first satisfy her natural love for her son! No, first for me! His meaning is clear; let me be sure of getting my share; make for me a hearth-cake.

¹ Surge, et vade in Sarephta Sidoniorum, et manebis ibi: præceptum enim tibi mulieri, ut pascat te.—III. Kings xvii. 9.

² Da mihi paululum aquæ in vase, ut bibam.—Ibid. 10.

³ Non enim pluerat super terram.—Ibid. 7.

⁴ Cumque illa pergeret, ut afferet, clamavit post tergum ejus dicens: affer mihi, obsecro, et buccellam panis in manu tua.—Ibid. 11.

⁵ Vivit Dominus Deus tuus, quia non habeo panem, nisi quantum pugillus capere potest farinæ in hydria, et paululum olei in lecytho: en, colligo duo ligna, ut ingrediar et faciam illud mihi et filio meo, ut comedamus et moriamur.—Ibid. 12.

⁶ Noli timere, sed vade et fac sicut dixisti. Verumtamen mihi primum fac de ista farinula subeinericulum panem parvulum et affer ad me, tibi autem et filio tuo facies postea.—Ibid. 13.

⁷ Mihi primum!

This would be enough to make any one lose patience, but the pious widow heroically overcame her motherly affection. "She went and did according to the word of Elias,"¹ and shared with him her handful of meal, which was all she had. But how pleasing her charity was to God! The Sacred Scripture says: "From that day the pot of meal wasted not, and the cruse of oil was not diminished."² Thus, while the whole kingdom was suffering from scarcity, the widow had always more than enough in her house, and when even richer people had not bread to eat, she was not in want of anything. St. Ambrose says: "With a little food she had sufficient nourishment during the whole time of the famine."³ "You are challenged," says St. John Chrysostom, "oh, Christian, and invited to imitate the widow!"⁴

St. Gregory writes of another charitable person, in the following style: There lived in our neighborhood a poor shoemaker, named Deusededit, a pious and holy man. He used to work hard, and whatever he gained by his labor during the week that was over and above what he required for his own moderate wants, he used to divide amongst the poor on Sundays. It was revealed to another person that a magnificent mansion was being built for this charitable man, in Heaven, but on Saturdays alone.

Example of
of a poor
shoemaker.

How great must be the joy of the angels when they see some poor Christians in our own days, who are secretly in receipt of alms to help them to keep house, and who, nevertheless, always lay aside something to give to other poor people who come to them for alms! They certainly observe the command: "Deal thy bread to the hungry."⁵

Of other
poor people
in our days.

Now, from all this I conclude as follows: If even the poor and needy, who have to live by their work and by the charity of others, are obliged to give alms, how will the rich and wealthy appear before the judgment seat of God, if they give little or no alms, under the pretext that they cannot do so, because they have nothing superfluous? There is no question of their being able to give alms; it is simply avarice that makes them niggardly or else it is a want of faith and confidence in God that makes them afraid they will be at a loss; or it is their extravagance in unnecessary things that leaves them unable to help the poor. Take any two kinds of trees, the linden and the apple-

Therefore,
there is no
excuse for
the rich if
they do not
give alms.

¹ *Quæ abiit, et fecit juxta verbum Eliæ.—III. Kings xvii. 15.*

² *Ex illa die hydria farinæ non defectit, et lecythus olei non est imminutus.—Ibid. 16.*

³ *Exiguo cibo perpetuum toto tempore famis invenit alimentum.*

⁴ *Provocaris, Christiane, et a vidua in certamen deducaris!*

⁵ *Frangere esurienti panem tuum.*

tree : the former spreads its branches in every direction, and makes the most agreeable shelter, while the flowers it produces are most delightful to behold ; yet it is but a barren tree that will never bring forth fruit. On the other hand, the apple-tree makes far less show, but it produces thousands of sweet apples. Whence comes this difference ? The linden is nice to look at, but it spends all the sap and nourishment it gets from the earth on its leaves and branches ; while the apple-tree keeps it all for the fruit alone. There is the same difference amongst men. Some are rich and delight to show off their wealth ; their clothing glitters with gold and silver ; they eat and drink of the best every day ; but little or none of the fruit of Christian charity is to be found in them. On the other hand, there are poor laborers who have to work hard for their daily bread, and who nevertheless are as generous as they can be towards the poor. What is the cause of this difference ? The former use up all their sap in producing leaves, that is, in useless expense ; while the latter, with the little they have, bring forth the fruit of charity. But woe to those, says St. John Chrysostom, who thus violate the commandment of Christian charity ! They will be treated like the tree in the Gospel that our Lord cursed, because it had no fruit, so that it withered up at once. Now, I can understand the meaning of those terrible words of our Lord, in the Gospel of St. Matthew : “ Amen, I say to you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of Heaven ; ”¹ and as if He had not said enough, He adds immediately after : “ And again, I say to you : It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of Heaven.”² First, He says that it is very difficult for a rich man to save his soul, and, according to St. John Chrysostom, He means this of all those who possess a great deal of worldly goods, and who are in great danger of being prevented by their wealth from serving God zealously, unless they do constant violence to themselves, and are always humble. And again, He says that it is as impossible, naturally speaking, for a rich man to save his soul, as it is for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, and in those words He alludes to people whose hearts and desires are fixed altogether on riches.

**They will
save their**

Unhappy people that you are, what are you to do ? Must you

¹ Amen, dico vobis, quia dives difficile intrabit in regnum cœlorum.—Matth. xix. 23.

² Et iterum dico vobis : Facilius est camelum per foramen acus transire, quam divitem intrare in regnum cœlorum.—Ibid. 24.

despair of your eternal salvation? Is there no means by which you can make the difficult way to Heaven easier for you, and remove the impossibility of getting there? Yes, there is a means of that kind. And what is it? Generous alms-giving, as St. John Chrysostom says: "Yet if we consider the matter attentively, we shall see that it is not impossible for a rich man to be saved, especially if he uses alms-giving as a means." For by that means the rich can gain the favor of God. He will give them the special grace of not becoming attached to riches, and moreover, He will save them from many sins and vices. But if they refuse to use even this means; if they are miserly and avaricious, or if they want faith and confidence, or if they go to useless expense and are extravagant, and therefore say: I can give little or no alms; oh, woe to them, then, for their doom is sealed! "They have slept their sleep, and all the men of riches have found nothing in their hands." St. Augustine says: "They have found nothing because they have placed nothing in the hands of Christ." And so their sentence is already pronounced: "Judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy." Their sentence is pronounced: "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, . . . for I was hungry, thirsty, and naked," and you have given me neither food, drink, nor clothing.

souls
with diffi-
culty.

What I have said of this subject, my dear brethren, does not mean that I believe the people here present are wanting in their duty in this respect; my sole intention is to encourage you to be charitable to the poor, who represent the person of Jesus Christ, for there are many of them now in these hard times, and there will likely be many more. No, the woe threatened to the uncharitable shall not fall on any of us! As long as we live, we shall always keep God as our Friend; we all wish to die a happy death, to have a favorable judgment, and to purchase for ourselves the kingdom of Heaven. But, since the best means of securing these blessings is generosity to the poor, we are determined to practise it in future. We shall never say, I cannot, but I will

Conclusion,
and exhortation to be charitable to the poor.

¹ Veruntamen si attendere voluerimus, non est impossibile salvari, præsertim si ab elemosyna remedia mutantur.

² Non possum.

³ Dormierunt somnum suum, et nihil invenerunt omnes viri divitiarum in manibus suis.—Ps. lxxv. 6.

⁴ Nihil invenerunt, quia nihil posuerunt in manibus Christi.

⁵ Judicium sine misericordia illi, qui non fecit misericordiam.—James ii. 13.

⁶ Ite maledicti, etc.: esurivi enim, et non dedistis mihi manducare, etc.—Math. xxv. 41-43.

help the poor as well as I can, especially the decent poor. If I am not in a position to say to Jesus Christ with Zacheus: "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor."¹ at least I will say, and prove my sincerity by my actions: Behold, Lord, I will lay aside the fourth, sixth, tenth, or twentieth part at least of my goods, according to my means and position, for the poor, and will send it on to eternity by their hands. Thou who art the true Owner of all I possess, shalt have all my superfluous wealth. I will never refuse to assist a poor person, and if I am sometimes unable to give him what he requires, I will at least have a friendly word for him, and show him that my intention is good. Strengthen, oh, Lord, with Thy grace, this resolution of mine, and then I will rejoice, and can rest assured that I am with Thee and that I gather with Thee; that is, that I place my perishable earthly treasures with Thee in Thy eternal kingdom. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Feast of the Dedication of a Church:

Text.

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

"Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor."

That was indeed a noble offer! "The half of my goods I give to the poor." Nor was it any wonder, therefore, that such a copious blessing was given to the house of Zacheus, by that Lord who never allows Himself to be outdone in generosity by His creatures who share what they have with Him, in the persons of His poor brothers and sisters. Ah, my dear brethren, generosity like this brings with it temporal and eternal blessings, and I have shown elsewhere that the alms you give are not lost, but are like seed cast into fruitful ground that produces a hundred-fold; for they are a sort of exchange by which you can send on your property by the hands of the poor into eternity. I have proved, also, that it is not a matter of mere choice to give alms according to one's means, but an obligation that binds under pain of sin; for the neglect of it will be brought forward on the last day as the only cause of the damnation of the wicked. Would to God that all understood this as they ought!

¹ *Ecce, dimidium bonorum meorum, Domine, do pauperibus.*—Luke xix. 8.

But how few we find like Zacheus, nowadays, who have the courage to say : “ Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor ” !¹ The half indeed ! If the rich and wealthy gave but the tenth, twentieth, thirtieth, or fortieth part of their goods to the poor of Christ ! But they shrug their shoulders and think : Oh, Zacheus was very rich ; he could afford it ; I cannot do so ; the times are bad now ; I must look after my own family, etc.—*continues as before.*

¹ Ecce, dimidium bonorum meorum, Domine, do pauperibus.

ON THE STATE OF THE POOR.

SIXTY-SECOND SERMON.

HOW DESERVING OF HELP THE POOR ARE.

Subject.

All poor people, no matter who they are, are deserving of being helped according to one's means.—*Preached on the fourth Sunday in Lent.*

Text.

Unde ememus panes, ut manducent hi?—John vi. 5.
“Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?”

Introduction.

That was an anxious question that came from the heartfelt compassion, love, and mercy of Jesus Christ for the poor and hungry crowd; my dear disciples, where shall we get bread enough for these poor people? There are many men who ask the same question, not through a desire of helping the poor, but through anger and impatience, when a number of poor people come to them for alms. Who can give to all those beggars? they say. There are too many of them! who can find bread enough for them? And they thrust the poor of Jesus Christ away from their doors without mercy and without compassion. Ah, Christians, if you cannot find bread or money for them, give them at least the kind word, so that they may see that you refuse them through sheer inability, and that you have a heartfelt compassion for them! “Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?” Such is the question of many other rich people, who say: I cannot help the poor; I have nothing superfluous; I can give little or no alms; let them look for bread elsewhere, etc. In reality, such

¹ *Unde ememus panes, ut manducent hi?*

people are quite able to give alms, but they are avaricious and niggardly; or through want of faith and confidence in God, they are afraid of being at a loss if they help others; or else they spend their money in useless vanity, pomp, and pleasure-seeking, leading idle lives the while, and so they are unable to give alms; but their empty excuses will profit them nothing before the judgment-seat of God, as I proved last Sunday. There are still other Christians, my dear brethren, who find another excuse when they are asked for alms, or exhorted to perform the works of mercy. They back-bite the poor and needy whom they despise in their hearts, and say: Poor people do not deserve my help; they are not worthy of alms. They are generally tiresome, stupid, shameless, deceitful, ungrateful, reckless, and useless people. This idle excuse I will now undertake to refute. And that will be the subject of my sermon, namely—

Plan of Discourse.

They say that all poor people are not deserving of help. I say that all poor people, no matter who they are, are deserving of being helped according to one's means; and I will prove it, too, in order to encourage all wealthy Christians to be as diligent as possible in the practice of Christian charity.

Give us, oh, merciful God, Thy grace to this end, through the intercession of Mary, the Mother of Mercy, and the holy angels guardian.

If there is a question amongst men as to the honor, love, and respect that ought to be shown to another, it is not always decided by the character of the person under discussion, for very often it is necessary to take into consideration him whose person the other represents. For instance, an imperial ambassador comes to the court of a prince; if his person alone were considered, none of the ministers of the prince would deign to look at him, because, as often happens, he may have raised himself to that eminence from a very lowly position, by his diligence. Yet he actually precedes all the ministers of the prince, and is received with the greatest respect by the prince himself, while counts and other nobles must wait on him at table. And why? Because he represents the emperor, who receives all the honor that is paid to his ambassador. Now, my dear brethren, if we consider the poor, as they are in themselves, we should often hesitate before having anything to do with them, allowing them to

Many beggars are not worthy of alms in themselves.

enter our houses, or treating them in a friendly manner, and it is also true enough that many of them are not at all deserving of charity, and that they ought to be thrust away from the door at once.

But we must consider whom they represent.

But stop! We must look far higher with the eyes of the mind, and consider the Person whom they represent, and in whose Name they stretch forth their hands for alms. And who is that Person? He is the King of glory, the Supreme Monarch of Heaven, Jesus Christ Himself, who expressly says: "As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to Me." Christ is hungry, thirsty, and naked, and it is to Him that food, drink, and clothing are given; it is He who suffers want and expects consolation, whenever the decent poor ask for help; it is Christ who knocks at the door when a poor person comes, and He it is who asks for a piece of bread for God's sake, as I have shown in a former sermon. Now, that is the basis of my subject to-day. If that is properly understood, all the pretexts for refusing to give alms on account of the unworthiness of the poor, fall to the ground of their own accord. Yet, we shall consider some of them in detail.

Therefore, even the lowest beggars must be respected.

In the first place, then, the over-sensitive, delicate, and sensual children of the world are disgusted at the bare sight of a beggar, and they would be ashamed to speak a kind word to him, on account of his poverty. What brings such wretched people in our way? they ask. They are so dirty, that they infest the whole house with a bad odor when they stand at the door. I cannot bear such people, and will have nothing to do with them, etc. And so they look upon them as undeserving of charity. But this is the most unchristian pretext that could be invented. Is their very misery to be the reason of their being turned away empty-handed? It should rather inspire you with greater compassion for them. If they were fed and clothed by the Almighty God as well as you are, they would not require your help, and they could appear much cleaner and neater; give them, therefore, what Christian charity and mercy require, and they will be much better off in future. No matter how troublesome, filthy, and untidy a poor beggar appears, you must know that under his rags is concealed the Person of Christ, whom the Prophet says that, although He was the most beautiful of the children of men: "And we have seen him and there was no sightliness. And we have thought him as it were a leper, and

¹ Quamdiu fecistis uni ex his fratribus meis minimis, mihi fecistis.--*Matth. xxv. 40.*

as one struck by God.”¹ He says of Himself: “But I am a worm and no man: the reproach of men and the outcast of the people.”² Ought you as a Christian to feel disgust at the misery of your Saviour by which He freed you from the filth of sin, when He comes to you in the persons of His poor? Ought you to disdain to give Him alms with your own hand, or, because He seems too ill-clad, to hesitate about receiving Him into your house, and setting food before Him? Ah, if you speak and think thus of the poor, your faith is gone as well as your charity!

The holy bishop Aidan, as the Venerable Bede writes, was presented by King Oswin with a beautiful and richly caparisoned horse as a special mark of favor. As the bishop was one day riding this horse, a beggar met him and asked for alms for God’s sake. Aidan immediately dismounted, gave the horse, just as it was, to the poor man, and went home on foot. The king was very angry when he heard that his costly gift was valued so little, and sending for the bishop, he said to him: Is a poor beggar of such great value, then, in your sight, that you must give him a king’s horse to ride? Is there no other way of helping such people? Aidan answered in a friendly tone; “Is a horse, then, more valuable in your eyes than the Son of God?”³ Is any horse too costly for Him? Whereupon the king saw his error and apologized for it at once; he said: “Henceforth I will never prescribe to you how much of our money you shall give to the poor children of God, for it is all in your hands.”⁴ So we, too, should think, my dear brethren, whenever the misery of the poor is repulsive to us. Is the Son of God, then, too wretched for me? Am I too great to minister to and help Him? It was this thought that gave courage to pious and holy people, to seek out the most miserable of the poor, to wait upon and attend to them, as they would on Christ Himself. Such was in particular the conduct of the holy Count Elezearius, who delighted in showing his generosity to poor lepers. Every day he used to wash the feet of twelve of these wretched people; he dried them with his own hands and kissed them respectfully; he placed them at his own table and waited upon them as if they were kings or princes; the more disgusting they were, the more did he see and honor Christ in

How pious
Christians
act.

¹ Vidimus eum, et non erat aspectus. Et putavimus eum quasi leprosum, et percussum a Deo.—Isai. liii. 2, 4.

² Ego sum vermis et non homo: opprobrium hominum et abjectio plebis.—Ps. xxi. 7.

³ Numquid tibi charior est filius equi, quam Filius Dei?

⁴ Nunquam deinceps prescribam, quantum de nostra pecunia filiis Dei tribuis, quæ tota in manu tua est.

them. As he was once going to hunt, he came to the house of a poor leper, in which there were six wretched beings who looked more like dead bodies than living men, so hideously were they deformed; their lips were eaten away, their teeth had fallen out, their mouths and throats were quite black, and their pallid countenances made them look like ghosts; but the Count, although he was brought up in the royal court, did not experience the least disgust at sight of them. He saluted them in a friendly manner, spoke to them of the joys of Heaven to encourage them to patience, and having given each of them the kiss of peace in token of respect, and distributed generous alms amongst them, he took leave of them. That was the way in which he imitated Christ our Lord, of whom the royal Prophet said: "He shall save the souls of the poor. He shall redeem their souls from usuries and iniquity, and their name shall be honorable in his sight."¹ But the over-delicate children of the world look at the matter in a totally different light, and therefore they often turn away the poor without mercy or pity!

Even im-
portunate
beggars
must not be
despised.

But, say others, beggars are so importunate and shameless. If you once give them anything, they will never let you rest; they will spend the whole day at your door. If you stretch out a finger to them, they will require the whole hand. I would willingly give them something now and then, if they were more modest in their demands, and if they would leave me in peace afterwards. As it is, I never give them anything. Now, that is a hard thing to say, and a very wrong thing too, for a Christian! Must a poor man, then, be always turned away, and never allowed to come a second time to you? How do you act with your own children? As soon as they open their eyes in the morning, they cry out for their breakfast. Do you refuse to give it them? By no means; you give it them gladly. Why? Because they are hungry. But two hours hardly elapse, when they ask again for something to eat. It is the same story at noon, repeated again at three or four o'clock, and so on until they go to bed at night. And yet your patience is not exhausted; you do not complain that your children are importunate and shameless, for you know that they require something to eat frequently during the day. You are quite right, too. But you should remember that the poor beggar is also driven by necessity to come to you several times during the week. He must have

¹ *Animas pauperum salvat faciet. Ex usuris et iniquitate redimet animas eorum, et honorabile nomen eorum coram illo.*—Ps. lxxi. 13, 14.

something every day to appease his hunger, and therefore you must change your opinion altogether, and say, not, I will never give him anything, but, I will always give him whatever I can afford, and at least I will have a kind word for him and promise to help him another time. If you saw Christ in the person of the poor, you would not be so wroth at their importunity.

Pious Christians manage much better. One Easter Sunday, Oswald, king of England, was sitting at table with Aidan, the charitable bishop of whom I have already told you. A servant who had charge of the poor came in great haste into the room, and whispered to the king that there was quite a crowd of beggars below, who were much more importunate than ever before, in their demands for bread. The pious king did not hesitate long. Take away, he said, everything you have prepared for us, silver plate and all, and divide it as fairly as you can amongst the poor people, so that they may be satisfied. Aidan, delighted at the great patience and charity shown by the king, seized his right hand and kissed it respectfully, saying: "This hand shall never decay." His prophecy proved true, for when Oswald was afterwards slain in battle, his right hand was placed in a silver vessel, and, according to the testimony of the Venerable Bede, remained uncorrupted. Thomas Cantipratanus relates a similar story of Theobald, a French count, who, of all the nobles of France, was the most generous to the poor. Once in particular he showed great charity towards a beggar who met him on a cold winter's day, and who, in a seemingly most importunate and shameless manner, begged for alms. Theobald asked him in a friendly voice what he wanted. Give me something, said the beggar, to cover my head with. The count immediately took off his cap, and gave it to him. Oh, said the poor man, give me a coat, too; and his request was granted at once. But he was not yet satisfied, for he asked for the vest also, and the count gave it to him. Ah, sir, said the insatiable beggar, see my poor bald head; give me your hat to cover it with. The count's face grew red as fire, for he was bald also, but instead of getting angry, he merely said: My good friend, I would willingly give you my hat, but I cannot do without it. Hereupon the seeming beggar disappeared with all that Theobald had given him. The good count was at once overwhelmed with sorrow. He leaped from his horse, looked around him on all sides, struck his breast, cried, lamented, and called in a tearful voice on the supposed beggar to return, offering him all his goods, and himself even

Example of other pious Christians.

as his servant and slave. But his cries were in vain, for the other did not return. The count then made a firm resolution never again to refuse anything to a poor person, and to observe faithfully the advice of our Lord: "Give to every one that asketh thee."¹ And his generosity was well rewarded, in this life and in the next, according to what a deceased and now blessed beggar prophesied of him. What do you think of this, Christians, who, if a poor person comes to you the second time, turn him away, and say that he has no shame?

Even if poor people pretend to be worse off than they really are, or if they are deceitful.

All very well, say a third class of people; but we cannot believe the poor; they often deceive us by pretending to be poor when they are not, or by exaggerating their poverty and misery. They often pretend to be sick, blind, wounded, or crippled, when in reality they are strong and vigorous in every respect. St. John Chrysostom answers these objections. Why are you so scrupulous and anxious, he says, to know whether the poor man, whom you ought to help in the name of Christ, deserves assistance or not?² Who knows whether he is not begging for some one else who is really poor, if he does not want alms himself? Certainly, you cannot know that. And if his poverty or sickness is not so great as he pretends, that condemns you more than him, for he knows by experience that he has to do with hard-hearted and miserly people, who will not give a penny, nor a piece of bread, unless it is almost forced out of them, and therefore he makes the most of his misery in order to excite your pity—a thing he is obliged to do more by your want of charity than by his own poverty. You say, they are deceitful, and pretend to be blind, lame, etc. Ah, St. John Chrysostom says: "Are you not afraid that your words will bring down a thunderbolt on your head?"³ Is it likely that a man would torment himself so much for the sake of a piece of bread, if he were not in want of it?

At all events, he who gives alms will not be deceived. Shown by an example.

Suppose, even, that now and then deceit is practised, that some pretend to be poor who are not so; it is very true that they do wrong, and they are bound in conscience either to restore the alms they have unjustly received, or to give them to other poor people just as if they had stolen them. Still you are not deceived in the least; the alms you have given for Christ's sake to such deceitful people have not lost their value, and if you are in the state of grace and have given them with a good intention, you

¹ *Omni petenti te tribue.*—Luke vi. 30.

² *Quid stipem deopcentem scrutaris? Quin illum ob Christi gratiam accipe.*

³ *Non times, ne fulmen ab hoc verbo cœlitus accensum in te feratur?*

can gain Heaven as a reward for them. The Blessed Jordanus, as Humbertus testifies, once gave his under-garment to a beggar, because he had nothing else to give. But the beggar was an impostor who only pretended to be sick and poor, and who immediately sold the garment and spent the price of it in drink. The companions of Jordanus, who saw this, laughed at him, and said : A fine use, indeed, has been made of your charity! Yes, answered Jordanus, I gave it because I thought the man was sick and poor; although I now know the contrary to be the case, I am not sorry for what I have given away: "For I think it is better to lose a coat, than to lose charity to the poor;"¹ I have given an alms to Christ in the person of that pretended poor man; what that man is in reality is nothing to me. And so it is, my dear brethren, if we are deceived, it is far better that it should happen through charity and mercy on our part, than that we should refuse to assist the poor of Christ through hard-heartedness. A too great anxiety to distinguish between really poor people and impostors, makes many very uncharitable; and very often they who are really deserving of alms, suffer from our determination not to give anything to impostors. The Emperor Tiberius, under the pretence of hindering all attempts at dishonesty, kept all the salaries of the senators himself, and commanded a public inquiry to be made in the senate-house, to see who were really in want of such salaries. The result of this was, that the poor, being ashamed of such a public inquiry into their circumstances, got nothing at all. It is just the same nowadays with those who are always trying to find out whether the poor are deserving of alms or not; they leave the majority of the poor without any assistance. St. John Chrysostom says : "If Abraham had always been so cautious about the strangers he received, he would perhaps never have had the happiness to entertain angels. He might probably not have known them to be angels, and would have turned them away like others. But since he received every one, he also merited to receive angels."² The three strangers who were going to Bethel, gave two loaves of bread to Saul, thinking him to be a poor man, and in reality he was a king; and in any case, no matter who Saul was, the alms given to him was received by the King of Heaven, who richly rewards such works of mercy.

¹ *Judico enim adhuc, melius esse, amisisse tunicam, quam perdidisse pietatem.*

² *Si Abraham scrutatus fuisset circa refugientes ad se, nunquam angelos hospitio recepisset; fortassis enim non putans eos angelos esse, cum reliquis repulisset, sed quoniam omnes suscipiebat, suscepit et angelos. — Hom. 11.*

Therefore, "give," if you can, "to every one that asketh."¹ Let it suffice for you to know that it is Christ, the Son of God, who undertakes to reward those who give alms.

Even they who seem to be strong and healthy must not be refused on that account.

What, says a fourth, must I give alms even to those who are strong and healthy, and able to earn their bread, but who spend their time loitering about the streets, and taking the bread out of the mouths of the poor people? No one ought to give them anything; they should be made to work. I know that there are such people, and therefore it is always safest to give charity to the decent poor, who must work hard the whole day, and still can hardly earn enough for themselves and their children, while they are ashamed to beg publicly. But those idlers, as you call them, are also really in want; for who is there who would trust them with any work? Be that as it may, however, you will not lose the merit of your charity, if you give them alms. Tell me, says St. John Chrysostom to a rich man, where do you get your wealth from? Is it the fruit of your own toil and labor? Did you inherit it from your parents? or have you increased it by your diligence? But who has blessed you with prosperity? Who has protected your property from thieves, fire, storms, plunder, and other misfortunes? Who has given you such success in your business, that you have now more than you want, while others, although they are strong and healthy, must beg their bread from door to door? Who has done all that? The Almighty God and no other; it is to His goodness that you must ascribe your prosperity. Give to Him, then, the honor and glory of your possessions, and do not turn away any one to whom He has not been so generous as He has been to you! Be not ungrateful to your Benefactor! For it would be ingratitude in you to refuse an alms to Him, when He asks it of you in the person of a poor beggar, and to turn him away from your door with harsh words.

They who are not grateful for the alms bestowed on them.

The fourth excuse is, that the poor are generally ungrateful; once they have received the food, clothing, or other alms given to them, they go away without returning thanks; they never think of the benefit they have received until they are again in want; God knows whether they even say an Our Father for it. Certainly, it is the duty of the poor to show gratitude and respect, as well as they can, to those who give them alms; but if they do not fulfil their duty, are you, therefore, freed from your obligation of performing the works of Christian charity and mercy?

¹ *Omni petenti tribue.*

If you seek the gratitude and respect of men as the only reward of your charity, oh, then I pity you, for you have made a bad investment of your capital! Remember that you give the alms to God Himself by the hands of the poor, and if you gain His grace and favor thereby, and the kingdom of Heaven as well, is not your reward sufficient? If you persist in urging that excuse, you show that you have not a supernatural end in view, when you give alms. The Patriarch John, who was surnamed the Almoner, once gave ten pennies to a beggar. The latter, thinking the alms too small, commenced to abuse, and even to curse and swear at the holy man, so that the servants of the Patriarch were on the point of beating the man. But John forbade them to do so, and told them to let the poor man alone. He said: "Let him talk as he likes,¹ but," turning to his steward, "do you give him the purse, that he may take as much as he pleases, and so correct the fault I have committed by not giving him enough." Thus this holy man was not only generous to the poor, but he also bore their ingratitude and coarseness with the greatest patience, knowing that Christ Himself stood before him in their persons. Remember this, Christians, I repeat, to make the poor work for you and then to give them something, as is the practice of some people, is not alms-giving, but paying wages. Do you think you will gain Heaven in that way? Will you dare to represent an act of that kind to the Almighty as an act of generosity, or to say to Him, when He shall come to judge you: Remember, oh, Lord, Thou wast hungry, and I have given Thee to eat? Yes, He will answer, you have given Me to eat, but I have earned it by my labor, and therefore I do not owe you anything for it. He will give the same answer to those who give alms with what belongs to others, or with unjustly acquired means. No, that is not the way to give alms, but simply to restore what already belongs to the poor, in case you do not find the proper owner; otherwise, restitution should be made to him, and not to the poor. The worst way of giving alms, is to help the poor with the intention of inducing them to commit sins of impurity. But it is a holy and meritorious way of alms-giving, and a delicate invention of true charity and mercy, to give some trifling work, for instance, or to ask some insignificant service from a decent poor person, who is ashamed to acknowledge his poverty, and to pay him for it more than it is worth, so as not to put him to shame, or to make him

¹ *Sinite eum, loquatur, quod vult.*

think that he is receiving alms. In the same way, although it is not exactly alms-giving, yet it is a work of charity and mercy to employ a poor tradesman or laborer, who has not work enough, in preference to others who are better off.

Even the wicked are not to be condemned or turned away.

Finally, most people say : I would willingly give food, drink, and clothing to the poor, and would give them twice as much, if I only knew that they were pious and God-fearing ; but they are generally a worthless lot, who know nothing of God, or of His commandments ; they utter ten curses for the one Our Father they say ; they live together like savages, and therefore it is not worth while to do anything for them. Shame upon you, Christians, to think and speak in that way ! Such is the warning of St. John Chrysostom. Do not try to read the secrets of hearts or to make yourself a judge over the actions of others, or perhaps to accuse them of faults of which you yourself are guilty ! “ Even if he who asks you for alms is a wicked man, still you must not forget that you will one day have to say to God : Lord, remember not my offences ! ”¹ Therefore, you should not remember the offences of your fellow mortals, who are perhaps less guilty, in the sight of God, than you. Do not condemn those who may appear amongst the elect on the day of judgment, while you may be amongst the reprobate. You will one day ask a great alms from God, when you will say to Him at the gate of Heaven, with the penitent David : “ Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy ! ”² How can you, a sinner, hope to obtain this mercy, if you now refuse to show mercy to Christ in the persons of His poor, under the pretext that they are sinners, and if you do not follow the example of God Himself, “ who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and the bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust ” ?³ Now if an offended God preserves and provides for even the greatest sinners, how can you refuse them the help they are in need of ? Christians, continues St. John Chrysostom, let us not be so careful in examining the consciences of the poor, to try to find a cloak for our own avarice and hard-heartedness. “ For it is not on account of the lives and merits of the poor, who receive alms from you, but on account of your good will, generosity, mercy, and charity, that God will reward you.”⁴

¹ Quod etsi valde peccator sit illi, qui te rogat : cogito, quia et tu dices Deo ; peccata mea ne recorderis.

² Misere mei, Deus, secundam magnam misericordiam tuam.—Ps. 1. 1.

³ Qui solem suum oriri facit super bonos et malos, et pluit super justos et injustos.—Matth. v. 45.

⁴ Non enim ex vita et merito accipientium a te pauperum sed ex voluntate tua et liberalitate multa, ex misericordia et bonitate mercedem tibi retribuere Deus.

It is, alas, only too true that many take occasion from their poverty to lead wicked and godless lives ; a fact that is all the more to be deplored, since, instead of making their misery a ladder by which to climb up to Heaven the more easily, they wilfully pervert it into a means of hurling themselves into hell, where they will suffer eternal hunger and thirst. It would be advisable also, to prefer the pious to the wicked poor, as objects of charity. Yet, I repeat that alms do not lose their merit, even when bestowed on bad people ; for just as the holy Mass is good and holy, even if it is offered by a priest in the state of mortal sin, since Jesus Christ is the principal Person who offers and is offered, so alms-giving is a holy work of charity, although it be performed in favor of a sinner, because the principal Person who receives the alms is, not the wicked man, but Jesus Christ Himself.

Alms are not thrown away, even on the most implous.

Peter Telonarius (the same man who had a vision, in which he thought he was standing before the judgment-seat of God and was about to be damned, when he was saved because he had once thrown, in an angry manner, a piece of bread to an importunate beggar), this Peter, who became very charitable afterwards, once met a wicked and godless sailor who had just escaped half-naked from shipwreck. Peter took off his coat, and gave it to the poor sailor. The following night Christ appeared to him with the cross on His shoulders, and spoke to him thus: Peter, do you recognize the coat I am wearing? I thank you for your generosity ; “for I was suffering from cold, and you have clothed Me.”¹

Shown by an example.

Oh, Christians, if we only understood that one most important truth, that it is the Son of God who receives alms, then we should not think of making excuses, nor scrutinizing the character of the poor before giving them charity ! St. Peter Chrysologus makes a beautiful remark on the words of the Psalmist : “Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor.”² What is the meaning, he asks, of the words, “he that understandeth” ? Is it so difficult to understand when a man is poor and in want ? That is a thing that we can see with our eyes, and hear with our ears. If I see a man with ragged clothes and folded hands standing before my door ; if I hear another complaining and begging for a piece of bread, I can understand at once that both are poor people. Why, then, should he be called

Conclusion, and exhortation always to see Christ in the poor.

¹ Petre! . . . quontam frigore affigebar et tu cooperuisti me.

² Beatus, qui intelligit super egenum et pauperem.—Ps. xl. 2.

blessed, "who understandeth concerning the needy and the poor"?' Certainly because not every one who sees a poor person understands what he is. If a man disguises himself in the clothes of a poor laborer, we do not know what sort of a man he is; if we judge from his dress alone, we should say that he is a laborer. But he may be a great person, who thus disguises himself, although we cannot recognize him as such. It is the same with poor people; they go about masked, and there are few who have understanding enough to know who is concealed under their disguise, for a special light and a strong faith are required to be able to recognize Him who manifests Himself only in the poor, and to see that He who made heaven and earth, appears as a ragged and naked beggar; that He who supports and provides for all, suffers hunger and thirst in the persons of the needy, and that the great God, to whom everything belongs, not only associates with the poor, but begs for and receives alms Himself as a poor man. To understand this well, requires a great and an enlightened mind. That is what the Prophet means when he says: Blessed and ever blessed is he that has such understanding, and acts according to it!

Therefore, we will respect all poor people, after the example of pious Christians.

If we understood that, my dear brethren, it would not be difficult for us, not only to help the poor, no matter what sort they are, with generous alms according to our means, but also to treat them always with the highest respect, as we would the Son of God Himself. Some of the greatest kings and rulers of the world have understood that well; such as Pope Gregory the Great, who always had a number of poor people at table with him, and who waited on them with uncovered head; Louis, king of France, who, through respect, washed with his own hands the feet of the most repulsive beggars and kissed them reverently, after the poor people had been fed by him; Edward, king of England, who took a poor cripple on his shoulders and carried him through the public streets to church, amid the laughter of the people, who imagined that the king had lost his senses; Elizabeth, queen of Hungary, who gave herself up to the service of the poor, and sucked the poisonous matter out of their wounds and ulcers with her own mouth; Placilla, an empress, who waited on the sick poor in the hospitals, and made their beds for them. We are astonished when we hear of people of such high position doing such things; but if we understood properly why they did so, if we could see Jesus Christ, the Son of the most high God in the

¹ Qui Intelligit.

persons of the poor, then we should not wonder that even crowned heads held the poor in respect; we should rather be ashamed that we have treated the poor so contemptuously, that we have turned them away from our doors without just cause, and that we have shown them so little mercy and charity. If we understood the matter properly, we should at least resolve to help the poor in future in every possible way. Happy, indeed, is he who thus understands concerning the poor and needy !¹

I have hitherto failed in this point; I confess my fault, oh, my God! Therefore, I have thought so little of Thy poor, and have so often forgotten the charity and mercy I owe them; therefore, I have given them often nothing but harsh words! I considered only their outward appearance, and have not used the light of faith, which would have shown me that Thou, my Lord and my God, art concealed under their poverty! Grant me to see this, O God, now and always, so that I may never look upon a beggar who comes to me, as too repulsive, too shameless, too deceitful, too idle, too ungrateful, too wicked, or too unworthy to receive alms from me. For what I will do for them, according to the firm resolution I now make, will be done for my God and my Saviour. Therefore, too, I shall always treat the poor with humility, respect, charity, and friendliness, no matter who they may be, just as I would treat Thee, if Thou camest in Thy own Person; and at least I will always have a good and friendly word for them, and treat them with every mark of respect. Nor do I ask any other thanks or reward for doing so, but that which Thou hast promised to all who give alms, namely, Thyself in the kingdom of Heaven. Amen.

Resolution of amendment and generosity to the poor.

Another Introduction for the Feast of St. Matthew, Apostle:

Text.

Discite, quid est: Misericordiam volo.—Matth. ix. 13.

“Learn what this meaneth: I will have mercy.”

The envious Pharisees who put a bad meaning on, and condemned everything that Christ said, managed to find fault with Him also on this occasion, because he sat at table with noted sinners, and in the house of Matthew, too, who was a publican; that is, one who was known to be a sinner. The meek Saviour answered them by saying: You are angry with Me without cause,

¹ *Beatus, qui intelligit super egenum et pauperem.*

and you have no reason to think these men unworthy of my presence, because they are sinners: "Go, then, and learn what this meaneth: I will have mercy,"¹ even on such sinners. It was for that I came on earth: the sick need a physician, not those who are well. The same excuse is brought forward nowadays, too, my dear brethren, when there is question of showing charity as we ought to the poor and needy. Many wealthy people act like the Pharisees in to-day's Gospel, and speak badly of the poor, whom they despise in their hearts; they think and say: Poor people do not deserve that I should share my food, drink, or clothing with them; they are tiresome, importunate, shameless, ungrateful, useless people; they are not deserving of help. But, Christians, hear what the Son of God says: "I will have mercy,"² even on such poor people. There is not one of them who does not deserve our help and charity. Such is the whole subject of to-day's instruction,—*continues as before.*

SIXTY-THIRD SERMON.

ON THE DECENT POOR.

Subject.

We must especially help the decent poor, according to our means, whenever we can.—*Preached on the eighth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Fodere non valeo, mendicare erubescio. Scio, quid faciam.—
Luke xvi. 3, 4.

"To dig I am not able, to beg I am ashamed. I know what I will do."

Introduction.

Unhappy steward, to what a depth of misery you have fallen! Well may you ask, "What shall I do?"³ To lose one's employment, to have nothing to live upon, to be unable to work for one's

¹ Euntes autem discite, quid est: Misericordiam volo.

² Misericordiam volo.

³ Quid faciam?

living, and to be ashamed to beg for it, these, indeed, are circumstances in which there is need of good advice, and which could easily make one despair. I feel sick at heart, when I sometimes think of the miserable condition in which many Christians live nowadays. I mean the decent poor, who are reduced to poverty by misfortune, who cannot work on account of old age, weakness, or sickness, or because they do not know how, and who are unable to continue their business through want of means, while they are ashamed to ask for alms, or to beg their bread, and must cry out with the steward in the Gospel: "What shall I do?"¹ Yet people do not often think of them, because their poverty is little known. Pity for these poor people has induced me to speak in their behalf to-day; for, as St. John Chrysostom says, every preacher and pastor must be a helper and consoler of the poor. I do not wish to take away anything from public beggars, for all deserve Christian charity and beneficence; but because these latter are able to speak for themselves, while the former are afraid to do so, I will try, in this exhortation, to beg some mercy and generosity for the decent poor. I say, therefore—

Plan of Discourse.

We must especially help the decent poor, according to our means, whenever we can, in preference to all others. Such is the whole subject. Towards the end, according to the time I shall have, I intend adding a few words of consolation and advice for such poor people.

Merciful Virgin, Mother of mercy, Mary, obtain from thy Son, for all who are here present, and who can afford to be charitable, a merciful and compassionate heart towards those who complain and lament at home with their children: "To dig I am not able; to beg I am ashamed;"² and obtain for the poor people themselves a patient resignation to, and contentment with the will of God! We ask that also of you, oh, holy angels guardian, who take such care of us all!

He who, without suffering any great loss thereby, can help his neighbor who is in grievous want, and who cannot help himself, is bound to do so by the law of God, the law of charity, and the law of nature; and if he refuses to give the necessary help, he commits a sin of cruelty that is condemned by the law of God, the law of charity, and the law of nature. It is useless to

He who can help his neighbor in grievous necessity, without serious loss to himself, is bound to do so.

¹ Quid faciam?

² Fodere non valeo, medicare erubesco.

waste time in proving this ; the law of God tells us to love our neighbor as ourselves ;¹ right reason tells us to do to each one as we should wish him to do to us in the same circumstances, and therefore we must not allow another to suffer a misfortune from which we can free him. For instance, a man falls into the water ; although he is an utter stranger to you, you seize hold of him at once to save him from drowning. A child falls down into the mud, and commences to cry ; you at once help it to get up, although it be the child of a Turk or a heathen. If you acted otherwise, you would show great cruelty and hard-heartedness. The priest and the Levite who passed by the poor man who was wounded by the robbers—as St. Luke writes, “they saw him and passed by,”²—were they not as cruel as the robbers themselves? Nay, you are even inclined to pity a dog that is in pain, and to give it relief. So says our Lord also to the Pharisees, in the same Gospel of St. Luke : “Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fall into a pit, and will not immediately draw him out on the Sabbath day ?”³

The decent poor are in greater necessity than others.

Al, my dear brethren, who are they whose cause I am advocating to-day? Are they dogs, or asses, or oxen? Are they heathens or Turks, strangers or foreigners? If they were heathens, or Turks, or foreigners, or even dumb animals, they would have a right to expect a merciful heart and a helpful hand to assist them in the misery in which they cannot help themselves. But they live in the same country, the same town, and profess the same Christian religion that we do ; they have been unfortunate; they are reduced to poverty; but they are redeemed by the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, as well as we. They are poor, but they have the same Father in Heaven that we have. They are poor, but they hope to have the same inheritance as we hope for, from their heavenly Father. They are poor, but they are not on that account of less value than we; perhaps much better and more precious in the sight of God. Now, these people, who are so closely connected with us in many ways, are in want ; they are in grievous want, and who can deny it? For, is it not grievous want to be obliged to depend on the mercy of others for the necessities of life, to have hardly bread enough to eat, or to be obliged to eat what one has with bitter sorrow and a sore heart, to be forced to stretch out the hand to implore help from others,

¹ Diliges proximum tuum sicut teipsum.—Matth. xix. 19.

² Viso illo præteribant.—Luke x. 31.

³ Cujus vestrum asinus aut bos in puteum cadet, et non continuo extrahet illum die Sabbathi?—Ibid. xiv. 5.

and to beg for alms for God's sake? But, what am I saying? They who can beg publicly and thus help themselves in their poverty, are not so very badly off, after all, although they are miserable enough in the eyes of the world; for it is wisely ordained by the Almighty Creator, that among the different states of life to which men are called, each one can easily adapt himself to the circumstances of the state in which he is born and brought up. Thus, a nobleman does not make himself unhappy because he is not a prince or a king, although he is not so rich as he would be in either of those dignities; a citizen is not dissatisfied because he is not a nobleman; a farmer is satisfied with his farm and his coarse food, and has not the least wish to be a rich merchant. And so it is always, my dear brethren; no sensible person will think himself unhappy because he has not that which he never had, or which is not suitable to his state of life. In the same way, too, they who are born in poverty, can easily endure it, for they are reared in it also; they have received no inheritance from their parents, except the beggar's staff, and they only know how to beg, and nothing more. If one of these gets a piece of bread and meat from a charitable person, he enjoys it just as much as a rich man would a sumptuous repast, and he is surprised at his good fortune; but if you were to ask him to work and earn his bread, he would probably refuse, for he would prefer to idle about the streets and beg from door to door, as is generally the case with street-loiterers. Therefore, I repeat, such people can easily help themselves. But for a man who has been accustomed to better things, who has been brought up respectably, and has hitherto earned his bread by his business, to be reduced to poverty and distress, through a decree of providence, by some unforeseen calamity, by a bad season, or by hard times, that is, indeed, a hard, a bitter trial, such as no public beggar has to bear. There is no doubt that it is a sadder sight to behold Job, who was formerly so rich, reduced to extreme poverty, abandoned by all, and seated on a dunghill; or to see Tobias robbed of his wealth by Sennacherib, and reduced to great want; or Ruth, born of respectable parents, obliged to sustain herself by gleaning corn in the fields; it is a sadder sight, I say, to behold such things, than to see Lazarus, who was always poor, suffering hunger at the rich man's door. Those who are called the decent poor in our days, are in the same sad condition; they have not been born in poverty, but have fallen into it through misfortune; they are as much in want as beggars, but

they are not used to it, nor can they make their wants publicly known. Sometimes they suffer more from hunger than beggars do, and what is worse still, they shrink from telling others of it, and cannot bear to beg for bread, which other poor people do without the least difficulty, or else they venture out furtively to ask for alms, like Nicodemus, who came to see Christ at night, through fear of the Jews, or they make known their misery only to some trusty friend or neighbor. Nay, when something is privately offered to them, they cannot take it without feeling shame and grief. Public beggars shout out their wants in the streets; they exaggerate them sometimes and thus excite people to greater compassion for them; the decent poor, on the contrary, labor and suffer in secret with their children, and receive less help, as their wants are not so well known to others. Oh, certainly, their poverty is greater than any other in the world!

We are, then, specially bound to help them.

Oh, you who are able to help them, surely, if you have human hearts in your bosoms, now is the time for you to prove it! If you have only a spark of Christian charity left, it ought to leap up into a flame, through your intense desire to help these poor people. St. John says: "He that hath the substance of this world, and shall see his brother in need, and shall shut up his bowels from him: how doth the charity of God abide in him?"¹ How is it possible for such a man to say that he loves God? Now, if this is to be understood of all who are in need of assistance, how much more is it not true of those who have special claims on your charity and mercy? Oh, law of God, that commandest us to help even our greatest enemies, where art thou? Such is thy command: "If thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat; if he thirst, give him water to drink."² How strict the obligation thou imposest on us to help our hungry and sorrowing brethren, countrymen, and fellow-citizens, in every possible way! If it is a sin of hard-heartedness to send away empty-handed one who can support himself by begging, what a great sin is it not to refuse help to those who, through shame, cannot do anything for themselves! There is no doubt, my dear brethren, that the greater the want and misery, the greater is our obligation to help him who suffers from it.

According to the example of

It was this thought that in former times moved good people to seek out the decent poor, and to help them privately. It fills

¹ Qui habuerit substantiam hujus mundi, et viderit fratrem suum necessitatem habere et clauerit viscera sua ab eo: quomodo charitas Dei manet in eo? -I. John III, 17.

² Si esurierit inimicus tuus, ciba illum; si sitierit, da ei aquam bibere.—Prov. xxv. 21.

me with pleasure when I read in the Sacred Scriptures how eagerly the Patriarch Abraham invited even strangers to share his hospitality ; how he went out to meet them, and asked them to remain with him. He used to say, as if he looked upon it as a great favor : “ Lord, if I have found favor in Thy sight, pass not away from Thy servant ; ”¹ deign to eat and drink with me. Nor do I find it less interesting to read how Booz commanded his reapers to let fall some handfuls of corn on purpose, that the poor widow Ruth might gather them without shame : “ And Booz commanded his servants, saying : If she would even reap with you, hinder her not ; and let fall some of your handfuls of purpose, and leave them, that she may gather them without shame, and let no man rebuke her when she gathereth them.”² I rejoice when I read how the holy bishop, St. Nicholas, went to a house by night, and threw in some money through the window for a poor widow and her daughters, who were in want, but were ashamed to beg. I rejoice when I read of Cardinal Bellarmine, who, when he was Archbishop of Capua, kept a list of all who were in debt, and of all ruined families, as well as of other decent poor, that he might be able to act the part of a generous foster-father to them. God Himself has at different times given us an example of this kind of alms-giving. Daniel was for a long time suffering hunger in the lions’ den, when God sent an angel who brought the Prophet Habacuc, with food for him, to Babylon. The Prophet Elias was without food in the desert, and God sent him bread by a raven. Why did He not do the same for many others who were in want ? Because they could seek food for themselves. Why did He not send the angel at once to Daniel, instead of employing Habacuc, or any other creature ? To teach us that we are bound to give alms, and to seek out those who secretly suffer want, and cannot help themselves.

good men in
the Old and
New Laws.

Ah, my dear brethren, how many decent poor there are nowadays, who would willingly sit down and eat the food prepared for them, if they could only find a charitable Abraham to invite them to do so ! How many poor widows, who would glean in the fields, if there was a kind-hearted Booz to allow them ! How many poor maidens would save their virtue, if they had a charitable Nicholas to assist them ! How many families there are, overwhelmed with debt, who must borrow even their daily

There are
few, now-a-
days, who
think of such
poor people.

¹ Domine, si inveni gratiam in oculis tuis, ne transeas servum tuum.—Gen. xviii. 3.

² Præcepit autem Booz pueris suis, dicens : Etiam si vobiscum metere voluerit, ne prohibeat eam ; et de vestris quoque manipulis proficite de industria, et remanere permittite, ut absque rubore colligat, et colligentem nemo corripiat.—Ruth ii. 15, 16.

bread, because there is no generous Bellarmine to look after them ! In that house there is a Daniel surrounded by his hungry children, and he has no bread to give them ; he can answer their cries only with his tears. In that other house an Elias is suffering from hunger and thirst, and can find nothing to eat or drink ; would that an angel sent a Habacuc to him with food ! But, alas, times are changed, or rather hearts and dispositions are different to what they used to be ! It is easy to talk of seeking out the poor, and helping them, so that they may not feel ashamed, and encourage them to make known their wants ! They dare not uncover their wounds for fear of being treated as impostors and turned away. There are few who trouble themselves about the welfare of others. Every one thinks he has enough to do to look after himself. "I have found me rest"¹ is what most people think, like the man of whom the Wise Ecclesiasticus speaks : "And now I will eat of my goods alone."² But hear what follows : "And he knoweth not what time shall pass, and that death approacheth, and that he must leave all to others, and shall die."³

The decent poor suffer from the extravagance of the rich.

But, while some are thus satisfied with their position, because their families are well provided for, their employments are lucrative, and they can live comfortably, there are many who are in the greatest poverty, who have large families and heavy debts, and who could cry out with the sick man, who sat at the pond of Bethesda, "I have no man ;"⁴ "I have been unfortunate, and have nothing left, no one will look at me now. Now I know the meaning of the saying: "A friend in need is a friend indeed." Formerly, I was able to earn my bread, but now that I am sick, there is no one to take pity on me or help me ; no one to visit or console me ! While some have everything they require, and are quite content with themselves, there are many unfortunate people who might say with the Prodigal Son : "How many hired servants in my father's house abound with bread, and I here perish with hunger !"⁵ The servants who serve God for temporal gain, have more than they can use ; even the wicked are able to spend money on unnecessary things ; and I must pine away through want !⁶ They indulge their ex-

¹ *Inveni requiem mihi.*—Eccl. xi. 19.

² *Et nunc manducabo de bonis meis solus.*—Ibid.

³ *Et nescit, quod tempus præteriet, et mors appropinquet, et relinquat omnia aliis, et morietur.*—Ibid. 20.

⁴ *Hominem non habeo.*—John v. 7.

⁵ *Quanti mercenarii in domo patris mei abundant panibus: ego autem hic fame pereor!*—Luke xv. 17.

⁶ *Ego autem hic fame pereor!*

travagance in dress ; they have many articles of clothing that they will never use again, but I have hardly a rag to cover myself ! The worms can eat the corn in their granaries, but I have not bread to eat ! They have money in their coffers, but I have not a penny ! They have costly dishes in abundance, until they turn away from them through sheer disgust, but I can hardly get salt to put in my soup for myself and my children. They can spend a lot of money on parties and entertainments, and would to God that they did not often injure their own souls, and those of others by doing so ! They can afford to lose ten or fifteen dollars at play : “ But I must pine away through want ! ”¹ I may sit here and sigh in vain for a penny to buy bread ; if I were to make known my misery, they would hardly find a penny to give me, although God has promised them the kingdom of Heaven as a reward for alms-giving ! Even their horses and dogs get enough to eat, but I must eat bread (my heart bleeds when I think of it) that many a well-fed dog would refuse to touch.

Is it not a shame, my dear brethren (if such is the case, and that is what I do not, and cannot know), for a Christian to spend his money on a thousand vanities, when he knows well, and sees and hears that many of his brethren and sisters have hardly anything to eat, and he is not at all anxious to help them ? How the complaints of the poor, who cry to God for vengeance against those hard-hearted people who think only of themselves, must re-echo through the clouds ! That is the reason, and I am not surprised at it, that scarcity and want so often afflict whole cities and countries. Therefore, says St. Basil, God does not open His hand to help us, because we close ours against the needy. St. Augustine says : “ We are chastised by scarcity, because we do not help the poor.”² Nor is it any wonder that all our pilgrimages and prayers remain without effect. St. Basil says : “ The voice of prayer calls in vain to God, and vanishes into thin air.” Why ? “ Because we do not hear those who ask us for alms.”³ This reason he found in the words of the Holy Ghost : “ He that stoppeth his ear against the cry of the poor, shall also cry himself, and shall not be heard.”⁴ What will such people answer on the day of judgment, when Christ will say to them in an angry

Who, therefore, must expect severe punishment.

¹ Ego autem hic fame pereo !

² Semper flagellamur in frugibus, quia bene egentibus non facimus.

³ Supplicantium ad Deum vox frustra clamat, et in aëra evanescit. Nam et nos rogantes minime audimus.

⁴ Qui obdurat aurem suam ad clamorem pauperis, et ipse clamabit, et non exaudietur.— Prov. xxi. 13.

voice : "I was hungry and you gave Me not to eat" ?¹ Their doom is sealed : "Judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy."²

Still more they who persecute and oppress such poor people.

But what will become of those who not only refuse to assist the decent poor, and thus incur guilt enough already, but who are ashamed of them, and turn away their eyes and hearts from them, and do not acknowledge them, simply because they are in poverty and trouble? And, alas, it is only too often the case, nowadays, that such poor citizens, instead of being treated with Christian charity, are only laughed at and ridiculed. The Wise Ecclesiasticus says : "As humility is an abomination to the proud, so also the rich man abhorreth the poor."³ What will become of those who act, not like the ravens that carried the bread to Elias, but like real carrion birds, and throw themselves ravenously upon the hungry and needy, to take away the bit of bread they have left ; who entrap the decent poor, who cannot defend themselves, by all sorts of legal chicanery ; who allow them to be defrauded, or neglect their just claims, because they are weak and powerless, or weary them by unnecessary delays in matters of justice ; who try to make their profit out of the general misfortune in times of scarcity ; who raise the price of provisions, so that many are compelled to sell their little property at a loss, in order to buy food ? Such is the way of the world ! The little flies are caught by the spiders, while the big ones are safe from them, thus verifying the words of our Lord in the Gospel of St. Matthew : "He that hath not, from him shall be taken away that also which he hath."⁴ "Fear and tremble all you who thus take advantage of the poor!"⁵ Such is the warning that St. John Chrysostom gives you. For although you have power, money, and influence, yet the poor have much mightier weapons to defend themselves with, namely, their prayers and cries for help.⁶ Nor will God forget them, as the Psalmist says : "For requiring their blood, He hath remembered them ; He hath not forgotten the cry of the poor."⁷ For my part, I certainly should not wish to stand in the place of those hard-hearted people on the last day, for one refusal to give alms in a case of necessity,

¹ Esurivi et non dedistis mihi manducare.—Matth. xxv. 42.

² Judicium sine misericordia illi, qui non fecit misericordiam.—James ii. 13.

³ Sicut abominatio est superbo humilitas, sic et execratio divitis pauper.—Ecc. xiii. 24.

⁴ Qui autem non habet, et quod habet, auferetur ab eo.—Matth. xiii. 12.

⁵ Timete, quicumque pauperes injuria afficitis.

⁶ Habent illi arma omnium validissima, luctus et ejulatus.

⁷ Quoniam requirrensanguinem eorum recordatus est : non est oblitus clamorem pauperum.—Ps. ix. 13.

brings with it, like a thunderbolt, the sentence : “ Depart from me, you cursed.”¹ If he, says St. Augustine, is condemned to hell, to whom Christ will say : I was naked, and thou hast not clothed Me,² “ what place in hell will be kept for him to whom Christ will say : I was clothed and you stripped Me ? They who have not clothed the naked shall burn with the devil. But where shall they burn who have plundered widows and orphans ? ”³ Oh, what will then be the fate of those wicked husbands, who bring their wives and children to poverty by their intemperance, and who make away with not merely the daily earnings, but even the clothes of their wives (and I know that to be the case) and spend the proceeds in the tavern ? Such poor wives and children are all the more to be pitied, since they find so few who will believe and help them, for they are generally treated as impostors when they ask for assistance. Your husband is young and strong, people say to the poor wife ; he can support you well enough if he likes. But they never think that it is the young, strong man who has reduced her to want. Alas, we can again say with St. Augustine : “ If they who have not clothed the naked, shall burn with the devil, where shall they burn,” who plunder their own wives and children, and reduce them to beggary ?

Christians, let us prove that we are children of the Father of mercy, and true followers of Jesus Christ, who had such compassion for the poor ! We should make friends of the decent poor especially, according to the divine command in Deuteronomy : “ If one of thy brethren that dwelleth within the gates of thy city. . . come to poverty, thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor close thy hand, but shalt open it to the poor man. Thou shalt lend him that which thou perceivest he hath need of. Thou shalt give to him, neither shalt thou do anything craftily in relieving his necessities ; that the Lord thy God may bless thee at all times, and in all things to which thou shalt put thy hand.”⁴ But where are we to find those poor people ? Ah, that is a question worth asking ! If they are ashamed to appear

Exhortation to all to help the decent poor.

¹ Discedite a me, maledicti. —Matth. xxv. 42.

² Nugus fui et non vestisti me.

³ Quem locum habebit in igne eterno, cui dicitur est : Vestitus fui et spoliasti me. Cum diabolo ardent, qui nudos non induerunt ubi putamus arsueros, qui viduas et orphanos spollarunt ?

⁴ Si unus de fratribus tuis, qui morantur intra portas civitatis tue . . . ad paupertatem venerit, non obdurabis cor tuum, nec contrahas manum, sed aperies eam pauperi etc. Dabis ei, nec ages quidquam callide in ejus necessitatibus sublevandis ; ut benedicat tibi Dominus Deus tuus in omni tempore, et in cunctis ad quæ manum miseris. —Deut. xv. 7, 8, 10.

in public, yet they are known here and there in your neighborhood. "Want goeth before his face." You can see their poverty in their sunken eyes and pallid faces. And if you really wish to help them, you can find ways and means enough of doing so, either by yourselves, or by means of others. "Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor." Why, asks St. Augustine, does the Prophet say "that understandeth"? Why does he not say: Who give to the poor? For this reason, answers the holy Doctor: "That we may give also to those who do not ask," through shame. That is not true charity that is forced from us by continued asking. Give alms just as God gives them to you every day. The rain falls upon your fields, before even you pray for it. The sun rises, while you are still in bed. The trees bear fruit for you, while you are asleep. Your vineyards produce wine. All the elements help to support you, although you do not think of them. "Blessed is he that understandeth" in the same way, how to give alms to the poor, and to help them, although they do not ask him for help. By giving alms in that way, since such poor people do not appear publicly before your door, like ordinary beggars, you will better fulfil the counsel of Jesus Christ, in the Gospel of St. Matthew: "That thy alms may be in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee" a hundred-fold here, and the kingdom of Heaven hereafter. Yes, my heavenly Father, this promise of Thine shall encourage me henceforth to be more generous and charitable to the decent poor, of whom I have hitherto thought so little! Thou hast generously bestowed on me all that I possess. I do not wish to enjoy it alone, but will share it honorably with my poor brethren and sisters. I will help, according to my means, those of whom Thou hast said: "What you have done to the least of these my little ones, you have done to Me." How could I ask Thee with any confidence for my daily bread, if I allowed Thy poor to suffer hunger? Therefore, harden not my heart, but give to me a truly Christian and merciful heart, like to Thine, oh, God! Such should be your resolution, my dear brethren, who can afford to help the poor.

Advice and
consolation
for the de-
cent poor.

Finally, I address you, poor Christians, whoever you may be, who daily think and say in your secret poverty, with the steward in

¹ Faciem ejus præcedit egestas.—Job xli. 13.

² Beatus, qui intelligit super egenum et pauperem.—Ps. xl. 2.

³ Ut et non petentibus detur.

⁴ Ut sit elemosyna tua in abscondito, et Pater tuus, qui videt in abscondito, reddet tibi.—Matth. vi. 4.

the Gospel : "To dig I am not able, to beg I am ashamed."¹ "What shall I do?"² I have nothing before me, no help, no resource. Must I despair? God forbid! Must I give vent to my impatience, and murmur against Heaven? Oh, certainly not. What good would that do? Shall I try to help myself by unlawful means? No, that would be a great mistake. "What shall I do?" Shall I call upon God to punish the hard-hearted and wealthy? Shall I curse and revile them? By no means; that would only make matters worse: that would change your temporal misery, by which you can gain Heaven, into an eternal hell, where you would be wretched forever. "I know what I shall do."³ "Make friends for yourselves."⁴ If no one in the world will help you, or be your friend, if all men abandon you, make friends for yourselves in Heaven, by bearing your poverty patiently. Select and keep as your Friend, the good God, to whom the Prophet David says: "To Thee is the poor man left; Thou wilt be a helper to the orphan."⁵ Make known your misery to Him; place your whole hope in Him who provides for the ravens, and for the smallest worm. St. Francis of Assisi, when he put on a coarse linen cloak, said: Now I can really say: "Our Father, who art in Heaven."⁶ When the same Saint sent any of his brethren to travel, instead of giving them money, he used to tell them to take with them that verse of the Psalm: "Cast thy care upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee."⁷ "I have been young," are the words of another Psalm, "and now am old; and I have not seen the just forsaken, nor his seed seeking bread."⁸ Have you offended God by sin? If so, your condition is wretched indeed! But you must say with the penitent Prodigal in the Gospel: I know what I will do: I will arise, and by sincere repentance, be converted to my heavenly Father.⁹ Are you, as I hope, in the state of grace? Then, for your consolation, remember Him who, as St. Paul says, "Being rich, became poor for your sakes,"¹⁰ your Saviour Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, who bore poverty for thirty-three years, and had not whereon to lay His head. "Let the

¹ Fodere non valeo, mendicare erubescio.

² Quid faciam?

³ Scio quid faciam.

⁴ Facite vobis amicos.

⁵ Tibi derelictus est pauper; orphano tu eris adiutor.—Ps. ix. 14.

⁶ Pater noster, qui est in cœlis.

⁷ Jacta super Dominum curam tuam, et ipse te enutriet.—Ps. liv. 23.

⁸ Junior fui, etenim senui; et non vidi justum derelictum, nec semen ejus quærens panem.

—Ps. xxxvi. 25.

⁹ Surgam, et ibo ad Patrem.—Luke xv. 18.

¹⁰ Propter vos egenus factus est, cum esset dives.—II. Cor. viii. 9.

poor see and rejoice,"¹ that they have as their Companion and Brother in poverty, God Himself, who still suffers hunger and thirst in their persons; for He will say on the last day: "I was hungry."² Think every day of what Tobias said to his son: "We lead, indeed, a poor life, but we shall have many good things if we fear God, and depart from all sin, and do that which is good."³ To you, poor people, I say the same words: Dear children of God, be not troubled nor afraid! It is true that you lead a poor life, but what great riches and treasures you can collect, if you fear God and avoid sin! What riches? All the riches imaginable. Look up to Heaven, and number the stars, if you can; look higher still, if possible: all that, with God Himself, will be your portion forever! You say, we shall have it 'all hereafter'; but now we are in suffering and sorrow. And what does that matter? you shall have it in a very short time. Christ said to His Apostles: "In a little while you shall see Me,"⁴ and possess all goods with Me. If, then, you have God as your Friend, what more do you want? St. Augustine asks: "What has the rich man, if he has not God: and what does the poor man want who has God?"⁵ Let this thought, beloved children of God, encourage you to be patient and resigned; let your prayer be, every morning when you renew your good intention: Behold, O God, I offer Thee myself and my whole family; Thy decrees are always just, no matter what Thou commandest; I give myself completely to Thy holy will. Thou hast given me temporal goods, Thou hast taken them away from me; may Thy Name be always blessed! I must endure hunger and sorrow: may Thy holy will be done, O Lord! I will not, therefore, cease to love, praise, and bless Thee, O God of infinite goodness! Dost Thou wish me to be poorer still? Behold, I am in Thy hands: do with me as Thou wilt, but fulfil what Thou hast promised me hereafter. It is in Heaven that I expect my reward, my satisfaction, my eternal joy. Oh, happy poor, if you thus speak, think, and act! Oh, wealthy poverty! Oh, sorrow full of consolation! Oh, want full of sweetness! That is how you should act. Amen.

¹ Videant pauperes et lætentur.—Ps. lxxviii. 33.

² Esurivi.

³ Pauperem quidem vitam gerimus, sed multa bona habebimus, si timuerimus Deum, et recesserimus ab omni peccato, et fecerimus bene.—Tob. iv. 23.

⁴ Habebimus.

⁵ Modicum, et videbitis me.—John xvi. 16.

⁶ Quid habet dives, si Deum non habet, quid non habet pauper, si Deum habet?

Another Introduction for the Fifth Sunday in Lent.

Text.

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

“Which of you shall convince Me of sin?”

Christ could say that with all truth, in spite of the envious Pharisees, who eagerly watched everything He did, and put a bad interpretation upon it: “Which of you shall convince Me of sin?”¹ So also think and say, but falsely, many wealthy Christians, nowadays, who seldom or never perform any of the works of Christian charity and mercy. Who will, or can accuse me of sin, they say, because I enjoy my goods alone, and give little or no alms? I want what I have for myself; I have no superfluous wealth; beggars are idle, deceitful, thankless, and often wicked people; I am not bound under pain of sin to help them, etc. My dear brethren, I have proved, during Lent, that these excuses are invalid, and shown, first, that each one is bound to give alms according to his means; secondly, that many could afford to give alms, if they lived according to the rules of Christian moderation, and therefore are not to be excused from the sin of hard-heartedness; thirdly, that all the poor, no matter who they are, are well deserving of being helped, according to one’s means, because it is Jesus Christ Himself who asks alms in their persons. But if, in spite of that, there are some who still think that public beggars have no claim on their charity, I will prove to them to-day that there are other poor who certainly deserve alms, and that they who refuse alms to them, are evidently guilty of sin. And what poor are they? I mean the decent poor, etc.—*continues as before.*

¹ *Qui ex vobis arguet me de peccato?*

SIXTY-FOURTH SERMON.**ON THE HAPPINESS OF THE POOR.****Subject.**

1st. The poor, when they are satisfied with the will of God, are better off, and happier in this life, than the rich. 2d. They are more certain of eternal happiness in the next life, than the rich.—*Preached on the eighth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Quid faciam? Fodere non valeo, mendicare erubesco.—Luke xvi. 3.

“What shall I do? To dig I am not able, to beg I am ashamed.”

Introduction.

The merciful Saviour said: “I have compassion on the multitude,”¹ for they have had nothing to eat for three days. “I have compassion on the multitude,” I must also say, when I think of how many poor beggars there are, and especially of the number of decent poor, who, on account of their former respectability, could easily say with the steward in the Gospel: “To dig” and labor “I am not able, to beg” publicly “I am ashamed.”² “What shall I do?”³ What hope is there for me? And they are just as badly off who have to work hard every day, and still can barely get bread enough for themselves and their children. Thus, since the decent poor feel their poverty more than public beggars, they are more deserving of pity. “What shall I do?” I have often advocated their cause already by trying to exhort and encourage others to be generous to them. Whether I have succeeded, or to speak better, whether I have touched the hearts of the rich, or not, I cannot say; all I know is, that my intention was good. But now the poor expect an alms from me, and I acknowledge my debt; I have prom-

¹ Misereor super turbam.—Mark viii. 2.

² Fodere non valeo, mendicare erubesco.

³ Quid faciam.

ised it to them. Therefore, hold out, not your hands, but your ears and your hearts! For if you come to me with outstretched hands, I can only answer you as St. Peter answered the lame man at the gate of the temple: "Silver and gold I have none; but what I have, I give thee."¹ Ye poor of Jesus Christ, do not expect money from me, because I have not a penny; but what I have, and can share with you, I am ready to give you, namely, spiritual consolation in your necessities. You ask, "What shall I do?"² I will tell you what to do. Be satisfied with the will and decree of God; hope and trust in Him, and you will be better off and happier in your poverty, than if you were rich. As I shall now show for your consolation.

Plan of Discourse.

You are better off, and happier in this life, than the rich. That I will prove in the first part, which will also be the longer, since it requires more proof. You are more certain of eternal happiness in the next life, as I shall prove in the second part. The rich will also hear something for themselves; the others can easily apply what they hear to their difficulties and trials.

Jesus Christ, Father, Companion, and King of the poor, give to all those from whom, in Thy all-wise providence, Thou hast taken away the goods of this world, or to whom Thou hast dealt them out sparingly, the consolation of Thy Holy Spirit, and the grace to serve Thee faithfully, and to be satisfied with Thy will. This we ask of Thee, through Thy Mother Mary, and our holy angels guardian.

A poor citizen who has hardly bread enough for his children, a poor laborer who must work the whole day and still suffer hunger, a poor beggar who must go from door to door on the public streets to look for a piece of bread, are all better off and happier here on earth than a rich man who has everything in abundance. What a strange, incomprehensible thing to say! Who can believe it? What do you rich people think of it? Is it true? But I need not ask you that question; you would laugh at me, and it would be with me, as it was formerly with my Lord and Saviour, when He preached to the Pharisees on the happiness of the poor. "Now the Pharisees who were

The poor, although they appear miserable, can be happy.

¹ Argentum et aurum non est mihi: quod autem habeo, hoc tibi do.—Acts iii. 6.

² Quid faciam?

covetous, heard all these things, and they derided Him.”¹ Ye poor and needy, what do you think of it? You will perhaps answer me with sighs and tears: Ah, God help us, what a miserable happiness ours is! Still, I maintain what I have said, and you, if you wish, can experience this happiness.

If they only serve God, and are satisfied with His will.

I admit that all the poor have not the happiness of which I speak. There are different kinds of poverty, says Hugo de Sancto Victore; there is a pretended poverty, a burdensome poverty, a useless poverty, a wicked poverty, and a holy poverty. A pretended, or false poverty is that of those hypocrites, or lazy people who merely pretend to be poor, or who exaggerate their poverty; or who, although they could earn their bread honestly, prefer to loiter about the streets, and take the bread out of the mouths of those who are really poor. A burdensome poverty is that of those who bear want unwillingly, and try to raise themselves from their lowly state by every means, lawful and unlawful. A useless poverty is that of most people who bear want like hungry animals, without any good intention or supernatural end, and without considering the will of God; they bear it simply because they cannot help themselves, so that they gain nothing by it for eternity. A wicked poverty is the worst of all, and it is that of those who lead impious and reckless lives in want and misery, who murmur against God and His providence, who curse the rich when the latter give them nothing, who sometimes barter their purity for the sake of a little gain, and thus make their beggar's staff a ladder by which to descend into hell, to suffer eternal hunger and thirst. All these are excluded from the happiness of which I now speak, although all could enjoy it if they wished. A holy poverty, and would to God that it were more general, is that of the just who are satisfied with the will of God; put their confidence in Him, and with holy Job, never cease to bless Him. It is of these alone that I speak, and I say that they are far happier than the rich ones of the world.

For earthly happiness consists in a peaceful and contented disposition.

For, to understand the matter properly, in what does earthly happiness consist? In the possession of wealth and riches? In being honored by others? In a luxurious and easy life? In eating, drinking, and sleeping? In spending the time in idle amusements? Is it in those things, I ask, that happiness consists? If so, then the consolation I have promised will come to nothing, and the best thing for me to do would be to hold my tongue and

¹ Audiebant autem omnia hæc Pharisei, qui erant avari, et deridebant illum.—Luce xvi. 14.

go home ; for all my preaching will not bring these things into the houses of the poor. In what consists, then, true happiness, which is a Heaven on earth ? I will not answer, but I will let those do it whom you must believe, unless you wish to accuse God Himself of an untruth. The great Apostle St. Paul, writing to the Romans, says: “ For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but justice, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”¹ In the first place, then, besides the state of grace and the friendship of God, without which there can be no true happiness, the kingdom of God consists in peace and contentment of mind. What good is it to me to possess money in my coffers, corn in my granaries, wine in my cellar, and rich lands, if I am at war with myself, disturbed, disquieted, and anxious in mind ? A piece of dry bread, with a contented mind, is better than the most costly fare with trouble and anxiety.

Who enjoys that peace of mind ? Is it he who has many cares and occupations, who has much to fear, much to hope for, much to guard against, much to desire, much that he is still in want of, much that he can lose any day, much that he is always in danger of having to leave, to his great sorrow, and who is therefore a servant and a slave to countless agitations and desires ? Or is it he who is free from cares and occupations of all kinds, who need fear only God, who has nothing to hope for but Heaven, nothing to avoid but sin, nothing to desire but his salvation, nothing to lose but his life, nothing to leave but this vale of tears, and who is, therefore, lord and master over himself ? No doubt the latter is far better off and more at peace than the former. But that is the case with every poor citizen, poor widow, or poor beggar, who is content with the decree of God’s providence and is resigned to the divine will. Thieves and robbers, go to them ; they are not afraid of you, you can take little or nothing from them. Misfortune, losses, and bankruptcy, they care not for you, because you cannot make them poorer. War, devastation, shipwreck, bad seasons, you do not trouble them, for you cannot injure their lands and possessions, since they have none. Law-suits and debts, you cannot take away their peace of mind, nor break their night’s rest, for they know nothing about you ; they have nothing to go to law about, nothing on which they can borrow money ; or if they have formerly contracted just debts, without any fault of their own, they leave the payment of them to

The pious
poor enjoy
that peace.

¹ Non est enim regnum Dei esca et potus, sed iustitia, et pax, et gaudium in Spiritu sancto.—Rom. xiv. 17.

their heavenly Father, whose providence has either taken from them what they had, or given them nothing, for no one has a right to claim anything from him who has nothing, nor would law or violence help such a claim. Finally, they need not have much fear of death, because it can take nothing from them, nor can it do anything to them beyond placing their souls in the possession of eternal goods.

On the other hand, the rich are always uneasy.

The rich man, on the contrary, is tormented every day with a thousand cares, troubles, fears, and anxieties, in his efforts to keep his wealth and position, to leave his children well off, to avoid being deceived and robbed by others, to prevent his own servants from being unfaithful to him, to collect his yearly rents and income, to carry on his business to advantage, to secure success in his law-suits, to cultivate his fields and vineyards properly, to protect them from bad weather, and to gather in his crops in due time. These cares, and countless similar ones, unceasingly torment the rich man, so that he is more like a prisoner and a slave than a free owner of his property,¹ as St. Cyprian says; therefore, the Prophet David calls the rich, "men of riches, to show that they do not possess their riches, but are possessed by them,"² as St. Ambrose explains the words. Even heathen philosophers know that much, for many of them renounced all they had so as to live without care, and be better able to devote themselves to study. Crates was once left a large property by a friend, but he immediately gave it away, saying: "Crates has to-day set himself free."³ Another poor philosopher had received five talents in gold from Policrates; the good man thought he was the happiest person in the world, since he had so much money. Away, he said, away with beggarly philosophy! it is not profitable; I will traffic my money and make more. He went to a merchant to learn business, and considered for a time in what way he could best invest his money. He spent the whole day and a good part of the night thinking of it; he even dreamed of it, and was disturbed in his sleep by it. After some time had elapsed in this way, he began to think that he had enough of it. From the moment the money came into my house, he said to himself, I have not had any peace. Good-bye, then, to business; the best business for me is to have nothing and to enjoy my usual peace of mind. Full of this resolve, he brought back the money to Policrates, and said to him:

¹ Pecuniæ tuæ captivus es.

² Viri divitiarum, ut ostenderet eos non possessores divitiarum, sed a suis divitiis possideri.

³ Crates Cratem hodie libertate donat.

“I hate the gift that robs me of my night’s rest.”¹ When Diogenes once saw, in the market-place, a quantity of costly merchandise and a number of people who were engaged in traffic, “O,” he exclaimed with joy, “how many things there are that I can do without !”² How hard it is for people to have to occupy themselves with so many different things ! Poor Christians, how much greater reason have you not to boast of the freedom that you can enjoy in holy poverty, without any trouble !

Yes, you say, but what a miserable freedom it is, when people have hardly enough to support life ! That is true ; but if they are content with the little they have, they live from day to day, according to the counsel of Jesus Christ, and do not trouble about the morrow ; they rely on the care and goodness of their heavenly Father, who provides for all, and who will not let them perish with hunger ; even if He did so, their lives are in the hands of God, who gave them life. But they have not the comforts, pleasures, and joys of life, like the rich. What comforts and pleasures ? Happiness does not consist in such things, as we have seen already. Yet, let us see which have the greater comfort, the rich or the poor. The comforts you speak of, that the rich man can enjoy, consist in having a fine house, in eating, drinking, and sleeping well. Is not that so ? For I do not wish to speak of impure pleasures. Now, I can say with St. John Chrysostom, that the poor man who is content with his lot has a more comfortable dwelling, more comfortable clothing, and eats, drinks, and sleeps better than the rich man. The Saint says : “Do not wonder at what I say,”³ for I will prove it to you. Let us go into the house of a rich man ; everything in it is most luxurious ; there are many rooms in the first, second, and third stories ; there are ante-chambers, parlors, dining-rooms, studies, bed-rooms ; rooms for the master and for the mistress, for the children, for the servants, and for guests ; most of them are adorned with costly hangings and with works of art, while the chairs are richly covered, and the sideboards glitter with plate. Let us go now into the house of a poor man ; it is a very small place, in which, besides his empty kitchen, he has barely room to remain with his family during the day, and to sleep at night ; or we may find him in a strange house, occupying one miserable room. There is certainly a great difference between the two ; I am astonished at the pomp and magnificence of the rich

The poor are better off than the rich, even as far as comfort is concerned.

¹ *Odi munus, quod me vigilare cogit.*

² *O ! quantis non indigeo !*

³ *Ne miremini dictum !*

man, and at first sight, I am inclined to pity the poor man ; but after all, which of the two has the greater comfort in his house, the rich man with his suites of rooms, or the poor man with his one room ? Now, it is quite certain that the former cannot occupy more than one room at a time, and that he can only be in one part of it at a time ; is he, then, so much better off than the other ; who can occupy just as much space in his little room ? If the former wishes to use all his rooms, he must go from one to the other ; the latter need not do that, and can content himself where he is, with his work ; and he is just as comfortable as the other, for he has space enough to rest himself in. The whole difference between the two is this : the rich man must go to a great deal of expense to keep his house in proper order ; he must employ upholsterers to look after the furniture ; men and maid-servants to clean the rooms ; nay, he must be careful, when he comes in from the muddy street, to clean his shoes, so as not to soil the carpets ; the poor man, on the contrary, is free from all these cares, and can go in and out, how and when he pleases. Is he not much better off than the other ?

In their
clothing.

Let us now consider their relative positions, as far as clothing is concerned. A rich lady wishes to go out to walk, or to Church. What a long time she takes to get ready ! Why so ? Because she must dress in the latest fashion, according to her position ; otherwise, she would not appear in public ; and a great deal of time and trouble is required for that. Her dress has to be prepared, her hair has to be combed and curled, the glass must be consulted twenty times, before she can get her head-gear into proper order, lace has to be pinned on here and there, ribbons must be adjusted, flounces have to be put on, one over the other, and puffed out ; hours are required to do the whole thing properly, so that she has to lose Mass very often on week-days, on account of the length of time she takes to dress. But supposing that she is at last decked out in the height of fashion ; do you think she feels very comfortable in that pompous array ? No chance of it ! She has to turn first one way and then the other, before taking a seat in Church, or she will spoil all her finery ! Fine ladies are bound to admit that their elegant dresses are most uncomfortable, and that as soon as they go home, they are glad enough to take them off, so as to be able to move about and sit down at their ease. How much better off and more comfortable is the wife of the poor citizen, in this respect ! During the time you would take to say one or two Our Fathers, she has

put on her hat, and jacket, and dress, and is ready to start. Judge from that, my dear brethren, which of the two enjoys the greater convenience in dress, the rich or the poor.

With regard to enjoyment in eating and drinking, you must admit that a large table, laden with silver plate and cut glass, and costly food and drink, does not constitute pleasure, but rather that a good appetite and a healthy stomach are the first requisites. You may sit down at a princely table, and have thirty different kinds of meats brought to you; if you are suffering from fever, or have no appetite, what pleasure will you have? No cook can prepare food half so well as hunger and a good appetite. Look at the poor man enjoying his bread and cheese; it tastes sweeter to him than all your partridges and field-hares do to you, who do not know what to eat first, you have so much to choose from. Artaxerxes, King of Assyria, after losing a battle, was obliged to take refuge in a peasant's hut; he was very hungry, and was glad to get some barley-bread to eat, and water to drink. He liked it so well, that he began to complain of his gods for having kept such delicious food a secret from him. You must acknowledge, too, that it is not a grand bed, with soft pillows, that makes one enjoy a comfortable sleep, but the fatigue of the body, an undisturbed imagination, and calm repose. How the poor man who has to work hard all day to get bread for himself and his children, enjoys his night's rest! He finds his handful of straw more comfortable, especially if he has a good conscience for a pillow, than the rich man, with all his money, with an overloaded stomach and a head full of cares, finds his bed of down; and while the former sleeps the whole night through, the latter awakes twenty times, and turns uneasily from one side to the other. But these are only pleasures that men enjoy in common with the brute beasts.

There is a spiritual, supernatural, and much greater joy that the poorest man, who is in the state of grace, can have in this life, and it is that which St. Paul calls true happiness, nay, even Heaven on earth; "joy in the Holy Ghost."¹ How so? The blind Tobias said to the disguised angel Raphael, when the latter wished him joy: "What manner of joy shall be to me, who sit in darkness, and see not the light of Heaven?"² A poor man or woman could ask: What joy can I have in the Holy Ghost?³

And as far as enjoyment in eating and drinking and sleeping is concerned.

They are much better off as regards spiritual consolations.

¹ Gaudium in Spiritu sancto.—Rom. xiv. 17.

² Quale gaudium mihi erit, qui in tenebris sedeo, et lumen cœli non video?—Tob. v. 12.

³ Quale gaudium mihi erit?

for I am in the greatest want, and have not even the necessities of life.

It is a comfort for a servant to suffer want with his king.

Listen : if in escaping from some danger, or on account of some sudden necessity, a servant were obliged to take refuge with his king, in a peasant's hut, and to be satisfied with barley-bread and water, and to sleep on the bare ground, would it not be a consolation and joy to him, although he suffers from want ? Nay, he would be more delighted to be the companion of his king in such circumstances, for a short time, than if he could sit with him at the royal table in the palace, because he could boast ever after that he had shared want as well as abundance with his master. But he is badly off all the same. No matter ; the king, he would think, is much greater than I, and he is no better off than I am. It is a certain fact, that there have been servants who pretended to be lame, or who even plucked out an eye, in order to be more like their lame or one-eyed master.

It is a still greater joy and consolation for a poor man to know that he is in the same state as Christ.

If the example of a mortal prince, whose favor is changeable and deceitful, can do so much, what cannot be expected from faithful servants and hand-maids of God, when they consider that, in their poverty, they are companions of Jesus Christ, the Eternal King of Heaven ? Nay, when they remember that their King had much less during His life, although He is Lord of all, than they His servants have ? St. Paul says, for the consolation of poor people : “ Being rich, He became poor for your sakes.”¹ What joy and consolation for a soul that loves God, to think : I was born of poor parents, my brothers and sisters are poor, my wife and children are poor ; but Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was even worse off than I am ! His Mother was a poor virgin, His foster-father was a poor working-man. His companions were fishermen, His dearest friends were the poor, the sick, and the oppressed ! I dwell in a small and miserable house : Jesus Christ had not even a house that He could call His own ; He was born in a stable ; He had to take refuge with strangers in Egypt ; He lived in a small house at Nazareth ; when He went to preach the Gospel, He had to pass the night in the open air, unless some one, through charity, offered Him shelter ! I have no money, but Christ, my Lord, had not even enough to pay the tribute ! I must earn my bread by working or by begging, and Christ, my Lord, had to work also for His daily bread ? I have no landed property : Christ, the Lord of the world, had not even a foot of ground in His own dominions ! I am clad in old, worn-out

¹ Propter vos egenus factus est, cum esset dives.—II. Cor. viii. 9.

clothes : Christ, my Lord and my King, was not dressed any better ! The garment that His mother made for Him, when He was a child, grew, by a continued miracle, with Him, and He never wore any other ! I sometimes suffer hunger and thirst : Christ, my Lord, had the same experience ! I live on alms, and am supported by the charity of others : Christ and His Apostles had to do the same, so that the latter were often obliged to pluck ears of corn to eat ! I must sometimes complain of being in want : Christ has had to do that also ! I sleep on straw : Christ had not even whereon to lay His sacred head ! I am despised and looked down upon by all : it was foretold of Christ, that He would be, “the most abject of men ;”¹ “the reproach of men and the outcast of the people.”² I will have nothing to leave my children when I die : Christ had not even a thread of His garment to leave to His mother, and He was buried in a grave that belonged to a stranger ! So that in my poverty, I am a companion and a living image of Jesus Christ, the Son of God,³ as St. Clement of Alexandria says of the patient poor. Have I not, therefore, reason to be satisfied ? Should I not rejoice with all my heart that I have the happiness of being poor with Christ ? “The servant is not greater than his master,”⁴ says our Lord Himself, and he should be satisfied to be as his master is.

It was this thought, my dear brethren, that filled convents and deserts with those who proposed voluntary poverty ; it was this thought that drove countless numbers of people to leave all they had, that they might share in the poverty of Jesus Christ. They think themselves rich enough, says St. Jerome, as long as they are poor with Christ.⁵ It was this thought that made our forefathers, the first Christians, sell their houses and lands, and lay the money at the feet of the Apostles, so that no one might have anything of his own, after choosing the poor Christ as his Head, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles. It is the same thought that makes pious souls nowadays think themselves happy on account of their poverty, esteem themselves unworthy of so great a grace, and pray earnestly that God would keep them in the poor and lowly condition in which He was pleased to live on earth ; and that I have often heard myself, to my great consolation.

Therefore,
so many
chose vol-
untary pov-
erty.

¹ *Novissimus virorum.*—Isai. liii. 3.

² *Opprobrium hominum, et abjectio plebis.*—Ps. xxi. 7.

³ *Nudam Dei imaginem.*

⁴ *Non est servus major domino suo.*—John xv. 20.

⁵ *Affatim dives est, qui cum Christo pauper est.*

Therefore, the poor are happier than the rich in this life.

See, now ; who could imagine that in a state which almost all men look upon with horror, which is avoided as the greatest evil of life, which excites the compassion and pity of all, there could be such great happiness and contentment ? This is, indeed, strange and unintelligible to the children of the world ; but it is what Christ, the Infallible Truth, who cannot judge of a thing otherwise than as it really is, publicly proclaims, when He places the poor in spirit, that is, those who embrace voluntary poverty, or who bear compulsory poverty with resignation, first amongst the blessed : “Blessed are the poor in spirit.”¹ That is what you, poor and needy Christians, could really experience if you are only satisfied with the will and decree of God. Rejoice, then, in your poor, but peaceful and happy state on earth ! And rejoice much more at your future happiness in the next life, of which you hold a much surer pledge than the rich ones of this world ; as I shall briefly prove in the

Second Part.

No one can go to Heaven who is not like Christ.

I find that I have already partly proved what I am now about to establish ; for it is true, and it is so infallibly, that, as St. Paul says, no one can enter Heaven, unless he is conformable to the image of the Son of God : “Whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son ;”² if, I say, that is so, who must not admit that there is more of the image of the poor Christ in the poor, than in the rich ? Therefore, if a poor man is satisfied with his condition, who will not say that he is surer of Heaven than the rich man ? You are frightened and shocked at this, you wealthy people ! And you have good reason, too, if one thing is wanting to you ! Not in vain has the meek Saviour threatened that woe : “Woe to you that are rich, for you have your consolation. Woe to you that are filled, for you shall hunger.”³ Not in vain has He declared in the Gospel of St. Matthew, that it is so difficult for the rich to enter Heaven : “Amen, I say to you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of Heaven. And again I say to you : It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of Heaven.”⁴ Oh, my God,

¹ Beati pauperes spiritu.—Matth. v. 3.

² Quos præcivit et prædestinavit, conformes fieri imaginis Filii sui.—Rom. viii. 29.

³ Væ vobis divitibus, quia habetis consolationem vestram. Væ vobis, qui saturati estis, quia esurietis.—Luke vi. 24, 25.

⁴ Amen, dico vobis: quia dives difficile intrabit in regnum cælorum. Et iterum dico vobis: Facilius est camelum per foramen acus transire, quam divitem intrare in regnum cælorum.—Matth. xix. 23, 24.

why art Thou so severe? Are riches, then, bad in themselves? No; but they are bad in the evil effects that easily follow from them, when they once get possession of the human heart. Therefore, I say, you have reason to fear, if one thing is wanting to you, namely, detachment from your riches, which is absolutely necessary to prevent your having an inordinate desire for them. You must receive them from the hand of God with gratitude and humility; you must use them with Christian moderation, and in doing good works to the glory of God, and, if they are taken away from you, either in part or altogether, you must be satisfied, and thus be poor, at least in spirit, so as to resemble our poor Saviour.

But what a rare and difficult thing it is thus to detach one's heart and affections from the money and property that one possesses in abundance, that one sees and touches and tries to increase daily! This is the chief reason why riches are to be dreaded, because, as St. Bernard says: "They seldom or never can be possessed without the heart being attached to them."¹ What little difficulty you have in this respect, poor Christians! How much easier it is to keep the heart and affections free from what one has not, and cannot hope to have! You very seldom desire great or abundant wealth, but merely what is necessary to support life. You are quite prepared to do as St. Paul says: "But having food, and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content,"² we ask for nothing more. Is not that so?

Again, if the right way to Heaven is that alone of which Christ speaks in the Gospel of St. Matthew: "How narrow is the gate, and straight is the way that leadeth to life; and few there are that find it!"³ and if the only way to hell is that of which Christ speaks in the same place: "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat,"⁴ you can judge for yourselves which of the two is more likely to find the way to Heaven, the rich man in luxury, or the poor man in want. I do not deny that many who were rich in this life, are now happy with God in Heaven. I admit, too, that here below, thanks be to God, there are many wealthy people who are zealous, pious, and edifying Christians;

That is very hard for the rich; very easy for the poor.

The narrow way leads to Heaven; hard for the rich to find it.

¹ Vix aut nunquam sine amore valeant possideri.

² Habentes autem alimenta, et quibus tegamur, his contenti sumus.—I. Tim. vi. 8.

³ Quam angusta porta, et arcta via est, quæ ducit ad vitam: et pauci sunt, qui inveniunt eam!—Matth. vii. 14.

⁴ Lata porta, et spatiosa via est, quæ ducit ad perditionem, et multi sunt, qui intrant per eam.—Ibid. 13.

nor can I say that all poor people go to Heaven. No, my dear brethren, eternal perdition is not a necessary consequence of riches, nor does eternal salvation follow necessarily on poverty; but we must acknowledge that the former have more opportunities of sin and incur more dangers of losing Heaven, than the latter. "All things obey money,"¹ says the Wise Man. He who is wealthy can satisfy all the evil desires of nature, and he would require a wonderful grace to refrain from doing so. Wealth is an incitement to nearly every vice; to pride and contempt of the poor, to avarice and an insatiable thirst for money, to sensuality and impurity, to envy and jealousy towards those who hold high places, to gluttony and intemperance, to anger and vindictiveness against those from whom one has suffered insult or injury, and to laziness and sloth in the service of God. How are those vices encouraged, nay, kept up and supported, if not by wealth? The Apostle says: "They that will become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil. For the desire of money is the root of all evils."² Pluck up this root, take away the opportunities of doing evil, and the above-mentioned vices, like trees without roots, will soon decay.

The poor who are contented with the divine will, are on the right way to Heaven.

You, poor Christians, are taken away from the most of these dangers and temptations. The greatest and almost the only temptations your poverty can cause you, are discontent, impatience, cursing, blasphemy, despair, theft. But you can easily avoid all these, if, being in the state of grace, you are content with the divine will and decree, for then you go direct on the road marked out for you by the footsteps of your Saviour, on the road that leads to Heaven. You resemble the dove that Noe sent out of the ark, which, "not finding where her foot might rest, returned to him into the ark."³ The raven, on the contrary, did not come back, because it found sufficient food in the decaying carcasses that were floating about. This raven is a figure of the rich, who seek their pleasure and repose in carrion, that is, in the perishable things of this world, and who have, therefore, little desire to enter into the heavenly ark. But you, whose hearts and hopes cannot be fixed upon transitory things, which have either never been given to you, or have been taken away from you, and who consequently can find no resting place

¹ Pecuniæ obediunt omnia.—Eccles. x. 19.

² Qui volunt divites fieri, incidunt in tentationem et in laqueum diaboli. Radix enim omnium malorum est cupiditas.—I. Tim. vi. 9, 10.

³ Cum non invenisset, ubi requiesceret pes ejus, reversa est ad eum in arcam.—Gen. viii. 9.

on this earth, what else can and must you do but strive with all your hearts for Heaven? Here in this life, where the rich hold their feasts and banquets, there is no place prepared for you. You must stand at the door, and be content to beg for what falls from their tables. But in the heavenly banquet, you will be preferred before many mighty lords and great ones of the earth. You will be seated in the first places, and will enjoy yourselves for all eternity.

But what am I saying? You hold a sure pledge of eternal happiness in your hands. Not I, but Christ Himself tells you that, in the words already quoted: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."¹ And again in the Gospel of St. Luke: "Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." St. Bernard makes a beautiful remark upon these words: the reward, he says, is promised only in the future for all the other beatitudes. "Blessed are the meek; for they shall possess the land."² Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.³ Blessed are the clean of heart; for they shall see God.⁴ Blessed are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God.⁵ Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice; for they shall have their fill.⁶ Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy."⁷ Mark these words, my dear brethren, they *will have* such and such a reward. But the poor in spirit, that is, the poor who are resigned to the will of God, and those who suffer persecution for God's sake, are the only ones of whom it is said: "Theirs *is* the kingdom of Heaven;"⁸ not merely *will be*, but *is*. Rejoice, then, ye fortunate poor, "for yours is the kingdom of God!"⁹ St. Bernard says: "The kingdom of Heaven is not merely promised, but is actually given to the poor."¹⁰ Not, indeed, as if they were already in Heaven, for they know the contrary to be the case, but to show them that they can be certain of going there. Now I can understand more clearly the text of to-day's Gospel: "Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity."¹¹ That is, according to the general interpretation, make friends of the poor by generous alms-giving, "that when you shall fail they may re-

Nay, they
are assured
of Heaven.

¹ Beati pauperes spiritu, quoniam ipsorum est regnum cœlorum.—Matth. v. 3.

² Beati mites, quoniam ipsi possidebunt terram.—Ibid. 4.

³ Quoniam ipsi consolabuntur.

⁴ Quoniam ipsi Deum videbant.

⁵ Quoniam filii Dei vocabantur.

⁶ Quoniam ipsi saturabuntur.

⁷ Quoniam misericordiam consequentur.

⁸ Ipsorum est regnum cœlorum.

⁹ Quoniam vestrum est regnum Dei.

¹⁰ Regnum cœlorum pauperibus non tam promittitur, quam datur.

¹¹ Facite vobis amicos de mammona iniquitatis.

ceive you into everlasting dwellings.”¹ But how, I would otherwise think, how, O Lord, can the poor receive me into a Heaven that they do not yet possess? Art not Thou the only Lord and Giver of glory? Certainly, it seems to me that the Almighty answers: the poor can receive you, if they are resigned, because I have already raised them to that dignity, so that by their prayers, and by the alms they receive that appeal to Me, they can bring their benefactors and supporters to Heaven, even while they are still on earth, for, “theirs is already the kingdom of Heaven.”²

Conclusion
and consol-
ing exhorta-
tion to the
poor.

Hear this, ye poor of Jesus Christ, and be comforted! Never say again that you are wretched and unhappy! Can there be any greater happiness than yours? If the rich ones of the world only understood the things of eternity, they might easily envy you. If they do not envy you now, the time will come when many of them will wish they had been as poor as you are; the time will come when you can laugh at all the rich people of the world; the time when you and they will go together into eternity; they, stripped of all their possessions, poor and naked, you, rich in your souls, without any fear of being robbed. Imagine that you see a merchant who is coming home from a foreign land: he ties up the money he has gained in a bag, and puts it behind him on his horse, but the constant shaking tears the bag and makes a hole in it. The merchant travels on contentedly, suspecting nothing, and meanwhile all the money falls out, little by little, on the road. Strangers who are going the same way, pick up the money and become rich. But the poor merchant, when he arrives home, and opens his bag, finds, too late, that all his money is gone. And so it is during this life: we are all travellers; our true home is eternity, according to the words: “Man shall go into the house of his eternity.”³ There our bundles shall be opened, at the words: “Behold the man and his works.”⁴ Oh, how many rich people will then find a large hole in their bags, through which, during their journey on earth, all their treasures and riches have fallen out and been lost, because they did not use them for the good of their souls; while others who come after them, that is, their children and heirs, collect their riches and make merry with them, but they themselves are sent poor and naked into eternal misery! But you, poor Christians,

¹ Ut, cum defeceritis, recipiant vos in æterna tabernacula.

² Ipsorum est regnum cœlorum.

³ Ibit homo in domum æternitatis suæ.—Eccles. xii. 5.

⁴ Ecce homo, et opera ejus.

who are patient and resigned, how rich and wealthy you will be, when you enter into Heaven to rejoice eternally with all the treasures you have collected during life by your virtues and good works. There have been crowned heads that have understood this truth at the hour of death. Charles, King of Sicily, gives us an example of that : When he was on his death-bed, he sighed : “How vain are the thoughts of men ! What good is my kingdom to me now ? How much better it would be for me now, if I had been a poor man, and not a king !”¹ John, King of Aragon, said the same thing when he was about to die : “Oh, happy state of the poor, and certain and happy life of those who live by the sweat of their brow, and the labor of their hands ! What better am I, wretched man that I am, for my kingdom, my honors, and my many servants ? What have they all done, but to expose me to many dangers of soul and body ? In the many years of my life, I have hardly had one happy day ! Ah, wretched and unhappy me, who see the vanity of the world, now when it is too late ! How much better I might have lived, if I had been a poor plough-man, and not a king !”² His brother Alphonsus, King of Naples, as history tells us, left this life with the same wish and the same regret. Philip the Third, King of Spain, although he led an innocent, pious, and holy life, said on his death-bed : “Would that I had never been a king ! Would that I had spent the years that I have passed in my kingdom, as a private man serving God in the desert ! With what certainty I would now die ! How confidently I could appear before the judgment-seat of God !”³ You, oh, poor, need not form such wishes on your death-beds, for you are now what you would then wish to have been. Ah, may God keep you from being so foolish as to abandon Him, and live in sin ! If you did that, you would have a hell both here and hereafter. The only thing that you should fear and avoid is to make God your enemy. The only object of all your cares should be to keep Him as your Friend, and to be resigned to His will : if you do so, I tell you again, you are sure of Heaven. Say, therefore, every day, when making

¹ *O vanas hominum cogitationes ! quid mihi jam regnum prodest ? Quam præstaret jam, pauperem fuisse, non regem !*

² *O felicem pauperum conditionem, et illorum securam vitam atque beatam, qui panem comedunt cum sudore sui vultus, qui vivunt labore manuum suarum ! Nam mihi misero, quid regnum, quid honores, quid obsequia plurimorum contulerunt ? . . . O me miserum et infelicem, qui tam sero fallacem mundum cognosco ! qui vitam certe vixissem multo meliorem, si non rex, sed pauper agri cultor fuissam.*

³ *Utinam nunquam rex ! utinam annos, quos in regno egi, exegissem privatus in eremo ! Quam nunc securus morerer, quam fidenter ad Dei tribunal pergerem !*

your morning offering : My Lord and my God, I am as Thou wishest me to be. I am perfectly satisfied with my poverty. During Thy life on earth, Thy poverty was even greater than mine. I rejoice and thank Thee for having chosen me as Thy companion. Even if Thou refusest me the repose and consolation that Thou generally givest on earth to the poor who are resigned to Thy will, then do, O Lord, as Thou pleasest, for I shall have more than enough in the future reward of Thy heavenly kingdom. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord :

Text.

Et hoc vobis signum : Invenietis Infantem pannis involutum, et positum in præsepio.—Luke ii. 12.

“ And this shall be a sign unto you : You shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger.”

Strange and apparently inconsistent things are announced in to-day's Gospel. The angels proclaim the birth of the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. But to whom do they proclaim it? To poor, lowly, and simple shepherds, who were tending their flocks. Where were they to find Him? In a stable. How were they to know Him? He was to be in the form of a little infant, wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. What a wonderful thing, and if I may venture to repeat it, what an inconsistent thing! How do those signs suit Him whose birth is announced? Is He not the King of Heaven and earth? What have the shepherds then to do with Him? Why were not all the princes and monarchs of the world invited to do Him homage on bended knee, as His vassals and servants? Is He not the Almighty God, who is to free the world from the slavery of hell? How is it, then, that He is to be recognised in a garb of such abject poverty? A palace of gold and legions of servants and attendants, although not at all sufficient for His divine Majesty, would still, according to our ideas, be more suitable for Him. Such, my dear brethren, is the judgment of the blind world, and of all the children of the world; but the God of Infinite Wisdom, who became man for love of us, judges quite differently. The proud world esteems and values only what appears great in the eyes of men; the comfort-loving world believes only in wealth and riches, and detests poverty and want above everything. Jesus Christ, our

Saviour, comes into the world to confound its false wisdom, for He chose, from His very birth, the most extreme poverty, the very opposite to what the world loves. Either the world is wrong in its judgment, says St. Bernard, or else Christ has made a mistake; this latter cannot be, and therefore the judgment of the world, which places happiness in riches and earthly goods, is false. Consequently, that which Christ preaches by word and example, must be true: "Blessed are the poor."¹ And this is what I mean to speak of to-day, for the consolation of the poor and needy; and my principal argument will be the fact that Jesus Christ was born poor, lived poor, and died poor for our sakes. I say, therefore, poor Christians, love your God, and be satisfied in your state with His will; if you do so you are better off and happier than the rich ones of this world. Such is the whole subject. You are better off, and happier in this life, than the rich, as I shall show in the first and longest part, etc.—*continues as before.*

¹ *Beati pauperes.*

ON THE CONTENTMENT OF EACH ONE IN HIS STATE OF LIFE.

SIXTY-FIFTH SERMON.

ON THE DIVINE DECREE, WHICH HAS APPOINTED A STATE AND CONDITION OF LIFE FOR EACH ONE.

Subject.

1st. It is God who, from all eternity, has pre-ordained and appointed for each one the state of life, with all its circumstances, in which he now is. 2d. Therefore, each one must be fully satisfied in and with his state, no matter what it is.—*Preached on the Feast of the Circumcision of our Lord.*

Text.

Quod vocatum est ab Angelo priusquam in utero conciperetur.
—Luke ii. 21.

“Which was called by the Angel, before He was conceived in the womb.”

Introduction.

So that Christ had His Name before the eight days were accomplished? Certainly, His name was pre-ordained from all eternity by His heavenly Father, who decreed that He should be called Jesus in time. My dear brethren, we have many names in this world; one has the name of being rich, another of being poor; one of being a master, another of being a servant; one of being well, another of being sick; one of being joyful, another of being sad; one of being a religious, another of being a secular; one is a statesman, another a business man, a third a workman. In a word, there are as many different names as there are conditions and states of life in the world. If I could compare them all with each other, and see wherein they differ, I might, accord-

ing to the general opinion, put an end to that which most frequently gives rise to complaints and discontent, for there are few who think their name good enough, and who do not strive for a better one ; I mean, there are few who are fully satisfied with their state of life, and who do not find something therein to be displeased with and to complain of. And the reason of this is, in most cases, because people will not think nor acknowledge how and from whom they get their name or state of life. To-day the custom is for one to wish the other a happy New Year ; I wish, therefore, to each and all of you, from my heart, that in which happiness consists, namely, perfect and constant contentment in your different states of life. And that my wish may not be an empty one and without fruit, I will now, and in another sermon also, show how each one can and must be content with his state, and that I will do by explaining this one truth, that, namely, before the creation of the world, God has so appointed for each one.

Plan of Discourse.

It is God who, from all eternity, has pre-ordained and appointed for each one the state of life, with all its circumstances, in which he now is. Such is the basis of the first part. Therefore, each one must be fully satisfied in and with his state, no matter what it is. The conclusion of the second part.

O, all-wise Creator and Ruler of the world, grant us all, through the intercession of Mary, and the holy angels guardian, the grace to acknowledge and understand the first, so that, as far as the second is concerned, we may be always fully satisfied with Thy most holy will and decree.

With regard to the first point, that God has pre-ordained for every one the state of life in which he is, with all its circumstances, I do not think it will take long to prove it, for, as I hope, I have not now to deal with atheists and infidels, who, blinded by vice and of darkened understanding, and that they may more freely indulge in sin, maintain that there is no God, and, as some heathen philosophers taught, that the world was made by chance, from a number of atoms. A folly that refutes itself, and that no sound reason could admit for a moment. Or if they believe in God, they say that He reigns in Heaven, and does not concern Himself about the affairs of mortals. Everything that happens is mere chance, depending on the changes of seasons, the run of luck, and the different dispositions and plans

The world
is governed
by the prov-
idence of
God.

of men. No, I have to do with true Christians, and true Catholic Christians, who believe, with me, in the one eternal, true, living, infallible Word, that has been interpreted by the Catholic Church, and who therefore adore God, who is present everywhere, and who is always working in each and every one of His creatures; that God who, as He created Heaven and earth by one word: "He spoke and they were made,"¹ so also He created the first man and all his posterity; that God who fixed their course for the sun and moon, and gave the stars their place in the firmament; who has placed bounds to the sea that it dare not pass; who has given a certain place, condition, movement, and operation to all inanimate things; who has fixed for rational creatures a certain time in which they should be created or born, in which they are to live and die, certain parents who are to give them birth, certain circumstances in which they must live; who has appointed the understanding they are to have in their soul, the size of their bodies, their outward appearance, strength, health, natural and supernatural gifts, temporal means, and everything else they have or are at every moment, one way to-day, another to-morrow. All these things God has pre-ordained in His all-wise providence from all eternity.

Not even
the least
thing ex-
cepted.

Not even the least thing happens in the world by chance, nor, as we are wont to say, by good or bad luck. Everything, sin alone excepted, happens with the knowledge and by the will and decree of God. Be assured, says St. Augustine, "nothing happens that is not first either commanded or permitted in the invisible court of the Supreme Monarch."² When we consider things merely according to the outward senses,—for instance, the change of weather, which is sometimes warm and sometimes cold, or else it is raining, or snowing, or hailing; the flight of the birds, which soar aloft in different directions; the blossoming of trees, plants, and flowers, some of which are white, others yellow, while some are long and others short; when we consider these and countless other things that we see daily, we are like little children, who hear the clock strike the different hours; they hear the noise it makes and think that it comes solely from the hammer which strikes the hours, because they know nothing of the works that are hidden inside the clock and regulate its movements. In the same way, too, we pay no atten-

¹ Ipse dixit et facta sunt.—Ps. xxxii. 9.

² Nihil fieri sensibilibus, quod te interiori invisibili aula illius imperatoris aut non jubetur, aut non permittatur.

tion to the beautiful machinery hidden in the divine nature, which ordains and arranges every visible thing, the smallest as well as the greatest, in number, weight, and measure, as the Prophet says.

Not a hair falls from your head, says Jesus Christ, without the knowledge and will of your heavenly Father :¹ Not a sparrow flies through the air without the divine decree : “ Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing ? and not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father.”² One bird builds its nest in a tree, another elsewhere ; a leaf is blown by the wind to a certain place, at a certain time ; a plant in the garden grows to a certain height ; the rain, hail, or snow fall upon me as I am walking the streets ; the flies torment, or bite me ; one of them happens to get into my hand, and I crush it to death ; all these things and every other imaginable event, happen with the knowledge, will, and decree of God : “ All things were made by Him, and without Him was made nothing.”³ God is the only Father of this great household, who arranges, moves, and regulates all that happens in the whole world, at all times. And He takes as great care, and no less trouble with the smallest creature, as with the greatest. The Sacred Scripture says : “ He made the little and the great, and He hath equally care of all.”⁴ He is as much concerned for the poorest and most miserable child that begs its bread from door to door, as for a great king who rules over men. It gives Him no more trouble to move and regulate the immense machinery of the heavens, than to transport a grain of dust from one place to another. Nor is He less careful of an insect, a worm of the earth, as long as He pleases to leave it its natural life, than He is of keeping the whole earth in its proper place. St. Gregory says : “ God takes as much care of each thing, as if He had nothing else to look after.”⁵ Oh, my dear brethren, I must exclaim with St. Augustine, what a wise, powerful and wonderful God we have ! “ He who created the angels in Heaven, created also the worms of the earth.”⁶ And I add, He who takes care of the angels, is equally careful of a worm of the earth !

This providence extends to the smallest and most contemptible things.

¹ Capillus de capite vestro non peribit.—Luke xxi. 18.

² Nonne duo passeret asse veniunt ? et unus ex illis non cadet super terram sine Patre vestro.—Math. x. 29.

³ Omnia per ipsum facta sunt, et sine ipso factum est nihil.—John 1. 3.

⁴ Pusillum et magnum ipse fecit, et aequaliter est illi cura de omnibus.—Sap. vi. 8.

⁵ Sic intendit Dominus singulis, ac si vacet a cunctis.

⁶ Qui fecit in caelo angelum, fecit in terra vermiculum.

How much more careful of men, who are each allotted a certain state of life.

Now if it is true that God creates, provides for, and preserves even the smallest irrational and lifeless creatures, in certain time, place, and circumstances, how much more is it not true of reasoning beings, for whose sake He has made all other things in Heaven and earth, that they might be the servants of man and help him to attain his last end ; for whose sake the Eternal Son of God came down from His throne, was made man, and gave up His own life-blood, that man, whom He created, might rejoice with Him for all eternity ? Such is the teaching of our Lord Himself in the Gospel of St. Matthew ; He tells His disciples to consider the care He takes of the birds of the air and the lilies of the field : “ Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns ; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Consider the lilies of the fields, how they grow ; they labor not, neither do they spin. But I say to you, that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these. Are not you of much more value than they ? ”¹ I know what conclusion I must draw, O Lord ! If Thou art so careful of the birds of the air and the flowers of the field, Thou wilt also take care of me. If Thou hast from all eternity fixed for each thing its certain time, place, measure, condition, and nature or mode of life, much more hast Thou done so for me and for every human being ! That this is the case, I am assured by St. Paul from the words of our Lord Himself, for that Apostle, writing to the Corinthians, and advising people of all conditions as to their conduct, husbands, wives, widows, unmarried people, and servants, says to them : “ I would that all men were even as myself ; ” but that cannot be ; “ every one hath his proper gift from God ; one after this manner, and another after that ; . . . as the Lord hath distributed to every one, as God hath called every one, so let him walk ; ”² “ let every man, wherein he was called, therein abide with God.”³ Mark, my dear brethren, how the Apostle often repeats the same thing, in order to impress deeply on our minds the great truth, that it is God who appoints for each one his state of life, with all its circumstances : “ As the Lord hath distributed to every one.”⁴

¹ *Respicite volatilia cœli, quoniam non serunt, neque metunt, neque congregant in horrea: et Pater vester cœlestis pascit illa. Considerate illa agrî, quomodo crescunt: non laborant, neque nent Nonne vos magis pluris illis?—Matth. vi. 26, 28, 29.*

² *Volo autem omnes homines esse, sicut meipsum. Unusquisque proprium donum habet ex Deo, alius quidem sic, alius vero sic unicuique sicut divisit Dominus; unumquemque sicut vocavit Deus, ita ambulet.—I. Cor. vii. 7, 17.*

³ *Unusquisque in quo vocatus est, in hoc permaneat apud Deum.—Ibid. 24.*

⁴ *Unicuique sicut divisit Dominus.*

Just as he, who has the direction of a theatre, gives to each of the actors his proper part, according to what he knows of each one's skill and cleverness ; nor does any one of them receive the same dress, nor have they all to say the same words, or to do the same things; but every one must act as the character assigned to him requires. Or, just as a painter who is about to paint some great historical subject, does not make all the persons whom he represents on the canvas of the same size, position, and stature, for if he did so, his picture would be a mere daub ; but he paints some of them full-sized, while he puts others in the background. One sits on a throne, another stands in an humble posture like an attendant, a third is on horseback, a fourth is on foot, a fifth laughs, a sixth weeps, a seventh looks up to Heaven, an eighth folds his hands and looks down on the ground. Each one is portrayed in the attitude that suits the subject of the painting, and the skill of the artist consists in making them all in due proportion, whether they are to be large or small, dark or light, cheerful or sorrowful. In the same way, says St. Paul, the great Artist of the universe has arranged the different creatures on earth with the greatest prudence and wisdom, in placing men in so many different conditions. "Every one hath his proper gift from God, one after this manner, and another after that." That one person should be a strong man, another a weak woman ; one a sovereign, another a subject ; one a master, another a servant ; one of high, another of low descent ; one a religious, another in the world, and married to such and such a person ; one a soldier, another a merchant ; one a tradesman, engaged in a particular business ; one rich, another moderately well-off, a third in absolute poverty ; one always healthy, another always sickly ; one always happy and prosperous, another always in sorrow and distress ; one prudent and clever, another simple and stupid ; all these and the other different circumstances in which men live, are, as it were, the characters that the Supreme Master of the theatre of this life has distributed to different individuals : "As the Lord hath distributed to every one."

Proved by similes.

From all this the Apostle draws the evident and undeniable conclusion, that every one must be contented and satisfied with the divine decree, in, and according to his state of life. "Let every man wherein he was called, therein abide with God."

Therefore, every one must be content with his state of life.

¹ *Unusquisque proprium donum habet ex Deo, alius quidem sic, alius vero sic.*
² *Unusquisque sicut divisit Dominus.*

“Wast thou called, being a bond-man? Care not for it;”¹ care for nothing but to act that part well, because God has called you to it. No matter who, what, or where you are, remember that you are as God has decreed and wished you to be. This thought alone should and must suffice to make you satisfied with your state. Such is the conclusion drawn by St. Paul, as we shall see in the

Second Part.

And justly too, if he acts wisely.

As long as I am under the authority of another, who has the right to do as he pleases with me and mine, and from whose authority I cannot escape, even if I wished, prudence requires that at least I should be patient, and allow him to govern me as he likes; for what would be the use of murmuring against him, or trying to resist his authority? I could not change my position for the better, but would rather make it more difficult and more irksome. Is not that so, my dear brethren? But now, suppose I am sure that my master is far wiser and more prudent than I, and that he knows best what is beneficial or injurious to me. If, moreover, I am certain that he is well inclined towards me, and that he will not lay any command on me that is not just, and right, and for my own good; then, not only would I act with great imprudence by complaining of his commands, but the mere thought of what he is should fill me with contentment, joy, and consolation in doing everything he tells me. Is not that true also? Now, as we have seen already, it is God who, from all eternity has pre-ordained and decreed for me the state of life in which I live, with all its circumstances. This state may be pleasing or displeasing to me; it may suit my inclination or not; but have I any reason for being discontented with it? What would be the use of that? Is not God the same unchangeable Lord He always was, with whom to will is the same as to accomplish? As the Prophet David says: “He hath done all things whatsoever He would,”² in Heaven and on earth. He still orders everything as He wills in Heaven and on earth; nor is He apt to change His will, or invert His order on my account. If He had no other object in all His decrees, but, “such is my will,”³ who could say anything against Him?

¹ *Servus vocatus es? Non sit tibi curæ.*—I. Cor. vii. 21.

² *Omnia, quæcunque voluit, fecit.*—Ps. cxlvi. 11.

³ *Sic volo.*

Run your head against a stone wall that stands in your way, and see if the wall will give way to you. It is God who has appointed for me my state of life. Must I, then, murmur or complain if that state is a lowly one? He is the Lord who has given me gratuitously, and out of pure generosity, all that I have; He could have given me much less and have placed me in a much lower state. The proverb tells us not to look a gift horse in the mouth. It is God who has given me my state; have I, then, any reason to say to Him: "Why hast thou made me thus?"¹ Is He not the Lord of Infinite Wisdom, who does everything for the weightiest reasons, so that, to His eternal praise, be it said: "He hath done all things well."² It is God who has given me my state: can I hope, or wish, or desire to be anything better than I am now, and than God wishes me to be? Should I not rather be greatly pleased and rejoiced with my state? Is He not the Lord, who calls Himself my Father, who assures me that He has written me down in His hands,³ who is so much concerned for me and my welfare, that He did not spare His only-begotten, eternal Son, but delivered Him up for my sake to a most disgraceful death, and who knows most exactly, and has known from eternity and foreseen what is best for me and my soul? All this is quite enough to convince me that there is in the whole world no better place or state for me, than that in which I now am, according to His most wise and beneficent decrees, and that I ought to allow Him to do with me in future as He pleases.

How inconsistent, foolish, and wicked, therefore, are the complaints of those who are not content, either with God, or with themselves, in their state of life? In order to understand this all the more clearly, we shall again have recourse, for a short time, to the similes used before. Suppose, my dear brethren, on the stage of a theatre, one who has to represent a peasant, or a beggar, begins to murmur against the manager, and to say: Why have I been selected for this mean part? See that other actor decked out with crown and sceptre, and clad in purple and gold, while I must put on a ragged coat, and an old battered hat. He is almost always on the stage, and attracts every one's attention, but I am not allowed to appear more than once or twice. Is he any better than I? Have we not made the same studies in the same school? Why can I not, then, represent a king as well as he?

How foolish
to complain.
Shown by a
simile.

¹ Cur me fecisti sic?—Rom. ix. 20.

² Omnia bene fecit.—Mark vii. 37.

³ In manibus me descripsi te.—Isai. xlix. 16.

What would you think of such complaints, my dear brethren? Would they show good sense? If it was a child who made them they might be excusable on account of simplicity or ignorance. What, the manager would say, do you want to upset the whole piece? What have you to complain of? You must act the part that is given to you, and if you do it well, the audience will praise you as much as the others, and more, too, if the others do not perform their parts as they ought. If you are not satisfied, you must leave the stage and not have anything to do with the piece.

Another simile.

We can imagine the same thing with the painting. Suppose that the picture had life, and could speak, and that the figure of a man that is painted in the background very small, with only the head visible, and almost hidden in dark colors, were to get discontented and to quarrel with the other figures of the picture, saying: I have been long enough in that dark corner. Why is that other figure so large? I am made of the same colors. I wish to come forward too, and to show that I am not so small and mean as I have hitherto appeared. You poor fool, the painter would say, what business have you to destroy my work? You must thank my skill and labor for the position you occupy, that is one required by the rules of art. Do not ask me why; but keep quiet in the place in which I have put you; otherwise, I will make short work of you, for I have only to take my brush and destroy you altogether. There would soon be an end to all murmurs and complaints, if every one knew his Master and Creator, and were content with the place and state allotted to him.

Yet most men find fault with their state.

My dear brethren, what I have represented to you by those two similes, really occurs amongst us mortals every day, on the great stage of life, in the great picture of the world. The characters, as I said before, are distributed by God; the figures are placed by Him in the picture, with as many differences and distinctions as there are different states in life. The Lord has done all according to the rules of art; "He hath done all things well."¹ But it is a great mistake of our corrupt nature, that we refuse to acknowledge the act. The majority of us cannot suit ourselves to it. There is hardly one in a hundred who is quite satisfied with his state and with its accidental circumstances. One wants this, another that; one thinks his state too lowly and despicable, another thinks his too poor, a third complains of having too much care and trouble, a fourth of having too much

¹ Omnia bene fecit.

sorrow and suffering. There is no end of murmurs and complaints; nearly every one wishes to be better off than he is. If we only think how it is with most people in the world, we shall find that even they who make profession of serving God, and leading a Christian life, if they meet with any contradiction, or disappointment, find fault at once with their state, as if it were to blame. Would that I had become a priest, says one, who groans under the trouble and care of bringing up little children and providing for them; if I had known what was in store for me, I would not have entered this state! I wish I had remained in the world, thinks the discontented religious, I could have supported myself, and served God as well! Oh, why did God bind me to a drunken, ill-tempered, and good-for-nothing husband? cries a discontented wife. Why am I tied to that useless and wicked woman? thinks an unhappy husband. And both are to blame, for they are always quarrelling with each other. I wish I had never seen that man, that I had never set eyes on that person; such are the complaints of masters against their servants, of servants against their masters, of inferiors against their superiors. Oh, would I were an angel, sighs the pious man, when he is annoyed by temptations. Would I had died in my cradle, thinks another; I would not be in such danger of losing my soul! Would that my parents had allowed me to study, says the tradesman, when he is tired with his work; I could manage the pen much easier than the hammer! He who has little to do complains of his enforced idleness. He who is kept very busy, complains that he can neither eat nor sleep quietly. Those who are small, wish to be great; the young desire to appear older, the old to be younger. We need not speak of the oppressed and sorrowful; their inordinate impatience shows clearly enough that they are not contented with their state. Why has that misfortune happened to me? they ask. Why has God afflicted me by the untimely death of my father, mother, son, daughter, wife? Why am I poor and without bread to eat, while others have more than they want? Why am I weak, ailing, and sickly, while so many wicked people are strong and healthy? Why must I earn my bread in the sweat of my brow, while others can live in idleness? Why am I despised and looked down upon, while others enjoy honor and prosperity? Are we not all made of the same earth and do we not all come from the same father Adam?

O God of goodness, what a number of complaints I hear against

No one is
satisfied

with what
God does for
him.

Thee! I thought that Thy infinite wisdom decreed nothing but what is just, and holy, and good, and right, and in proper order; yet if I am to believe the judgments of men, everything seems to be in confusion and disorder amongst them, and nobody is in his right place. Yes, O Supreme Monarch, Thou hast done all things well in Heaven and on earth, but there is hardly one man whom Thou canst please! Thou hast made the sun, moon, stars, and other heavenly bodies, and placed them in proper order; Thou hast given the winds their velocity, the elements their proper qualities, and none can find fault with what Thou hast done; men alone are not as they ought to be, and if we believe their complaints, Thou hast not dealt with them fairly nor justly. So that Thou, O God of infinite wisdom, who canst not err, nor be deceived in anything, hast made a great mistake in the creation, preservation, government, and direction of man! We must either admit this, my dear brethren, or confess that we are laboring under a grievous mistake, and that we are guilty of the greatest folly and injustice when we murmur or complain. The first cannot be the case, therefore the second must be the undoubted truth.

Great pre-
sumption.

Oh, poor mortal, worm of the earth, who are you who dare to contradict the decree of the Almighty? Such is the question that the Lord asked His servant Job: "Wilt thou make void my judgment," and subvert my decrees, "and condemn me, that thou mayest be justified?"¹ Remain in thy appointed place, and complain not of the order I establish, or else I have only to withdraw my hand from thee and thou shalt fall into nothingness. What thou art, where, and how thou art, from whom hast thou all that, if not from Me? If I have given thee less than others, I have not done thee wrong thereby, because I am not bound to give thee anything. If I deprive thee of father, mother, children, friends, and relatives by death; if I take away thy money and property, by losses and misfortune; thy health and strength, by sickness; thy comfort and joy, by sorrows and trials, I take from thee nothing that belongs to thee, nothing but what was mine already. "Friend, I do thee no wrong. Take what is thine, and go thy way."² Take what I wish to give thee, and go and use it according to my will. Is it not enough for thee that I have created thee to my own image, that thou mayest

¹ Numquid irritum facies iudicium meum, et condemnabis me, ut tu justificeris?—Job xl. 3.

² Amice, non facio tibi injuriam. Tolle quod tuum est, et vade.—Matth. xx. 13, 14.

be happy with Me for all eternity, and that I may give myself to thee forever, while I have left so many millions of men, whom I might have created, in their original nothingness? If thou dost not look upon this as a benefit, I have at least done thee no wrong, and therefore thou hast no cause for complaint.

Therefore, oh, man, remain as you are, and be satisfied with what the Lord has given you. "If you are enough for God," says St. Cyprian, "let God be enough for you."¹ So it is, O great God, my sovereign Ruler! I must say with the Prophet Job: "What can I answer, who have spoken inconsiderately,"² and complained hitherto without cause? "I will lay my hand upon my mouth,"³ and keep silence; I will be contented with Thee, and with myself in all humility. And meanwhile, I return Thee heartfelt thanks, O eternal God, for having created and preserved me as I am, for having given me this time, place, state, employment, and other circumstances in which to live. I desire to be nothing less, nor greater, nor better, than what I now am, according to Thy will. Thou knowest why Thou wishest me to be so and not otherwise; it is not for me to inquire the cause thereof. My duty is to receive, like a poor mendicant, the alms Thou givest me, be they great or small, for I know that, as Thy Prophet says: "Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgment is right."⁴ Dost Thou wish me to live henceforward in a different way? Then I am in Thy hands; do with me as Thou wilt; Thou wilt find me as Thou wishest me to be. Amidst all the accidents, sorrows, and troubles of life, I shall keep my mind at rest, and console myself with the thought that Thou, O God of Infinite Wisdom, hast so decreed for me. Even if I did not know that it is for my greater good, I am at least certain that it is in accordance with Thy will, and that it cannot be better than Thou wishest it to be. It is for Thee, O Lord, to appoint a state of life for me; it is for me to fulfil the duties of that state so as to please Thee. And this I will always try to do, henceforth, with Thy grace, as long as Thou art pleased to leave me on this earth. In all other things, O Lord, "Thy will be done."⁵ Let that be our conclusion. Amen.

Conclusion
and resig-
nation to the
will of God.

¹ Sufficis tu Deo, sufficiat tibi Deus.

² Quid levitior locutus sum, respondere quid possum?—Job xxxix. 34.

³ Manum meam ponam super os meum.—Ibid.

⁴ Justus es, Dominus, et rectum iudicium tuum.—Ps. cxviii. 137.

⁵ Fiat voluntas tua.

Another Introduction for the Feast of St. John the Evangelist :

Text.

Sic eum volo manere, donec veniam : quid ad te ? tu me sequere.—John xxi. 22.

“ So I will have him to remain till I come; what is it to thee ? follow thou Me.”

When Christ had appointed Peter as Prince of the Apostles, and Head of the whole Church, and had foretold that he would die as a martyr for His Name's sake, Peter was curious to know what would become of John, his fellow-Apostle, what duties he would have to do, and what sort of a death he would die. “ Lord,” he asked, “ and what shall this man do ? ”¹ Christ, answered : “ So I will have him to remain till I come: what is it to thee ? follow thou Me.”² By which words, as St. John Chrysostom, writing on to-day's Gospel, tells us, He meant: Is it not enough for you that I have told you what I wish you to do ? “ You know your duty, see that you labor to perform it well, and prepare for the combat that is in store for you.”³ “ What is it to you if I wish this man to remain here ? ”⁴ “ Do you attend to your own duty and fulfill it.”⁵ St. John Chrysostom continues, “ Thus teaching us, that we must not be sad, nor inquire too curiously into the divine decrees, and be content with merely knowing the will of God.”⁶ Would that all men profited by this lesson, my dear brethren; what a quiet, contented, and happy life they would lead in the world ! “ And what shall this man do ? ” Such is the question that most men ask in their different states and conditions of life. Why is one rich, another poor ? Why is one a great lord, and another a servant ? Why is one in prosperity, another in adversity ? Why is one healthy, another sick ? They thus disturb themselves, and few of them are so contented with their state, that they do not find much to complain of and murmur at. But, we must say to such people : What is it to you ? how others are situated ? Mind yourself ; see that you do your duty properly, and be contented with the state

¹ Domine, hic autem quid ?

² Sic eum volo manere, donec veniam : quid ad te ? tu me sequere.

³ Opus suscepisti, id considera, perface, labora et te certaminibus expone.

⁴ Quid ad te, si volo eum manere hic ?

⁵ Tu officium tuum cura et exsequere !

⁶ His verbis nos erudiens, neque dolendum, neque curiosus præter divinam voluntatem investigandum.

⁷ Quid ad te ?

appointed for you. You must not trouble yourselves, because others are in a different position, nor be too curious in seeking the reason of that. This uneasy curiosity comes principally from the fact that men do not think nor acknowledge from whom they have received the state of life and condition in which they are. That every one may henceforth be satisfied, no matter what circumstances he is placed in, I say, as the subject of to-day's sermon: It is good, etc.—*continues as before.*

SIXTY-SIXTH SERMON.

ON THE ALL-WISE PROVIDENCE OF GOD IN ARRANGING DIFFERENT STATES OF LIFE.

Subject.

God has arranged different states : 1st, for our greater good in general ; 2d, for the greater good of each one in particular. Therefore, each one must be fully satisfied with the divine will in his state.—*Preached on the Feast of the Epiphany of our Lord.*

Text.

Vidimus stellam ejus in oriente, et venimus adorare eum.
—Matth. ii. 2.

“We have seen His star in the East and are come to adore Him.”

Introduction.

These wise kings were called from the East by a star ; the poor and simple shepherds who were in the fields near Bethlehem were called by an angel ; the report of all this, without doubt, called many others from Jerusalem and the neighboring places. All these people were brought in different ways and manners to the same place, that they might adore the new-born God and offer Him their homage. The kings, when they had seen the star, and the shepherds, when exhorted by the angel, were ready at once to obey and came to adore Christ. My dear brethren, all of us in this life are called for the same purpose, namely, to serve God here, and to possess Him as our reward hereafter for-

ever. But we are not called in the same way, nor have we to serve Him all in the same state and condition of life. St. Paul says : "Every one hath his proper gift from God ; one after this manner, and another after that."¹ It is God who from all eternity has appointed for each one his state of life, with all its circumstances. The arrangement is made in time, not by chance, as people were wont to distribute Epiphany cards to each other on the vigil of this Feast, not blindly, nor by accident, but according to the all-wise determination of divine providence. And for this very reason every one can and must be content with his state of life, and all its circumstances, no matter what it is, and must live in perfect and peaceful resignation to the divine will ; as I proved in the last sermon. Now, as there are many who are dissatisfied with their state, they might ask me, why has God made the states and conditions of men so different ? Is He not the Father of this great household ? Are we not all His children, and alike according to nature ? How comes it, then, that we are treated so differently ? That one gets more, another less ; that one is in a high, another in a lowly position ; that one can live in idleness and comfort, while another must live in poverty and hard work ; that one is rich, another poor ? To answer these complaints, I will now show that all these things are perfectly just, right, and consistent, and for our greater good.

Plan of Discourse.

God has arranged all things for our greater good in general. The first part. For the greater good of each one in particular. The second part. Therefore, each one must be fully satisfied with the divine will in his state. The conclusion.

To this end continue to give us Thy powerful grace, O Lord, through the merits of Mary and our holy angels guardian !

There are many different members in the body.

Amongst other wonderful things that God has created, and in which we can admire and acknowledge the infinite power, wisdom, and skill of the great Artist, is the human body, which is called a microcosm, that is, a little world, on account of the artistic arrangement of its different members, one of which surpasses the other in size, excellence, and strength, and every one of which has its own appointed place and function. The head occupies the principal place, and is the council-chamber in which

¹ Unusquisque proprium donum habet ex Deo ; alius quidem sic, alius vero sic.—I. Cor. vii. 7.

the reason weighs everything, and directs the other members. The eyes are placed just below the forehead to see ; the ears are on both sides of the head to hear ; the arms and hands can be stretched out much farther that they may work, and help the other members ; the feet are placed underneath to bear the body from one place to another ; the teeth are placed in the mouth to masticate the food ; the stomach is placed in the centre of the body to digest the food ; the heart is so placed that it can send the blood through all the veins. Each member has its own duty to perform, and differs from all the others in form and appearance. Do you still ask, you who are discontented with your state of life, why does God, who calls Himself the common Father of all, make such distinctions amongst His children in this life, and treat them so differently ? If so, I will not answer you, but I will ask you with Theodoret : “ Why has not the Supreme Artificer given to all the members of our body the same strength and power ? ”¹ Why does the eye see, and not the ear ? Why does the mouth eat, and not the foot ? Why do the hands labor, and not the face ? Why is one placed higher than the other ? Again, tell me why are not all the members eyes, because God could have made them so by a single act of His will ?

You need not think long on the matter ; the answer is ready. You know that otherwise the body would be deformed and unshapely, because it requires more than eyes to see, for its support. It must hear, feel, smell, taste, walk, stand, and work, nor could it do all these things if it was nothing but an eye. Besides, where would the eye get its strength from, if there was no stomach ? how could it go about from one place to another, to see different things, if there were no feet to carry it ? etc. In a word, the difference between the members is necessary for the support of the body, that one may be able to help the other, and that all may concur in preserving themselves in their proper position. Without that order, difference, and concurrence, the whole body would be destroyed. Such is the case. Suppose, now, that all the members were independent, and that they began to murmur amongst themselves and to complain of their position and duty. The feet complain of the load they have to carry, and would wish to be higher up and to see like the eyes ; the hands grow tired of working and wish to digest like the stomach,

That difference necessary to the stature and support of the body.

¹ Cur non omnibus corporis nostri membris Imam et eamdem vim rerum Opifex indiderit ?
--Orat. 6. De Providentia.

or else refuse to supply it with food. What would become of the body in that case? Try it for a few weeks: let the hands lie idle and give no food to the stomach, and see how it will be with you. Hands, feet, and stomach must die of hunger.

The same difference is necessary in all states of life to support man.

It is just the same with us men in this world, my dear brethren. We constitute a body, as St. Paul says: "We being many, are one body in Christ," who is our Head, "every one members, one of another. Having different gifts according to the grace that is given us."¹ We have received duties to perform that are very different from each other. Why is that? It is necessary, in order to keep the whole moral body in a proper condition. Experience proves that one cannot exist, or can do so only for a very short time, without the help of another of different condition; so miserable is man when he is alone. We live in society, and by society our lives are preserved. Let us consider merely those things, my dear brethren, that we require for our daily support. We must at least have bread to eat; but how are we to get it? The ground has to be tilled, the corn must be sown; there must be some one to do that, and to provide enough for millions of people; they who do it are laborers or agriculturists. Many different implements are necessary to till the land properly, ploughs for instance, and smiths are required to make them. The corn must be ground after being threshed, the meal must be made into dough, and baked in an oven; therefore, there must be millers and bakers. See how many different occupations are necessary to supply us with bread alone! But we must have something to drink, too, and we have either to content ourselves with water, or there must be people to make something else for us, to dig the ground and plant the vineyard. We require clothes, and where are we to get them? It would not do for us to make garments of leaves, like our first parents. We must have wool, that has to be first shorn from the sheep, then cleaned, carded, spun, woven, pressed, cut and shaped to the size of the body. Who will do all that? The head and feet must also be covered; so that hats and stockings and shoes are wanted. Who will provide us with all those things? You see, therefore, that weavers, dyers, hatters, shoemakers, and tailors are required. We must have houses to live in, to protect us from the rain and snow and cold air; different articles of food must be brought from one country to another, because everything cannot grow

¹ *Multi unum corpus sumus in Christo, singuli autem alter alterius membra. Habentes donationes secundum gratiam, quæ data est nobis, differentes.*—Rom. xii. 5-6.

in the one place ; therefore, there must be builders, sailors, and drivers. Arms, offensive and defensive, are necessary to keep off the attacks of enemies ; the liberal arts and sciences must be taught and learned, that the country may be governed properly ; and the same may be said of countless other usages, occupations, and employments that require people of different trades and arts, without which human society could not exist.

Where are you now, you uneasy people, who are dissatisfied with your lot in life ? Let us again hear your complaints and murmurs, your wishes and desires. Oh, what a difference there is between people in this world ! Why must I work hard for my daily bread, while others have only to sit down and it is brought to them ? Why am I so poor that I must beg for food ? Could not God give me money and property, as He has given to others ? Why am I a servant, while others are masters and mistresses ? Why I am always in trouble, while others have nothing to annoy them ? Would that I had never entered on this state ! Would that I had never known the person who now torments me so ! If I had only become a priest ! If I had only remained in the world ! I wish I was this ! I wish I was that ! etc. All very well ; but what does it all mean ? Do you wish that all men should be equal ? That one should be as rich, as honored, as clever, as learned as another ; that one should have as many comforts as another ; in a word, that there should be perfect equality of states and conditions of life ? But, O God of goodness, if Thou wert to grant that wish, and to place every one in the condition in which he desires to be, would people be satisfied then ? I do not think so ; for their imaginations would then suggest something else to be desired. We have a very inconstant and changeable will ; what we like to-day, we detest to-morrow ; at eleven o'clock we long for something that we cannot bear the sight of at twelve. So that if Thou, O Lord, wert pleased to allow each one to have what he desires, Thou shouldst change and invert, every hour in the day, the present order of things.

The desire for equality is foolish and purposeless.

Still, suppose, my dear brethren, that God were to arrange matters according to the wish and desire of each individual ; suppose that we are all equal, as we wish to be ; what is the consequence ? Mercy on us, what a state of things there would be then ! How many years, nay, how many months or weeks do you think the world could last under such circumstances ? Who would till the ground, or reap the corn ? Who would thresh,

For thus every one would be badly off, and the world could not subsist.

and bake bread? Who would cut wood and stone to build houses? Who would make hats, shoes, stockings, and clothes? Who would be a servant? But, you think, I would be rich enough, I could have everything for money, and might employ people to do all that for me. What people? Other people, you say, who wish to earn money. But they are as well off as you, and no doubt they will study their own comfort too. Do you think that if I am not in want of you, I am likely to attend on you, or to work for you? If I am as great and as rich as you, what do I care for your money? And again, if you expect others to work for you while you remain idle, what becomes of the equality you are so anxious for? See what confusion you would cause if you had your way. Every one would know all the trades and professions, and every one would be master, and have to wait on himself; every one would be a ruler, and at the same time a baker, a mason, a shoemaker, and a tailor. In a word, every one would be wretched with that imaginary happiness, and the world would soon go to ruin.

We must therefore admire and praise the wise arrangements of providence.

Acknowledge, therefore, that such a wish would be wrong and foolish, and that it would be of no service to the welfare and preservation of the human race, while the manifold differences and distinctions that exist amongst men are absolutely necessary. Learn from this to admire the wisdom and foresight of our heavenly Father, who bestows His gifts in unequal measure, but so that all are benefited by them. 'To one He has given much, to another little, and to a third hardly anything;' so that one being subordinate to another, they may be mutually dependent on and helpful to one another. When the organ builder wishes to make an organ, does he make all the pipes of the same size? By no means, for that would spoil the work completely. No; some of the pipes must be very large, others medium-sized, and others again very small, according to the order in which they are placed. The large pipes require a lot of wind, and give forth a loud, coarse note, the medium-sized require less wind, and make less noise, while the smallest require hardly any wind and give forth a clear, fine note. What is the reason of that? That musical harmony may come from the blending of different notes; the loud notes support the fine ones, and are helped by them in turn, so that the ear is delighted by their combination. If there was no such difference of note, the organ would give forth only

¹ Unusquisque proprium donum habet ex Deo: altus quidem sic, altus vero sic.—I. Cor. vii. 7.

a monotonous and annoying shriek. In the same way, we must imagine that the whole world is an organ that is furnished with many pipes of different sizes, by its great Builder. The rich are, so to say, the large pipes, that being filled with wind, give forth a great volume of sound; the poor are the smallest pipes, that receive little; but both are necessary to produce harmony. St. Augustine says: "The rich and the poor are two different kinds of men, who cannot do without each other."¹ If there were no rich people, the poor could not live. If there were no poor, the rich would have no one to work for them. The servant depends on his master for his support; the master depends on his servant for the work he expects him to do. And there is no one, no matter how poor and lowly he may be, who cannot sometimes be of assistance and help even to the greatest lord of the land. We learn that from the fable of the mouse and the lion. The mouse had received a kindness from the lion, and out of gratitude promised to help him on the first opportunity. The haughty lion laughed at the idea of a little mouse ever being able to help him. But not long after he was caught in the hunters' toils; he foamed with rage and threw himself from side to side in his efforts to get free, but the more he tried, the tighter became the ropes that bound him, so that believing himself on the point of being made prisoner, he commenced to howl and lament bitterly. The mouse hearing the noise, ran up, and seeing what the matter was, commenced gnawing at the ropes until they were all loosed. The lion was thus set at liberty, and he doubted no longer that a poor little animal could render him a great service. This fable shows that even the lowest, poorest, and most despicable of men can be sometimes useful and even necessary to the service and support of the richest and greatest, and therefore should not be despised. "The rich and the poor are two different kinds of men, who cannot do without each other." It is true, then, O Supreme Lord, that Thou arrangerest everything for the general good of all men; true what the Prophet says of Thee: "Thou hast made all things in wisdom."² It is for us to be satisfied with the state in which Thou hast placed us, to do our duty to Thy honor and glory, to fulfil Thy holy will, and to be always pleased and contented with Thy all-wise decrees.

Yes, some will think, it is easy for you to talk; I know that And each
one in par-

¹ *Dives et pauper duo sunt sibi necessaria.*

² *Omnia in sapientia fecisti.*—Ps. ciii. 24.

particular must
be content
with his
state.

there is a necessity for having different stations in life, but why is mine such a lowly one? Why am I so unfortunate as to be obliged to live in poverty, hard work, and trouble of all kinds, although we are all alike as far as our nature is concerned? How could it injure the general welfare if I were in a better and more comfortable position, and if I, who to-day am so poor, were to become rich to-morrow; if I, who now have so much labor, care, and anxiety, were enabled to live henceforth in peace and quiet? Now, you make out a very good case indeed; but you think only of yourself in the matter; how would it be if every one were like you in that respect? It would be the case of equality over again, for you have no more right to those things than others, nor can you bribe the Almighty God to pay more attention to your fancied claims, than to those of others. Be careful, then, that while you wish to be better off than others, you may not become the most miserable of all; and while you have to remain in your poor and lowly condition, since God will not change, on your account, the order He has established, you do not make that condition far worse by your impatience and discontent. You are in a lowly condition, because God has decreed so for you, and not for others. But why for you? That is a question you must ask God Himself, if you dare do so. I admit that others are better off than you; one is rich, another is a great man; and they have as little claim as you to a better position, on account of their merit before God; but as the matter stands, it is in accordance with the divine will; the will and decree of God are the sufficient reason for it. Let others be as God wills, and do you also be the same; be satisfied with what He has appointed for you, and serve Him according to your condition. I repeat with the Apostle: "As God hath called every one, so let him walk,"¹ so let him eat and live, so let him be and remain. But, that I may give you a more consoling answer to your question: Why has God placed you in that state, and given you, as you think, such an unhappy lot in life, I tell you that that very state, no matter what it is, has been given you by God for your own greater good, and the same is true of every one; so that all should rejoice and be comforted in their state. That is what I shall prove in the

¹ Unumquemque sicut vocavit Deus, ita ambulet.—I. Cor. vii. 17.

Second Part.

Here I must remind you, my dear brethren, of a most important truth that I have treated of at length elsewhere, namely, that according to the unanimous teaching of the holy Fathers, our eternal salvation or our eternal ruin depends, as a general rule, on a certain state of life and on certain circumstances of it; so that he who will save his soul in one state, would lose it in another. That is the first point. Besides, it is certain that God does not wish all men to serve Him in the same manner. Our great King wishes to have different kinds of servants and ministers in His court, just as is the case with earthly kings and princes, who are only poor beggars when compared to the Almighty God. He requires one kind of service from religious, who, like privy-councillors, always stand at His side on the altar and in choir engaged in constant prayer and meditation: another from parochial clergy, whom He sends out as warriors and soldiers to snatch souls from the grasp of the evil one, or to keep them in His service; another from temporal masters and superiors, who, like chancellors and judges, must examine everything and govern His people; another from married people, who have to look after their families and to bring up their children to serve Him; another from the unmarried, the sick, the rich, the poor. Therefore, it is certain that God does not lead all men to Heaven in the one way, but in as many different ways as there are different states, obligations, and duties; so that He wishes one to save his soul in one way, and another in a different way. And we must be very careful to remember that our salvation does not depend on the holiness and excellence of a state, nor on the occupations of a state in themselves, but on the conformity of the state and its occupations with the will and decree of God, who has appointed it for us from all eternity by His all-wise providence.

God does not wish each one to serve Him in any state of life.

Further, it is infallibly certain that God, from whom the future is not hidden, foresees and knows from eternity what will happen to each one who is placed in a certain time and state and in circumstances that are almost infinite in variety, and also how each one will act in those circumstances. "Lord, Thou hast proved me and known me," says the Prophet David. "Thou hast understood my thoughts afar off, and Thou hast foreseen all my ways."¹ Yes, O Lord, I and every one must confess

God has also foreseen what state is best for the salvation of each one, and with the best will on His part to save the souls of all.

¹ Domine, probasti me, et cognovisti me. Intellexisti cogitationes meas de longe, et omnes vias meas prævidisti.—Ps. cxxxviii. 1, 3, 4.

that Thou hast seen what I would do if I were a ruler, a laborer, a rich man, a poor beggar, a merchant or tradesman, a layman or an ecclesiastic ; Thou hast foreseen what I would do if I were unmarried in the world, or if I had embraced the married state ; Thou hast known what would be the consequence if Thou hadst given me a good or a weak understanding : “Thou hast foreseen all the ways”¹ by which Thou couldst have led me. And so, too, hast Thou seen, among all the different states of life with their circumstances, that in which I would save my soul, or lose it, and the circumstances in which I might most conveniently serve Thee, so as to gain Heaven in the way and manner which Thou hast ordained for me in Thy inscrutable designs ! What have I to think and say of all this, oh, my God ? Nothing but what Thy Prophet has said : “There is no speech in my tongue. Thy knowledge is become wonderful to me.”² I am amazed at Thy infinite wisdom ! Finally, there is no doubt that God, who takes care of the sparrows of the air and of the smallest worm of the earth, takes care also of my eternal salvation ; for, as St. Paul says, His wish and desire is my sanctification ;³ He wishes that all men, for whom He has shed His Blood, should save their souls. Nor can it be doubted, I repeat, that by His decree, He has placed me in that state, in those circumstances, in which I can best and easiest serve Him according to His intention, and thus work out my salvation and gain eternal happiness, if I only really wish it.

Hence no state is better or more useful for me, than that in which I am by divine decree.

I am then forced to conclude, when I consider all this, that no state, no circumstances in the world could be better for me, than that in which I now am by divine decree. For, what better thing could I desire, than to be in that place, in that way, in which I can best serve God as He wishes me to serve Him, and work out my salvation with the greatest facility, since it is the state that He has selected as the means of leading me to eternal happiness ? What better would I be if I had the most holy or most excellent state, if I were not in it according to the will of God ? Of what use would the whole world be to me, with all its riches, honors, and pleasures, if I do not go to Heaven ? Therefore, I must live contentedly and peacefully in the state appointed for me by God, and, no matter what it is, I must thank Him for having placed me therein. For otherwise, I, a poor mortal,

¹ Omnes vias prævidisti.

² Non est sermo in lingua mea. Mirabilis facta est scientia tua ex me.—Ps. cxxxviii. 4, 6.

³ Hæc est enim voluntas Dei, sanctificatio vestra.—I. Thess. iv. 3.

must understand better than the Almighty what is most useful for myself ; or else I am blind in what concerns my soul ; or I doubt divine providence, as if it did not concern itself about my eternal welfare. Any of these thoughts would be blasphemous in the highest degree.

Learn from this, my dear brethren, how wrongly we act, when we complain of our state, and how foolish they are, who, wishing to lead good and Christian lives, disturb and disquiet themselves on account of their piety and their wish to do good and save their souls. If I were rich, says the poor man, I could do more good, go more regularly to Church, and practise the works of Christian charity and mercy better ; as it is, I must remain at home and work for my living. How much better I would be with such a mistress, says a discontented maid-servant ; she would give me time to say my prayers and to practise devotion ; now I can hardly go to Church, except on Sundays, or early in the morning on week-days, to hear Mass ; I will be lost altogether ! Ah, unfortunate people that we are ! says the married woman, when she now and then visits a convent, or sees some one who can spend her time quietly praying at home,—the whole day I am busied with my children and with a thousand household cares ; I wish I had become a nun, or had remained unmarried ; then I could attend to my soul better, serve God with more zeal, and be more sure of going to Heaven. I have not time now, my dear brethren, to consider such nonsensical complaints more in detail ; I shall do so on a future occasion. Now I shall merely content myself with saying, by way of conclusion : Do what God requires of you in the state in which He has placed you, as well as you can, with a good and supernatural intention for His sake, and be content in that state, and while performing its duties, with God and with yourself. Then you will be truly pious, you will serve God as He wishes you to serve Him, and you will work out your salvation according to your state, so that you will be on the right road to Heaven. “As God hath called every one, so let him walk.”¹

How foolishly many complain of their state, even under the appearance of piety.

Yes, O Supreme Ruler, so shall it be, and so shall it remain, as Thou hast ordained. Thou hast done everything well, and for our greater good. I am satisfied with what Thou hast given me, nor do I wish for anything but what seems good to Thee. If I have received anything better than others, Thou alone art the Giver, and to Thee my fervent thanks are due. If I have

Resignation to the will of God for all in general.

¹ Unumquemque sicut vocavit Deus, ita ambulet.

received less, I still have as much as Thou wishest me to have, and honor and praise are due to Thee for what I have not, as well as for what I have. Meanwhile, I will try to be more zealous in offering Thee the service that is due from my state of life. Thou hast called me to the religious state ; I am content therewith, and thank Thee, O God, for the great grace ; I will try, with Thy help, to fulfil the duties and obligations of that state. Thou hast commanded me to preach Thy word to others and to instruct them in good ; grant that I may say to Thy people what will be for Thy greater glory and the good of their souls. Thou hast given me the great honor of consecrating and partaking of Thy Sacred Body and Blood daily at the altar ; ah, grant that I may do so with a clean heart, with chaste eyes and hands, and with the reverence, humility, and devotion befitting so great a mystery. I will always strive to prepare myself for it as well as I can, because that is pleasing to Thee, oh, my God. If Thou hadst wished otherwise, if Thou hadst decreed that I should serve Thee in another state of life, I would have readily submitted to Thee ; for I can do nothing more acceptable to Thee, than to do what Thou wilt and what my duty requires. Thou art my God, and I am Thy servant : my life and state are in Thy hands. Such, my dear brethren, should certainly be my sentiments.

For the
clergy and
laity.

And you, reverend members of the clergy, should unite with me in this conclusion. God has placed you in a holy state ; He has appointed for you a holy place and a holy office, in which you share in the inheritance of Jesus Christ ; do what you can, therefore, to lead holy lives, and be satisfied, as long as you live, with the divine will. And you, too, laymen whom God has placed in a higher position than others, should unite with me in this conclusion, according to your different states and occupations. There are many who are poorer and less thought of by the world than you ; many who must wait upon and serve you ; many who are in need of your patronage, help, or advice ; many whose happiness, honor, and prosperity, nay, whose very lives often depend on you. Remember that it is God who has placed you in your exalted position, and in His eyes you are no more than others, even the poorest and most despicable, while compared to Him you are less than nothing, and all your present and future happiness, honor, prosperity, condition, occupation, life, time, and eternity, depend on His will and pleasure. Remember that you will one day have to take the lowest places, if you do not direct your lives and actions now according to the divine

law. Keep God always before your minds in everything you do; and if you have an easier life than many others, thank God humbly, not so much on that account, as because the divine will and decree are fulfilled in you. But when you find out that you have also your troubles and difficulties, for there are many who grudge you the happiness they imagine you enjoy, many whose false tongues find fault with your actions, many who will try to supplant you by underhand means,—when you find these and similar trials coming upon you in addition to the ordinary cares that often keep you employed till late at night, remember then that God has so decreed it. Do your duty punctually, and be satisfied in the Lord.

Unite with me, also, you married people ! The chief duty imposed upon you by your state of life is to bring up your children in a Christian manner, and I have often told you how you are to fulfil it. Ah, parents, you must be most exact in this duty; a great deal depends upon it, namely, Heaven or hell for yourselves and your children for all eternity. Along with this duty, you have many annoyances to contend with every day; some have naughty, obstinate, and disobedient children; others have sickly, delicate, or stupid children; some have too few, others too many children; some, who are all right in this respect, have much to endure from undutiful and obstinate servants; others, who live in constant love and harmony, are in continual fear and anxiety at the least sign of illness, that they are about to be separated by death; others live in strife and dissension; the husband curses the wife, the wife, the husband; oh, what a state of trouble ! Others are in great want, and must work hard for their daily bread. Ah, do not complain, no matter what you may suffer ! Think to yourselves : God has so willed it for me, with the exception of the cursing and swearing; that and no other is the way in which, if I am patient, I shall save my soul; and therefore, be satisfied in the Lord, all of you.

Such should be your conclusion, too, unmarried men and women. But how? Do I mean that you should be content with the state in which you now are, although many of you, no doubt, intend to change it? Certainly many of you are not yet in your definite state of life, and it is not in my power, nor do I wish to interfere with your freedom in selecting a state. Some of you would willingly embrace a state from which you have been hitherto kept away by all kinds of obstacles, even by the opposition of your parents. But remember that it is God who has

placed those obstacles in your way; pray to Him daily for help and advice; resign yourselves fully to His holy will, and be ready to enter on the state to which He will call you, for He knows best what is most suited to secure your salvation. Meanwhile, live in the unmarried state as is becoming before God, that is, in humility, modesty, chastity, careful to avoid the occasions of sin, and be satisfied in the Lord.

For widows. Such should be your conclusion also, widows! Your state has been changed, to the joy of some and the sorrow of others of you; but remember that it is the great God who has effected the change. Follow the advice of the holy Apostle St. Paul: "A woman is bound by the law, as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband die, she is at liberty; let her marry to whom she will; only in the Lord. But more blessed shall she be, if she so remain, according to my counsel."¹ Whatever you do, serve God according to your state, and be content in the Lord.

For servants. Such, too, should be your conclusion, servants. Hear and follow the advice of the same Apostle: "Wast thou called, being a bondman? care not for it,"² nor be sorry because you must serve others, for God so wills it. If you appear little in the eyes of the world, you are not so before God, but are often greater and better than kings and rulers: "For he that is called in the Lord, being a bondman, is the freedman of the Lord."³ Do your duty well and faithfully, and be content in the Lord.

For the oppressed. Such, too, should be your conclusion, you who are in trouble and sorrow. Imagine that you are figures in a picture, or actors in a theatre, who must always weep and sigh, and comfort yourselves with the thought that it is the most wise, just, and loving God who has placed you in that position, that you may rejoice all the more for eternity. Repeat frequently, therefore, when you say the Our Father, although with tears in your eyes, yet with resigned hearts: O Lord, "Thy will be done."⁴ I will treat of this more in detail hereafter.

For sinners. Such, too, should be your resolution, oh, sinners! But what am I saying? No, you must not and cannot be content with your state. I recall my words; you must always murmur and be dissatisfied with it, but you must murmur against yourselves, not

¹ Mulier alligata est legi, quanto tempore vir ejus vivit; quodsi dormierit vir ejus liberata est; cui vult nubat, tantum in Domino. Reator autem erit, si sic permanserit secundum meum consilium.—I. Cor. vii. 39.

² Servus vocatus es? non sit tibi curæ.—Ibid. 21.

³ Qui enim in Domino vocatus est servus, libertus est Domini.—Ibid. 22.

⁴ Fiat voluntas tua.—Matth. vi. 10.

against God ; for the unhappy state of sin is the only one in which God does not wish you to be. Your own perverse will has brought you to that state; be quick, therefore, and free yourselves from it by sorrow and true repentance, and regain the state of grace. I need say no more now ; you have heard enough already, and, as I hope, you are earnestly resolved to amend. Keep your resolution, and you, too, may live in peace.

Oh, my dear brethren, if you all were to live thus content with your position, according to the will of God, what an agreeable Paradise this earth would soon become ! What happy and fortunate times the years would bring about with them ! And again I wish you that happiness with all my heart. Serve God as He wishes you to do in your different states ; I repeat, in the beautiful words of St. Cyprian : “ You are enough for God, let God be enough for you.”¹ If God is satisfied with your person, your state, and your occupation, do you also be satisfied with His decree. If a man lives as God wishes him to live, and has God as his Friend, what more does he want?² He certainly should have enough. I conclude with the words of St. Paul : “ And the peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,”³ until we are called away from the state in which God has now placed us, to meet together in that happy state, in which there will be eternal peace, contentment, and joy. Amen.

Conclusion.

Another Introduction for the Sixth Sunday after Epiphany :

Text.

Eructabo abscondita a constitutione mundi.—Matth. xiii. 35.

“ I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world.”

There are many great and hidden mysteries, which we in vain try to unravel with our weak intellects, and which we should never know anything about, unless the Lord Himself declared them to us. Nor do I speak now, my dear brethren, of divine mysteries, such as the Trinity of different Persons in the one divine nature, the Incarnation of the Son of God, the real presence of Jesus Christ under the appearance of bread and wine ; in these and similar great truths we must humbly submit our understanding

¹ Sufficit tu Deo, sufficiat tibi Deus.

² Homo cujus Deus est, quid amplius quærit ?

³ Et pax Dei, quæ exsuperat omnem sensum, custodiat corda vestra, et intelligentias vestras in Christo Jesu.—Philipp. iv. 7.

to the service of faith, and say : I do not understand it, but I believe it firmly as the infallible truth, revealed by an all-wise, truthful, and infallible God ; I shall understand it one day, when I shall have the happiness of entering Heaven, where God will show to His elect mysteries that were hidden from the foundation of the world. Amongst the natural events that daily come before us, there is one that puzzles most men, as if it were an incomprehensible mystery ; nay, sometimes it makes them murmur and complain ; and that is, the difference that God has made in states and conditions of life, amongst us men, as I have explained already. Why should that be? they say ; is not God the common Father, etc., as before. To answer these complaints, I will now explain, in a simple and easy manner, this apparently incomprehensible mystery, and will show that it is right, just, consistent, and for our greater good,—*continues as before.*

SIXTY-SEVENTH SERMON.

**ON THE CONTENTMENT OF EACH ONE IN HIS STATE OF LIFE,
AS FAR AS THE SERVICE OF GOD IS CONCERNED.**

Subject.

1st. No one could serve God better in any other state, than he can in that which God has appointed for him. 2d. In another state he would not serve God at all.—*Preached on the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary.*

Text.

Postquam impleti sunt dies purgationis ejus secundum legem Moysi, tulerunt illum in Jerusalem.—Luke ii. 22.

“ And after the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they carried Him to Jerusalem.”

The Blessed Virgin Mary offered two sacrifices to-day in the temple of Jerusalem ; as a Mother, she offered her Son to His Eternal Father, and as a Virgin, she sanctified her virginity in the judgment of the world ; and both these sacrifices were very difficult ones. She could offer nothing to Heaven that was

greater and more excellent than her divine Son, and humanly speaking, she could offer nothing she loved more to preserve before the world than her virginity; for as the holy Fathers teach, she would have preferred not to be the Mother of God, if she could not have kept her virginal purity. Yet, in obedience to the law of Moses, she had to appear as an ordinary woman, who was in need of purification. But, oh, Immaculate Virgin, thou didst not stand in need of that ceremony! Let them observe it who were subject to the law; it was not made for thee! Certainly, it seems as if the Holy Virgin answered, it is for me, because such is the will of God. My Son has subjected Himself, like a sinner, to the law of circumcision, and I will submit to the law of purification; such is the will of God, and that is enough for me. Ah, Mary, obtain from thy Son for me, through the hands of thy angels, the grace that I may to-day impress deeply on my own heart and on the hearts of all present, those few words: Such is the will of God. Then there will be an end to so many fruitless sighs and complaints, for there are only a few who are content in their state of life, while the greater number are always wishing to be better off than they are; and the error of those people comes from the fact that they do not think nor acknowledge that it is the will of God for us to be as we are. My dear brethren, I have already shown that each one can and must be contented and satisfied with his state of life, no matter what it is, because the God of infinite wisdom and goodness has appointed it for him. There are still two other complaints to be examined, one of which is founded on fancied piety; for there are many who say that they cannot serve God as they wish in their state of life, and therefore they are always longing for another state in which they can pay more attention to their salvation. This I will now refute, relying principally on the argument, "Such is the will of God," and I say —

Plan of Discourse.

You would not serve God better, if you were in another state of life, than you now can in that which He has appointed for you. The first part. You would not serve God at all if you were in another state, which He has not appointed for you. The second part. Therefore, if you wish to serve God, perform well the duty required by your state, and be satisfied with the divine decree. The conclusion.

Short repetition of the preceding sermons.

I must here briefly remind you of what I have said in the two last sermons on this subject, for the whole matter rests on that, and if it is properly understood and deeply impressed on the mind, it is sufficient to make any sensible man, no matter who he is, powerful and contented. In the first place, God does not wish from one what He requires from another, nor does He wish all to serve Him in the same way. He is a great king, who desires to have many servants and ministers in different capacities in His court. Hence, every one cannot have the same state, occupation, and mode of life, nor can one perform even as many works of piety and devotion as another, but each one must attend to the divine service as well as he can, in the state of life assigned to him. Secondly, the great difference we see amongst men, one being poor, another rich, one being of high, another of lowly birth, one having an easy, another a hard life, is necessary for the general good, and for the preservation of the world, which could not long subsist if we were all equal. Thirdly, as it is God who rules everything in the world by His providence, and, with the sole exception of sin, does not allow the least thing to happen without His will and decree, so also it is He who makes that difference between men, distributes His gifts according to His own pleasure, and appoints for each one the state of life in which he now is and will be in future. From this it follows that the distribution of states of life is just and reasonable, because the God of infinite wisdom, justice, and holiness cannot fail nor err in His decrees, and therefore no one has a right to make the least complaint of his state or circumstances, no matter what they are. Fourthly, God has appointed the states and circumstances of life for the greater good of each individual, and because He has foreseen that such a state or such circumstances would best enable each one to gain Heaven in the way in which divine providence has resolved to lead him thither. Hence, each one must be not only satisfied with his state of life, but must also rejoice and thank God for having appointed that state for him with all its circumstances, nor has he anything to dread or to guard against but the unhappy state of sin.

Hence appears the folly of those who wish to be in some other state.

Keeping these points well before our minds, we shall now proceed to examine the ordinary complaints, wishes, and desires of many men, who lead discontented and unhappy lives, and who blame the Almighty God, because, as they imagine, they cannot serve Him properly in their present state. We shall see whether they have real cause for complaint, or not. If I were not so poor,

they say, if I were a little better off, so that I need not work so hard the whole day! If I were not so delicate and sickly, so that I must spend the most of my time in the house, or in bed! I wish I had become a priest, or at all events that I could live alone, and avoid all those domestic cares that sometimes almost drive me frantic! If I were not troubled with so many children; if I had not that husband, that wife, who is the cause of all my trouble, discontent, and impatience, and who will drive me mad in the end! If I had another master or mistress, who would give me more free time, or if I could only manage to live without having to attend to others! And many more complaints of the same kind, my dear brethren, that you can easily imagine for yourselves, for you know best what you have often desired and longed for. But now I ask all those people: If you were what and where you wish to be, what then? Oh, then I could serve God better; I could do more good, spend more time in prayer, go to Church oftener, be more generous in the practice of Christian charity and mercy, and attend principally to the business of my soul; whereas now, in my present state, occupation, or business, and with all the cares and anxieties that oppress me, I have hardly time for a serious thought once or twice in the day. Yes, so you think, at all events!

But now, with regard to the first point; tell me, how do you know that you would serve God as He wishes you to serve Him, if you were in the state you long for? His providence has placed you in your present state, in the midst of your present cares and anxieties, and not in another state in which you imagine you would be better off. It is not enough to do a good and holy work; the first question is whether God wishes that work to be done at that time and in that way, by that particular person. But I will speak of that in the second part. Suppose, even, that every good work, in every state, performed by any one, were pleasing to God, provided it is done with the proper intention for His sake, how do you know that if you were in the state you long for, you would perform those works of devotion, serve God better, do more good, or attend more to your soul, as you imagine? Have you penetrated the secrets of the divine council-chamber, and there discovered that wonderful knowledge by which God foresees from eternity what can happen to each individual under any possible circumstances, and by which He decrees what is to be done or omitted at certain times? Certainly, neither your knowledge nor mine can reach so far. You know

For they do not know whether, or how they could serve God in another state.

the state you are in now, and how things go with you from day to day, but you cannot say for certain how it will be with you to-morrow in that state, even for a single hour. You sigh now, later on perhaps you will laugh; now you are full of consolation, bye-and-bye you will lose all courage; to-day you are very devout, to-morrow you will be quite cold in the service of God; to-day you would rather die a thousand times than offend God by a mortal sin, to-morrow you may forget all about it for the sake of some small profit, or on account of an unchaste look or desire, or the love of a creature, and you may give up God, your soul, and Heaven, consent to sin, and sell yourself to the devil. So changeable are we poor mortals in our resolutions! What we eagerly desire one hour, we reject with loathing the next. And how can you say with certainty that you would live well in a state of which you have had as yet no experience? How can you know the difficulties that would await you, the desires and inclinations that would arise in your mind, the temptations with which the devil, the treacherous world, and your own rebellious flesh would attack you? You would in all probability be more dissatisfied and more troubled than you now are in your present state. How, then, can you say that if you were in other circumstances, as you fondly imagine, you could do more good, serve God better, attend more to your soul, and be more certain of Heaven?

We are blind even in things that we daily experience.

With reason the Wise Man says: "The thoughts of mortal men are fearful, and our counsels uncertain."¹ Why are they fearful? Because we are blind as to the future, and know nothing of it. We are like a little child who is left in the dark in a strange room, and is frightened at everything, because he knows not where he is, nor where he is going. If he could come across a chair, the best thing for him to do would be to sit down on it, and keep quiet till a light is brought, or the day breaks. We are blind, my dear brethren, and wander about in the dark whenever we direct our thoughts to the future. We are not able to understand clearly even what is present, much less to know what we would do if we were situated differently. Therefore, if we are wise, we shall dread taking a step in the dark, and longing for another state or condition. The best thing we can do is to sit down quietly on the chair that is already placed for us; that is to say, to content ourselves with the state which God, the Ruler of the world, has allotted us, and to try to serve Him and save

¹ Cogitationes mortalium timidæ et incertæ providentiæ nostræ.—Sap. ix. 14.

our souls therein, as well as we can. I do not think that we should work miracles if we were in any other state.

Again, do you imagine you could serve God better, if you were differently situated? How could you do that? Is it not by the grace and help of God? For, certainly you will not think you can do more than the great Apostle of the Gentiles, St. Paul, who had to say of himself: "Not I, but the grace of God with me."¹ I do a great deal of good in converting heathens, in procuring the glory of God, in watching² and prayer, in suffering hunger and thirst, heat and cold, dangers by land and water, persecutions and trials by day and night, for the name of Jesus Christ; yet, "not I, but the grace of God with me." It is, in fact, an article of faith that no one can perform a single supernatural work, meritorious of Heaven, without the preventing and co-operating grace of God. Now God bestows His grace according to the state and the occupations to which He has called each individual, and it is in the same way that He gives special graces and helps, which are called, "the grace of vocation."³ These helps He does not give to others who are differently situated. For instance, to get up during the night, to spend whole hours in choir singing and meditating, to live in strict solitude and silence, to fast often and rigorously, to wear coarse clothing and chastise the body frequently during the week with iron girdles and disciplines, all these things seem terrible and insupportable to a man of the world, and many are horrified when they merely read or hear of such austerities. Yet, a good religious who tries to serve God according to his state, will not think much of these things, although he may naturally be as sensitive as any one else. Why is that? It is the effect of the "grace of vocation," which is given to the religious, and not to the man of the world who is not called to that state by God. On the other hand, many could not endure to have the cries of little children resounding in their ears all day long, to have to wash and dress and carry them about; for my part, I could not stand it a single day. Yet, fathers and mothers have, as a general rule, no difficulty in doing all that; they are quite patient, and have even joy and consolation in it. How is that? It is the effect of the "grace of vocation." Now, I ask you again, how could you serve God in a different state of life, perform your duties and bear incidental

God gives graces of state to each one, without which no one can serve Him properly.

¹ Non ego, sed gratia Dei mecum.—I. Cor. xv. 10.

² In vigiliis multis, etc.—II. Cor. xi. 27.

³ Gratia vocationis.

trials and difficulties better and with greater merit, than you can in the state in which you now are, if God did not give you those special graces? Do you imagine that He would be more generous to you with His helps, if you placed yourself in circumstances in which He does not wish you to be, than He now is when you are in the state that His providence has allotted you? I do not think so. If you are now so slothful and careless, in spite of the many graces of state you receive, in all probability you would be much worse if you were situated otherwise, and therefore, instead of serving God better, you would neglect Him more than you now do.

Therefore, each one can serve God best in his appointed state.

Remain, therefore, as you are, and where you are, according to the will of God; be content with your state, and give up those useless complaints and anxious desires by which you merely torment yourself, and cannot do the least good. If you really mean what you say, and are sincerely desirous of serving God better, and doing more good, then begin in your appointed state, and show that you are in earnest. Perform your daily tasks and duties with a good intention, which you must renew often during the day, for God's sake; bear incidental difficulties and trials with patience; do all you can to avoid mortal sin, at all events, and if your state exposes you to dangers of sin that you cannot avoid, call upon the Almighty with humility and constancy to help you, and do not go into such occasions without necessity. If you do that you will serve God in the best possible way, and it is, in fact, the only way to serve Him properly. For, you cannot serve God by wishing to do what is not suited to the state appointed for you by Him. As we shall see in the

Second Part.

In what the service of God consists.

To serve God, do good, live piously, save one's soul, and go to Heaven, in what does that consist? How is it to be done? Is it only by prayer, meditation, going to church, watching, fasting, giving alms, visiting the sick and those who are in prison, and chastising the body, as many simple-minded persons think, who imagine that the service of God and true piety consist only in such things? Oh, if that were the case, we should be badly off indeed! The most of us would have reason enough to be discontented and to complain. And what would sick and delicate people then do? How could they come to Church or pray, and how could they then serve God and save their souls? And

the poor and needy, what hope would be for them, for they receive alms and cannot give any? You, too, who are engaged in the public service, and who must be always writing and studying; you merchants, who must be always in business; you workmen, who have to spend the day in your work-shops; you laborers, who continually toil in the gardens and fields, woe to you, indeed, if that were the case, for you could give only the least part of your time to God, and what would then become of your souls? Is it really Thy wish, O Lord, that all men should go to Heaven? Art Thou sincere in commanding them to do good, and to serve Thee faithfully to the end of their lives? But if so, why hast Thou made so many different states of life amongst men, and placed so many people in such circumstances that it is almost impossible for them to serve Thee always? Clearly, then, my dear brethren, the service of God must necessarily consist in something else, that all men under all circumstances can fulfil and observe perfectly. And such is really the case.

If you ask me, then, in what, I will let you answer yourselves. There are two maid-servants in your house. You say to one, Stay in the room and mind the child, and to the other, Go into the garden and dig. Both are ready to obey, and they do what you tell them. Now, which of the two servants does your will? Both of them, you will answer. But why? Neither has been attending on you; one was sitting by the fire in an easy-chair, amusing herself with the child, the other was digging in the garden and did not, perhaps, think of you the whole time; is that serving you? Yes, certainly, you answer, because they both did what I told them. And you are quite right. But suppose that one of them got tired of digging, came into the room and said: I am so fond of my mistress, that I cannot bear to be away from her; I will remain with her and attend to her, and we can hold a friendly conversation with each other. What would you think of that? Would that servant obey you better thus, than if she had remained in the garden? What are you talking about? you would say to her; I did not hire you to love your mistress so much; I do not want your conversation nor your attendance; if I required you, I should have called you; go back and do as you are told, if you really wish to be obedient, and to respect me. But, the servant would say, the other maid can sit by the fire; I am able to do that as well as she; let me change with her, and she can see what it is to dig in the garden. You

Shown by a
simile.

would not argue long with a servant like that. Go, you would say, and do what I told you ; the other must remain as she is, because such is my will ; if you do not obey me, you are no servant of mine. Quite right again, but you have now answered the first question.

It consists in fulfilling the divine will.

Serving God and doing good consists in nothing else than in doing, omitting, and suffering whatever, however, and whenever God wills each one to do, to omit, and to suffer. The Lord God has many servants and hand-maids, to whom He has given different states in life. He is not in need of any of them, and He places His exterior glory in having His creatures do as He wishes them. Whatever He requires from them, be it great or small, prayer or labor, little or much, it is well done, if done according to His will. This is the only source of all our virtue and piety and holiness of life, and we must always act like the servant of whom the centurion says in the Gospel : " I say to one, go, and he goeth ; and to another, come, and he cometh ; and to my servant, do this, and he doth it."¹ He who neglects this, does not serve God at all. Why ? Because he refuses to do what God has commanded him, as I shall prove more in detail hereafter, although it is so evident that any sensible man might see it for himself.

Which is done by each one fulfilling what God requires from him in his state of life.

And still you come with your discontent and your anxious desires : I wish I was a priest ! I wish I was unmarried ! I wish I was richer ! I wish I was this, I wish I was that ! I could then serve God better, and have more opportunity and time to do good and to save my soul. How can that be ? Are the years longer for priests and others, than for you in your state of life ? Have they more than twenty-four hours in their days and nights ? No, you say, but they have more hours to devote to prayer and divine service, than I who have so many cares, so much work to occupy me, so that I have hardly an hour in the day to give to God. So that you imagine, after all, that the only time given to God is what you spend in prayer and works of devotion, and you act like the servant who refused to work in the garden and wished to be near her mistress ; you, too, wish to be always near your Lord in prayer. I admit that the ecclesiastical state is much holier and more perfect in itself, than the secular state, but it is so only for those who are called to it. Certainly, oh, good God, I and many others have great reason to thank Thee

¹ Dico huic : Vade, et vadit ; et alio : Veni, et venit ; et servo meo : Fac hoc, et facit. — Luke vii. 8.

most humbly every day for the vocation Thou hast given us. And woe to me if I do not work with that great grace and live according to my holy state ! But, if Thou hadst not wished me to serve Thee in this state ; if Thou hadst decreed me to be a shoe-maker, a charcoal-burner, or a chimney-sweep, or that I should earn my living by digging or other work, would I not have served Thee just as well, oh, my God, if I had been content with Thy decree, and had done Thy will to the best of my power ? There is not the least doubt of it, and I should not serve Thee if I had not done Thy will in the way appointed by Thee. Such is the case, my dear brethren. A religious consecrated to God, sits or kneels for many hours, day and night, in choir, singing the praises of God ; his day is all marked out for him ; part of it he must spend in meditation, part in vocal prayer, or in spiritual reading, or in other good works, according to the rule. He does a good work whenever he does any of those things zealously and with a proper intention. He serves God ; but why ? Why is his work good ? Because he does what God wishes him to do. The father of a family looks after his domestic concerns ; the mother minds her children ; the lawyer studies and manages the cases intrusted to him ; the tradesman works with his hammer, thread, needle, etc. ; the servant waits upon his master, the maid sweeps the house ; the poor man begs his bread from door to door ; the sick man sits in an easy chair, and eats dainty food. Are not all these doing good, too, and serving God ? Who can doubt it ? provided only that they have a good conscience and a proper intention. Why ? Because they perform what is expected of them ; they do what God wishes them to do. But, you say, their occupations are not spiritual, like those of religious. No matter, as long as they fulfil the will of God, they do enough.

Or do you think that you are bound to do all the good things you see others doing ? Very well, if so ; come along, fathers and mothers, let your house look after itself, it will not run away from you ; come into the choir and sing the office with the religious ; let your children cry as much as they please ; the praise of God and the salvation of your soul have the first claims on your attention ! You lawyers and councillors, when you go into court or to the council-chamber, take Thomas à Kempis under your arm, and let your legal documents lie where they are ; you can consult them if a question arises. Read your Imitation of Christ, and if any one says anything to you, tell him you must do good

To leave this and do something else, although it is better in itself, is wrong, and displeasing to God.

and save your souls. You shop-keepers, kneel down behind the counter and say the office of the Immaculate Conception, and if a customer comes in, tell him that he must wait till you have finished your prayers, because you must serve God ! In the same way, you workmen and servants, carry your rosaries in your hands, and if your masters tell you to work, you must answer them: Prayer is more important; I must first say the rosary a dozen times and work for my soul. That would suit you admirably, would it not ? It is far easier than working. But you think it would be too ridiculous. And I am of the same opinion ; it would be just as if one expected the blacksmith to work with a needle, or the tailor with a hammer. Not less ridiculous is the complaint of some: I cannot do what others do, I have not the time, etc. No, you cannot, and what is more, you must not do it. What have you to do with the works of others ? You are not expected to perform them. We are strange creatures indeed ! We desire to do what we should not, and have a great reluctance to perform what our duty requires of us. If God had wished you to serve Him in a different manner, He would have appointed a different state for you. Do now what your state requires of you ; pray when the time comes for prayer ; work when it is time to work ; go to Church, if your duties do not prevent you ; give alms and do works of mercy, if you have the means and opportunities. Let each one do what his state requires of him ; let him do it well, as God expects him to do it, and let him do it with a good intention, because God requires it of him. That is quite enough. In that way every one can do good, and serve God as He wishes to be served ; in that way all will work out their salvation according to the divine will.

Although the occupations of many states are vile, yet God requires no others from them.

Ah, thinks another, I must occupy myself the whole day with vile and despicable things, to support myself and my family. How can I please God thereby ? The surest sign of the divine will is the fact that you are forced to engage in such occupations (for He could easily free you from them if He wished), and that He has commanded you to support yourself and your family thereby. Therefore, if you do willingly and patiently what you are forced to do, and offer it up with a good conscience and a pure intention to God, because it is His will, who can deny that God is pleased with your work ? Hear what St. Dorotheus writes of his disciple Dositheus: ¹ The latter, since, through bodily weakness, he could not observe the order of the day like the others in

¹ Bibl.—SS. PP. Tom. 3.

the monastery (for he could not rise in the morning, nor work, nor eat, nor drink like the others), in order to do something for God's sake gave himself up completely, in obedience, to one of his superiors, who ordered him to attend to the sick now and then, when he was able to do so. Dositheus obeyed humbly and readily for five years, when he died of consumption. God revealed to the Abbot of the monastery that the young Dositheus was as high in glory as St. Paul and St. Anthony. The other monks began to complain when they heard this; they said: "Where is, then, Thy justice, oh, Lord?" "Thou hast made like to us, nay, even superior to us, a man who was brought up in comfort, who never fasted, nor chastised his body, nor interrupted his night's rest, while we have to bear the whole burden of religious observance by day and night. What greater reward can we hope for all our labor and trouble, than Dositheus, who has done hardly anything in comparison to us, has already gained in Heaven? for Thou hast made him equal in glory to the greatest Saints. And God answered them, saying: His obedience merited more, in a short time, than all the austerities of many others. Dositheus did what he had to do, and what his superior commanded him. I have not required him to fast, watch, nor chastise his body, because his health did not permit; he performed a service most pleasing to Me, because he did well and zealously what I wished him to do. Let us all take this to ourselves. Do well what your state requires, God will certainly not expect any more from you; nay, besides the keeping His commandments, He cannot expect any more; He must be satisfied with that. For, what father who has taught his son nothing but a trade, could reasonably expect that son to write a learned essay for him? And if the father were angry with him for not being able to do it, the son could say: But, father, if you wish me to write such things, you should have sent me to school to study. My trade does not teach me to write fine essays; but as far as my trade is concerned, I am at your service. Certainly, if, on the last day, God were to require from a man more than belonged to his state and circumstances, that man could answer that he had done well the work which had been appointed for him on earth. For instance, if God were to ask a poor man why he did not give more alms, the man might answer: Lord, Thou hast given me poverty as my portion; I have had to live on alms, or by my labor, but I have been content with Thy will. Why have you lost

¹ *Ubi nam ergo iustitia tua, Domine?*

Mass and missed the sermon so often on Sundays and holy-days ? He will ask another. Lord, Thou hast given me sickness as my portion ; the doctor and my confessor, whom Thou hast commanded me to obey, told me to remain at home. I have borne my pain and weakness with patience for Thy sake ; what more could I do ? Why have you not meditated every day on heavenly things ? He will ask a simple plough-man. Lord, Thou hast not taught me how to meditate. I have tried to learn all I could from sermons and catechism, and to live according to what I have heard ; I have offered up all my daily labors to Thee, because Thou hast told me to do so. Why have you not gone forth to labor for my honor and glory, and to gain souls for Me ? Lord, the father of a family will answer, Thou hast given me no talent for that ; Thou hast imposed a different duty on me. I have worked for Thy honor and glory by being content with my state, according to Thy decree, by doing my duty to please Thee, and by being diligent in exhorting my children and servants to do Thy will. Why have you not heard Mass oftener, and performed more works of piety ? Lord, the servant will answer : “ Thou hast set men over our heads ; ”¹ I could not do as I wished : my master and mistress told me to stay at home and work ; whenever I was allowed, I heard Mass every day, and I did everything with a good intention. Now, my dear brethren, what fault can God find with such answers ? He will and must be satisfied with them. Nay, if all those works are performed in the state of grace, and those people die in that state, He must reward every one of them eternally, according to His promise in the Gospel of St. Matthew : “ Then will He render to every man according to his works. ”² Mark those words, “ according to his works, ” not according to the works of another. Oh, if every one only did well what his state requires, what a pleasing service would be rendered to God all over the world !

Conclusion and instruction as to how each one is to serve God daily in his state.

Let us all begin, therefore, to-day, my dear brethren, to serve our God with fresh zeal, and let each one be satisfied with his state and with the divine decree ! This should be our good intention every morning : My Lord and my God, behold me, Thy servant, ready to do whatever is pleasing to Thee ! Thou hast placed me in this state ; I thank Thee most humbly for it ; I am satisfied with it, no matter what it is. These labors, cares, occupations, annoyances, and trials will likely be my lot to-day ; I will accept

¹ Imposuisti homines super capita nostra. — Ps. lxxv. 12.

² Tunc reddet unicuique secundum opera ejus. — Matth. xvi. 27.

and endure them to Thy greater honor and glory, because such is Thy will. I rejoice with my whole heart, that Thou hast so many faithful servants in the world, who will praise and honor Thee on this day with holy occupations, which I have not time for, since my daily duties are far more lowly. Nevertheless, I know that Thou wilt not despise what I do, but receive it from me with pleasure, for I can do nothing more pleasing to Thee than that which Thou wishest me to do. And that my daily work may please Thee all the more, I unite it with the works of Jesus Christ Thy Son, who spent the greater part of His life as a poor carpenter in the work-shop, and did as much for Thy glory in that state, as He afterwards did by His preaching and miracles. Instead of saying long prayers, I will often raise my heart to Thee during my daily labor, and say: I do this for Thy sake, O Lord, because it is pleasing to Thee! All for Thy honor and glory! Give me grace to perform all the duties of my state with zeal and diligence, according to Thy holy will, and keep me from all sin! Such should be your resolution, my dear brethren, and you should do your best to keep it. That is the way to serve God, to do good, to be pious, and to gain Heaven. Amen.

SIXTY-EIGHTH SERMON.

**ON THE CONTENTMENT OF EACH ONE IN HIS STATE OF LIFE
AS FAR AS THE DANGERS OF THE SOUL ARE
CONCERNED.**

Subject.

Every one must be content with the divine decree in his state of life, as far as the unavoidable dangers of the soul are concerned.--*Preached on the Feast of St. Matthias, Apostle.*

Text.

Ita, Pater ; quoniam sic fuit placitum ante te.—Matth. xi. 26.
“Yea, Father: for so hath it seemed good in Thy sight.”

Introduction.

It is I, then, oh, my God, who must take the place of the Apostle Judas, and be reckoned in the number of those to whom Thou hast said: "Behold, I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves;"¹ they will drive you from one city to another, they will accuse you in the synagogues, bind, imprison, and scourge you; he who kills you will think he does a service to God; you will be hated by all men for my Name's sake. Am I then to be of their number? "Yea, heavenly Father," I am satisfied, "for so hath it seemed good in Thy sight."² Thou canst dispose of me as Thou wilt. Send me forth whither Thou wilt, to declare Thy name and Thy glory; amongst Jews, heathens, barbarians, I care not where; my life is devoted to Thy honor! I am ready for labor and toil, for all sorts of persecutions and trials, to shed my blood, to suffer martyrdom, and a violent death, I refuse nothing: "For so hath it seemed good in Thy sight;" may Thy will be always done in me! Thus said the holy Apostle St. Matthias; and if he did not use those exact words, at least he proved, by his works, his readiness to do God's will in all things. Therefore, it is not without cause that the Catholic Church selects the Gospel read to-day for the feast of this Apostle, for he was elected as an Apostle by a visible mark of the divine will. As we read in the Acts of the Apostles, a hundred and twenty persons had assembled to see who was to be chosen for the apostleship in place of the traitor Judas; none of them ventured to give a vote until they had invoked the Holy Ghost with these words: "Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two Thou hast chosen; . . . and the lot fell upon Matthias."³ "Yea, Father; for so hath it seemed good in Thy sight." With the same conformity to the divine will and pleasure, he afterwards went to the countries allotted to him; first to Judea, amongst the Jews, who hated the Christian name, then to Morocco, amongst barbarians and heathens, where, as a reward for his labor in spreading the glory of Jesus Christ, he was first stoned and then beheaded. He was quite ready for everything: "Yea, Father; for so hath it seemed good in Thy sight." What a beautiful example St.

¹ Ecce ego mitto vos. sicut oves in medio luporum.—Matth. x. 16.

² Ita, Pater; quoniam sic fuit placitum ante te.

³ Tu Domine, qui corda nosti omnium, ostende, quem elegeris etc. . . . et cecidit sortis super Matthiam.—Acts 1. 24, 26.

Matthias gives us, my dear brethren ! How so ? We cannot become Apostles and travel through the world to preach the Gospel to Jews and heathens, and further the glory of God ; it is not every one who can do that. Nor can we be stoned to death or beheaded for Christ's sake ; and many, in fact, would not willingly undergo that martyrdom. Yet there is one thing we can all do, after the Saint's example, to further the glory of God every day of our lives ; and what is that ? We can be satisfied with and resigned to the will of God in all circumstances and occurrences, and no matter how things go with us in this life, we can always think and say : " Yea, Father ; for so hath it seemed good in Thy sight." I have already more than once tried to encourage you to be thus satisfied in your different states of life, my dear brethren. Besides the mental and bodily troubles that are inseparable from different states, there are dangers and difficulties that affect the soul and its salvation, which give many, especially pious Christians, occasion for uneasiness and anxiety in their state, so that they wish to be situated differently. But even in these, each one can and must be peaceful and contented, because it so pleases God and has been so arranged by His providence for every one. As I shall prove in the present instruction.

Plan of Discourse.

Every one must be content with the divine decree in his state of life, as far as the unavoidable dangers of the soul are concerned. Such is the whole subject.

I rely on the divine help, through the intercession of Mary and the holy angels guardian, and thou, oh, holy Apostle Matthias, who bringest so many people from distant places every year to honor thy relics ; obtain for us, who are here assembled in thy honor, the grace to conform our wills always to the will of God, so that in all difficulties of soul and body, we may think and say from our hearts : " Yea, Father," etc.

The difficulties and dangers that assail our souls and our salvation are the different occasions of and allurements to evil, the temptations to various kinds of sin, and the difficulties we meet with in the service of God, which could make us abandon it, and so fill us with a just fear of losing our souls and of going to hell for all eternity. Such are certain circumstances which

The dangers of the soul consist in the occasions of sin.

excite us sometimes to anger, impatience, cursing and swearing, sometimes to injustice, avarice, injuring our neighbor, or to pride and vanity, to impurity and carnal love, to gluttony and drunkenness, so that, as we are drawn with a kind of violence, we sin easily and frequently in those different ways, unless we are vigilant and resist the temptation with all our might.

Which
make life
a burden
to many.

Ah, that is the very thing that makes me uneasy day and night, and causes me to be discontented with my state! is the complaint of many. I would readily be satisfied with everything, if I had not daily, at all times, in all places, so many dangerous occasions of sin to guard against. For, what is the married life but a continual source of impatience, cursing and swearing, quarrelling and strife? The husband is given to anger and intemperance, the wife is idle and fond of amusement; the disobedient children will not listen to what is said to them; the servants are lazy and obstinate; they must be told to do a thing twenty times before they stir; one would almost be obliged to have other servants to look after them. The neighbors are devoured with curiosity to know everything that happens; they often find fault with and misinterpret one's acts; one's own friends and relations can hardly be trusted, for they talk here and there and say many things to others behind one's back, that are not well meant. Who could preserve patience and meekness under such circumstances? Who could keep from sinning through anger, cursing, or swearing? What is my poverty and hard, laborious life, but a school of sorrow and despair? What is my employment but a temptation to injustice, unless I am very careful? One has to deal with all sorts of people, to hear all kinds of talk, to see all kinds of dangerous and seductive objects. Who can guard himself and keep his senses always under control, so that he does not sometimes sin with the tongue, or at all events consent to an unlawful thought or desire? Besides, it is well known that the devil attacks one with various great temptations, and that he presents all kinds of horrid pictures to the imagination. In a word, wherever you turn, you find occasion to do evil and to lose your soul; you cannot help committing sin!

Therefore,
some un-
justly blame
their state
for all their
sins.

But what nonsense to talk like that! It is a mere excuse that some people make, when they are warned to give up the evil habits that are to them an occasion of sin. They say without hesitation that their state and condition in life are to blame; that they have so many opportunities of evil, that it seems almost im-

possible for them to keep from grievous sin. Nay, they even go so far as to commit sin and think nothing of it; so that often when they go to confession they say: I have done nothing wrong, but the ordinary daily sins. And what are they? Anger, impatience, cursing, swearing. And is it not worth while to mention them particularly? Oh, but I cannot help committing them, on account of my state and circumstances at home. What? Instead of blaming your state, you should blame your own unmortified will, that refuses to correct a bad habit. There have been holy emperors, kings and princes, lawyers and public officials, merchants and shop-keepers, citizens and married people, peasants and beggars, who led pious lives amidst the many dangers, annoyances, and temptations of their different states. And in our own days, if the consciences of men were laid bare before us, we should find good and zealous Christians who so live in the midst of similar circumstances, dangers, and temptations, that for several years they do not commit one grievous sin. Why should you be compelled to sin, more than they? No, there is no temptation, no occasion, no devil, nor number of devils, that can force you against your will. If you kept God always before your mind, if you remembered, with a lively faith, that all the outward troubles and annoyances, which you blame for your sins, proceed principally from God Himself, and are appointed for you by His providence, you would resign yourself to His will with more meekness and patience, and the divine grace would keep you from sin in all those occasions and dangers, which are actually decreed by the Almighty for your greater good.

And do you think, perhaps, that your state is the only one that is exposed to dangers of this kind? Or do you imagine that if you were in another state that you desire, you would find fewer dangers? Oh, certainly not! Poor mortals that we are, not one of us can boast of being free from them! Job says: "The life of man upon earth is a warfare." The warfare is general, no one is exempt from it, it never ends until, after having conquered, we enjoy the repose of Heaven. No state so holy, no Order so strict, no place so pure, that countless temptations and dangers of sin cannot find their way into it. Even St. Jerome, in the desert, amidst constant watching, fasting, and mortification, had no rest from them day or night. St. Paul, although he saw the third Heaven, was tormented constantly by the demon of the

Each state has, by divine decree, its dangers and occasions of evil.

¹ *Militia est vita hominis super terram.*—Job vii. 1.

flesh. If one were to try to escape from all outward occasions of temptation, by hiding himself in some corner between four walls, he would still have a source of temptation in himself, for wherever he goes he brings his own flesh with him, and in that is nourished the cause of temptations that may ruin him forever; or else he will have enough to do to combat the devil, who goes about like a roaring lion, and leaves no one at rest in his efforts to destroy souls. In fact, if we wished to avoid all dangers and seductions to evil, we should leave this life, as the Apostle says. Such is the will of the God of infinite wisdom, for all states and circumstances of life, that He may thereby prove our virtue, and excite us to be watchful and make us fly to His paternal care for refuge, with humility and confidence. He thus wishes us to storm Heaven, and carry it away by violence. For, since tyrants and persecutors are not always to be found, and we have not the opportunity of being martyred for the faith, these temptations and dangers, that must be overcome by patient resistance, take the place of martyrdom. So that they are general, because such is the will of God; no one, therefore, has a right to complain of them, or to be dissatisfied on their account with the divine decree.

They who have more numerous and greater dangers to contend with, must still be content with the divine decree.

Still, I admit that, while each state, no matter how holy it is, has its own dangers and temptations, yet some states have much more numerous and grievous ones than others. Now, if God calls you to such a state, to contend with occasions from which others are exempt; if He wishes you to overcome greater difficulties, and to use greater violence than others, to gain Heaven, dare you, or can you find fault with Him, or ask Him why He does so? I would not advise you to do that, but rather to say with the high-priest Heli: "It is the Lord; let Him do what is good in His sight."¹ He is the Lord, who can do only what is good. He can give His Heaven at any price that He wishes to put upon it. If He required a thousand times more difficulty and labor, Heaven would be worth it all. Can He not give the penny that He paid to those who worked a whole day in his vineyard, also to those who worked only an hour, although the former had far more trouble and labor than the latter?

Explained by a simile.

A soldier in war time must always be ready, either to fight in battle, or to sit idle in winter quarters. He may be lying asleep in his tent, but as soon as he hears the signal for attack, he springs

¹ Dominus est, quod bonum est in oculis suis, faciat.—I. Kings iii. 18.

up at once, and goes wherever his officer tells him. The soldiers who are in the van are certainly in greater danger than those who are in the rear, and yet the general in command orders a certain regiment to lead the attack ; nor would there be any use in the soldiers of that regiment complaining, because they are more exposed than the others. That is the will of him who commands the army and arranges the battle. The soldiers must obey, and the greater the danger, the braver they should be, and the greater will be their glory when the battle is ended. Nay, generally it is the oldest regiment that claims the right to be first in the van, where the fight is thickest, nor does it readily give up that right to others. My dear brethren, “the life of man upon earth is a warfare.”¹ As long as we mortals live on this earth, we are always engaged in a dangerous combat, in which we have to fight for eternal life, and we must either win or lose it. Some of us are placed in the van, others in the centre, others in the rear; that is, in greater or lesser dangers, as the general thinks fit ; but all are so placed that they can conquer if they choose. Now this great General has placed you, by His providence, in the state and in all the circumstances of the state in which you are. He knows well, and has foreseen from all eternity, the occasions, dangers, allurements, and temptations to evil that you are to meet with in that state, at all times, and under all circumstances. He knows, too, your strength, and how much you can do. He says also, by His Apostle St. Paul : “ God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able,” nor will He place over you a burden too heavy for you to bear, “but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it.”² If, then, the dangers of your state appear to you to be greater than those of other states, why should you find fault with what you cannot change ? You must say with Heli : “ It is the Lord ; let Him do what is good in His sight,”³ God wills it so. You must be satisfied and fight against the temptations and dangers as well as you can, with His help, which will never be wanting to you, if you appeal to Him with confidence. Say, therefore, in such circumstances : “ Yea, Father, for so hath it seemed good in Thy sight.”⁴ I

¹ *Militia est vita hominis super terram.*

² *Fidelis autem Deus est, qui non patietur vos tentari supra id, quod potestis, sed faciet etiam cum tentatione proventum, ut possitis sustinere.—I. Cor. x. 13.*

³ *Dominus est, quod bonum est in oculis suis, faciat.*

⁴ *Ita, Pater : quoniam sic fuit placitum ante te.*

will fight as well as I can, only do Thou help me, for I rely on Thy grace and assistance !

The sins committed on account of those dangers, do not come from the state, but from the malice of men.

Ah, you say, but I am so weak ; I am so often overcome by impatience that I sin almost daily ; I always propose to be watchful, and not to curse or swear so wickedly, or to offend God in the least, but all to no purpose ! It is always the same ! If I go a hundred times to confession, I always have the same sins and daily faults. That certainly would not be the case if I had not so many occasions to sin, or if I were in another state of life. Certainly, it is very wrong for you to commit so many sins ; God has never decreed that. But what is to blame for it ? Is it an occupation or business that you can give up ? If so, and if you find that, no matter what you do, you still commit grievous sin, then it becomes a proximate occasion for you, and you must abandon it, no matter what it costs. Is it your state, which according to divine command you cannot change, such as the ecclesiastical or the married state ? Then, as I said before, your own will is alone to blame, and not the state in which God has commanded you to remain, to use the proper means to avoid sin by His grace, which He will not refuse you, and to be diligent in overcoming temptations.

In another state, one would sin more grievously, although the dangers are less.

Besides, how do you know that you would not commit so much sin in another state ? Perhaps, nay, likely you would be much worse therein, and would lose your soul ; so that it is better for you, so to speak, that you now and then sin through anger and impatience, on account of weakness (although it is never good to sin), than to commit far more grievous sins in another state to which God has not called you, although the dangers of that state are less in themselves. Mark my words : I say, dangers less in themselves, because the greatness of the danger or temptation must not be measured by what it is in itself, but by what the person is whom it assails, and by the help that God gives. For instance, there is an opportunity of gaining a hundred dollars unjustly, and also of gaining ten dollars in the same manner, without being detected. Which danger is the greater, and the more likely to lead one to theft ? Certainly the first, because a hundred dollars excite greater cupidity than ten, and yet, the first is less dangerous for a rich man, than the second would be for a poor beggar. Why ? Because according to the difference of state, ten dollars are more for a poor man, than a hundred for a rich man ; and if the rich man is pious he will have no difficulty in giving up the chance of making the hundred dollars

unjustly, while the poor man, if he is not very good, will be quite ready to sell his soul for the ten dollars. Even the same man who can withstand a severe temptation, if he were in other circumstances, would yield to a much weaker one. We experience that in ourselves daily. Many a one who conquers a violent temptation to anger and hatred, and who forgives his enemy for the love of God, according to the law of Jesus Christ, bursts out into a violent passion for some worthless thing, or at a slight contradiction from a well-meaning friend. How often does it not happen that a person who has been violently tempted to impurity for many years, and has fought valiantly and preserved his chastity, allows himself to be seduced by a chance occasion that is far less dangerous than his former temptations? Joseph conquered in a long-continued and grievous temptation, that came from the wife of his own master; David, a holy man, after God's own heart, was betrayed by a chance look into becoming an adulterer, and a murderer. Perhaps Joseph would have fallen, like David, in the lesser occasion, and David, like Joseph, would have overcome in the greater.

So that, although the dangers in one state are less than in another, how do you know that they would be less for you? You who now, with the help of God, keep your soul for months free from grievous sin, in the midst of the dangers and occasions of evil to which your state exposes you, even you, I say, would perhaps, in other circumstances, yield to the least temptations and lose your soul; especially if you are not in the place and state in which God wishes you to be. Put a fish into a silver vessel filled with the best wine, and it will soon die, but throw it into even the dirtiest water and it will live. Why? Because water is its proper element, and has been assigned to it by the Author of nature; it can live, therefore, in water, but not in wine, although the latter is more costly. The same thing would happen to you and me, if we were to change with each other; if you took my place and I yours, against the will of God, I would not be strong enough to bear up against the difficulties of your position, nor could you overcome the temptations of mine. Why so? Because God has allotted your state to you and mine to me, in His inscrutable designs, and He has also determined what helps and graces He will give to every one according to his state and the dangers of it. There are many occasions and companions that a layman can frequent in the course of his business, without any injury to his conscience, because he cannot avoid them; but if I were to expose

Which no
one can
know.

myself to them without necessity, or without being obliged to do so by ordinary courtesy or Christian charity, I should likely fall at once. Why? Because I would go out of my proper place, and therefore could not expect a special help or grace from God to avoid sin in such circumstances.

Therefore, we must all be satisfied with the will of God in our appointed states, and use the proper means to avoid sin, such as humble and trustful prayer.

Therefore, let us all be satisfied with our appointed states and be resigned to the will of God. This one thought alone should be enough for us: "Yea, Father; for so hath it seemed good in Thy sight."¹ Thou hast done, and done well, too, for every one as Thou hast wished and known it to be for his greater good! The more we know of the dangers and opportunities of sin that we are exposed to in our state of life, the more careful should we be not to rush into other unnecessary dangers through want of reflection; for it is in that that our chief fault and the chief cause of our sins are to be found.

In the daily occasions that we cannot avoid nor prevent we must use these salutary means to protect ourselves: first, we must confess our weakness with great humility, for we can do nothing without the divine help, but also with unimpaired cheerfulness and childlike confidence in God, to whom we must often send up aspirations during the day, firmly believing that He will not allow us to commit a mortal sin. For Jesus Christ has promised, not once, but several times in the Gospel, that He will refuse nothing to him who, with firm confidence, asks Him for something useful to salvation. Believe, and it shall be done unto you.² Even if we sometimes fall through weakness, we must not, therefore, lose courage, but rather acknowledge and humbly repent of our sin, and begin with fresh zeal to combat our inordinate inclinations and desires; like him who, fighting with another, receives a severe blow, and is only made more courageous by it.

Recollection of the presence of God.

Secondly, we must accustom ourselves to remember God in all our daily actions, and to keep ourselves in His presence. That we can easily do during our work, and in the midst of the most weighty occupations, by a passing thought or an aspiration; for the mind is not induced to commit sin, unless it loses sight of God, and it is almost an impossibility for one who is at all pious, to commit a grievous sin deliberately, when he has a lively remembrance that the Almighty God is present, looking at him.

Frequent confession.

The third means consists of frequent and worthy confession to

¹ Ita, Pater: quoniam sic fuit placitum ante te.

² Credite, et evenient vobis.—Mark xi. 24.

the same enlightened confessor. That includes also the evening examination of conscience, in which we examine and detest the faults and sins we have committed during the day, with a firm resolution to amend them ; a practice that good and pious Christians never omit. A garden cannot run to waste when the weeds are plucked up every day ; and in the same way, a bad habit must be corrected, when the conscience is daily cleansed and purified.

Finally, we must not forget that after our night's rest, we must give the beginning of the day to God alone, to whom belongs our first and most important business. As the day is well or ill begun, so, generally speaking, will it be throughout, and they who say their morning prayers devoutly, will certainly find that they will have a special inclination and encouragement to be good during the day, as well as great consolation and joy in the Lord in everything they do. If I were to ask such people whether what I say is true, I know from experience that they would confirm every word of it. It is useful also, after having made the good intention, to recall briefly the occasions of sin that we are likely to meet with during the day in our ordinary occupations, namely, the places we are likely to be in, the persons we have to deal with, the business we have to do, the annoyances and troubles that await us, the faults and sins we usually commit, and then to make a firm resolution, and say : Now I will be careful not to commit a deliberate sin in any of those circumstances ; I would rather die to-day than offend God and lose Him by mortal sin. If we forget our resolution and commit a fault ; for instance, if in a moment of anger, a curse bursts forth from our lips, we must strike our breasts, or else say in our own minds with heartfelt sorrow : God be merciful to me a sinner ; and then renew our good resolution. That we may keep this resolution all the better, we must recommend it to God, with childlike confidence, in the following or similar words : See, O Lord, Thou knowest what my state of life is, and the many dangers and occasions of offending Thee to which I am exposed ; but Thou knowest, too, that I do not seek them wilfully. It is in accordance with Thy decree, my Lord and my God, that I live in this state and avoid these dangers. "Yea, Father ; for so hath it seemed good in Thy sight." Thou knowest also my weakness and misery, and that I cannot resist any temptation, unless Thou comest to my assistance. But Thou wilt help me, because Thou hast promised to do so ! I will co-operate with Thee, as far as I can, and I

Good use of
the morn-
ing time.

¹ Ita, Pater ; quoniam sic fuit placitum ante te.

confide altogether in Thy fatherly care. Let what Thou wilt happen to me this day, one only request I make of Thee: Do not permit me to offend Thee, my loving Father, and my Supreme Good, by a mortal sin! Then I shall be always content with Thy holy will and decree. Amen.

SIXTY-NINTH SERMON.

ON THE CHILDLIKE CONFIDENCE WITH WHICH EVERY ONE OUGHT TO ABANDON HIMSELF TO DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

Subject.

Nothing more reasonable, or more conducive to true happiness, than to abandon ourselves with childlike confidence to divine providence.—*Preached on the Feast of the Epiphany of Our Lord.*

Text.

Ecce, magi ab Oriente venerunt.—Matth. ii. 1.
 “Behold, there came wise men from the East.”

Introduction.

A wonderful journey that was! “Behold, there came wise men.” Were they really very clever? Where did they come from? From the far-off East. Where were they going to? To Jerusalem. For what purpose? To adore the new-born Saviour of the world. But where were they to find Him? They knew not. So that they were going, they knew not where, to see, they knew not whom. They ask about Him: “Where is He?”¹ They should have found that out before undertaking such a long journey. They seek Him in Jerusalem; perhaps He is elsewhere. They come to a certain place, and perhaps they are going away from Him all the time. How long will they have to wander about before they find Him? They know not; perhaps they will never find Him. Would it not have been more prudent to have sent their servants on beforehand to make inquiries, and to have awaited their return before setting out? es-

¹ *Ubi est?*—Matth. ii. 2.

pecially since it was in winter time that they had to leave their own countries to undertake a difficult journey. But the three wise kings never thought of all these things; they had seen the star as a sign of the new-born Saviour, and they accepted the invitation to come and adore Him; they required nothing more. Without delay they set out, not having even a guide, for the star they had seen in the East did not appear to them again until they had left Jerusalem, as the Gospel says: "Who having heard the king, went their way; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East, went before them." The difficulties and length of the journey, and the uncertainty of finding the place, did not frighten them from their purpose. They trusted completely in God alone; He, they thought, who has called us by the star, will no doubt bring us to the right place. They left all the care of themselves to Him. Truly, my dear brethren, they acted wisely, prudently, and sensibly. Oh, how their example shames our pusillanimity, our want of faith and confidence in God! How it condemns our inordinate and excessive cares, anxieties, fears, and uneasiness, our useless troubles and apprehensions, our desperate efforts to provide everything that concerns our bodies and souls, our earthly lives, our state and our welfare, as if there were no one in the world to take care of us but ourselves, as if there were neither God nor providence to look after us! If, like the three wise men, we employed proper diligence, and then placed all our hope in God, and abandoned ourselves with full confidence to His care and providence, things would go far better with us in this pilgrimage to our heavenly fatherland; as I shall show in this sermon.

Plan of Discourse.

Nothing more reasonable, or more conducive to true happiness, than to abandon ourselves with childlike confidence to divine providence. Such is the whole subject.

I prove it at once by relying on the grace and light of the Holy Ghost, which I confidently hope to obtain from Him, through the intercession of Mary, and the help of the holy angels.

Where could or ought I to place all my hope and confidence, to whom could I more reasonably intrust myself and all belong-
We can trust fully in Him who

¹ Qui cum audissent regem, abierunt; et ecce stella, quam viderant in Oriente, antecedit eos.—Matth. II. 9.

has knowl-
edge, pow-
er, and will
to arrange
all for our
greater
good.

ing to me, if not to Him who has a perfect knowledge of me and my condition, who knows exactly what my wants and necessities are, and what is good or bad for me, at all times, in all circumstances, who has also the power of providing me with all I want, and guarding me from all harm, at all times, in all circumstances, and what is still more, whose love and good-will I can be always certain of, knowing that He desires and seeks only to do me good, and to arrange everything for my greatest happiness, both of soul and body? Oh, if I find such a Guardian, I need have no further care! I can rest quietly and allow Him to deal with me as He thinks fit, certain that no evil can happen to me, and that nothing I undertake can turn out badly.

We can
find no one
like that,
among men.

But where can I find such a one? You may search the whole world through, before you find any one who possesses those three qualities. You have, for instance, an important law-suit; to whom do you intrust it? Is it not to the most celebrated lawyer you can find? If one, who has the name of gaining every case he takes in hand, accepts your case, you think that half the care is taken off your shoulders and that your case is as good as gained. Why? Because, you say, he knows what he is doing. And you act sensibly enough in the matter. But you must not be too confident; no matter how clever the lawyer is, since he is only a changeable mortal, he may allow himself to be bribed by your opponent and may protract the case a long time, so that you are as badly off as before. He is not wanting in knowledge and experience, but he is not well inclined to you. A child thinks it is nowhere so safe as in its mother's lap; if it sees a dog, or any other animal running up to it, it flies at once to its mother's arms; if you try to frighten it, it calls out at once for its mother; as long as she is present, or even knows of its danger, it has no more fear. What is the reason of that confidence? Because the child knows that its mother loves it, and would not allow it to be injured. And that, too, is a well-grounded confidence. Still, it often happens that the child cries for a piece of bread, or for a new dress, but the poor mother can only hold out her empty hands and say, with tears: Oh, my child, I have nothing to give you. She is not wanting in knowledge, for she knows well what her child is in need of, nor is she wanting in good will, for she is anxious to help him; but she cannot, she has not the power to do so. Many a poor, oppressed subject thinks he would be all right if he could only manage to present his lord with a petition, setting forth his grievances. Why?

Oh, he thinks, such a rich man can have no difficulty in making a slight concession in my favor ; he can easily do it, and besides, he is well known as a good and kind lord. Still the poor man remains as badly off. Why ? Because, though his lord would willingly help him, he knows nothing of him, he cannot always know how his poor subjects are getting on. And so it is always with us in this life : some know how to help, but cannot ; others can, but know not how ; others know how and can help, but are unwilling to do so ; and if we find one who has all three qualities, yet he will not be able to extend them to all times, places, and circumstances. Oh, certainly it is an ill-grounded confidence that is placed in any mortal !

So that I must not rest my hopes in this world, but seek some one in Heaven, in whom I can reasonably and certainly place my whole confidence. And who else is that, but the almighty, all-wise, and infinitely good God? Christ our Lord, when exhorting us, in the Gospel of St. Matthew, to have no care for the morrow, nor for food, drink, or clothing, but to place all our confidence in our heavenly Father, intrusting ourselves and all we have to His providence, uses these brief but impressive words : “ For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things.”¹ God knows all your wants ; you need not fear that He will forget them. The Father, that is, the Creator of all things, who has Heaven and earth in His power, knows them ; be assured, then, that He can provide for and help you in your misery. Your Father knows and can do all things ; you cannot doubt, therefore, of His goodness and love ; you must believe that He arranges everything for your greater good.

Let us meditate a little, my dear brethren, on these three words, “ your Father knoweth.”² God knows everything that concerns us—what we want, and what is necessary to us ; who can doubt of that ? What could be hidden from Him ? St. Paul says : “ All things are naked and open to His eyes ; ”³ all, without exception, great and small. His intellect is not overpowered by the multitude of things, nor is it confused by their variety, nor does the insignificance of a thing exclude it from His care and providence. He cares for me and for each one in particular, says St. Augustine, as if He were occupied with me alone. He cares for the whole world as He would for one individual. Consider, my dear brethren, how, when you look at a well-painted

But in God.

He knows everything, and where and how anything is good or bad for us.

¹ Scit enim Pater vester, quia his omnibus indigetis.—Matth. vi. 32.

² Scit Pater vester.

³ Omnia nuda et aperta sunt oculis ejus.—Heb. iv. 13.

portrait, no matter where you turn, the eyes always follow you; it is a figure, though an imperfect one, of the divine wisdom and providence. Go where you will, do as you please, let what may happen to you, whether you are in joy or in sorrow, the eye of God always follows you, in all places, in all circumstances. His wisdom "reacheth from end to end."¹ It knows and comprehends all things, not merely those that are present, but also those that are past, and what will happen and can happen for all eternity; everything is clear and manifest to the eye of God, and is arranged by His providence with the utmost wisdom. Away with those foolish theorists, of whom there are some, even amongst Catholics, who, through want of a lively faith, and for some absurd reason of their own, imagine that God is blind and does not trouble Himself about the affairs of the world! As if everything happened by chance, according to the false words of one of Job's friends: "And thou sayest: What doth God know? and He judgest as it were through a mist. The clouds are His covert and He doth not consider our things, and He walketh about the poles of Heaven."² Heaven is His palace, and He remains there always, without ever coming forth from it; there He enjoys Himself, without being in the least concerned about His creatures. Certainly He would have a great deal to do, if He were always busied with the concerns of mortals. Such are the blasphemous thoughts and speeches of those half atheists. Oh, poor mortals, how miserable you would be, if they were true! What consolation would there be for you in your trials, if you had to deal with a God who cares nothing for you? But, be comforted; the true God sees all your wants, says the Prophet Jeremias: "Whose eyes are open upon all the ways of the children of Adam;"³ He knows more of your wants than you do yourselves.

He takes constant care of us, and adverts even to the least thing.

The same all-wise God is more careful of you than you can be or can ever wish to be for yourselves. When you are asleep at night, the eye of God is watching over you for your greater good. Sometimes, when you sit down quietly, not suspecting any evil, the hand of God is engaged in averting some misfortune that was about to happen to you, of which you knew nothing. Instead of giving me merely a piece of bread to eat, He causes, without my knowing anything of it, a whole crop of corn to grow for my support. The little grain of wheat that lies in a barn ten miles

¹ Attingit a fine usque ad finem.—Sap. viii. 1.

² Dicis: Quid enim novit Deus? et quasi per caliginem judicat. Nubes latibulum ejus, nec nostra considerat, et circa cardines cœli perambulatur.—Job xxii. 13, 14.

³ Cujus oculi aperti sunt super omnes vias filiorum Adami.—Jerem. xxxii. 19.

off, has been appointed by God from all eternity to be eaten by you or by some other individual in particular. The branch blown down by the wind and lying in the forest, still awaits the arrival of him who is specially appointed by divine providence to make fire of it. The wool of one particular sheep in a whole flock is destined to make clothing for a certain individual, who never even bestows a thought on it. The piece of meat that is now cooking in the pot, is already set aside by providence for some poor prisoner or beggar, to whom it will be given, out of Christian charity, although he knows nothing of it yet. Do you know how many hairs you have on your head? Oh, you say, how could I know that? Yet God knows it, and has counted them exactly, as Christ says: "The hairs of your head are all numbered."¹ How many hairs fall from your head that you know nothing of, and they are cast into the fire or swept out of the house, because they are of no value, and yet the great God takes care of them! "But a hair of your head shall not perish,"² without His knowledge. Not a flake of snow is blown about by the wind, that God does not know of it, nay, He has even decreed that a particular flake should fall upon you, and not on any one else. No leaf falls from a tree without having its place marked out for it by Him. Not a weed grows in the garden that has not its height, shape, and form, and the length of time it is to grow, determined by God. In a word, even the meanest thing on earth is under the constant care of divine providence. The conclusion to be drawn is evident, my dear brethren. If God knows and cares for even the least thing, that to our mind is of no importance whatever, how much more careful will He not be of His reasoning creatures, whom He has made to know, love, and possess Him for all eternity? How much less likely is He to leave them without what is necessary for the support of their bodies, the comfort of their minds, and for the eternal salvation of their immortal souls? And what a consolation it is for me, and for all men, to think and say with the Prophet David: "But I am a beggar and poor; the Lord is careful for me."³ I am a poor, miserable mortal, beset with many evils and dangers of soul and body, yet I do not despair; the Lord knows it all; the Lord is my Guardian and is careful for me.⁴ He knows and cares for

¹ *Vestri capilli capitis omnes numerati sunt.*—Matth. x. 30.

² *Capillus de capite vestro non peribit.*—Luke xxi. 18.

³ *Ego mendicium sum et pauper, Dominus sollicitus est mei.*—Ps. xxxix. 18.

⁴ *Dominus sollicitus est mei.*

everything that belongs to me. Certainly, that is reason enough to abandon myself to Him with childlike confidence.

His almighty power can do everything.

My Father, who knows everything,¹ is able also to arrange everything for my greater good. This is another and still more powerful reason. I do not think there ever was any one who doubted that. He who believes in the one true God, must adore Him as the Almighty Lord, whom nothing can withstand, to whose will all things must be subject. So does the Prophet Jeremias address Him: "O most mighty, great, and powerful, the Lord of hosts is Thy name."² As long as I am under His care and protection, who can harm me, or what can be wanting to me? For He who made this earth out of nothing by a single word, can He not provide a dwelling for me in some corner of it? He who placed bounds to the raging sea that it dare not pass, He who restrains the winds and makes them blow, how, when, and where He wills, can He not protect me against the enemies of my soul and body? He who causes the mighty oak to grow from a small acorn, can He not find the means of providing for me in my poverty? He who taught fire how to ascend on high, can He not give me counsel and advice in my doubts and perplexities? He who protected the three youths in the fiery furnace, Jonas in the whale's belly, and Daniel in the lions' den, can He not save my life from dangers that are not near so great? He who fed thousands in the desert with a few loaves, can He not find bread enough for me, and for you and your children? He who has so richly adorned the earth, that is only our footstool, can He not provide me with clothing? Certainly, O Lord, Thou canst do all that easily! I confess with the angel Gabriel: "No word shall be impossible with God."³ Therefore, I think and say, with fresh courage and firm confidence in Thy providence, what Thy Prophet suggests to me: "The Lord is the protector of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"⁴

He has also a sincere desire to arrange all for our good, because He is our Father.

But, you say, my dear brethren: We know all that well enough. God knows and can do all things; He knows how to help us, nor does He want the power to do so; but there is something else. And what is that? He does not wish to do so, as we often find to be the case, when He leaves us in trials and troubles without consolation and help. But, Christians, where is your confidence? Where is your faith? Does not God mean

¹ Sicut Pater vester.

² Fortissime, magne et potens, Domine exercituum nomen tibi.—Jerem. xxxii. 18.

³ Non erit impossibile apud Deum omne verbum.—Luke i. 37.

⁴ Dominus protector vitæ meæ, a quo trepidabo?—Ps. xxvi. 1.

well towards you? He who knows your wants, is your Father. "Christ did not say," is the beautiful explanation that St. John Chrysostom gives of these words: "Christ did not say, God knoweth, but, your Father knoweth, so as to encourage men to have greater confidence. For, if He is a Father, He cannot disregard His children. For, what father would allow his children to be in want even of necessaries,"¹ if he is able to provide them? It would be a cruel father, indeed, who would, even if he had only one loaf left, coolly look on when his son is suffering from hunger! And, even if there were such fathers among men, yet God could never be so hard-hearted. Tertullian says: "There is no one so good and so fatherly,"² no one who is more concerned for the wants and necessities of his children, no one who has a greater love for his own flesh and blood than God has for us, for whom He has sacrificed His only Son. Nay, the name, father, is not sufficient to express the tenderness of His love for us; He takes the name of mother also. Hear what He says by the Prophet Isaias: "Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? and if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee."³ Hast thou not had experience of this, oh, David? He answers: "My father and my mother have left me; but the Lord hath taken me up."⁴ Hast thou not also experienced it, oh, Ishmael, when thy mother Agar left thee under the tree in the wilderness? When thou wast on the point of dying of thirst, God heard thy cries, and sent an angel to show thee a spring of water and to bring thee back to thy mother. And thou, too, Moses, hast experienced it. Thy mother had given thee up to death through human respect, when she exposed thee on the Nile, in a basket, but thy heavenly Father remembered thee; He was the pilot who brought thy frail bark to a safe harbor, and intrusted thee to the care of a king's daughter. So great is the fatherly, nay, more than motherly care that the God of love takes of His children! Is it likely, my dear brethren, that this God has changed His heart towards us? Are we not rather His chosen children, whom He has specially commanded to call Him Father? Christ

¹ Non dixit: scit Deus, sed scit Pater vester, ut eos in majorem spem ducat. Si enim Pater est, non poterit despiciere filios. Qualis enim est pater, qui sustinet etiam necessaria filiis deesse?

² Tam plus nemo, tam pater nemo.

³ Numquid oblivisci potest mulier infantem suum, ut non misereatur filio uteri sui? et si illa oblita fuerit, eog tamen non obliviscar tui.—Isai. xlix. 15.

⁴ Pater meus et mater mea dereliquerunt me; Dominus autem assumpsit me.—Ps. xxvi. 10

says in the Gospel of St. Matthew : “ Thus, therefore, shall you pray: Our Father ;”¹ so that we must make known our cares to Him with childlike confidence, just as children do to their parents.

Therefore, like children, we must place all our confidence in Him.

Consider what occurs in a large family. A crowd of little children are always running after their father and mother ; they eat and drink a great many times a day ; they never trouble themselves as to where the food comes from ; they care not whether bread is cheap, or dear ; they leave all that to their parents, who have to provide for them. Nor do the parents expect their children to trouble themselves about it, and if one of the little ones were to say to his father that he was anxious about it, the father would at once tell him it was not his business, that he had only to be good, obedient, and diligent in his studies, and everything would be provided for him. And that is what God, too, requires from His children ; it is on that account He tells us to call Him Father. Our chief care should be to lead a good and Christian life ; to obey His law exactly ; to use moderate, natural diligence according to our state, in temporal things ; to have recourse to Him always, and then to allow Him to do with and for us as He pleases, with the firm assurance that nothing will be wanting to us. Oh, what a quiet and happy life we could have, if we were not wanting in that childlike confidence ! Hear how God Himself complains, that we trust in Him so little. Look up, He says, and see all the birds that fly about in the air : “ Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns,” and yet, “ your heavenly Father feedeth them.”² As if He wished to say : Would it not be folly and cruelty for a father to feed cats, and dogs, and horses abundantly every day, with his own hands, in order to give pleasure to his son, and yet to deny his son the food that he gives to animals on his son’s account ? See how unjustly you accuse my heavenly Father, oh, ye of little faith, with your childish fear and inordinate anxiety on account of your wants ! He feeds with His own hand the birds of the air, the young ravens and carrion birds even, for your use and benefit. “ Are not you of much more value than they ?”³ Do you think, then, are you afraid that such a Father will leave you in the lurch ? Was it not looked upon as an act of cruelty,

¹ Sic ergo vos orabitis : Pater noster.—Matth. vi. 9.

² Respicite volatilia cœli : quoniam non serunt, neque metunt, neque congregant in horrea, et Pater vester cœlestis pascit illa.—Ibid. 26.

³ Nonne vos magis pluris estis illis ?—Ibid.

on the part of that Athenian senator, to drive away the sparrow that sought refuge with him when pursued by a hawk? On account of that very act he was justly expelled from the society of the other senators, because he had dishonored his position by such an act of cruelty. What would they have done, if he had turned away, not a sparrow, but a human being who had thus fled to him for refuge? What, if he had acted thus to his own child? How cruel, then, we consider our heavenly Father to be, when we have such little confidence in Him, as if He were likely to drive away His own poor creatures, whom He has adopted as His own dear children, when they fly to Him for refuge in their necessities, as to the source of all good! No, be not anxious; no matter who you are, no matter what danger threatens, what enemy persecutes, what want oppresses you, abandon yourself to God, as children do to their loving father; throw yourself in His arms; He will not turn away from nor abandon you, nor leave you without comfort in your distress, for He is your Father.

If the name of father, which takes away all fear and anxiety from children, is not enough to inspire you with confidence in God, then, at least, you must believe His own words, for He is a God of truth, whom as Christians you are bound to believe. No one can bind himself more solemnly to do or to give anything, than God has bound Himself to help in all dangers those who hope in Him, and to give them what they desire. We find hundreds of such promises in the Holy Scripture, and they are repeated so impressively, that he who doubts them must necessarily accuse a most faithful God of treachery. To save time, I will quote only a few of them. The Wise Ecclesiasticus says: "Ye that fear the Lord, hope in Him, and mercy shall come to you for your delight. Know ye that no one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded."¹ If there be any such let him come forward: "For who hath continued in His commandment, and hath been forsaken? or who hath called upon Him, and He despised him?"² No such person can be found in the whole world: "For God is compassionate and merciful. . . and He is a protector to all that seek Him in truth."³ He says by the Prophet David:

He has also promised to provide for those who trust in Him.

¹ Qui timetis Dominum, sperate in illum, et in obiectationem veniet vobis misericordia. Scitote, quia nullus speravit in Domino, et confusus est.—Ecc. ii. 9, 11.

² Quis enim permansit in mandatis ejus, et derelictus? est aut quis invocavit eum, et despexit illum?—Ibid. 12.

³ Quoniam pius et misericors est Deus. . . et protector est omnibus exquirentibus se in veritate.—Ibid. 13.

“Behold, the eyes of the Lord are on them that fear Him, and on them that hope in His mercy to deliver their souls from death, and feed them in famine.” “Be not solicitous, saying: What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things.”² In a word, God commands the Prophet Isaias: “Say to the just man that it is well.”³ Go, ye preachers, and tell all good men that they must be full of hope; all things will go well with them, and turn out for their greater good. But, O Lord, must I say that to all? Yes, to all the just, without exception. To all the just? Must I then go to that poor man who is unjustly oppressed by others, and who finds nothing but misery and wretchedness wherever he turns? Certainly, I send you to him first of all; tell him he must have confidence in Me, and I will not forsake him. Must I go to that widow, who has no help or comfort left? I will find her bathed in tears, and surrounded by a crowd of children who often cry to her in vain for bread? By all means you must go to her and tell her to hope in Me, and all shall be well with her. And to that poor woman who is ill in bed, and can do nothing for her support? Yes, go and say to her that He who feeds the sparrows will not allow her to die of hunger, if she trusts in Him. Shall I say it also to those poor orphans, who have been deprived of father and mother by death, and who have hardly any one to look to for help, so that the dying parents were forced to exclaim: *Alas, what will become of my poor children; how will they ever get through the world?* Yes, go and tell them that it is well;⁴ they must look on Me as their Father and Guardian; if all men forsake them, I will still keep my protecting hand over them. Therefore, my dear brethren, I say to all of you, by command of God, the same words: “Say to the just man that it is well.” Is there one amongst you whose business is not prospering, who is reduced to want, who knows not what to do to support himself and his family, or who is in dread of extreme misery, let him be of good heart! Let him only trust in God, and submit to His decrees with full resignation, and everything will go well with him, everything will turn out to his advantage. Do not doubt of this; your Heavenly Fa-

¹ *Ecce, oculi Domini super metuentes eum, et in eis, qui sperant super misericordia ejus ut eruat a morte animas eorum, et aliat eos in fame.*—Ps. xxxii. 18, 19.

² *Nolite solliciti esse, dicentes: Quid manducabimus, aut quid bibemus, aut quo operiemur?* Sedit enim Pater vester, quia his omnibus indigetis.—Matth. vi. 31, 32.

³ *Dicite justo, quoniam bene.*—Isai. iii. 10.

⁴ *Quoniam bene.*

ther cares for you ; He has given you His word, and promised to help you, if you serve Him truly and trust in Him. He will infallibly keep His word, for His promises cannot deceive.

Ah, Christians, how is it that we are so wanting in confidence in God ? We believe that there is one God, in whom there are three Persons ; that Jesus Christ, God and man, is present under the appearances of bread and wine ; and many other mysteries, too, that far surpass our understanding, we believe as firmly as if we saw them with our own eyes. Why ? Because God has revealed them ; that alone is enough for us, for we are certain that God cannot deceive us. But it is the same God who assures us that, of His own accord, He keeps a watchful eye on all our wants, so as to provide for us ; that every one who hopes in Him, will not be confounded ; that there is no danger or necessity, in which He is not willing to help those who have recourse to Him with confidence in His goodness. Now, this is not less worthy of belief than the mystery of the Blessed Trinity ; God can no more deceive us in this point than in the others ; why, then, should we not believe it firmly ? We trust even an honorable man, who pledges his word and makes us a promise ; why should we not trust God, who cannot go back of His word like men ; who can always fulfil it, which men are often unable to do ; who would not be God if He deceived us and did not keep His promise ? Why, I ask again, do we not trust Him ? Why have we so little confidence in Him ?

How unreasonable they are who do not trust in God.

But alas, O Lord, Thou mayst remind us as often as Thou wilt, that Thou art our Provider and that Thou dost not care less for us than for the birds of the air, that Thou supportest even in the cold winter ; Thou mayst assure us that Thou art our Father, and we are Thy dear children, that not a hair of our heads can perish against Thy will ; Thou mayst declare, upon oath, that a prodigy would happen before Thou wouldst deceive us in our hopes and abandon us in our wants ; but all Thy assurances can give us no comfort in the least danger, nor induce us to throw ourselves into Thy arms and place our hope in Thee alone. We are just as uneasy as ever, just as fearful at the approach of the least misfortune. That man is just as downcast as ever at his poverty, or on account of having lost his law-suit ; that mother still trembles with fear for her only son, and dreads every moment that she will hear bad news of him ; those children weep and lament at the bedside of their sick father, fearing that, if he dies, they will not be able to support themselves.

And put their confidence in creatures.

The least breath of wind terrifies him who is on the sea, the least cloud fills the husbandman with alarm; no one thinks of Thee, oh, heavenly Father! Instead of flying to Thee for refuge, we place all our trust in frail and mortal creatures. The clever trust to their own wits in danger, the rich confide in the wealth they have amassed with so much labor, as if they could enjoy it forever; some who have law-suits on hand trust in their friends and patrons; others who have large families confide in their own labor and industry; most people rely on medicines alone in sickness; every one has recourse in necessity to selfish, inconstant, and deceitful mortals, who, as a general rule, either cannot or will not help them, and whom they have as much reason to mistrust as they have to place all their confidence in Thee, oh, good God!

Who even abandon God, through fear that He would not help them in temporal things.

And what is worst of all, we violate Thy commands for fear that if we served Thee faithfully we should suffer some temporal loss. How many use unjust means, how many have recourse to underhand trickery to maintain themselves in their state, as if we were obliged to be at a loss by always doing what is right! How many use sinful means to gain even a just law-suit, as if God could not gain it for them, or replace their loss otherwise if they are unsuccessful! How many a maiden sacrifices her purity to gain a livelihood, as if God could not provide for her, if she remained true to Him! How many shrink from fulfilling the law of Christian charity and mercy and giving generous alms, lest their children should be at a loss thereby; as if God could not provide for them, although He has promised that, "he that giveth to the poor shall not want"!¹ How many a one is afraid to hear Mass in the morning, lest he should not have time enough to work, and thus lose some of his daily earnings; as if all temporal blessings had not to come to us from the divine generosity!

And therefore they are abandoned by God.

And this, if you wish to know it, oh, Christians of little faith, is the reason why God, wearied of His own goodness to you, sometimes leaves you without help in your wants, sickness, misfortunes, persecutions, or poverty, and allows you to moan and lament in vain, while He pretends not to hear you, either because you are not as pious and zealous in His service as you should be, or because you have not a childlike confidence in Him, and place your hopes in creatures alone. For that very reason, I say, you get neither help nor consolation from Him, and there-

¹ Qui dat pauperi, non indigebit.—Prov. xxviii. 27.

fore things do not prosper with you, because He wishes to show you that without Him, all your labor and trouble are worthless; and besides, divine providence is not so much concerned about the wicked. Such is the threat of the Wise Ecclesiasticus: "Woe to them that are faint-hearted, who believe not God; and therefore they shall not be protected by Him. Woe to them that have lost patience, and that have forsaken the right ways, and have gone aside into crooked ways."¹ God acts with us in such circumstances as He did with King Ochozias; the latter being grievously ill, sent to the false god Beelzebub for help and advice, as we read in the 1st chapter of the Fourth Book of Kings. The true God was so displeased at this that He commanded the Prophet Elias to say to the King: "Is there not a God in Israel, that ye go to consult Beelzebub, the god of Accaron? Wherefore thus saith the Lord: From the bed on which thou art gone up, thou shalt not come down, but thou shalt surely die."² The same punishment is inflicted nowadays on those who do not put their confidence in God when they are in trouble and difficulty, but seek comfort and consolation from creatures. Miserable wretches that you are, "is there not a God in Israel?"³ Is there no God in Heaven to whom you can fly for refuge? "Wherefore, thus saith the Lord: Thou shalt not come down from thy bed."⁴ As a just punishment of your want of confidence, all help will be denied you; your business will not prosper, you will not escape that danger, no matter what you do, you will not recover from that sickness; and that because you do not place your hopes in God, but elsewhere.

But, my dear brethren, we shall manage matters more prudently, we shall confidently commit ourselves and all our affairs to Him who alone knows how to help us, who alone can and will help us, as St. Peter warns us: "Casting all your care upon Him, for He hath care of you."⁵ Oh, what a consolation, what a happiness for a soul that loves God, that trusts in Him, and looks upon Him as its own Foster-Father! What a consolation for him who can think and say to himself: I am certain that

Conclusion
and confident
resignation to the
care and
decree of
God.

¹ Vae dissolutis corde, qui non credunt Deo; et ideo non protegentur ab eo. Vae his, qui perdidierunt sustentiam, et qui dereliquerunt vias rectas, et diverterunt in vias pravas.—Ecclesiasticus. II. 15, 16.

² Numquid non est Deus in Israel, ut eatis ad consulendum Beelzebub, deum Accaron? Quam ob rem hæc dicit Dominus: De lectulo super quem ascendisti, non descendes, sed morte morieris.—IV. Kings I. 3, 4.

³ Numquid non est Deus in Israel?

⁴ Quam ob rem hæc dicit Dominus: De lectulo non descendes etc.

⁵ Omnem sollicitudinem vestram proficientes in eum, quoniam ipsi cura est de vobis.—I. Pet. v. 7.

God knows what I want and what is good for me ; I am certain that He can arrange everything for my greater good ; I am certain, too, that He loves me more than a father loves his only child, and that He will arrange everything for my greater good ! What need have I then to trouble myself ? What can disturb my peace ? No matter how things go with me, well or ill, in the judgment of the world, I know that my loving Father has so decreed for me, and, therefore, I am certain that it is all for the best. What a happiness to be thus able to live in constant peace and contentment, without fear or anxiety, like a child in its mother's lap ! Oh, certainly, it is a foretaste of the happiness that awaits such souls in Heaven ! Ah, why have I not long since abandoned myself with that confidence into the hands of my heavenly Father ? If I had done so, I should have escaped much unnecessary care, disquiet, fear, anxiety, trouble, and despair, which served only to increase my misery. Away, then, with those useless cares ! To Thee and to Thy providence, oh, heavenly Father, I commit my soul, my body, and all that I have from Thee. Thou mayest do with me according to Thy good will and pleasure ! Let others place their trust in men and in other creatures, that are all only broken reeds ; I shall build on a foundation that can never give way. I shall be better cared for, as long as I trust in Thee, although I may have nothing, than if the whole world belonged to me otherwise. I will say with the Prophet Micheas : "But I will look towards the Lord, I will wait for God my Saviour: my God will hear me."¹ Yes, He will hear me, although I remain silent ; my wants will speak for me, for they are all known to Him ; His own infinite power will speak for me, for it can help me ; His fatherly heart will speak for me, for it loves me ; His own word will speak for me, for He has promised to help me if I trust in Him. Confiding in Him, I cannot be disturbed by any misfortune, danger, illness, or want. If temptations try to lead me into sin, "I will look towards the Lord."² If poverty and want oppress me, "I will look towards the Lord." If I am tried by sickness, "I will look towards the Lord." Whatever may be my circumstances : "In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be put to confusion."³ Let that be our conclusion, my dear brethren. Amen.

¹ Ego autem ad Dominum adspiciam, expectabo Deum salvatorem meum: audiet me Deus meus.—Mich. vii. 7.

² Ego autem ad Dominum adspiciam.

³ In te, Domine, speravi, non confundar in æternum.—Ps. lxx. 1.

*Another Introduction for the Feast of the Resurrection of
Our Lord:*

Text.

Veniunt ad monumentum.—Mark xvi. 2.

“They come to the sepulchre.”

Who are they who go out so early in the morning? Mary Magdalen, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, all weak women. Where are they going to? “To the sepulchre,”¹ in which Christ was buried, whose very Name was hated by the Jews, whom even courageous men, nay, even His own Apostles and disciples were afraid to defend, lest they should be seized by the Jews and put to death. What were the circumstances under which they went? They knew that there was a guard before the sepulchre to prevent any one from entering. Why were they going? “That coming they might anoint Jesus.”² But how could they do that, because they could not drive away the guard, nor roll back the heavy stone that closed the entrance of the sepulchre? And they were well aware of that also: “Who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the sepulchre? For it was very great.”³ Considering all these things, might not their journey seem a fruitless one? And yet they went on with courage and confidence, knowing that He who, though dead, was the Almighty God, could remove all difficulties from their way, so that they might fulfil their intention. Nor were they disappointed, for when they came to the grave, all the soldiers were gone: “They saw the stone rolled back,”⁴ and what was still farther beyond their hopes, they were the first to hear of the Resurrection of Christ. See; what no man dared to do, was done by those weak women, who, in spite of the difficulties that surrounded them, put their confidence in God, and went on boldly. How their example puts to shame our want of courage, my dear brethren, etc.—*continues as before.*

¹ Ad monumentum. ² Ut venientes ungerent Jesum.—Mark xvi. 1.

³ Dicebant ad invicem: quis revolvat nobis lapidem ab ostio monumenti? Erat quippe magnus valde.—Ibid. 3, 4.

⁴ Viderunt revolutum lapidem.—Ibid. 4.

ON THE GOOD USE THAT EACH ONE
IN HIS STATE OF LIFE SHOULD
MAKE OF TIME.

SEVENTIETH SERMON.

ON THE REDEEMING IN OLD AGE OF LOST TIME.

Subject.

1st. Old people should learn on this, the last day of the year, to redeem and make up for lost time. 2d. How they may do this.—*Preached on the Sunday in the Octave of Christmas, which was the last day of the year.*

Text.

Hæc processerat in diebus multis.—Luke ii. 36.
“She was far advanced in years.”

Introduction.

There was once a remarkable assembly of people of different ages in the Temple of Jerusalem. There was Anna, a widow eighty-four years old, who always served God zealously day and night by fasting and prayer. There was Mary, the Virgin Mother, who was only in her fifteenth year, but had already far surpassed all the Saints in virtue and holiness. There was Jesus Christ, still a little Infant a few weeks old, but the Holy of holies. Sanctity, therefore, does not depend on one's time of life, or whether one is young or old, but on the use that one makes of his life. This Gospel, my dear brethren, is admirably suited for this, the last day of the year. To-day all are accustomed to think how old they are; children think: now I am about to enter on my seventh, eighth, ninth, or tenth year; young people think: now I shall be twenty or twenty-five years old; old people say: the six-

tieth, seventieth, or eightieth year of my life will soon have passed away ; so that the end of the year reminds every one of how long he has lived. But does it also remind every one of how he has spent the time of his life ? And yet, that is the principal thought we should have to-day, partly that we may redeem the time that we have lost and misspent, partly that we may make a better use of our time in future. The first point is especially for the old, the second for the young. The former should profit by the warning of St. Paul, "redeeming the time,"¹ the latter by that of the Wise Ecclesiasticus: "Son, observe the time,"² which you have still to live. The consideration of this last day of the year should teach us both these points. But since that would be too much matter for one sermon, I shall divide it into two, giving the first place to the old people, as is right. On to-day, therefore, I will speak specially for the old, since it is the last day of the year. On next Sunday, the first of the New Year, the young shall hear of something to their advantage.

Plan of Discourse.

Old people should learn on this, the last day of the year, to redeem and make up for lost time. The first part. How they may do this, they may learn in the second part of this discourse, which will be partly a meditation and partly an instruction.

Oh, Holy Ghost, if Thou dost not rule my tongue and strengthen my heart and those of my hearers to make a good and practical conclusion, I shall lose my time in useless talking! We all beg of Thee, therefore, to give us Thy light and grace, through the merits of Mary and the holy angels guardian.

Here I can be helped out with my subject by what the philosopher Seneca wrote once, when he was growing old, to his friend Lucilius: "I came to my villa,"³ he says, looked all around to see how things were going on, and then began to find fault with my steward. How is it, I said, that every time I come here, I find something that wants repairing ; either a roof is giving way, or a wall, or a piece of timber in a roof ? But, sir, answered the steward, you must not blame me for that ; the building is too old, and I am afraid that one of these days it will fall on top of me. What, thought I to myself, so old as that ? And yet I had it built. What will become of me ?⁴ The beams

Seneca in his villa finds out that he is growing old.

¹ Redimētes tempus.—Ephes. v. 16.

² Fill, conserva tempus.—Ecl. iv. 23.

³ Veneram in suburbanum meum.

⁴ Quid mihi futurum est ?

of wood are beginning to rot, the stones to crumble away and fall down, and they are younger than I ; what will become of me, who am made of flesh and blood, and not of wood and stone ? With the thought in my mind I went out to examine the garden, and found many of the trees in a state that highly displeased me. How is this ? I said to the gardener. I see clearly that you are not attending to your business. Look at the state those trees are in, with their rotten and crooked branches ; there is hardly a green branch on them. Sir, answered the gardener, I assure you I do all I can for them, but to no purpose ; the trees are too old, and have no sap. O ho, thought I to myself again, I planted these trees myself, and saw their first leaves. If they are now so old, what must their owner be, who has planted them ? I must certainly be a good deal older than I thought. My dear Lucilius,—such is the conclusion of his letter:—“ I owe it to my villa that I became aware of how old I am,”¹ and how near death.

We can say
the same if
we consider
ourselves.

My dear brethren, is it not so with us mortals ? We are growing older every day, and do not bestow a thought on it. Not without reason does the Holy Scripture compare our lives to a ship sailing swiftly onward, that leaves behind her no vestige of her course. If we stand or sit still, our lives still hurry on ; if we sleep during the night, our lives do not sleep, they are always in motion. We eat, drink, and enjoy ourselves, we occupy ourselves in different ways at home and abroad, and still our lives do not stop for a single moment, but continue their onward course. Every hour we have less to live, and so days, and weeks, and months, and years succeed each other, but we never think of the flight of time ; we grow old and fall into the grave, almost before we know where we are. Christians, you who have spent many years in this world, have already experienced many changes and vicissitudes ; you could speak of many things that you have seen, heard, and read in your time, but do you know, can you fairly realize yet to yourselves, that you are now old and must soon descend into the grave ? Consider the state of your bodies, and see whether you will not find in them signs of ruin and decay. Your eyes are not so bright as they were, your ears are not so sharp, your limbs do not carry you so swiftly, your teeth are gone or are decaying, the leaves are falling from the tree, that is to say, the hairs are falling from your heads. And what is the cause of that ? Old age ; you have lived a long time already, and death is near.

¹ Debeo suburbano meo, quod mihi senectutus mea apparuit.—Senec. Ep. 12. lib. 2.

And if nothing else reminds you of it, at least this day should teach you. Think of it a moment: this is already the thirtieth anniversary in this century, of the last day of the year. How many such days have I seen? It seems to be hardly a year since I left school, but if I count up, I shall find that twenty or thirty years, or even more have elapsed since then. It seems to be only a few months since I got married, since I first came into the house I now occupy, since I first entered on my present occupation, and yet, how many years have passed since then! How time flies! How often have my companions, neighbors, friends, and relations wished me a happy New Year, and many of them are now dead! How often have I wished the same to others, who are now twenty, thirty, or forty years in their graves! Oh, I begin to see that I have lived a long time; I am an old man, now; the best part of my life is gone, and only a very small portion of it is left for me; I must soon die. Such is the fruit that each one should derive from the consideration of this day.

This day should remind us of that.

But we must not be satisfied with the mere thought and remembrance of this fact; we must for the good of our souls go a little farther. For instance, we might think: beautiful years, whither have you gone? What has become of all the months, weeks, days, hours, and minutes of the past years? How have I employed them? I should not have used a single moment for any purpose but for the end of my creation, that is, for the salvation of my soul, for the honor, praise, and service of my God. Alas, has a single year passed since I came to the use of reason, that I have not wandered away from this end? Have I ever spent a single month without offending God? Can I with truth point to a single day of my life, and say: That day was devoted fully, without the exception of one moment, to the service of God? Yet, every minute of all that time, that I have not spent in the service of God and the business of my soul, is lost to me forever! Oh, what a loss! How much good I have left undone, that I might have accomplished! How many means and opportunities of working out my salvation I have neglected! How much merit I have lost, that I might have gained for Heaven! How many inspirations and graces of God, that I could have used to do good, I have disregarded! How much precious time I have spent in sleeping, dressing, eating, drinking, talking, amusing myself, paying visits, and idling about, without ever offering my actions to God! How much time I have lost in idleness and sin! What will be the end of all that? Perhaps the next year, this

How that is to be done for the good of our souls.

very day may be the last of my life. I am very old now ; my body shows signs of decay. How would it be if I were to drop down dead now ; what have I to bring with me into eternity ? What have I to live on there ? Ah, how can I replace the lost time, and redeem it ? It is high time for me now to begin to serve God alone, and to begin at once, and in earnest, since to all appearance I have so little time left. That is the way, my dear brethren, in which we should remember and think of what the last day of the year teaches us.

Many wil-
fully reject
such
thoughts.

But how few there are who trouble themselves with such thoughts ! Ausonius tells us of the Grecian courtesan Thais, that the older she became, the less frequently she looked in the glass, so that she might not notice how old she was growing. Once as she was standing before the glass, she noticed that her forehead was wrinkled, whereupon she became so enraged that she threw the glass on the ground and would not look at it again. Foolish woman, how could it help showing your wrinkles ? Were they likely to become less visible because you did not see them yourself ? If you had been wise you would have used the mirror oftener, in your old age, than at any other time, so as to see how the beauty with which you ensnared so many souls, was fading away, and then you might have spent the rest of your life in doing penance. I am afraid that many Christians are guilty of the same folly, that there are many who do not look in the glass, nor notice the flight of time, nor try to redeem the past, but wilfully drive away all salutary thoughts of that nature, because they do not wish to remember that they are growing old, and that death will soon come to them.

But we
should oft-
en think
of them, so
as to redeem
the past.

And what is the good of all that ? It will not delay the arrival of death, nor keep them a moment longer out of eternity. If there ever was a time to have such thoughts, it is surely now, so that the loss of the past may be made good. The Spartan of whom Plutarch writes was much more sensible in this respect. In ancient Sparta the people were all warriors, who despised worldly pomp ; the men shaved their heads, the women alone allowed their hair to grow. One old man, however, as soon as he noticed the approach of old age, allowed his beard, which was white as snow, to grow to its full length. The others were amazed and asked him why he thus acted against the usual custom. He answered : " I do it that, seeing my gray hairs, I may not act unworthily of them." ¹ A wise and prudent answer !

¹ Id facio, ut canos meos videns nihil eis indecorum faciam.

Christians : “ Walk with wisdom,” is the warning of St. Paul, “ redeeming the time.”¹ Think, and think often, of your past years, so that if you have lost any of them, you may make the loss good again. You may, perhaps, find that you have lived in darkness,² that you have misspent much time. Keep your old age constantly before your eyes, that you may not do anything unbecoming. It is time, now, for you to commence to walk as the children of light ;³ redeem the ill-spent past at once,⁴ and replace the time you have lost. But how are you to do that ? How can you make up for lost time ? You shall hear in the

Second Part.

And that is not a question to be wondered at : How can we redeem the past ? Can we bring back the years of our childhood and youth, and live them over again ? No, that is impossible ; not an hour or a moment that is past can be recalled. God can give me as many years to live as I have lived already, but, although He is Omnipotent, He cannot make it untrue to say that the years of the past are gone forever, and what is lost of them is lost forever. And what dost thou mean, then, oh, holy Apostle, with thy exhortation to redeem the time ? The holy Fathers give us an answer to this question in different words, but to the same purpose. To redeem the time, says St. Anselm, is to repent sincerely of past sins, and to be converted with all one’s heart to God, for the sinner deserves that God should take all time away from him, and shorten his life, as the Lord says by Solomon : “ The years of the wicked shall be shortened,”⁵ he will not be allowed to live as long as he otherwise might have lived ; so that when man appeases God by repentance, he receives the full time appointed for him, and thus he redeems the time he would have lost otherwise. Again, you can redeem the time, says St. Augustine, if you devote solely to the service of God and the good of your soul, the days and hours that you intended to give to idleness or worldly and unnecessary occupations, after you have spent many days and hours in idleness and amusement.

How to redeem the past. Shown from the holy Fathers.

That is the way in which the head of a family acts, who finds that he is not as well off as he ought to be, when he examines his accounts at the end of the year. He has made more debts

Explained by a simile.

¹ In sapientia ambulate, tempus redimentes.—Coloss. iv. 5.
² Eratis enim aliquando tenebræ. ³ Ut filii lucis ambulate.
⁴ Tempus redimentes. ⁵ Anni impiorum breviabuntur.—Prov. x. 27.

than profit, and he is not able to pay them. What is he to do? I cannot allow that to go on, he thinks; if I do we shall all be reduced to beggary. And what does he do? He considers how he and his family have been living hitherto, so that he may cut off whatever is superfluous and so avoid all unnecessary expense. Hitherto, he says, I have kept three maid-servants, and one manservant; one maid was for the children, another for my wife, and the third for the kitchen, while the man had to attend to me; now the man and two of the maids are not necessary, so they can go. My wife can look after herself and the children, I must wait on myself, and thus I can save enough to pay the interest of my debts. Hitherto, almost every quarter, as often as a new fashion came out, we have had new clothes, but we have to let the fashions alone now; our old clothes are good enough for us; the children need not be dressed so expensively, our means do not allow of it; all superfluities must be done away with, so as to save money; people know who we are well enough. Hitherto we have had five or six different dishes at table, and have often invited people, but what is the good of that now? We can do without the half of our daily food and the third part of the entertainments we used to give, and all that expense will be saved. Hitherto we have enjoyed all possible comforts; we have slept in the morning till seven or eight o'clock; I have spent whole days in idleness, and my wife has lost much time in useless visiting and in giving dinner-parties. A life like that is not profitable; we must get up earlier in future, and be more diligent. The food will not come into our mouths of its own accord. All the money that used to be spent on tea, sugar, and other delicacies, must be saved. In that way the master of the house will make but a little profit every day, yet it will amount to something considerable in the end, and in a few years he will not only make good his losses, but become even richer than before. My dear brethren, we are all like stewards of the Almighty God in this world, as Christ explains in several parables. The business we have to do concerns eternal goods that we can every day gain and store up for ourselves in Heaven, so that we may have something to live on for all eternity. Oh, God of goodness, what a beautiful time Thou hast given us in all the years that are past! What great profit we might have derived from it! Every moment, if we wished, and had labored with that intention, we might have gained the Kingdom of Heaven! Now let each one call himself to account, and see whether he has become richer or poorer, and

to what extent, as far as his soul is concerned, and whether he has lost or gained during all that time. Many, perhaps, when they consider everything carefully, will find that they have contracted more debts, that are still owing to the divine justice, than they have made profit by their tepid and carelessly-performed good works. What are they to do? Are they to be reduced to beggary in the end? Quick, there is no time for delay; your stewardship may soon be at an end, it must end soon for the old! You must carry on your business on another footing; you must arrange matters so as to make good your losses.

How? Just as that prudent master acted. The superfluous and unnecessary occupations that used to take up so much time, must be cut off, and the time thus spared must be spent for the good of the soul. For instance, I have hitherto thought of nothing the whole day but temporal things, such as, how I should live before the world according to my state and occupation, how my family and myself should eat, drink, and dress, and worse than all, I have hardly ever had a pure intention of doing all that for God's sake. Now, that will not do any longer. Why should I lose so much time? Could I not employ it much more profitably? From this day forward, therefore, till the day of my death, I will manage matters more prudently; I will observe a better order during the day. I will cut off one or two hours from my ordinary unnecessary sleep, to mortify myself for God's sake and for the good of my soul; before doing anything else, I will hear Mass, unless charity or necessity prevents me; on Sundays and holydays I will assist at the sermon in order to be encouraged to do good; I will not say, as I have hitherto said: Seven or eight o'clock is too early; no, five or four o'clock is not too early for me to serve God! On the same days I will devote at least half an hour to spiritual reading; every evening before going to rest I will say my evening prayers and make the examination of conscience with my family, and that will not injure, but greatly benefit my household. Even if I should make less temporal profit by living thus, what does it matter? I must make good the losses I have caused my soul during my life. Hitherto I have had many troubles, discomforts, crosses, and trials from my own family and from others every day, but I have borne them unwillingly and impatiently, and given way to anger and vindictiveness. To what purpose? For the future I shall bear those crosses better; formerly I have suffered spiritual loss from them, but now, since I cannot avoid

We must employ in the service of God the time we have hitherto spent otherwise.

them when they come, I will derive great profit from them for my soul, by bearing them with patience and resignation to the will of God, knowing that I well deserve them for my sins, for which I have so often incurred the eternal punishment of hell. Hitherto I have been to confession and communion not more than four times or even only once in the year. Foolish man that I was ! The Sacraments are the fountains through which we receive the grace of God ; I must therefore amend in this particular ; during the short time that is left to me, I will go to confession and communion every fortnight at least, and try to gain all the indulgences I can, so as to escape the punishment due to my past sins. I have hitherto spent much money in pleasure-seeking and in following the usages of the world for pride and vanity's sake ; what is the use of that extravagance ? I will use my money in future for the good of my soul ; I will send it on before me to Heaven by the hands of the poor. I have indulged very much in sensuality and bodily comforts, but that is not the way to go to Heaven. Henceforth I will mortify my eyes, ears, tongue, and hands ; I will seek less pleasure and practise more self-denial, eat and drink less and fast more, talk less and pray more, go less amongst men and spend more time in communing with God, and I will never more commit a deliberate sin and always try to fulfil the will of God as well as I can ; such shall be the order of every remaining day and year of my life. That is the way to redeem the time, my dear brethren, and to make good the loss sustained in the past. Thus you may redeem the time, or, as the Greek Text has it, redeem the occasions, namely, for the occasions of good which you have hitherto neglected, or used for an evil purpose.

And perform the works of virtue with more zeal and frequency.

Finally, to redeem lost time is to perform the above-mentioned works of devotion and virtue with all the more diligence, zeal, and attention. We shall again make use of a simile to explain this point. There are six people travelling together, who wish to reach the same town before night. They talk and laugh as they journey along. One of them who is thirsty goes into a tavern to get something to drink and tells his companions to go on and he will overtake them. But he stops a whole hour drinking, so that his companions have gone on a long distance ; how is he to manage so as to overtake them ? Oh, he thinks, I can do that easily enough ; if they only continue walking as slowly as before, I shall soon come up with them. He therefore walks much faster, raises his feet quicker, and only takes one

step, where he would before have taken three, and so in half an hour he rejoins his companions. If he continued to run along like that, he would reach the town before them. Thus he makes up for the time he spent in the tavern, and regains it with profit. Now, it is not necessary to explain, my dear brethren, that we are all travellers during this life, who are journeying to the same place, our heavenly fatherland, the city of God. We have now been many years on this journey, but what progress have we made? How often and how long have we delayed in this and that tavern along the road; I mean, how much have we allowed ourselves to be influenced by an inordinate love and attachment for creatures! How often have we not even gone backwards by sin! How slowly and tediously we have journeyed on when we were in the state of grace! And what little progress we have made in all that time! We still hope, however, to arrive at our destination, Heaven. The evening is approaching; many pious Christians who began the journey with us are now far ahead. There is nothing for us to do but to walk faster, that is, to perform our good works with greater zeal and frequency, and to act like the Egyptian King Mizerinus, although his circumstances were different from ours. It had been foretold to him by an oracle that he had only six years to live; I will make them, he said, into twelve. He then, as Nierenbergius relates, redoubled all his usual pastimes and pleasures, and ordered large fires and lanterns to be lit so as to turn night into day, that he might enjoy himself all the longer. We should learn from this foolish king to redouble our good works and our zeal in the service of God, so as to increase our years and make up for lost time.

The merits that one can heap up for Heaven do not always depend on the length of time one lives, even if he spends his whole life in the state of grace; nor do they depend on the number of good works that one performs every day, but rather on the manner in which they are performed, and on the amount of piety, zeal, and fervor, and the intention that one has. A holy Father says: God does not consider the number and the size of the gifts we give Him, but rather the desire and intention with which we give them.¹ A Christian who has spent long years in the service of God without committing grievous sin, who prays often, and performs many works of devotion, but, generally speaking, in a careless, indolent, and sleepy way, is like a richly

For our merit increases, not according to the length of time, but the perfection of our good works.

¹ Non respicit Deus quantum, sed ex quanto.

laden ship on the high seas, during a storm, when the wind blows from different quarters ; the ship is driven about here and there, and manages to make very little way ahead, because the winds and waves oppose her progress. On the other hand, if the wind is fair it blows her along on her course and she makes as much way in an hour as she otherwise would in a day, and thus finishes in a short time a voyage that at other times would require months to accomplish. So it is also with a man who, having once come to a true knowledge of eternal things, endeavors with all his might to serve God under all circumstances. He puts all the zeal and fervor possible into everything he does, no matter how small it is ; a single, " Lord, Thy will be done," that he utters in difficulties, a single act of mortification in temptations and dangers of sin, a single victory over human respect in company, a single sigh from the heart, " Lord, for Thy sake," amid his daily occupations, brings him farther on the way of salvation and nearer to Heaven than all the prayers, and masses, and good works do the careless Christian who is wanting in recollection, intention, earnestness, and diligence.

By diligence one can do more in a short time than another in a long time. Shown by a simile.

When Mutius Scaevola, the celebrated Roman soldier, saw that his countrymen had half lost a battle, he began to think of how the loss might be repaired. He noticed afar off amongst the enemy's forces, one who surpassed all the others in size and in magnificence of apparel. That, he said to himself, must be King Porsenna ; if he were put out of the way, it would be an easy matter for us to conquer the enemy ; and without more ado, he leaped on his horse, forced his way through the hostile ranks, and laid low the supposed king with a single blow. But he was deceived, not by his brave hand, but by his eye, for the man whom he killed was not the king, but one of his chief officers. He was then taken prisoner and brought before King Porsenna. Scaevola at once placed his right hand in the fire, and said: Oh, king, this right hand of mine has erred by slaying another in thy stead ; it must now atone for its fault. And he held his hand in the fire until it was burnt off, apparently as little concerned at the pain he was suffering as if the hand did not belong to him. Martial, who celebrated this heroic deed in verse, asks who was Mutius, where was he born, and brought up, what other remarkable warlike deeds he had performed, and whether he was before that a man of great or of little authority among the Romans. But the poet answers his own question by saying : " After such an heroic act, there is no need to inquire what he

was before,"¹ for even if he had been the basest of men, that one action alone would suffice to render his name and fame immortal. In the same way I say, my dear brethren, if we find that we have done much evil and little good in our past lives, and that, therefore, we have a bad name before God, and have almost lost the battle for eternity, we must now take courage, and after having repented sincerely, we must begin to serve God with all our strength and with all possible zeal, and make a firm resolution to continue doing so to the end of our lives. Then it may be said of us : After such good conduct, our former carelessness may easily be forgotten ; the loss of time will soon be made good, as the Holy Ghost assures us of those who die young after a holy life : " Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time."²

Many of the most celebrated theologians teach that for some people the commission of grievous and manifold sins is even a sign of predestination to grace, and that there are many who would not enter Heaven at all, or who, at all events, would not have such a high place there, if they had not been grievous sinners. How can that be ? Is it, then, a good thing to have sinned ? By no means ; sin is, and must always be condemned. Must one, then, sin in his youth, that he may live better afterwards ? No, that is still worse. The doctrine alluded to is founded on the fact that a man, who has had the misfortune to sin often and grievously, through malice, when he gets an inspiration of grace and does penance, is often spurred on to greater zeal by the consideration of his former life, and does more good than if he had always remained innocent. For when I think that I have offended God, I must feel greatly humbled, and humility is the foundation of all Christian virtues, and makes the soul capable of receiving heavenly gifts and graces. The humility that makes me look upon myself as unworthy to live amongst men, and as fit only for the companionship of demons, effects in me a constant mildness, modesty, charity, and mercy towards others, even towards the poorest and lowliest. The consideration of my past offences makes me patient in enduring the trials of life, for if anything occurs to give me pain, I at once acknowledge that I have deserved it, and that, in fact, I have often deserved hell itself. Therefore, I say : " Lord, Thy will be done." The remembrance of my wicked life teaches me how patient God has been

In that way even one's past sins may be the occasion of greater glory for him in Heaven.

¹ *Scire piget, quid fecerit ante.*

² *Consummatus in brevi explevit tempora multa.*—*Sap. iv. 18.*

with me in supporting me for such a long time, while I despised Him ; how exceedingly merciful He is in adopting me again as His beloved child, in preference to so many others who are now in hell for less sins than mine, and thus I am forced to love such a good and merciful God with my whole heart, to avoid offending Him by the least wilful sin, and to strain every nerve to do what is pleasing to Him. Thus the words of the Gospel are verified : “The last shall be first.”¹ They who come into the vineyard at the eleventh hour receive the same reward as those who began at the first hour. Thus the public sinner, Magdalen, has more glory in Heaven than many hundreds of the innocent just, because as she had offended God more grievously, she served Him after her conversion more zealously. Hence, as St. Jerome says, Paul, who formerly persecuted the Church of Christ, became one of the greatest Apostles, and did more than any of them for the glory of God : “He was the last in rank, but the first in merit.”²

Resolution
thus to re-
deem the
time lost.

That is the way, my dear brethren, to redeem the time that has been lost and misspent in the past, and to make good the damage suffered by the soul. What we have to do is to set to work zealously and on this very day, lest we fare like the Emperor Julius, of whom Suetonius tells us, that he intended to do great things for the good of Rome, of Italy, and of the whole world, and had already begun, when he was surprised by death and had to leave everything unfinished. “While thus thinking and acting, he was surprised by death.”³ Ah, how many Christians are hurried away by death, at the very moment when they resolve to lead a better life ! Therefore, let us all cry out to Heaven, with zeal and determination : My Lord and my God, I thank Thee infinitely for having borne so patiently for so many years the many sins I have committed, for not allowing me to die in a state that would have separated me from Thee forever, and condemned me to hell, and for having given me time to repent and amend my life. I declare before Heaven and earth that this last day of the year shall also be the last of my wickedness and sin, that I will henceforth unceasingly deplore; and that it shall be the first on which I consecrate myself wholly to Thy service for all the time that remains to me ! I know I am not worthy of a longer life, because, up to the present I have made such a bad use of my time; yet, I hope, in Thy infinite mercy, of which

¹ Erunt novissimi primi.

² Novissimus in ordine, primus in meritis est.

³ Talia agentem atque cogitantem mors prævenit.

Thou hast given me such ardent proof, that Thou wilt not refuse me the time that I am now resolved to employ in Thy service. Not a single moment of it shall pass without profit, without a good intention, or without my doing something for Thy honor and my salvation, even if I had a hundred years to live. But if I must die soon, and there is only a short time left for me to prove my fidelity and love towards Thee, then Thou, oh, most good and merciful God, wilt take my present earnest will and penitent heart for the deed. Amen.

My dear brethren, if we really mean this we shall all end this year most happily, and that is my wish for each and every one of you, along with my earnest desire that you may begin the New Year happily.

Another Introduction for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception :

Text.

Dominus possedit me in initio viarum suarum.—Prov. viii.
22. *From the Epistle of this Feast.*

“The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His ways.”

The most blessed Queen of Heaven, Mary, the Mother of God, is that most pure Virgin, of whom alone amongst all mere creatures, those words can be said with truth : “The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His ways,” for not a single moment of my whole life had the wicked serpent the least part in me. Even in the first moment of my conception the Lord took up His dwelling in me by sanctifying grace, and remained with me always, so that the least stain of sin or imperfection could never be found in me. Oh, most holy and always immaculate Virgin ! We all rejoice with thee, and congratulate thee from our hearts ! Yet, while we thus exult on account of thy honor, we poor children of Eve must bemoan our pitiful condition ; we are conceived in sin and are born enemies of God ! But our forefather Adam has brought that misery upon us. Ah, would that I could say : “The Lord possessed me,”¹ from the moment in which I was cleansed in baptism and in which the Lord gave me His sanctifying grace ! But, past years of my life, what have you to say to that ? Alas, when I ask you, how often do I find that I have driven God out of my soul by sin ! How few the years, months, weeks, and days of which I can say with truth : “The

¹ Dominus possedit me.

Lord possessed me"! But all the time that I have not spent in the grace of God is lost to me forever, and I have hitherto hardly ever thought of that! If my life, that is already far advanced, were to come to an end, what would be my fate? What am I to do now? This very day, on which the most pure and immaculate Virgin reminds me of the years I have spent in sin, I will begin to examine my past life, and to redeem the time I have lost, as St. Paul warns us: "Redeeming the time."¹ You should all profit by that warning, my dear brethren, especially those of you who are now advanced in years. To encourage you to do so is the object of this sermon, which is partly a meditation and partly an instruction. Intention: We must examine our past lives to redeem lost time. The first part. How we are to redeem that time. The second part. Oh, Holy Ghost, etc.—*continues as before.*

SEVENTY-FIRST SERMON.

**ON THE MAKING GOOD USE OF PRESENT AND FUTURE TIME,
ESPECIALLY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.**

Text.

Et Jesus proficiebat sapientia et ætate, et gratia apud Deum et homines.—Luke ii. 52.

"And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age, and grace with God and men."—*Preached on the first Sunday after Epiphany.*

Introduction.

According to His human nature, Jesus was only a Child of twelve years and yet He was the Teacher of the doctors, and was every day occupied in procuring the honor and glory of His heavenly Father, and was the Holy of holies! Therefore, the possession of sanctifying grace does not depend on how long one lives, nor on whether one is young or old, but on the use made of time. For a man who is zealous in the service of God can gain more merits for Heaven in a month, than a tepid Christian in several years; as I proved to you last Sunday, when I showed

¹ *Tempus redimentes.*

you how to redeem lost time, according to the warning of the Apostle, "redeeming the time," by increased zeal in good works. There is yet another warning of the Holy Ghost with regard to the time that God may still mercifully bestow upon us: "Son, observe the time"¹ that thou hast, and that still remains for thee to live. If it were to extend to a hundred years, oh, do not squander a moment of it; make a good use of it, so as to imitate our Lord, and increase, not merely in age, but in the grace of God. It is to this that I wish to exhort you to-day.

Plan of Discourse.

We should all, no matter who we are, but more especially the young, make a good use of present and future time for the welfare of our souls. That is, alas, done by very few. The whole subject.

Christ Jesus, the Eternal Son of God, Thy Father, who hast taught the Doctors in the Temple when Thou wast only a Child of twelve years old, teach me and all of us to-day, by Thy example, to use our time to this end and for the proper purpose! This we ask of Thee, through the intercession of Thy Mother and the holy angels guardian.

What is very precious and useful must be carefully guarded and not be squandered. A young, prudent, and clever man had once the good fortune, according to the world's way of thinking, to be espoused to a very rich lady. A few days before the wedding he thought to himself how he should manage with the fortune that was about to become his. My bride will bring me a rich dowry, he thought; ought we to spend it, and have a pleasant time with it? But if we did that, it would last only for a time, and what should we have, then, to live on? No; the best thing is to lend it all out at interest, so that it will bring us in a yearly revenue, on which we can live for a long time. A wise resolution, certainly! But, my good young man, you must not reckon without your host; you must first see whether your bride will agree to that arrangement! In fact, a few months after their wedding, during which time he allowed her, as is usual, to do as she pleased, he found out that the fortune she brought with her was spent upon costly dresses, lace, ribbons, head-gear, bracelets, earrings, and other articles of female adornment. He was rather taken aback at this, and thought to himself: That is,

What is precious must be carefully guarded.

¹ Fili, conserva tempus.

indeed, a fine way to lay out the money at interest. Whenever my wife goes out, she brings her whole fortune with her. I thought we would have had a fixed capital, that would have brought us a yearly income ; but what could be more unsteady than a capital that goes in and out of the house every day. If things are to go on like that, I need not have rejoiced so much at getting a rich wife, for she will dispose of my whole income in that way. You see, my dear brethren, that the good man had reason enough to complain of his wife's extravagance.

Time is a very precious treasure.

Now to come seriously to our subject: every year that is given to me, and to each one of us, what else is it but a fortune that the great Father of all gives to the human soul as to His beloved child and the Spouse of His Holy Spirit ? And what a splendid fortune it is ! What a rich and fruitful capital, provided only it is well employed and made good use of ! So rich is it, and so precious, that if the Saints in Heaven could feel any discontent, they would envy us the possession of it, and the greatest torment of the souls in purgatory, the greatest despair of the reprobate in hell, arise from the fact that they cannot any longer have that precious gift. It is a common and a true saying, that it is only the sick who know the value of health ; he who has never been ill cannot value health properly. Let us then hear what they have to say who have lost time forever, and can never have it any more.

As the blessed in Heaven know.

Blessed souls who now behold God, and possess Him securely, I expect no answer from you ; for if I were to ask you how you value time, you would say to me, as my faith teaches me already by the holy Apostle St. Paul : “ Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him.”¹ Go and tell all men, you would add, that this is the interest we reap from having well invested the capital of the short time of our lives on earth.

The souls in purgatory.

Poor souls who are still in purgatory, tell us the value of that gift, which the good God bestows on us, when He gives us this fleeting time to live in. Ah, it seems to me I hear you cry, as was once really the case : “ If we had only one hour ! ”² If we had that priceless treasure that you now possess ! We do not ask for a whole year, we would be satisfied with a day or an hour,

¹ *Oculus non vidit, nec auris audivit, nec in cor hominis ascendit, quæ præparavit Deus his, qui diligunt illum.*—I. Cor. ii. 9.

² *Ah, si daretur hora !*

and what terrible torments we could free ourselves from in that short time ! We have misspent only a little of the capital that was given to us ; some moments here and there we have lost, and on that account we must now suffer the painful loss and unspeakable torment of not being yet able to possess our highest Good ; so that perhaps for many years we must bemoan in this lake of fire the loss of our precious time ! “ Ah, if only one hour were given to us ! ” This should suffice to teach you who still live on earth, what a precious thing time is.

Despairing spirits, lost mortals, you, I mean, who are in hell forever, tell us how we are to value time ! Humbert, a holy religious, was once meditating on eternity ; while absorbed in thought, he heard a mournful voice that nearly broke his heart with pity ; but he took courage, and asked whose voice it was, and why it complained so. I am one of those unhappy souls, was the answer, one of those wretched beings who have no more time ! I have been sent here by divine command to teach you, and others through you, the priceless value of the short time of your lives. Know, then, that of all the torments of hell, the worst is the eternal remembrance of the time we have so miserably squandered during our lives. Ah, if only the least part of it were now given back to us ! But there is no hope of that. There is and will be no time for us any more.¹ Suppose, my dear brethren, that God placed me as a merchant at the gate of hell, to sell time to the reprobate ; how dearly would they purchase it, think you ? Rich glutton, who are now in the midst of the flames, and desire a drop of water to cool your tongue, what would you give me for a few minutes of that time which you spent in eating and drinking ? Ah, would be his answer, you ask what I would give ; ask rather what I would not give. If I had all the treasures of a thousand worlds, I would give them with pleasure. Cruel Herod, you have now been more than eighteen hundred years in hell ; I have half an hour's time here for you ; what will you give me for it ? Everything ; a thousand kingdoms, if I had them ! Despairing Judas, where are the thirty pieces of silver that you got for your treason ? Will you give them to me ? I have got one moment of time for you. Ah, would that I could have it to do penance in ! Willingly would I endure all pains and torments imaginable for a million of years, if I could only gain that one moment. Give it me, other lost souls would cry out : I will give you twice as much,

The reprobate in hell.

¹ *Tempus non erit amplius.*—Apoc. x. 6.

a hundred thousand times as much for that moment ! But away with you all ! Not one of you shall have a single moment for all eternity. "Time shall be no longer."¹

Therefore, we must guard this treasure and make the best use of it.

That is the precious gift, the rich treasure that the divine generosity has bestowed upon us all, my dear brethren, and upon us alone who still journey through this life to our fatherland ; and He has given it to us in such a manner, that nothing really belongs to us on earth, but the time that is given us, as St. Bernard says : "Time alone belongs to us ; whatever else we have belongs to others."² Honors, riches, money, food, drink, and clothing, are external things that we cannot have full dominion over to do with as we wish, and they can be taken from us even against our will. "Time alone belongs to us,"³ and is fully in our power. The wife cannot take it away from her husband by extravagance in dress, unless he consents to her doing so ; nor can the husband squander his wife's time by gambling and drinking ; no man on earth can take it away from me, unless he deprives me of life. Of course, men may talk to and cajole me, and thus prevent me from doing what I wish to do, for instance, from going to Church to hear Mass or a sermon ; but they cannot hinder me from employing that same time well or ill, according to my own will and intention. This is the precious treasure that you, Christians, who are still in the bloom of youth, can naturally look forward to enjoy for a longer period, than those who are already advanced in years. What shall we do with this rich treasure ? Shall we allow it to go in and out ; shall we squander it in amusement, idleness, and pleasure-seeking ? Oh, no ; that would be bad management indeed ! And what must we do with it, then ? We must lay it out at good interest, so that we may have profit enough from it to live on for eternity. "Son," is the warning of the Holy Ghost, "observe the time"⁴ that is given to thee ; do not lose the least particle of it : "Let not a particle of a good day overpass thee"⁵ without profiting by it.

That is not generally done by young people, who waste their time in wickedness.

But, alas, beautiful time, how thou art thrown away, especially by young people ! Such is the complaint of even the heathen philosopher Seneca ; how much more, then, should not Christians make the same complaint ! He says : "A great part of life is spent in doing evil, the greatest part in doing

¹ *Tempus non erit amplius.*

² *Solum tempus nostrum est, reliqua aliena sunt.*

³ *Solum tempus nostrum est.*

⁴ *Fili, conserva tempus.*

⁵ *Particula bonæ diei non te prætereat.*

nothing, and nearly the whole of it in doing what one should not do." What a sad use to make of such a priceless treasure ! But alas, it is the case with many ! Let each one examine his conscience, and see how he has hitherto spent the years of his life ; will he not find that a great part of them has been spent in doing evil ? It is well known how St. Ambrose acted so as to insure greater reverence being paid to the ground round the Church. He took a handful of earth from it and squeezed it in his hands until blood came out of it, by which miracle he showed that the ground was bedewed with the blood of martyrs, and should therefore be held in great respect. If a St. Ambrose could thus squeeze in his hands a good part of the lives of many youths and maidens, what would come out of it but the filth of impurity and other hateful vices ? We might say of them with the Prophet David : " His ways are filthy at all times." Day and night, Advent and Christmas-time, Lent, Easter, the holiest times of the year, all full of sin ! Perhaps he would find some who, in their childhood and at the first dawn of reason, committed sins that still burden their consciences, because they never confessed them, or confessed them improperly, through shame, or at all events were wanting in true sorrow and resolution because they remained in the proximate occasion, and never did penance as they ought, so that if he were to examine the fifteen, twenty, or thirty years of their lives since they came to the use of reason, he would not find perhaps a single day which was wholly devoted to God and to their salvation ; not a single day that they did not spend in sin and at enmity with God ; not a single day on which they did anything really good and meritorious of Heaven. Precious time, priceless treasure, that is thus thrown away in a manner that cannot be sufficiently deplored ! Oh, my God, when I think of it, my heart is like to break with sorrow and repentance ! I must say with Thy servant David : " The sins of my youth do not remember." The first, best, and most precious part of my life, which Thou hast specially reserved for Thyself, has been snatched away by the devil, with my consent ! I hope, my dear brethren, that none of you have cause to lament thus with truth, and therefore I will consider the other class of people who, according to the philosopher, lose their time.

¹ *Magna pars vitæ elabitur male agentibus, maxima nihil agentibus, tota aliud agentibus.*

² *Inquinatæ sunt viæ illius in omni tempore.*—Ps. 1x. 26.

³ *Delicta juventutis meæ, ne memineris.*—Ibid. xxxiv.

Doing no-
thing.

“The greatest part of life is spent in doing nothing,”¹ or in doing things that are worth nothing. Let us consider for a moment the daily life of idle people. They sleep till late in the day, or if they cannot sleep, they lie idly in bed, thinking God knows what; they say their morning prayers while they are dressing, and it is well if they do even that much; they then spend an hour before the glass adorning themselves; if it is not too cold, they go to Church, more to see and be seen than to offer sacrifice to God. I have said nothing of their breakfast, and now it is already noon and time for them to think of dinner; then they go out walking and pay visits, or amuse themselves until supper-time; after that they go to bed, or to some ball or party, and spend the following day in bed. These are the chief occupations of their lives; days like that make up their weeks, the weeks become months and the months years, which thus pass in idleness. A certain poet symbolizes this very well. He represents the sun in a golden wagon, drawn by twelve beautiful maidens to represent the hours, all of whom were provided with wings and arrows as a sign of the swiftness of their flight; but some of the hours were very large, others of moderate size, and others again very small. Mercury, the messenger of the gods, meets them and asks why they are so unlike in size. The smallest answered: We are the hours of prayer; the next said: We are the hours of worldly business; and the third, and tallest: We are the hours of sleeping, eating, drinking, and amusement. This is very true of a great many, especially of young people, who are in the best part of their lives, and who, if they look back for twenty or thirty years, to see what they have done for the one important concern of their soul during that time, will find that the fewest and shortest hours have been given to it, while all the others have been spent in doing nothing.

That is not
a Christian
way to live.

But is that the way to live as a Christian, or even as a reasoning human being? Seneca once passed by a fine house, and asked who lived in it. He was told that it was occupied by Servilius Vaccia, who never did anything but eat, drink, sleep, and enjoy himself. Ah, in that case, said Seneca, you ought not to say that Vaccia lives here, but “Vaccia is buried here;”² because all that belongs to a reasonable being has died out of him, and there is nothing more left to him, but to lead a sensual life, like a beast. Oh, how many houses of Christians there are, over which one might with truth write the epitaph,

¹ *Maxima pars vitæ nihil agentibus.*

² *Hic Vaccia situs est.*

here lies buried the man, the woman, the youth, or the maiden, who spends the very least part of life in a human, Christian, and supernatural manner! Why should precious time be thus wasted? Have we nothing else to do on earth? "Why stand you here all the day idle?"¹ is the question that Christ asks us. Can one of us answer like the laborers in the Gospel: "No man hath hired us"?² In fact, young people often say they have nothing to do, they have no household to look after, no children to attend to, and therefore, they must do something to pass away the time. Ah, God help them, I could say, with St. Bernard; must a man then try to invent some means of spending his precious time? Have you really nothing to do? Have you no sins to repent of, for which you still owe a terrible debt to the divine justice? Have you nothing to do? Have you not to gain the friendship of a great God, who is worthy of all love and service from you? Have you not an immortal soul to care for, which, if it is once lost, can never be redeemed and is lost for eternity? Have you not a terrible enemy to conquer, against whose assaults you cannot be too careful in protecting yourself day and night? Have you not a strict judgment to fear, in which an account will be demanded of every idle word, and your good works themselves will be scrutinized? Have you not to prepare for death, that comes like a thief in the night, to hurry you away when you least expect? Have you not to labor for a long eternity, to avoid the never-ending pains of hell, to gain the everlasting joys of Heaven? And you have nothing to do! Say, rather: Oh, I have a great deal to do, of which I think very little now, and therefore, I lose so much precious time in doing nothing! Well may you say, St. Bernard: "There is nothing more precious than time; but alas, nothing is valued so little nowadays,"³ or squandered more foolishly! A great part of it is lost in doing evil, the greater part in doing nothing, the whole of it almost in doing something else besides what one ought to do. This is the way in which a third class of people lose their time.

There are many who do not do evil nor live in idleness; but they have their hands and heads full from morning till night. With what? Principally with things that do not concern them, and for which they are not in this world. Tell me, my dear

In doing something else. How foolish that is. Shown by examples in the form of a simile.

¹ Hic situs est. ² Quid hic statis tota die otiosi?—Matth. xx. 6.

³ Nemo nos conducit.—Ibid. 7.

⁴ Nihil pretiosius tempore; sed heu! nihil vilius hodie aestimatur.

brethren, if the Roman emperor were to take all his soldiers away from Italy and Hungary, on account of a war with the Turks, and were to deliver up those beautiful countries, the defence of which cost so much brave Christian blood, as a prey to the enemy, and on the other hand, to set all Germany in motion, enrolling a hundred thousand additional troops and making alliances with different princes, with the sole object of gaining possession of some desert district of Lybia or the Caucasus, where not even a blade of grass can grow, much less anything required for man's support; what would you think of such a project? Would not each one of you say, like the disciples, when Magdalen poured the ointment on the head of our Lord: Why this waste? ¹ Why should such a vast army, that it took such trouble to collect together, be forced to make a long and toilsome journey into a country that is not worth conquering? It should be sent to a rich and new country, or at least should be used to protect its own land against foreign invasion. Certainly, sovereigns are wont to make a better use of their power. Formerly people used to laugh at Domitian, who, although he had the whole burden of the Roman Empire on his shoulders, used to spend his time catching flies. Hartabus, a king of Hyrcania, devoted the most of his attention to trapping mice and moles. Bientes, a king of Lydia, was fond of catching frogs. Orepus, King of Macedon, used to make lanterns. All these people were not idle, they had their occupations; but occupations that were not suitable for kings. We laugh when we see the trouble that children take to build dolls' houses, to make castles out of cards and birds out of paper, which latter they tie to cords and run after for hours, until they are tired. They are busy, too, and are often more interested in what they are doing than many grown-up people are about their household concerns. Still, we think, it is only child's play, they are acting as children act.

So do most
men.

Oh, angels of Heaven, what do you often think when you see what our occupations are? Running around the world, crossing the seas, fatiguing the head with study, writing whole reams of paper full, working till the perspiration rolls down from our foreheads, laboring the whole day and breaking our rest at night to scheme and plan, with our minds full of thoughts, our hearts full of desires, and all for this earth, all for this miserable vale of tears, in which we are not to live, but merely to travel like pilgrims. Such are our occupations! And yet, if all the goods

¹ Utquid perditio hæc?—Matth. xxvi. 8.

of this world were heaped together, compared to eternal goods, they would be of infinitely less value than a fly, a mole, a frog, a child's house of cards. These, I say, are the occupations that take up the most of our time. We do hardly anything for our souls' sake, hardly anything with a good intention for God's sake, or for a happy eternity! Holy faith assist me! Sacred justice lend me Thy infallible scales! Place on one side a single grain of sanctifying grace, such as a servant of God gains by a devout Our Father, or by bearing trials with patience and resignation to the divine will, or such as a poor servant-maid can gain by sweeping out the house with a good intention, which can be elicited in a moment. Place on the other side all the wealth of Peru, the Indies, and the whole world. Which of the two will weigh the heavier? Which is the more valuable? Oh, certainly, that grace is far more precious than all the treasures of earth! St. Thomas Aquinas says: "A single grace is of more value than all the wealth of the universe."¹ And yet, that grace, which we might gain at any moment, and increase, too, even by our daily necessary occupations, if we perform them with a pure conscience and a supernatural intention, we throw away, while we run like children after other worthless things that it costs us a deal of trouble to secure! Thus the precious time of our lives is spent in doing something else besides what we ought to do.

Is it for that we are in this world? Have we not another most important business in which to occupy our time? What great blindness! What happened to Anthony and Cleopatra is a well-known fact. They went once to catch fish for amusement; the queen, in order to prove that she was the more skilful and to have an opportunity of teasing her lover afterwards, found out from an experienced fisherman what the best bait was; so that she succeeded in catching many large fishes, while Anthony had to be content with a few small and worthless ones. He kept his ill-humor concealed for a time and appeared to be glad of the queen's good fortune. But at last he lost patience, on seeing that her success called forth congratulations on all sides, while his want of luck was greeted with derisive laughter. Cleopatra, seeing that he was out of temper, calmed him by saying to him: "You are born to fish for kings and kingdoms."² Do not be vexed at your want of success in an art that is not worthy of you; that

¹ Bonum gratiæ unius majus est bonum bono nature totius universi.

² Natus es reges et regna piscari.

is the art you are best acquainted with ; we women, who do not understand it, have to be content with less noble pursuits. Christians, you understand what I mean by this anecdote. We are not born to catch worthless flies and frogs, but to fish in time for an eternal kingdom. Christian merchant, you are not born to count money, but to bear a royal sceptre in your hands. Woman, you are not born for the worthless comforts and amusements of this earth, but to seek here the eternal joys of Heaven. Maiden, you are not born to play and amuse yourself, to adorn and trick yourself out so as to please others, but that you may be one day clad with the sun, so as to win the heart of the King of Heaven. Young man, you are not born to eat and drink, to sleep, to go out walking, or to spend your time in useless talk ; those occupations are far too low for your great end. You are born to gain a kingdom ¹ which cost the Son of God thirty-three years' labor, nay, even His very life's blood, to regain for you after you had lost it.

Exhortation
to make
good use of
time.

Therefore, I repeat, by way of conclusion, the exhortation of the Holy Ghost : " My son," my daughter, " observe the time" ² that is given to you for such an important business. " Let not a particle overpass thee." ³ If you lose a moment, you lose a whole kingdom that you might have gained in it. Do not say, as young people do : I have time enough to gain Heaven afterwards. Ah, afterwards, fatal word that has brought many to hell ! There is no Christian among the reprobate, who had not the same intention of working out his salvation afterwards. How can you dispose of future time, when you are not certain of a moment ? Even if you still have many years to live, according to the divine decree, can you say that afterwards you will have the favorable time, the acceptable time, the time of peace and salvation that the Sacred Scripture speaks of so often ? Unhappy Jerusalem, was the cry of our Saviour : " If Thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace." ⁴ Thy walls shall stand for thirty-seven years longer, but not for thy welfare ; thy inhabitants will be scattered over the world till the end of time : " Because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation." ⁵ Make a good use, therefore, of the time which you now have, and do not squander the rich treasure on which you must live for eternity. When Conrad,

¹ Natus es regna piscari.

² Fili, conserva tempus.

³ Particula te non prætereat.

⁴ Si cognovisses et tu, et quidem in hac die tua, quæ ad pacem tibi.—Luke xix. 42.

⁵ Eo, quod non cognoveris tempus visitationis tuæ.—Ibid. 44.

Bishop of Hildesheim, was once studying during the night a sermon that he intended preaching to his people on the following day, he had an ecstasy in which he saw a hall draped in mourning. Jesus Christ was seated therein as a stern Judge, full of majesty and surrounded by many persons of noble aspect who acted as His councillors. In this august assembly the bishop beheld one of his most intimate friends, a German prelate of princely birth, still young in years, who stood there as an accused person; he was examined and condemned to death, whereupon he was stripped of his priestly robes by the angels and delivered over to the executioner to be beheaded. When this was accomplished, all the councillors stood up and left the hall, one after the other, repeating the words of St. Paul: "Therefore, whilst we have time, let us work good."¹ When Conrad came to himself again, and as he was thinking of this vision, the news was brought to him that the prelate in question had died suddenly. Conrad deeply deplored the sad fate of his friend, and never forgot, during his whole life, the words: "Therefore, whilst we have time, let us work good." Let us, too, my dear Christians, take those words to ourselves, that they may spur us on daily to make a holy use of the time that still remains to us, and that death may not come before we carry out our good resolutions. Alas, what will become of us in that sad night when we shall wish to work good and shall not be able, as Christ warns us: "The night cometh when no man can work"²? While time lasts for us, let us, then, hasten to do penance, to gain grace and to attain heavenly glory.

In all documents the year is mentioned as, "the year of our Lord,"³ or "the year of salvation."⁴ The words *Anno Domini* are also written in all contracts, wills, and epitaphs. They ought to be written also, and with truth, on all the years, weeks, days, and hours of our lives: To-day is the day of the Lord; this hour is the hour of the Lord and of salvation; therefore, it must not be employed for any other purpose, but for the Lord alone and for my salvation. Away, then, with all useless thoughts and words, with all idle and foolish pastimes that have already stolen so many golden hours from me, in which I might have earned an eternity of glory; I bid farewell to all these follies forever! I will in future so divide each day as to give to my body only what

Resolution
to do so
really for
the future.

¹ Ergo, dum tempus habemus, operemur bonum.—Galat. vi. 10.

² Venit nox, quando nemo potest operari.—John ix. 4.

³ Anno Domini. ⁴ Anno salutis.

is barely necessary for it, that I may serve my God, and to my worldly occupations only what my state of life absolutely requires, and even those I will perform safely for Thy sake, oh, my God, to whom all time properly belongs! If I were certain that I had still a hundred years to live, would it be too much, O Lord, if I were to give all that time to Thee? Would it be too soon for me to commence now to love Thee alone with my whole heart, who hast loved me from all eternity, and created me for no other end but to love Thee, and hast, moreover, bestowed countless benefits on me every moment of my life? O God, deserving of all my love, I now begin, and with Thy grace will continue to serve Thee, so that when death comes, be it soon or late, I may say with Thy servant Hilarion: Go forth, my soul, why shouldst thou fear? Thou hast served God for thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy years, and hast not wasted a moment of that time.¹ Go forth² from time to the place where thou hast safely invested thy treasure, to a joyful eternity. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Feast of St. Thomas, Apostle:

Text.

Thomas autem, unus ex duodecim, qui dicitur Didymus, non erat cum eis, quando venit Jesus.—John xx. 24.

“Now Thomas, one of the twelve, who is called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.”

What a loss that was to Thomas: “He was not with them when Jesus came”!³ If he had made a better use of his time and had remained with the other Apostles, he would have also had the happiness of being visited by Jesus, and would not have been guilty of that incredulity, obstinacy, and presumption that led him afterwards to doubt the resurrection of Christ, although Christ Himself had foretold it, and the other Apostles, as well as the holy women, had actually conversed with Jesus after He had risen from the dead. So much depends, my dear brethren, on making a good and careful use of time. A single moment, in which I yield to an inspiration of divine grace, may be the beginning of all the special graces that I afterwards receive, and of my eternal salvation. A single moment, in which I omit some good work that God requires of me, may be the cause of many

¹ Egredere, anima mea, septuaginta annis servisti Deo.

² Egredere. ³ Non erat cum eis, quando venit Jesus.

sins, and of my eternal damnation. Therefore, the Holy Ghost warns us: "My son," my daughter, "observe the time" that thou now hast and wilt have; do not waste a single moment of it! And this is the subject of the present exhortation,—*continues as before.*

SEVENTY-SECOND SERMON.

ON SHROVE-TIDE.

Subject.

No more liberty is allowed in unlawful things at Shrove-tide, than at any other time.—*Preached on Quinquagesima Sunday.*

Text.

Tradetur enim gentibus.—Luke xviii. 32.

"He shall be delivered to the Gentiles."

Introduction.

If there is any time in the year at which insult is offered to our Lord by sinners, at which Christians deliver up their Redeemer again to be mocked at by heathens and to be ill-treated by them, it is Shrove-tide. Nor does this statement require any proof, if we only consider for a moment what happens during those days. Generally speaking, people imagine, or at least act as if they believed it to be true, that everything is allowed during that time—dissipation, drunkenness, impurity, dangerous and heathenish amusements and the desecration of Sundays and holy-days are mere recreations that are perfectly lawful during Shrove-tide. Permit me now, my dear brethren, to disprove this false idea, and to show that, although it is Shrove-tide, not a whit more liberty is given to do evil, or to place the soul in danger of sin, than at any other time. I do not intend to speak of any danger or vice in particular, but of all in general. We know from the law of God and of His Church what is sinful in itself; our own reason and experience teach us what are the dangerous occasions of sin. I repeat my

¹ *Fili, conserva tempus.*

Plan of Discourse.

No more liberty is allowed in unlawful things at Shrove-tide, than at any other time. He who speaks and acts contrary to this, delivers up Jesus Christ to the Gentiles to be mocked. This I shall endeavor to prove to the end that good Christians, such as I believe the most of those to be who are assembled here, may rejoice that they have no part in the dissipation of the thoughtless, and may be encouraged to serve God faithfully, even at Shrove-tide. How happy I should be if I were the occasion of saving even one soul from committing a single sin that it would otherwise have committed!

Almighty God, Ruler of hearts, Thou must do that! I hope that Thou wilt even do more! This grace we ask of Thee through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, to whom Thou canst not refuse anything, and through the holy angels, whom Thou hast given to all of us to protect us from the assaults of the devil.

At Shrove-tide every-thing is the same as at other times.

If it were really the case that more freedom is allowed in these days than at other times, then that must come either from some change in God, the Ruler of all, who does not wish us to serve Him now the same as at other times, or from some change in our state of life and religion which does not require such great holiness of life from us at this time, or else from some change in our own souls, which at this season have a business to attend to that is far different from the business of their salvation. One of these three must be the cause of the change and relaxation of morals, for I can find no other. But none of these three things happens and, therefore, this part of the year should not differ from the other parts, as far as the service of God is concerned.

God is always the same.

It is Shrove-tide, but what then? Is there on that account a different God in Heaven? Is not God the same now as He was at Christmas-time? Has He, perhaps, lost His majesty, His authority, or His supremacy? Was He better, holier, wiser, or juster a few months ago, than He is to-day? Is He worthy of less honor, fear, and love? Has He given up His honor during these days? Does He wish us to fear and love Him less? Has He in this season given free leave to commit all kinds of vices? Does He hate and condemn sin less now than formerly; or has He, perhaps, concealed Himself, so as not to see what we do, or does He close His eyes to our folly and dissipation? Perhaps He has lost His power and cannot punish sin as severely as before? Has He assured us that we can go into the danger and not

perish? Where is the proof of that? How is it that this season has the privilege of allowing what is forbidden at other times? It is an article of faith that the world and its usages are at enmity with the service of God; could there be any time, then, at which worldly pleasures might be indulged in without restraint, and when people are allowed to forget God, to serve the world, and to follow its corrupt usages? Oh, no, God is always the same unchangeable Lord, who says of Himself: "I am the Lord, and I change not."¹

He is still the same most perfect God, who deserves our love during Shrove-tide as well as during Lent; the same infinite, omnipresent God, who must be honored in all places over the whole world; the same eternal God, who must be served at all times; the same jealous God, who cannot allow any one to share our hearts with Him, nor permit Himself to be defrauded of a moment of time; the same God of infinite holiness, who must hate and detest sin always. "To God the wicked and his wickedness are hateful alike."² He still remains the same most just God, who can allow no wickedness to go unpunished, and who cannot give to any one a single moment in which he may lawfully sin. Ecclesiasticus says: "He hath given no man license to sin;"³ at no time in the year can He allow sin. He remains the same provident God who has never promised His help and grace to those who expose themselves to danger without necessity; nay, He assures us, on His own word, that He will abandon such presumptuous men to their own weakness, and will let them perish in the danger; for His threats and warnings hold good at Shrove-tide, as well as at any other time. "Give not place to the devil."⁴ "Woe to that man by whom scandal cometh,"⁵ that is, by whom others are placed in the dangerous occasion of doing, speaking, or thinking evil. The warning of Christ in the Gospel of St. Luke holds good at all times: "And take heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness,"⁶ at any time or season. So also with the words: "What I say to you, I say to all: Watch."⁷ Be careful; close the gates of your senses, that death may not enter your souls. It always remains true that: "He that loveth danger shall

And must
be honored
and served
even during
Shrove-tide.

¹ Ego Dominus, et non mutor.—Malach. iii. 6.

² Odio sunt Deo impius, et impietas ejus.—Sap. xiv. 9.

³ Nemini dedit spatium peccandi.—Ecccl. xv. 21.

⁴ Nolite locum dare diabolo.—Ephes. iv. 27.

⁵ Væ homini illi, per quem scandalum venit.—Matth. xviii. 7.

⁶ Attendite vobis, ne forte graventur corda vestra in crapula et ebrietate.—Luke xxi. 34.

⁷ Quod autem vobis dico, omnibus dico: Vigilate.—Mark xiii. 37.

perish in it.”¹ And what the Apostle says of those sins that are generally committed at Shrove-tide is always true also: “They who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God.”²

So that He must be served then as well as at other times.

Therefore it is not allowed to lead a more careless, dissipated life at this season than at any other, as far as God is concerned; and if you say the contrary, you belong to the rabble who delivered up Jesus to the scorn of the Gentiles, and you act most unjustly towards your Supreme Lord if you take anything away, during these days, from the love and service you owe Him. Do you think, perhaps, that a whole year or a whole life-time would be too much for the service of God, unless it were interrupted by the dissipations of Shrove-tide, although He has created you out of nothing, nay, snatched you out of hell? Would it be too much for God, who has loved you from all eternity, and will love you for all eternity; for a God who in human form gave up His whole life for your salvation? Ah, if you had a hundred thousand lives, they would not be enough to make a full return for His love! Why, then, do you think that the year is incomplete without the dissipations of Shrove-tide; that is, without a certain season being devoted, according to the perverse custom of the world, to drunkenness, sensuality, and heathenish amusements? Oh, think as much as you will that it is Shrove-tide, but put not away the thought that even then there is a God who must never be offended and must be loved always. Therefore: “Fear the Lord thy God,”³ at all times.

Every one must always live according to his state.

I come now to our state and profession. It is Shrove-tide, you say; but I suppose you remain a reasoning being at Shrove-tide. You are still a Christian, a Catholic, and make profession of the law, faith, and religion of Jesus Christ. Is not that so? for you certainly do not wish to deny your faith, nor if it were possible, to blot out the baptismal character from your soul. Now, it is an incontestable truth that every one is bound at all times to act as he knows his state and duty require. The words of the Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas, are: “Every one who makes profession of any state is bound to act as becomes that state.”⁴ This doctrine is admitted even in the perverse world, which teaches that all should behave in a manner suitable to their birth, station, and occupation. What is fit for a laborer

¹ Qui amat periculum, in illo peribit.—Ecc. iii. 27.

² Quoniam, qui mala agunt, regnum Dei non consequentur.—Galat. v. 21.

³ Time Dominum Deum tuum.—Levit. xix. 32.

⁴ Quicumque profitetur statum aliquem tenetur ad ea, quae illi statui conveniunt.

is not fit for a gentleman. What would we think of a gentleman who would mix with the common people and go about from one tavern to the other? The world would condemn him and say: He is enjoying himself, certainly, but in an unbecoming manner. If I, my dear brethren, were to throw off my clerical dress, and disguising myself, were to rush out to-day into the town, mix with all sorts of people, fill the streets with my shouts and cries, and spend the night in dancing, what man, even if he were the most dissipated, would not be horrified at seeing me? What a shame, people would cry; what a scandal in a Christian town! The man must be mad! But, I would say, it is Shrove-tide for me, as well as for you! I am a man as well as you, and must enjoy myself; I am as much in need of rest and recreation as you are; I am doing this to restore my strength, so that I may be better able to do my duty afterwards. Am I not right? Fie, the answer would be; is that a recreation for a priest, who professes to be a companion of Jesus Christ? Is it fit for one who has vowed to tend to perfection according to his Order, or for a preacher who must exhort others to lead holy lives? Can you not amuse yourself without giving public scandal? If you want amusements of this kind, you should have remained in the world; you must not forget your state of life when you seek recreation. And the answer would be quite right, my dear brethren; I would not have a word to say to it, and would feel thoroughly ashamed; nor would I be worthy of wearing any longer this beloved black cassock, which I would not change for the royal or imperial purple. God preserve me from such folly!

Now, I ask you again, is Christianity an empty imagination? Is that protestation that we have made in baptism to renounce the devil, the flesh, and the world, with its vain practices, a mere fable? Is the name of Jesus Christ that we bear, of which we boast, and which has cost our Saviour so much blood, such a vile and worthless name that we can easily give it up for anything that flatters our senses? Can there be any time in the year at which it is permitted to act in a manner unbecoming this name, and to dishonor the dignity of our state? What is a Christian, my dear brethren? He is one who has a special relationship to God, his heavenly Father; what Jesus Christ is by nature, the Christian is by adoption; he receives by baptismal regeneration what the divine Word received by birth. The Apostle St. Paul says: "You have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby

The dignity and duty of a Christian remain unaltered at Shrove-tide.

we cry: Abba (Father).”¹ St. John says: “Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called, and should be the sons of God.”² What is a Christian? He is one who is most closely connected with Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, whose member he is. All Christians, says the Apostle, constitute but one body, whose head is Christ, and they are united to Him as members by baptism. “Now you are the body of Christ, and members of member,”³ united so closely that Christ and we have the same life, as He says to His Father: “I in them, and Thou in me.”⁴

What is a Christian? He is one who belongs to God the Holy Ghost, whose dwelling-place he is. “Know you not,” says St. Paul, “that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”⁵ Can any greater dignity be imagined, my dear brethren, than to be a child of God, a brother of Jesus Christ, and the dwelling-place of the Holy Ghost? St. Louis looked upon it as a far greater honor to bear the name of Christian, than to be king of France. St. Leo says: “Oh, Christian,” no matter how poor and lowly thou otherwise art, “acknowledge the greatness of thy dignity in being made a partaker of the divine nature, and do not, by an unworthy life, return to thy former vileness!”⁶ What is the profession and duty of a Christian? His name of child of God shows clearly enough what reverence and love he ought to have for his heavenly Father at all times and in all places. Hear what St. Peter says: “And if you invoke Him as Father, . . . converse in fear during the time of your sojourning here.”⁷ If he is a member of Christ, he must represent in his own person the life of his humble, thorn-crowned Head. If he is a temple of God, he must keep himself in purity and holiness as a vessel consecrated to God: “For the temple of God is holy; which you are.”⁸

With which
the ordinary
amusements
of Shrove-

See, then, if you can reconcile the holiness and nobility of your state with the vanities and dissipations of the world, the promises you made in baptism and the duties of your holy state with the

¹ *Accipistis spiritum adoptionis filiorum, in quo clamamus: Abba, (Pater).*—Rom. viii. 15.

² *Videte, qualem charitatem dedit nobis Pater, ut filii Dei nominemur et simus.*—I. John iii. 1.

³ *Vos autem estis corpus Christi, et membra de membro.*—I. Cor. xii. 27.

⁴ *Ego in eis, et tu in me.*—John xvii. 23.

⁵ *Nescitis, quia templum Dei estis, et Spiritus Dei habitat in vobis?*—I. Cor. iii. 16.

⁶ *Agnosce, O Christiane, dignitatem tuam, et divinæ factus consors naturæ noli in Latinam villitatem degeneri conversatione redire!*

⁷ *Si patrem invocatis eum . . . in timore iuculatus vestri tempore conversamini.*—I. Pet. i. 17.

⁸ *Templum enim Dei sanctum est, quod estis vos.*—I. Cor. iii. 17.

many sins and follies that are generally committed at this season. If the season cannot make it lawful for me, a priest, even in the eyes of the world, to have recourse to worldly pleasures and amusements, because they are unbecoming my state, neither can it justify a Christian in the sight of God in indulging in pleasures that are contrary to the dignity and sanctity of his state. Oh, certainly not; do what you can to excuse yourselves, bring forward as many pretexts as you like, "the very religion that you profess condemns your faults!"¹ If a heathen who knew a little of the history of the Church were to come into one of our Christian towns and see how people act during this season, what a strange opinion he would be obliged to form of us! Is this, he might say, that celebrated Christian religion which adores a poor, humble, and crucified God, and exhorts all men to imitate Him? Is this the religion which forbids sin, even in desire and secret thought; the religion which points out to its followers the rough and narrow way of penance and the cross, and tells them to follow it if they wish to go to Heaven? In former times your ancestors upbraided ours for holding public festivals in honor of Bacchus, and proved therefrom the wickedness of our idolatry; while they themselves, by their modest, humble, chaste, and temperate lives, showed so clearly that the Christian religion was true, that they made more converts than all our tyrants with their persecutions could make perverts. But now I can hardly see any difference between what you do now and the pleasures we used to indulge in formerly. Either the old Christian religion is changed, or your ancestors were hypocrites and had no right to accuse ours of impiety. But, I would say to him, wait a little; the day after to-morrow, when Lent begins, you will see a great change in our conduct, for then we will strew ashes on our heads, pray, visit the churches, and lay aside all outward signs of revelry. What, the heathen would answer, is your religion like a coat, that you can take off to-day and put on to-morrow? Is your religion a mere system of trickery that sometimes approves of vices and sometimes condemns them? That at one time prescribes purity and temperance, and at another requires drunkenness, impurity, and dissipation? A religion of that kind contradicts itself, and cannot be true. What do you think, my dear brethren, could we make any answer to this reproach? We might say, perhaps: Oh, it is Shrove-tide; we are only amusing ourselves in order to serve God all the better afterwards.

tide are not
consistent.

¹ *Ipsa erroris vestros religio, quam profitentium, accusat!*

But he could reply : Are amusements of this kind fit for a Christian ? If you wish to enjoy yourselves, you should do it in a manner becoming your holy state and the teaching of your faith, that is, with decency and modesty. And to this I could have even less to say than to the first reproach. No season can make me cease to be a Christian ; no time can dispense me from leading the Christian, that is, the holy and God-fearing life that I am bound to lead.

The soul remains the same, and must be always cared for.

Finally, it is Shrove-tide. But have we not a soul during Shrove-tide, to save which is our only business ? We have an immortal soul, and if it suffers injury, what good would it do us to have had all the pleasures of the world during Shrove-tide ? We have also an implacable enemy, who is always lying in wait for us, and who spies out every moment for a chance of ruining us. Perhaps the devil is asleep during Shrove-tide ? Or he is weaker and not so well able to tempt us, or else is our nature stronger and better able to resist him, when we leave every door and window open to him, than at other times, when we often have enough to do, even in church and during prayer, to resist him ? We have also death to fear during Shrove-tide ; an uncertain death that may happen at this time as well as at any other ; a terrible death, that will at once launch us into a long eternity. Are we now, perchance, better protected against the countless unforeseen accidents that may cut short the thread of life at any moment ? Are we better prepared to make the long journey into eternity, if our time should come when we are in the midst of sinful indulgence ? We have also God's judgments to expect, and He will demand a strict account of every idle word, nay, even our good deeds will be scrutinized. Will nothing of what we do during Shrove-tide appear in that judgment ? We have a Heaven to hope for, and a hell to avoid. Is that fire extinguished in which sinners are to burn, or will it ever be extinguished ? Is that kingdom destroyed in which the just are to reign, or is it worth so little now that we need not trouble ourselves about it ? If we gain Heaven during Shrove-tide, shall we be less happy, than if we gained it at another time ? If we go to hell during Shrove-tide, shall we be less miserable and unhappy than at another time ? Are we now better protected against the anger of God ? Who, I ask again, has conferred such an extraordinary privilege on this season ? Therefore, the false idea that more is allowed at Shrove-tide than at other times, can be entertained only by those who have no proper faith

in God, no particle of true religion, and no real love for their souls and their eternal salvation.

But, they say, that is too severe altogether! Must we always remain at home and give way to melancholy? Lent is coming on; we must enjoy ourselves now; if something occasionally slips in that is not all right we can make it good during Lent; in a few days more we shall have time enough to atone for it all. But what a wretched excuse that is! Because we must watch over ourselves a little more carefully and restrain our senses in a few days, ought we, therefore, now to allow ourselves every liberty? We shall soon weep for our sins; must we now collect material for our tears, and do something that we can afterwards atone for? The Catholic Church will soon forbid us the use of flesh-meat; ought we, therefore, now to indulge in carnal pleasures? Bye-and-bye we shall be exhorted to self-denial; must we, therefore, now drown our reason in drunken excess? Penance shall then be preached to us; let us now act so as to leave something to repent of. We must go to confession at Easter; let us now do something that will give us matter for confession. We must return thanks to God; behold, O Lord, Thou hast commanded us to observe a forty-days' fast; we will obey Thee, but we will have some satisfaction for our obedience by doing beforehand what is pleasing to ourselves, whether it pleases Thee, or not. What wicked talk that is! We *must* enjoy ourselves! Why *must*? What necessity is there for it? Oh, Lent is coming on. But is Lent, then, so terrible? You seem to think that it is like going into another world, where you will never see each other again! What is your idea of Lent? Do you intend to leave the world and bury yourselves in a monastery, or hide away in a cave in the desert? Will you have to suffer hunger and thirst, and to macerate your bodies by vigils and disciplines? I do not think that the spirit of penance will lead you so far. Perhaps the ashes that will be placed on your foreheads the day after to-morrow, require that you should now enjoy yourselves, as a necessary preparation? No; you say. And what then? Oh, we must fast, unless we have a dispensation, and abstain from the use of flesh-meat. Poor people, how I pity you! It is a wonder that you are still alive! Yet there are many who would be overjoyed to have on Easter Sunday the food that others have during Lent, although it is not flesh-meat. Ah, my dear brethren, how many there are who have not always bread enough to eat! They must abstain every day; their fast

The approach of Lent does not render such pleasures necessary.

lasts through the year; they can never amuse themselves, and yet God keeps them in health and strength. But we must amuse ourselves; we cannot do without it! What folly to imagine that! We have reason to do penance our whole lives long; we must work out our salvation in fear and trembling; as long as the present time lasts, we are not sure of Heaven. It is not those who now laugh whom Christ calls blessed, but those who now weep.¹ And we have cause enough for weeping every hour and moment; our past sins, even if we had committed only one, the constant danger of sin, the uncertainty of dying a happy death and going to Heaven and escaping the pains of hell, all these things should excite us to constant watchfulness, and to childlike fear, humility, and modesty.

We can and ought to rejoice in God.

Yet, lest I should be too strict in this matter (for I know well that they are blessed who weep and mourn, that we are sometimes allowed to laugh, that there are innocent recreations, and that at times when we are free from cares and labors, we may, nay even, now and then, must amuse ourselves), you, too, should amuse yourselves at Shrove-tide, but in a lawful and Christian manner; for if everything that all Christians do were Christian, there would be no bad Christians on earth. Amuse yourselves, then, but with a good and holy intention for the honor and glory of God, the Lord of Heaven. Examine for a moment all the amusements of Shrove-tide, and place the good intention before them, to see how they will harmonize with it. For instance, I will drink to excess, for the honor and glory of God: I will enjoy myself this evening with this or that person in an unlawful manner, for the honor and glory of God; I will spend the night dancing, disguised, and dressed immodestly, for the glory of God and in union with the bitter passion and death of Jesus Christ, that God may be more pleased with what I do, and may be more honored by it. What would you think of that? Is it consistent? Is it not rather making a mockery of God? Enjoy yourselves, but like children of God, who keep their Father always before their eyes and in their hearts; enjoy yourselves, but without sin, without danger to your souls. I have spoken up to this, merely against sinful and dangerous amusements, which are just as unlawful now, as at any other time, and which are not permitted to any one, no matter who he is.

Sinful and dangerous amusements

Do you know, my dear brethren, what my hope is now? I hope and desire that I am preaching to-day without cause, and

¹ Beati, qui nunc fletis!

that what I say cannot be applied to any one in this whole city. To tell the truth, I have just reason for this hope; for I can easily imagine that in the present troublous times, when the whole land is suffering, and so many poor people are bewailing their misery, when we ourselves must acknowledge that we feel the rod, and do not know how much longer we may have to feel it, when God is chastising us with the intention of bringing us to humble and heartfelt sorrow for our past sins, which sorrow alone can appease His anger; in such circumstances, when we have not the least excuse for indulging in dissipation, it is, I repeat, easy for me to imagine that no inhabitant of this city can be so unchristian, so foolish, as to take part in the ordinary dissipations of this season. No, I cannot believe that they who can boast of being born and bred in a holy city are guilty of such extravagant conduct. And if there are young people who, through forgetfulness, seek unlawful pleasures, I cannot imagine that there are parents in this city who allow such license to their children in these hard times. Certainly, if any one asserted the contrary, I should tell him that it is not, and cannot be true. Yet, it actually happens! What, in this city? Yes, in this very city! Away with you, I do not believe you! You must not tarnish the fair fame of this city in that way, nor make strangers look upon us all as fools and idiots, who think they are not sufficiently punished already, and who try to provoke God to chastise this unhappy city and country still more severely. No; I cannot believe you! But it might still be urged against me, it is true, nevertheless, that some young people flaunt about the streets and steal out of the house at night, that their parents connive at them, nay, even persuade them to do so, that mothers go to balls and entertainments with their daughters, and that even foreigners are surprised to find so much levity and dissipation amongst us! Oh, nonsense; I cannot listen to you any longer! Yet, I know that there was an apostate even amongst the Apostles of Jesus Christ, and therefore there may be some amongst us, though not in this congregation here present, who require a word of warning; but still I am quite of the opinion that there are only a few such, and that they have been dragged, as it were, against their will, to share in unlawful amusements, by foreigners with whom they are brought into daily contact.

I turn then to you, beloved, pious, and Christian brethren who are here present, and I ask you in the words of our Lord, which He addressed to His Apostles, after many had abandoned Him :

are ill suited
to present
circum-
stances.

Exhortation
to the pious
to remain
faithful to
God.

“Will you also go away?”¹ My beloved disciples, you alone are with me, all the others have left me; will you follow their bad example and leave me also? My dear Christians, I ask you the same question; will you join the impious rabble, who during this season offend God by unlawful pleasures, or will you not rather remain faithful to God like the twelve Apostles, like all good and pious Christians? Oh, certainly! True friendship shows itself at all times, and especially when the beloved one is abandoned and in distress. Such are the words that God spoke to the Israelites by the Prophet Baruch: “You shall see in Babylon gods of gold, and of silver, and of stone, and of wood, borne upon shoulders, causing fear to the Gentiles; beware, therefore, that you imitate not the doings of others. . . . But when you see the multitude behind and before adoring them, say you in your hearts: ‘Thou oughtest to be adored, O Lord.’”² In the same way, dear Christians, if during this season you see a crowd of people feasting in honor of Bacchus, say in your hearts: ‘Thou alone, O Lord, art our God, whom alone we must adore, fear, honor, and love! What a joy it will be for the angels if you try to atone in some degree, by worthy confession and communion, by frequently visiting the Blessed Sacrament when it is exposed, by fervent prayer and by pious lives, for the insults that so many offer to their Creator during this time! You would be like Tobias, of whom the Scripture says: “When all went to the golden calves, . . . he alone fled the company of all, and went to Jerusalem to the temple of the Lord, and there adored the Lord God of Israel.”’³

Resolution
to be al-
ways faith-
ful.

We shall remain true to Thee, then, O Lord our God, at all times, even if the whole world were to abandon Thee! We shall show that we are true Christians, that we are Thy loving children, imitators and brethren of Jesus Christ, temples of the Holy Ghost, worthy descendants of our pious forefathers, who gave up their property and their lives for Thy honor and in defence of the Christian religion! Far be it from us to do anything unworthy of our dignity, or contrary to Thy holy law! We shall enjoy the pleasures that Thou permittest to us, for Thy honor and glory, and in such a way that we shall have nothing additional to repent of and atone for during Lent! Strengthen our resolution by Thy powerful grace, and be merciful, O God of infinite goodness, to those who offend Thee! Amen.

¹ Numquid et vos vultis abire?—John vi. 68.

² . . . Visa itaque turba de retro et ab ante adorantes, dicite in cordibus vestris: Te oportet adorari, Domine.—Baruch vi. 3-5.

³ Cum irent omnes ad vitulos aureos. . . hic solus fugiebat consortia omnium, et pergebat in Jerusalem ad templum Domini, et ibi adorabat Dominum Deum Israel.—Tob. i. 5, 6.

*SEVENTY-THIRD SERMON.***ON MORNING PRAYER.****Subject.**

The morning is the best and most suitable time for prayer, and that which is most pleasing to God ; therefore, this time should be devoted to prayer and to the honor of God, in preference to all other occupations.—*Preached on the fifth Sunday after Easter.*

Text.

Petite, et accipietis.—John xvi. 24.
“ Ask, and you shall receive.”

Introduction.

That is the best and surest means of finding comfort, alleviation, and help in all necessities and troubles of soul and body ; namely, prayer to God. We are assured of this in to-day's Gospel by Jesus Christ Himself : “ Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in my name, He will give it to you.”¹ Therefore, my dear brethren, let us pray ; let each one of us make known his wants and necessities to God ! I have often spoken, in different sermons, of the power and unfailing efficacy of prayer, of the way in which to pray, and of the many faults we may commit in prayer. The Gospel of to-day gives an opportunity I have been long seeking, that of speaking of the time for prayer. But is there a special time, then, for it ? Does not the Apostle tell us to pray always without ceasing ? That is true ; still, there is a time for prayer which is better, more profitable, more pleasing to God, and more necessary than any other time, and that is in the morning when we get up ; as I shall now proceed to show.

Plan of Discourse.

The morning is the best and most suitable time for prayer, and that which is most pleasing to God ; therefore, this time should be

¹ Amen, amen dico vobis : si quid petieritis Patrem in nomine meo, dabit vobis.—John xvi. 23.

devoted to prayer and to the honor of God, in preference to all other occupations. Such is the whole subject.

Oh, holy angels guardian, encourage us to do this every morning; and that we may never forget it, do Thou help us, O Blessed Saviour, through the intercession of Thy Mother Mary :

The early morning belongs in justice to God.

The most honored guest is shown to the best place at table; he is the first to be served with every dish, although what he gets may not be better than what is given to the other guests; such is the general custom amongst decent people in the world. Etiquette requires that the first of everything should be given to the most honored, because it is the first, and if that rule were neglected, the guest would look upon himself as insulted. Well-reared children, when they get up in the morning, make a point of greeting their parents before any one else in the house, and it would be a sign of great rudeness in a child to pass by its father or mother, in order to greet any one of the servants. You know, my dear brethren, what I mean. The first part of every day is the early morning; the first greeting belongs to Him who has the right to our first thought as soon as we awake; and to whom does this first part of the day belong, if not to God, our Supreme Lord and Master? Whom should we greet first of all, if not our heavenly Father? All that we are, all that we have, all that we can do is a gift of God, and should belong to Him alone.

The end of our creation.

The only end for which we are on this earth is to know God, to love Him, to adore Him, and to praise Him, that we may possess Him in eternity; therefore, all our thoughts, words, and actions, and all the movements of our souls and bodies should tend to this one end, and our whole lives should be a constant adoration and praise of God; not a moment of the day should pass, without being devoted to His honor and glory by a good intention. That is what the Apostle and Christ Himself so often impress on all men: "We ought always to pray, and not to faint,"¹ nor cease praising God. But, since we cannot always keep our thoughts fixed on God during the whole day, and according to divine decree must attend to the temporal duties of our state, it is only right and just that we should present at least the best part of the day to God, and give it completely to Him by returning due thanks to Him, and offering up to Him all the other actions of the day.

The law of nature.

Even blind heathens have learned from the light of nature,

¹ Oportet semper orare, et non deficere.—Luke xviii. 1.

that all our acts should commence with a religious motive. Virgil said: "We must begin with Jupiter."¹ Cicero, too, used to teach the Romans: "All our actions should begin with Jupiter and the other immortal gods."² What a shame for a Christian who is illumined by the light of faith, and who adores the one true God present in all places, to be surpassed in this point by heathens and idolaters, and not to give even the beginning of the day to the true God whom he adores! It is a fault that even unreasonable creatures do not commit; the mother-of-pearl opens its shell in the early morning towards Heaven to receive the dew; the flowers of the field turn towards the sun as soon as it appears above the horizon, as if to greet and welcome it; all the birds of the air begin to sing and chirp in the morning, as if obeying a natural instinct that tells them to bless and praise their Creator, to thank Him for having given them life, and to look to Him for their support. Hence King David invites them to praise God: All ye birds of Heaven bless the Lord.³ Such is also the opinion of St. Ambrose, who says: "The birds sing their sweet notes from the rising to the setting of the sun, so as not to forget the gratitude that all creatures owe their Creator."⁴ St. Bonaventure tells us that the Seraphic St. Francis, whenever he heard the birds sing in the morning, used to say: "Our sisters the birds are praising their Creator."⁵ John of God, when visiting the hospitals in the early morning, used always to say by way of salutation: "Brethren, let us return thanks to God, since even the birds fulfil that duty."⁶ St. Gregory remarks that the cock which crows very loud during the night, makes less noise when crowing in the early morning. This, he says, I take to mean that the cock wishes to awaken men, and when they are awake, to invite them to praise God.

Thus we can go to school to irrational creatures and learn from them when and how we are to treat with God. Why, then, should we require so many exhortations of the holy Fathers to induce us to pray to God in the early morning? Hear what St. Basil says: "A certain time, and that in the morning, should be appointed for prayer, that the first movements of our soul and

The exhortation of the holy Fathers.

¹ Ab Jove principium.—Eclog. 3.

² Ab Jove et cæteris diis immortalibus sunt nobis agendi capienda primordia.

³ Benedicite, omnes volucres cœli Domino.

⁴ Nocturnas aves canoro carmine occasum diei solere prosequi, ne immunes abeant gratiarum actione, quibus Creatorem suum omnis creatura collandat.

⁵ Sorores aves laudant Creatorem suam.

⁶ Fratres, gratias agamus Deo nostro, quando jam aves hoc gratiarum officium illi persolvunt.—A. Castro, In Vit. Joan. Del.

mind may be consecrated to God. Nor should we allow any other care to enter our minds before we have delighted our souls with the thought of God. Nor should we undertake any bodily labor before doing what the Psalmist says: I will pray to Thee, O Lord; in the morning Thou wilt hear my voice; in the morning I will be present with Thee.”¹ St. Jerome, writing to Demetrias, a pious Roman matron, says, amongst other things: “Although you should devote your whole life to the service of God, yet you must select a special time during the day, at which you must give yourself, heart and soul, to God in prayer; the best time for this is the morning, because it is that part of the day which is most acceptable to God.”² St. Ambrose, speaking of the words of the Psalmist: “My eyes to Thee have prevented the morning; that I might meditate on Thy words,”³ says: “Know you not, oh, man, that you owe the first sound of your voice and the first movement of your heart to God?”⁴ He expects that from you not only as due to His Supreme Majesty, but also as a duty that He specially requires of us.

The com-
mand of God
in the Old
Law.

In the Old Law He gave His people a special command with regard to this duty; these are the words of God Himself, by which He shows us that He is not satisfied with any time, but with the particular time that He selects Himself: On the first day of the month you shall offer a holocaust to the Lord: “two lambs of a year old without blemish every day; one you shall offer in the morning, and the other in the evening.”⁵ What time of the day was the sacrifice to be made? It is fixed clearly enough: “One you shall offer in the morning, and the other in the evening.”⁶ Amongst all the sacrifices of the Old Testament, the best was the burnt offering, and we might therefore easily imagine that it would be pleasing to God, no matter at what hour of the day it was offered; for the lamb was the same, whether it was sacrificed on the first of the month, or on the second, or in the morning, or at any other time of the day. But, although the

¹ Sit autem signatum tempus orationis, ac matutinam quidem, ut primi animi ac mentis nostræ motus consecrentur Deo. Neque ullus rei curæ ante aditum ad nos demus, quam nos in cogitatione de Deo oblectaverimus; neque corpus prius ad functionem muneris alicujus moveamus, quam illud fecerimus, quod dictum est: orabo ad te Domine: mane exaudies vocem meam, mane astabo tibi.

² Quamvis omne vitæ tempus divino debeas opere consecrare: optimum est ergo huius operi matutinam deputari tempus.

³ Prævenere oculi mei ad te diluculo, ut meditarer eloquia tua.—Ps. cxviii. 148.

⁴ An nescis, O homo! Quod primitias cordis ac vobis quotidie Deo debeas?

⁵ In mensium exordiis offeretis holocaustum Domino: agnos anniculos immaculatos duos quotidie: unum offeretis mane, alterum ad vesperum.—Num. xxviii. 3, 4.

⁶ Unum offeretis mane, alterum ad vesperum.

victim was substantially the same, the Almighty did not value it unless it was offered on the first day of the month and in the first hour of the day, to show that He must have the beginning of all our actions. In other things, too, He reserves the first fruits for Himself: "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and give Him of the first of all thy fruits" of the field, and the firstlings of the lambs of thy flock, and the firstlings of thy cattle, etc. And as He required the first fruits formerly from the Israelites, so He now requires the first fruits of time, that is, the early morning, from the faithful. He says by the Prophet Osee: "They will rise early to me: Come and let us return to the Lord." In the Book of Wisdom we read: "We must prevent the sun to bless Thee, and adore Thee at the dawning of the light." The Prophet Amos says: "Bring in the morning your victims." In the Book of Leviticus: "And the fire on the altar shall always burn, and the priest shall feed it, putting wood on it every day in the morning." These words are thus interpreted by St. Gregory: Our hearts are the altar, the fire is the love of God which He wishes to burn always, every Christian is a priest, the wood is the example of the Saints and the commandments of God; the fire must be renewed daily by renewing our fervor, and that, too, in the morning.

Still more powerfully does our Lord exhort us to this by His own example; we read in the Gospel of St. Mark: "Rising very early, going out He went into a desert place; and there He prayed." Such, too, has always been the custom of pious servants of God. Moses used to spend the early morning in prayer, before attending to any public business. The Sacred Scripture says of Elcana, Anna, Phenenna, and their whole household: "And they rose in the morning and worshipped before the Lord; and they returned, and came into their house at Ramatha." The holy Pope Clement relates of St. Peter that he used to assemble the faithful early every morning, and spend an hour

The example of Jesus Christ, and of all pious servants of God.

¹ Honora Dominum de tua substantia, et de primitiis omnium frugum tuarum.—Prov. iii. 9.

² Mane consurgens ad me: Venite, et revertamur ad Dominum.—Osee vi. 1.

³ Oportet prævenire solem ad benedictionem tuam, et ad ortum lucis te adorare.—Sap. xvi. 28.

⁴ Afferte mane victimas vestras.—Amos iv. 4.

⁵ Ignis autem in altari semper ardebit, quem nutriet sacerdos, subiciens ligna mane per singulos dies.—Levit. vi. 12.

⁶ Diluculo valde surgens, egressus abiit in desertum locum, thique orabat.—Mark i. 35.

⁷ Surrexerunt mane et adoraverunt coram Domino; reversisque sunt, et venerunt in domum suam Ramatha.—I. Kings i. 19.

with them in prayer and praising God. That pious custom was observed afterwards so strictly by the primitive Christians, that Pliny writes to the Emperor Trajan : No matter how closely I examine the lives of these Christians, I cannot find anything wrong in them. And he adds : "They hold their meetings before the rising sun, and sing hymns to Christ and God."¹

The desire
of the Catho-
lic Church.

How our Mother, the holy Catholic Church, endeavors to encourage us her children to this practice ! All the hymns that priests recite in the divine Office are full of invitations of this kind : "Now that the day has dawned, let us adore God and pray to Him."² "Away with sleep ; let us rise quickly and seek God in the night, as the Prophet says."³ "Come, Holy Ghost, and enlighten our senses with Thy light, that our first words may be spoken to Thee, and our mouths may be opened in Thy praise."⁴ "To Thee, O God, our voices shall first sing, that all our works may begin with Thee."⁵ And many more of the same kind ; all loving efforts that the Catholic Church makes to exhort and encourage her children to consecrate the first part of the day to prayer and the praises of God. So that, my dear Christians, we must acknowledge and confess that according to the law of justice, to the end of our creation, to the very instinct of nature itself, to the command and will of God, to the example of Jesus Christ and of all true servants of God, to the exhortations of the holy Fathers and to the invitation of our Mother, the holy Catholic Church, we are bound to spend the best and most excellent part of the day, the early morning, in praising God, who is infinitely worthy of all praise and honor.

Therefore,
they act
wrongly
who omit or
put off
morning
prayer.

And now I can leave it to yourselves to say how unjustly, how unworthily of Christians, how discourteously and rudely they act towards God, who, after their night's rest, which they do not take merely to satisfy the wants of nature and to recruit their bodily strength, but to gratify their sensuality and indolence, awake without thinking of God, get up without making the sign of the cross, and begin the day, or rather the fore-noon, since the sun drives them out of bed, without prayer, without bending the knee to God, without offering to Him all their ac-

¹ Antelucanos agunt coetus ad canendum Christo et Deo.—Plin. Ep. 79. ad Traj.

² Jam lucis orto sidere, Deum precemur supplices.

³ Pulsis procul torporibus surgamus omnes ocius, et nocte quaeramus Deum, propheta sic ait praecepit.

⁴ Tu lux refulge sensibus, te nostra vox primum sonet, et ora solvamus tibi.

⁵ Te lingua primum concinat, ut actuum sequentium, tu sancte sis exordium.

tions with the good intention, or else fritter away the whole morning in dressing. How unjustly the Almighty God is treated by those who spend the whole morning in bed and when they are awake, feed their imaginations with all sorts of idle fancies, and have their tea or coffee, or their pipe of tobacco brought to them in bed, or else huddle on their clothes carelessly and go at once to breakfast! Of such people it may well be said: "Whose God is their belly;"¹ for they serve it before they serve God. I will say nothing of those wicked people whose first thoughts on awaking are about impure pleasures and desires, and who thus consecrate the first part of the day to the foul demon of lust. Finally, how unjustly God is treated by those who barely make the sign of the cross and then devote themselves at once to temporal cares, to their ordinary domestic duties, and to conversation and greetings; but their duty to God, their prayers and the holy Mass (if they hear one on week days) they put off to the last moment!

Yes, some will say, if we were in a convent and had only ourselves to look after, we might observe an exact order of the day, and spend the early morning in prayer alone; but we people in the world cannot do that. Things are very different in a household; when we get up we must look after the house, and allot their different tasks to the servants, or else everything will be topsy-turvy. I believe all that easily enough; but what then? Could you not manage to do that the evening before? If the master or mistress sleeps till late in the day, as sometimes happens, who, then, tells the servants what to do? And yet everything goes on all right. Why should the contrary be the case when the time that otherwise would be spent in bed, is devoted to God by prayer and hearing holy Mass? Ah, if you had a spark of divine charity in your hearts, you would feel that the early morning belongs by right to God, and that He expects it; you would know how to manage your households, and at the same time to attend to the service of God! Suppose, for instance, that you had guests to entertain, a law-suit to carry on, or a great profit to make, you would be careful to arrange everything the evening before, so that no time might be lost. And why are you not as careful in matters that concern the honor and glory of God? What great perversity it is, says St. Basil, and how insulting to God, to give the early morning to the service of the world, and not to think of God until later on! If you had a

Unavailing
excuses on
account of
domestic
duties.

¹ Quorum Deus venter est.—Philipp. iii. 19.

great man in your house, would you first have your own dinner, and then give what remains to your guest? ¹ You would not dream of thus insulting him. How, then, can you dare to devote the first part of the day to your domestic cares, and to give only the remainder to the divine Majesty? ² How can He submit to be treated so unworthily and unjustly?

On account
of ordinary
engage-
ments.

As soon as I get up, others say, to excuse themselves from the duty of morning prayer, I have always something to do; people come to see me and do business with me, and decency, as well as Christian charity, require me to attend to them. A pity, indeed, that you should consider it a matter of decency to attend first to the servant, while you keep the master waiting; that is, that you should first transact your business with others, and keep God, the King of Heaven, outside the door of your heart, waiting in vain for the time that He most desires to have from you! Do you get up early every morning, and, like a good Christian, try to observe a regular daily order in your business and in the duties of your state; or must you acknowledge that you are remiss in this point? Perhaps you rise to-day at six, to-morrow you will get up at seven, the day after at eight, until you get accustomed to long sleeping, or else you do not go to bed at a regular hour. Is that the case? If so, and people come to see you in the morning when you are still asleep, what can you do? Oh, you can easily arrange matters then! The servant can excuse you, or can ask the people to come an hour later, because the master or mistress is still in bed. And so you get out of the difficulty. But tell me; would it not be much better and more edifying, and would not those people have less reason still to feel offended, if your servant could say to them with truth: You must excuse my master for half an hour, he is saying his prayers; my mistress is now engaged in her morning devotions; my master and mistress have gone to Church to hear Mass, or to assist at morning prayers. Now, I ask you again, would not that be a much more Christian and edifying excuse? Could any one feel offended at it?

No business
should be
preferred to
prayer.

No; no matter how great and important your worldly occupations may be, they must not take such possession of your heart, as to make you neglect the care of your soul and the duty you owe to God. Christ said to the Scribes and Pharisees: "Render, therefore, to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God

¹ *Si tu nobitem hospites domi exciperes eime mensæ reliquias apponeres?*

² *Quomodo ergo existimas ex repositis Deum placare?*

the things that are God's."¹ "All things have their season."² Give, therefore, to your domestic duties the time they require; but do not on that account refuse to devote the proper time to God. He wishes to have the early morning for Himself, and, therefore, everything else must be set aside in order to give Him that time.

What a number of occupations David had every day! He had to govern his large kingdom with its vast provinces, he was harassed with wars and persecuted by enemies, he was always surrounded by crowds of people who were seeking an audience or awaiting his orders. And yet, how exact and punctual he was in devoting the first hours of the morning to the praises of God! Such is the testimony he gives us of himself: "My eyes to Thee have prevented the morning; that I might meditate on Thy words."³ And he assures us that it was his continual practice: "O God, my God, to Thee do I watch at break of day."⁴ And he promises to continue it: "I will meditate on Thee in the morning."⁵

How numerous and holy were the occupations of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Teacher, whose example we must all follow, if we wish to be amongst the elect in Heaven! St. Luke says of Him: "Great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities."⁶ He had sinners to convert, and poor and oppressed to help, wherever He went. These were the occupations for which He came down from Heaven, and for the sake of which He often forgot to eat and drink, as He said to His disciples when He was engaged in the conversion of one Samaritan woman: "I have meat to eat which you know not."⁷ And yet, as we have seen already, He used to rise early in the morning and go into a solitary place to pray.⁸ But, oh, merciful Lord, wilt Thou keep the poor, distressed, and afflicted people waiting for Thee so long? Yes, they must wait, for now is the time at which I must converse with my heavenly Father; now is the time for prayer. He acted thus in order to teach us; for, since He always enjoyed the presence and vision of His Father, He was not in need of prayer.

¹ Reddite ergo quæ sunt Cæsaris, Cæsari, et quæ sunt Dei, Deo.—*Math.* xlii. 21.

² Omnia tempus habent.—*Eccles.* iii. 1.

³ Prævenierunt oculi mei ad te diluculo, ut meditarer eloquia tua.—*Ps.* cxviii. 148.

⁴ Deus, Deus meus, ad te de luce vigilo.—*Ibid.* lxi. 2.

⁵ In matutinis meditabor in te.—*Ibid.* 7.

⁶ Conveniebant turbæ multæ, ut audirent, et curarentur ab infirmitatibus suis.—*Luke* v. 15

⁷ Ego cibum habeo manducare quem vos nescitis.—*John* iv. 32.

⁸ Diluculo valde surgens abiit in desertum locum, ut ibi oraret.

Other pious
Christians.

Sidonius Apollinaris, writing of Christian kings, tells us of Theodoric the Goth: "He used to come with a few attendants to the early morning devotions of the priests, and join in them with great fervor."¹ In the Life of the Empress Pulcheria we read that she rose every morning at daybreak, and with her three sisters, her brother, the Emperor Theodosius, and his wife Eudoxia, went to the imperial chapel, where they all sang the Psalms alternately, like priests in choir, and then heard Mass. Their devotions over, the emperor received his ministers, while the imperial princesses went to their usual occupations. Ah, Christians, if all households were regulated in that manner, what great glory would accrue to God, and what plentiful blessings to us!

Conclusion
and exhortation to devote the morning to prayer.

Let us, then, be constant in the observance of this Christian practice, or if we have been negligent therein hitherto, let us now begin to make prayer and the praises of God the first business of every day. If anything occurs to prevent us from doing so, and to steal away that time from us, let us act like the angel with the Patriarch Jacob. We read in the Book of Genesis that he spent the whole night with an angel, in whose company he experienced such consolation that he would not let him go away. The angel remained with him till the early morning, but would not consent to stay any longer. He said: "Let me go, for it is break of day."² Why could the angel not remain longer on earth; why was he in such haste to depart? He meant, as St. Cyprian says: "It is time for me to sing the praises of God, according to the words: Where wast thou when the morning stars praised me?"³ We should make the same answer, my dear brethren, in the early morning, if over-indulgence in sleep keeps us too long in bed, or if temporal cares, domestic duties, or conversations and business with others are apt to hinder us from praying and praising God: "Let me go, for it is break of day." Away with sloth! Away with cares and business! This is not the time for such things! "It is time for me to sing the praises of God with the angels!"⁴ This is the time that I must give to my God; my angel guardian invites me now to pray, or to go to Church. Oh, what a beautiful thing it is, says St.

¹ Antelucanos suorum sacerdotum cœtus minimo comitatu expetebat quotidie, et grandi dultate venerabatur.

² Dimitte me, jam enim ascendit aurora.—Gen. xxxii. 26.

³ Tempus est, ut cantem Dei laudes, secundum illud: Ubi iras cum me laudarent astra atutina?

⁴ Tempus est, ut cantem Dei laudes cum angelis!

Basil: "What greater happiness can there be on earth, than to imitate the singing of the angels, to devote the first part of the day to prayer, and to adore our Creator in hymns and canticles?"¹ What greater happiness than to unite our voices with those of our fellow Christians assembled together in the early morning, and to say: All for the honor and glory of God? Certainly we should so act, that, after having praised God on earth like the angels, we may with them praise and bless Him for all eternity. Amen.

The same Introduction will serve for the Feast of the Holy Apostles Philip and James:

Text.

Quodcumque petieritis Patrem in nomine meo, hoc faciam.—
John xiv. 13.

"Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, that will I do."

SEVENTY-FOURTH SERMON.

ON THE USE AND NATURE OF MORNING PRAYER.

Subject.

1st. The early morning is the best time to pray. 2d. How to pray at that time so as to reap the greatest profit.—*Preached on the sixth Sunday after Easter.*

Text.

Quia ab initio mecum estis.—John xv. 27.

"Because you are with Me from the beginning."

Introduction.

For you, my dear disciples, said our Lord, I have prepared special gifts and consolations of my Holy Spirit that I do not

¹ *Ecquid beatius, quam hominem in terra concentum angelorum imitari, ineunte statim die in orationes ire; in hymnes et cantibus Creatorem venerari?*

give to other men; that Spirit will enlighten you in a special manner, so that you may instruct others, and bear witness to Me; “because you are with Me from the beginning”¹ of my mission. What a beautiful thing it is, my dear brethren, and how pleasing to God, to be with Him from the beginning, to spend the first of the day with Him in prayer, to begin the day by praising Him! as I have proved in my last sermon, when I showed that the best and most suitable time for prayer, and that which is most pleasing to God, is the early morning. Ah, if we only knew what great gifts and graces we could gain from God by morning prayer, we should certainly devote that acceptable time to Him! To encourage us to this I repeat—

Plan of Discourse.

The early morning is the best time to pray, and the most useful for our souls. As I shall show in the first part. How to pray at that time, so as to reap the greatest profit, I shall explain in the second part.

That we may all profit by our knowledge of this truth to pray at the proper time, we beg of Thee, O Jesus, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and the holy angels guardian.

Prayer, to be useful, must be attentive and meritorious.

No one can deny that the more attentive and meritorious prayer is, the more salutary and useful it is for our souls. Prayer without merit is like the cries of a beggar, who implores alms the whole day through the streets and yet returns home at night without having received anything. Prayer without attention and full of distractions is a mere wasting of precious time, and does not give praise or honor to God; nay, not only does He refuse to look on it with favor, but He even considers it as an insult deserving of purgatory, provided the distractions come from carelessness, sloth, not watching over the senses, or want of proper preparation, and are voluntarily indulged in.

Prayer is usually more attentive in the morning.

Now, my dear brethren, the early morning is generally the time at which we can pray with the greatest attention and merit. With the greatest attention, because it is the most suitable time for prayer, since the mind is still fresh after sleep, and we are not disturbed by the temporal cares and business that generally disquiet us during the day and cause all kinds of distractions. For we know by experience, and it is a common complaint of people, that they can hardly say an Our Father properly during

¹ Quia ab initio mecum estis.

the day, even in Church, on account of their domestic troubles ; once the head is full of worldly cares, it can hardly free itself from distractions. But in the early morning, when most people are still asleep, when the children are quiet and the streets noiseless, the very gloom of the morning and the general silence are great helps to pray with attention. St. Bernard says: "Not without reason does the Prophet say: In the morning I will stand before Thee and will see ; because we are then free from external cares." On that account, too, the same Prophet David not only spent the morning in meditation and prayer, but also rose during the night for the same purpose, that he might not be disturbed. He says: "I rose at midnight to give praise to Thee." Hence, so many religious imitate his example, and rise at night to pray and sing psalms. Hear, O Christian soul, says St. John Chrysostom, "the Church of God rises in the middle of the night to pray ; rise thou also, O my soul," and praise God in Heaven. If thou canst not do it at midnight, continues the Saint, "at all events do it in the early morning," which is the best time for praying attentively and without distractions.

And not only that ; but it is also the most meritorious time for prayer. The invitation that David gives to all men is: "In the nights lift up your hands to the holy places, and bless ye the Lord." And what will be the effect of doing so ? He adds: "May the Lord out of Sion bless thee; He that made Heaven and earth." For the blessing and the grace of God is like the manna that was given every day to the Israelites in the desert, every one could collect as much of it in the early morning as was necessary for his support during the day ; but whoever gave way to laziness and slept or spent the morning otherwise than in collecting the manna, had to go without it the whole day, because it melted at once after sunrise. By that the Almighty teaches us that we must pray in the early morning, as He expressly says in the Book of Wisdom: "That which could not be destroyed by fire, being warmed with a little sunbeam, presently melted away ; that it might be known to all, that we must prevent the sun to bless Thee, and adore Thee at the dawning of

And more meritorious, as it can make all our works meritorious during the day.

¹ Non frustra ait Propheta, mane adstabo tibi et videbo ; quia tunc a curis exterioribus adhuc sumus jejuni.

² Media nocte surgebam ad confitendum tibi.—Ps. cxviii. 62.

³ Dei Ecclesia mediis surgit noctibus ad orandum ; surge et tu anima !

⁴ Saltem sub ipsum difuculum.

⁵ In noctibus extollite manus vestras in sancta, et benedicite Dominum.—Ps. cxxxiii. 2.

⁶ Benedicat te Dominus ex Sion, qui fecit cœlum et terram.—Ibid. 3.

the light.”¹ No doubt God keeps the treasury of His graces always open for us Christians, and He is always ready to bestow them upon us if we only ask for them properly; yet it is in the morning especially that He is prepared to send down a copious rain of graces on those who pray devoutly, so that their souls may be strengthened during the whole day, and all their subsequent works may feel the good influence of their prayer. Hence, they who do not profit by this time, and who allow it to pass without prayer, lose all or a great part of what they might otherwise have gained in merit during the day. This seems to be the meaning of the Wise Man when he says: “Love not sleep, lest poverty oppress thee; open thy eyes, and be filled with bread.”² In fact, my dear brethren, it is evident enough that all our thoughts, words, and actions, in order to be meritorious of sanctifying grace and of eternal glory, must necessarily proceed from a supernatural intention, that is, from one which directs them to God. Without this intention the holiest works have no merit; with it, when one is in the state of grace, the meanest and most abject works, such as eating, drinking, working, standing, walking, can be raised so high that they reach God Himself and bring us eternal glory in Heaven. And that is a theologically certain truth, as I shall show on another occasion.

So that the neglect of it causes great loss to the soul.

Therefore, I say: You, oh, man, who remain in bed through sheer laziness, till seven, eight, or nine o'clock, without saying, as you ought, your prayers, in which the good intention should have the chief place, or who, when you get up, betake yourself at once to temporal cares, or seek first of all to satisfy your gluttony, and thus put off your prayers till the time of last Mass, if even you hear Mass at all, see what a great loss you suffer. For you squander without profit or merit for your soul all the first hours of the day; all the thoughts, words, and actions, all the different movements of body and soul that might have gained for you a new degree of sanctifying grace and increased your glory in Heaven; all these you have lost forever by your neglect of morning prayer, or by deferring it, and you will never be able to make good the loss. Alas, how much, then, are not they to be pitied, who spend the whole day working for temporal gain without saying a single prayer or once directing their thoughts or in-

¹ Quod ab igne non poterat exterminari, statim ab exiguo radio solis calefactum tabescebat: ut notum omnibus esset, quoniam oportet prævenire solem ad benedictionem tuam, et ad ortum lucis te adorare.—Sap. xvi. 27, 28.

² Noli dilligere somnum, ne te egestas opprimat; aperi oculos tuos, et saturare panibus.—Prov. xx. 13.

tentions to God ! Their souls must suffer hunger and be straitened by poverty, because they do not collect the heavenly manna; they work like the brute beast, and go to bed at night after their day's labor, as poor spiritually as they were when they got up in the morning. But if you devote the early morning to devout prayer, in which you offer up all your actions to God with a good intention, then everything you do during the day will gain for you an eternal reward in Heaven, unless some sinful act or some contrary intention destroys the influence of the good intention, and prevents it from having its due effect.

Besides, there is no more powerful means of avoiding grievous sin during the day and of maintaining one's fervor in the divine service, than devout and fervent morning prayer. St. John Chrysostom says: "If we make God our friend in the morning by our prayer, we need fear no enemy."¹ And if an enemy attacks you during the day, and tempts you to sin, "you may laugh at him, because God is your friend."² In time of war, the army that first occupies a position and protects itself against all attacks, has already gained a great advantage, while the other that comes later into the field, although it may be more numerous, has many difficulties to contend against, and generally speaking, must lose a great many men before it can dislodge the enemy. It is the same with the spiritual combat that we have to sustain against the enemies of our soul ; the advantage is on the side of him who first occupies the field. If my soul keeps the early morning for itself by offering itself to God in fervent prayer, and strengthens its will against sin by a firm resolution, oh, then I have gained a great advantage ! If during the day a bad thought or a temptation of the devil comes, if dangerous company or occasions tempt me to sin, the remembrance of the promise I have made to God in the morning, of my good resolution, and of the special graces that God has prepared for those who give Him the best part of the day, will come to my assistance, so that I shall overcome the temptation without great difficulty. But he who misspends the first moment of grace, he who begins the day without God and continues it without prayer, what wonder is it that he should lead a bad life, fall into many sins and die abandoned by God ? I have heard many people say : Whenever I omit my morning prayers,

It is also a powerful means of avoiding sin during the day.

¹ Si in matutinis Deum nobis propitium fecerimus oratione nostra, nihil habebimus inimicum.

² Et quod habes, deridebis, propitium habens Deum.

the whole day seems to go wrong with me, everything is a trouble to me. On the other hand, they who begin the day with God by devout and fervent prayer, must acknowledge, from their own experience, that they feel during the day a wonderful courage and zeal in temporal as well as in spiritual things.

It is a mark of a good and pious man.

Besides, the merit of morning prayer is not a little increased by the mortification that one inflicts on his sensuality and love of comfort and pleasures by taking some time from sleep in order to give it to God and to his soul. In one word, what is the sign of a just, pious, and God-fearing man? Is it, perhaps, generosity to the poor, or visiting the sick, or fasting and chastising the body? Certainly all these things are agreeable to God, and very profitable to the soul, if they are performed for a supernatural end; but they are not a convincing sign of piety. And what is, then? The Holy Ghost Himself tell us by the Wise Ecclesiasticus: "The wise man. . . will give his heart to resort early to the Lord that made him, and he will pray in the sight of the Most High. He will open his mouth in prayer,"¹ etc. That is the true mark of a man who is really pious and good. And what has he to expect from God? "The Lord will fill him with the spirit of understanding; and he shall direct his counsel and his knowledge, and in his secrets shall he meditate. If he continue, he shall leave a name above a thousand; and if he rest, it shall be to his advantage."²

Therefore, the devil tries to prevent or disturb it.

All this is well understood by the crafty tempter, who knows how much the welfare of souls depends on morning prayer, and therefore he uses all his art and power to prevent it. To that end he appoints certain evil spirits, called morning devils, whose sole task is to lie in wait so as to steal away our first thoughts, on awaking, from God, and to fill our minds with all kinds of images, suggesting now one business, now another, until they take away our thoughts completely from morning prayer; if they succeed in doing that, they are sure of the remainder of the day. But if they cannot prevent morning prayer altogether, they try at least to disturb it by laziness, sleepiness, and all kinds of distractions, so that it may be wanting in proper fervor and devotion.

Shown by an example.

Amongst the hermits of old, who used to pray in the early

¹ *Justus cor suum tradet ad vigilandum diluculo ad Dominum, qui fecit illum, et in conspectu Altissimi deprecabitur. Aperiet os suum in oratione, etc.—EccI. xxxix. 6.*

² *Spiritu intelligentiæ replebit illum, et ipse diriget consilium ejus, et disciplinam, et in absconditis suis consolabitur. Si permanserit, nomen derelinquet plus quam mille; et si requeverit, proderit illi.—Ibid. 8, 10, 15.*

morning and then occupy themselves in making baskets and in other manual labor, there was a holy man who once saw the devil very busy during the night, preparing all kinds of tools and instruments and placing them in the monks' cells. What are you doing? asked the holy man; what is the meaning of all that? The evil spirit answered: "I am preparing distractions for the monks, that they may occupy themselves in these things, and so become careless of prayer and of praising God." Ah, Christians, let us not be deceived by the morning devil, nor allow him to steal away from us that time so precious for prayer! But what is that prayer? How should we make it so as to derive the greatest profit from it? That we shall see in the

Second Part.

The Christian's morning prayer consists in the following acts: In what morning prayer consists. First, in humble adoration of God, by which we acknowledge Him to be our Créator and the Sovereign Lord of our lives and of all that belongs to us. Secondly, in returning thanks for the benefits we have hitherto received, and especially for His having preserved us during the night and given us another day to devote to His service—a favor He has not bestowed on many, who either died suddenly during the same night, or fell dangerously ill, or what is worst of all, committed mortal sin. Thirdly, in offering to Him all that we have and all that we are, our bodies and souls, our temporal possessions and wealth, giving all to His holy will, that He may do with us, during the day, whatever He pleases. Fourthly, in the good intention by which we unite all the thoughts, words, actions, trials, and difficulties of the whole day with the merits of Jesus Christ, and offer them up to His honor and glory. Fifthly, in the sincere resolution and determination not to offend God deliberately in any way, but to fulfil His holy will in everything, as well as we know how. Sixthly, in humbly asking the divine help and grace, knowing that, on account of our weakness and misery, we cannot do the least good without it. Finally, in imploring the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of our holy angels guardian, and of our patron Saints. But I need not say much of this matter, because every prayer-book is full of morning prayers of this kind. Would to God that those prayers always came from the heart, and not merely from the lips!

¹ *Distractionem fratribus præparo, ut his occupati fiant negligentiores ad orandum et glorificandum Deum.*

The best of all is public prayer made by many together.

The best and most useful kind of morning prayer, and that which this instruction principally aims at, is public prayer offered up by many who assemble in the Church at the same hour in the early morning, to pray to the great God and to sing His praises. Happy, indeed, is the city of Treves in this particular ! How many opportunities have you not of practising this devotion if you wish ! At half past four in the morning you can come to the Church of our college, in which, before the congregation prayers commence, you may hear the office sung in the choir, and the invitation to begin to praise the great God of Heaven. And if that hour is too early, or the Church too far away for some, they can have the same devotion in the Church of our Novitiate at half past five. If even this does not suit, there are opportunities enough for public morning prayer in the Church of the Dominican Fathers, in that of the Augustinians, and in that of the Minorites at six o'clock. So that in nearly every part of the city the praises of God are sung in the early morning. This, I say, is the best and most useful kind of morning prayer ; it is according to the holy custom of the primitive Christians, who, as I said before, were assembled by St. Peter to pray and sing the praises of God, so that the heathens even wondered at it and were obliged to praise the Christians in the following words : " They assemble in the early morning to sing the praises of Christ their God." ¹ It is the prayer that most resembles the office of the holy angels, who with one voice sing the praises of their Creator in the early morning. I must say again with St. Basil : " What greater happiness can man have on this earth, than to imitate the choirs of angels in Heaven, to assemble for prayer at daybreak, and to adore his Creator in hymns and canticles ?" ² This is the prayer of which Jesus Christ, the infallible Truth says to us in the Gospel of St. Matthew : " I say to you, that if two of you shall consent upon earth, concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by my Father who is in Heaven. For where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." ³ But if the assembling of two or three for prayer is so pleasing to God, that He has promised to give them all they ask, what an agreeable sight it must be in the eyes of

¹ Antelucanos agunt cœtus ad canendum Christo et Deo.

² Equid beatius, quam hominem in terra constitutum, concentum angelorum imitari, in eunte statim die in orationes ire ; in hymnis et canticles Creatorem venerari.

³ Dico vobis, quia si duo ex vobis consenserint super terram, de omni re, quamcumque petierint, fiet illis a Patre meo, qui in cœlis est. Ubi enim sunt duo vel tres congregati in nomine meo, ibi sum in medio eorum.—Matth. xviii. 19, 20.

God, and what may not be obtained from Him, when some hundreds of Christians meet in the Church to unite in offering up their prayers and hymns to Him !

But there are many who say: I can pray at home, or if I wish, I go to the Church, to pray there alone. Quite true, answers St. John Chrysostom ; but you are laboring under a great mistake, however. You can pray at home or in Church : “ But you cannot pray at home, or otherwise alone, as well as you can in Church, when many are assembled together for prayer ; whence the harmony of many voices ascends to God.”¹ Not without reason has Christ told us to say, “ Our Father,”² not “ my Father ;” and “ give us,”³ not “ give me.” For thereby He teaches us that the prayer of many assembled together is most pleasing to His heavenly Father. You can pray alone, but such prayer cannot be so effective as when many pray together, because the number of those who pray makes God more inclined to hear them and to be merciful to them. There is no doubt that when twenty men pull together at a rope, they will move a far greater weight than if they pulled separately, one after the other. Private prayer is like a cannon-ball fired against a wall in order to destroy it ; while the prayer of many together storms Heaven, as it were, and takes it by force. Tertullian says of the Christians of his time: “ We meet together in order to force our own way to God by our prayers ;”⁴ we do violence to Him and compel Him to hear us. But, “ This violence is pleasing to God.”⁵ Nay, the angelic Doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas, does not hesitate to say : “ It is impossible for the prayers of many to fail in obtaining what is obtainable.”⁶ These words should not be forgotten by those people who, though they are present at public morning devotions, yet do not join in singing and praying with the congregation, but read their prayer-books privately and think they have thus more devotion because they consult their own tastes. St. John Chrysostom tells you what a mistake you make : you pray alone, and that is quite right so far ; but how careless, distracted, and sleepy your prayers are sometimes, when you do not know what you are praying for, or what you desire from Heaven ! How can you expect God to hear prayers of that kind ? Whereas, if you

The prayer of one alone is not so meritorious or so pleasing to God, as when many pray together.

¹ Fieri tamen non potest, ut domi tam bene ores ubi clamor felici societate excitatus ad Deum refertur.

² Pater noster. ³ Da nobis.

⁴ Colimus in cœtum, ut ad Deum quasi manu facta precatationibus ambiamus.

⁵ Hæc vis Deo grata est.

⁶ Multorum preces impossibile est, quod non impetrent illud, quod est impetrabile.

send the same prayer to Heaven in company with many others, it will find its way in, and your want of fervor will be supplied by the fervor of others, so that God will be moved to listen to you ; just as in an army, the raw recruits are put along with old, experienced soldiers, so that the inexperience of the former, which would give the enemy an easy victory, is helped by the bravery of the latter, and both together gain the day.

The number of people praying together excites to zeal and fervor.

The fact of a number of people praying and singing together is in itself sufficient to excite the most tepid to fervor, devotion, and earnestness. As far as I am concerned, my dear brethren, I must say that during the first few months after the introduction of the morning devotions into our Church, I could hardly refrain from shedding tears of joy and consolation at seeing so many people singing and praying and crying out together to Heaven. Such is the testimony of a priest of the Society of Jesus who belongs to another Province, and who happened to be in choir, during those devotions ; he said afterwards, with tears in his eyes, to a person whom he met : “ O Father,”¹ (he spoke in Latin, as he did not know our language), “ how beautiful that is ! I sat for half an hour listening, and could do nothing but shed tears the whole time. What a heavenly thing it is ! We have nothing like that in our country.” Praises and thanks be to God, my dear brethren, that He has given us so many opportunities of practising that beautiful devotion ! And praise and thanks to Him again that so many devout people, servants, tradesmen, and citizens, are so regular in attending it ! I must always think of such people as Christ said to His Apostles of the common people, who believed in Him and were always pressing round Him to hear His words : “ Suffer the little children to come to Me ; for the kingdom of Heaven is for such.”¹

No excuse for the laziness of those who neglect that devotion.

But, alas, there are many others whom one dare not invite to come so early to public devotions. They find even eight o'clock too early in the winter mornings to come to the sermon ; they often lie in bed till the bright rays of the sun drive them out of it ; they frequently spend a great part of the night in drinking, gambling, sitting before the door and talking, and how can we find fault with them if they sleep rather long in the morning ? Sometimes the dawn of day is not the end, but the beginning of their sleep ; not the beginning of their prayer and devotion, but the end of their enjoyment at balls and parties. They thus turn

¹ O Pater !

² Sinite parvulos ad me venire ; talium est enim regnum cœlorum.—Matth. xix. 14.

the night into day, and, as a matter of course, the day is turned into night, so that when others begin to praise God together, they begin or continue to sleep. How is it possible for them to be present at morning devotions? Yet I do not think that any of those people are now here present. No, the majority of men of good-will may say: I do not act in that way; I go to bed at a regular hour every evening, but I cannot get up early enough for morning devotions; I have tried it a few times, but I was so sleepy during the day that I could hardly attend to my business, on account of breaking my rest so soon. I can quite believe what you say, and am not at all surprised at it. But do you know why it is so with you? You have grown used to long sleeping, and use is second nature. If you were to mortify yourself for a time, and get up earlier for a few weeks or months, you would acquire a good habit, and find that the sleepiness of which you now complain would soon be changed into cheerfulness and gayety. We are what we accustom ourselves to, says the proverb. Many religious of both sexes find it very hard at first to rise at midnight to sing the praises of God, but they get used to it and it comes easy to them. Why? Because they grow used to it. There are many working men who have to labor hard all day and who therefore require more sleep than you, yet they get up every morning at four o'clock to earn a little money, as St. John Chrysostom says; why should you not do as much to earn an eternal treasure in Heaven? I have elsewhere in our Province seen noble lords and ladies present at early morning devotions, and they kept up that habit for many years, even in the depth of winter, and still keep it up; why, then, I must ask, cannot others do the same? Seven hours' sleep ought to be enough for every one; more than that is too much, and is injurious to health.

Ah, Christians, I can easily guess the true cause why we sleep so long in the morning. Do you wish to know what it is? "Oh, God, my God, to Thee do I watch at break of day;"¹ such was the daily cry of King David. What made him so watchful? He says: "For Thee my soul hath thirsted;"² the love I have for Thee, O Lord, gives me no rest, and I cannot remain in bed any longer. See, my dear brethren, that is where the fault lies with most of us; we are wanting in that eager love of God, and in true zeal in His service; we cannot say truly, like David: "For Thee my soul hath thirsted;" therefore, too, we cannot say: "O

It is a sign
of a defect-
ive love of
God.

¹ Deus, Deus meus, ad te de luce vigilo.—Ps. lxxii. 2.

² Sitivit in te anima mea.—Ibid.

God, my God, to Thee do I watch at break of day." Oh, what will become of us when the stern Judge will demand an account from us of all the precious hours of our lives that we have squandered in idleness and in unnecessary sleep with the sole view of gratifying our sensuality, while during the same hours others employed their time in singing the praises of God, and thus gained great profit for their souls, which we, too, might have had if we chose? I hope, at all events, that with the help of God's grace, this instruction will induce many who cannot or will not come to public morning devotions, to give, at least, the first part of the day to God, immediately on rising in the morning, by devout and fervent prayer, and to do their utmost, according to the duty that is laid upon them, to send their servants and other members of their household to the public devotions, and not to act as many do, who seem to forbid their servants from going to early devotions, lest they should disturb their masters or mistresses.

Conclusion and exhortation to be constant in attending morning devotions.

But you who have begun that holy custom, continue in it, and as long as you are in good health, do not allow sleepiness or sloth to interfere with it, as some do, who appear at morning devotions whenever they have a fit of zeal, but when the fit is over, forget their love of God and abandon themselves to the delights of sleep. St. Rose of Lima had, with permission of her confessor, fixed a very early hour in the morning to commence her prayer; but since she often mortified her love of sleep by watching whole nights, and so could not sleep in the evening, she sometimes was unable to rise at the appointed hour in the morning; she prayed, therefore, to the Mother of God to awaken her at the proper time, and her prayer was heard. The Blessed Virgin herself used to awaken her every morning, saying: "Arise to pray, my daughter; arise for it is time."¹ Thus she always had the great consolation of seeing the Blessed Mother of God on awakening. Once, after having been awakened in this manner, while she was dressing, she was overcome by sleep and fell back again on her bed; but the Queen of Heaven took her by the hand and said to her: "Awake, my daughter; do not give way to sloth! You have asked me to call you to your usual prayers, and behold, I do so; awake."² St. Rose thereupon opened her eyes, but the Blessed Virgin had already disappeared; so that because she gave way to sleep she lost her accustomed consolation. By that the Mother

¹ Surge ad orationem, filia! Surge, nam instat hora.

² Surge filia; ne pigriteris! rogasti me; et ecce ad solitas precas te voce; surge!

of God shows us that it is a matter of great importance in the sight of God whether we are careful or negligent in offering to Him the first hour of the day. Let us imagine, then, dear Christians, that we hear from the Blessed Virgin, or from our holy angel guardian, who will not fail to awaken those who ask him to do so, the words: "Arise, it is time for prayer!"¹ Awake, my son, my daughter, the morning devotions are about to begin! Come, my children, and let us unite in praising God! Think often of the words of St. Basil that I have already quoted: "What greater happiness can there be on earth, than to imitate the choirs of angels in Heaven, and to unite with others at day-break in singing the praises of God."² Let us now begin together and continue on earth the duty that we hope and desire to perform in Heaven, namely, with one heart and mouth to praise, love, and bless God! This is the wish that I daily send up to God during the elevation at Holy Mass; Lord, look on Thy people who are here assembled to praise Thee; Thy Son has promised that where two or three are gathered together in His Name, Thou wilt give them all they ask for; give us, then, grace to serve Thee, and to persevere in Thy grace and love, so that we may praise and love Thee forever in our heavenly country. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Feast of St. Bartholomew, Apostle :

Text.

Eziit Jesus in montem orare, et erat pernoctans in oratione Dei.—Luke vi. 12.

"Jesus went out into a mountain to pray, and He passed the whole night in the prayer of God."

From these words we learn first, that Christ went out to pray, and secondly, that He remained the whole night in prayer. By the first, He teaches us poor mortals what we must do amid the dangers to body and soul to which we are exposed, namely, that we must take refuge with God by prayer, for that is the surest means of finding help. By the second, He shows us the best and most profitable time for prayer, namely, the night, or since our duties do not always allow us to pray then, the early morning. I have already proved, my dear brethren, that this is the best time for prayer, as well as the most suitable and the most pleasing to God. Ah, if we only knew, etc.—*continues as before.*

¹ Surge ad orationem! Surge, nam instat hora.

² Equid beatius etc.

SEVENTY-FIFTH SERMON.

ON THE EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE IN THE EVENING.

Subject.

It is only right for every true Christian to examine his conscience before retiring to rest in the evening.—*Preached on the third Sunday in Advent.*

Text.

Tu quis es?—John i. 19.
“Who art thou?”

Introduction.

Certainly a very necessary question : “Who art thou ?” If I only asked myself, if every Christian asked himself that question every day ! If I asked myself : “Who art thou ?” I must acknowledge that I am a human being, created by God, who always lavishes benefits on me, so that I must admit that I owe Him a debt of unceasing gratitude. If I ask myself : “Who art thou ?” A human being, I must answer, who am in the world for no other end but to serve God and to honor and praise Him with all my thoughts, words, and actions, although I am disturbed by many duties and cares which prevent me from seeing whether I really do everything for this one end, and therefore, it is necessary for me to recollect myself occasionally and examine my actions to see if they have strayed away from that end. But if I ask myself after such an examination : “Who art thou ?” I will frequently find that in place of loving God, I have fallen into sin, and incurred the danger of being eternally lost, if death were to surprise me. Therefore, I must often repent of my misdeeds, do penance for them, and try to avoid them in future. See, my dear brethren, what salutary thoughts are suggested by that question : “Who art thou ?” for it includes all the points that constitute the examination of conscience, that all true Christians should make every day, and especially every evening before retiring to rest. This is what I will show to-day, by explaining that question : “Who art thou ?”¹

¹ *Tu quis es ?*

Plan of Discourse.

It is only right for every true Christian to examine his conscience before retiring to rest in the evening. Such is the whole subject.

That we may all do so, give us, O God, Thy grace, which we ask through the merits of Mary and the holy angels guardian.

The examination of conscience consists, then, as we have seen, in three things principally ; first, in heartfelt gratitude for all the benefits we have received from God during the day; secondly, in carefully examining ourselves to see whether we have spent the day well, or ill, according to our last end ; thirdly, in exciting ourselves to sorrow and repentance for the sins we have committed, with a firm resolution to live better in future. Now I say, and all must admit who think of the matter attentively, that it is only right for each and every Christian, no matter what his state and condition may be, to observe these three points every day, and not to omit one of them.

What is required for the evening examen is perfectly just.

And in the first place, as far as gratitude is concerned, is it not right that we should at least once in the day return thanks, with all our hearts, to that Lord who has overwhelmed us with benefits during the whole day, nay, even during our whole lives ? Oh, mortal, “ who art thou ? ” how dost thou live ? With the exception of the morning, when, as I have no doubt, you hear Mass like all good Christians, you spend the greater part of the day in sleeping, eating, drinking, talking, working, and in the ordinary domestic duties that are required by your state of life. I admit that if you do all this with a good intention and direct your actions to your last end, while you are in the state of grace, all these actions are holy and meritorious, and if while performing them you frequently raise your heart to God, they become an unceasing prayer. Still, ought you not to give to God, who thinks of you every moment in the day, who preserves you in life and protects you from countless dangers of soul and body, at least a quarter of an hour in the evening, after your day’s work, before you retire to rest, to open your heart to Him and thank Him for the benefits He has bestowed on you ? If you did not do so you would be guilty of base ingratitude.

First, gratitude.

Suppose, says St. Bernard, that you were sick, blind, deaf, dumb, or crippled, and that some one had to-day healed you ; with what gratitude would you not think of that man this even

Proved by a simile.

ing when you are going to bed for the first time, with your senses perfect and free from bodily ailment ! And how can you retire to rest without thanking God, who has given you to-day and always your sight, hearing, speech, your sound limbs, your health, and your life ? Nay, if you give a poor beggar even a piece of bread, he will not go away without thanking you ; but God has given you your dinner and supper and all that you have ; does He deserve no thanks for His goodness ? Your servant wishes you good night, and you thank him for doing so, although his wishes cannot give you a night's rest ; the good God not only wishes, but gives you rest during the night ; you sleep surrounded by His benefits ; is it possible that you can go to bed without first thanking Him ? If so, you would be more ungrateful than the dog, which fawns upon you before he leaves your room for the night. See there, my dear brethren ; if the evening examen were of no use to us, if it were not so necessary to keep us from sin and to preserve us in the friendship of God, if it consisted in nothing but thanking God for the benefits we have received from Him, would it not be only right for every true Christian to practise it constantly ? Would it not be an injustice to omit it even once ?

Secondly,
the examen
of con-
science is
just.

The second point that belongs to this examen, and that properly constitutes it, is the discussion of our conscience and of our actions during the day. If we love our soul and its salvation, we must admit that every one is bound to make this examen daily before retiring to rest. A merchant or man of business who has bought and sold a great deal of merchandise in his shop and at the market during the day, if he is a careful and prudent man, will sit down in the evening and look over his accounts, comparing his receipts with his expenditures, to see whether he has lost or gained by his transactions, whether everything is paid for, whether he owes anything or anything is owing to him, and he writes down everything in its proper place, that he may not forget it, and that he may avoid mistakes in future ; he also exacts a similar account from all his clerks. It would be a bad thing for a merchant if people could say of him that he keeps no books, nor accounts, that he is careless in writing things down and has all his affairs in confusion, etc. A man of that kind would not do much business. A gambler who has spent five or six hours in playing cards, especially if the stakes are somewhat high, counts his money when he comes home, and reckons up what he had before he began to play, to see whether he has won

or lost. How much more careful both the merchant and the gambler would be in making up their accounts, if they knew that they could thereby make good all their losses! Oh, mortal, “who art thou?”¹ You are a merchant whom God has sent into this world as to a market, that you may buy eternal goods for yourself. The last end, the great object of your life is God and Heaven; to it must be directed all your thoughts, cares, words, and actions. The hour will come when you shall hear the words: “Give an account of your stewardship,”² show what you have gained with the talents intrusted to you. Woe to you, then, if you have not kept a book, if everything is in confusion, if you are short in your account! You are engaged in a continual game; your opponent is the devil, the world, and the flesh; the stake is not a penny, as I have sometimes seen, nor a dollar, nor two dollars, as is the case with those who are too much given to gambling, but your own immortal, precious, and only soul, and the happiness of a whole eternity, which you can win or lose each moment. For God’s sake, think how much depends on your winning! Now that game turns out sometimes lucky, sometimes unlucky for men; at one time we win, at another we lose, according as we overcome or yield to temptation to sin. Now, as we have seen before, you are engaged the whole day in your domestic and other duties, and are distracted with all kinds of thoughts and cares, so that you cannot give the proper amount of attention to the business of your salvation; you have seen, heard, thought, spoken, and done a great deal; it may easily happen that you have now and then lost sight of your last end and suffered great loss. Certainly your conscience always does its work; it warns and reproves if we do anything serious against the law of God; but during the day, amid the tumult of temporal affairs, it is like one who tries to speak alongside a rushing torrent; he opens his mouth and says different things, but the noise of the water drowns his words. In the same way the turmoil of temporal affairs prevents us from hearing distinctly the voice of conscience. Besides that, our evil inclinations blind us at the time of temptation, so that we either take no notice of the sin we commit, or else look upon it as trifling; it is only afterwards, when we enter into ourselves and take time to consider the matter attentively, that we find out the deformity and gravity of it. What value did Esau set on his birth-right when he sold it for a mess of pottage? He came home tired and hungry, says the holy Scripture, he saw the warm food which his

¹ Tu quis es?

² Redde rationem villicationis tue.—Luke xvi. 2.

brother Jacob was preparing, and felt such an inclination for it, that he at once gave up his birth-right forever, in return for it: "And so, taking bread and the pottage of lentils, he ate, and drank, and went his way, making little account of having sold his first birth-right."¹ But when his eyes were opened afterwards and he saw the effects of his gluttony and learned that he had lost his father's blessing, "he roared out with a great cry."² Ah, my dear brethren, often we sell our right to Heaven for a miserable mess of pottage, for a vile pleasure, or some temporal gain! Yet in the heat of passion we think nothing of our loss, like Esau, until our eyes are opened afterwards and we think more seriously of it. And that is what we should do every day, when we have got rid of the cares of business, and our evil inclinations are stilled. From all this, oh, mortal, you must see that it is right and prudent for you, if you love your soul and its salvation, to examine in the evening the actions of the day, and to take account of the good and the evil, according to the advice of St. Ephrem: "Every day you must dilligently consider how your business has progressed,"³ and whether your soul has lost or gained during the day.

Even heathens have made that examen.

I will not say much now of St. Basil, St. Bernard, St. John Chrysostom, and other holy Fathers of the Church, lest you should think that the custom is fit only for great Saints; for even heathens, who tried to lead an orderly life, according to the light of reason alone, give Christians a good example in this respect. The philosopher Seneca says: "The mind must be called upon to give an account of itself daily."⁴ He says of himself: "I use this power and judge myself every day," in the evening, "when the light has disappeared, and my wife, knowing my custom, keeps silence. I consider how I have spent the whole day; I review all my words and acts; I hide nothing from myself, and pass over nothing, and if I find that I have done wrong, I reprove myself, and say: See that you avoid that in future."⁵ Such, too, was the custom of Cato, Sextius, Pythagoras and many other philosophers. Those heathens and idolaters acted thus

¹ Et sic accepto pane et lentis edulto comedit, et bibit, et bibit, parvi pendens, quod primogenita vendidisset.—Gen. xxv. 33, 34.

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

³ Diebus singulis vespere diligenter considera, quo pacto sese habeat negotatis tua et mercimonii ratio.

⁴ Animus quotidie ad rationem reddendum est vocandus.

⁵ Utor potestate et quotidie apud me causam dico, cum sublatum e conspectu lumen est, et conticuit uxor, moris mei jam conscia, totum diem mecum scrutor, facta et dicta mea rememoror, nihil mihi ipsi abscondo nihil pertranseo. . . Vide, ne istud amplius facias.—Seneca. L. 3. De ira c. 36.

through love of honor, or to win the praise and esteem of men. They knew nothing of the divine justice, which will exact a strict account of every idle word, and in which even our good actions will be examined to see whether they have been properly performed; they knew nothing of hell or purgatory, nor of the severe temporal and eternal punishments that are inflicted on sin; they knew nothing of the everlasting joys of Heaven, nor of the rich reward that awaits our good works. What would they not have done, if they had had as much light and knowledge as we have? Lipsius says, speaking of Seneca's mode of life: "I am amazed whenever I read this, nor can I ever read it without admiration and confusion,"¹ for it is a wonderful thing that a man who was so much occupied with business and study, who had a wife and children to look after, who lived amid the turmoil of a court as a tutor of the emperor, and who was so rich that his treasures might be called regal, yet was so punctual in examining himself every evening.

But I am still more surprised, my dear brethren, that many sensible Christians have given themselves up so completely to temporal things, that they cannot spare a quarter of an hour, when their day's work is done, to attend to their souls. Must a benighted heathen, then, rise up on the day of judgment to put such Christians to shame? No, we will not allow such a disgrace to rest upon us; but every evening we will act like the steward of the Gospel, who called all his master's debtors together and asked each of them: "How much dost thou owe my Lord?"²

So let each one recall to his memory all his thoughts, words, actions, his outward senses, and the duties and obligations of his state, and ask: "How much dost thou owe my Lord?" How have I served Him to-day? When and how did I rise this morning? What were my first thoughts? What did I do afterwards? With whom did I associate? What business did I undertake, and with what intention? What joys or sorrows have I had? Have my pleasures been lawful, have I borne sorrow patiently? You, my eyes, what do you owe my Lord? Have you seen, or wished to see, anything unlawful to-day? You, my ears, what do you owe? Have you, perhaps, heard with pleasure something contrary to purity or charity? And you, my tongue, what do you owe? How much, where, how have

How much more should not Christians do the same.

How all in general may make this examen.

¹ *Obstupesco, quoties hæc lego, nec sine admiratione ac rubore unquam legi.*

² *Quantum tu debes Domino meo?—Luke xvi. 5.*

you spoken? Have you injured or lessened the good name of another? Have you given way to lying, cursing, swearing, quarrelling, or scandalous talk? You, my hands, what do you owe? Have you sinned to-day by impurity or injustice? You, my feet, what do you owe? Have you brought me into dangerous company, in which the precious time is wasted in dissipation, or in drinking and gambling?

How each one may make it according to his state of life.

In the same way each one may examine himself upon his own particular duties: "How much dost thou owe my Lord,"¹ as father or mother? Have I been careful to train up my children for their last end? Have I kept them away from evil, and led them on to good? Have I punished them when they did wrong? Have I given them good example? How much dost thou owe thy God, as master or mistress? How have I treated my servants? Have I allowed them to do anything against the law of God, or connived at their doing it? Have I given them cause for impatience and trouble by being harsh with them? How much dost thou owe as husband or wife? Have I always acted according to the love and respect that we owe each other? Have I, perhaps, through excessive love, done something against my conscience, or given cause, by ill-temper, for suspicions, jealousy, and sadness? How much dost thou owe as shopkeeper or tradesman? Have I taken advantage of any one to-day in my work or business? Have I done everything with a good intention for God's sake? How much dost thou owe as son or daughter? Have I always shown obedience, respect, and filial love to my parents? How much dost thou owe as servant? Have I done the work required of me with proper diligence, fidelity, and readiness, and considered the advantage of my employer in everything? And so on. Now, if I find that I have managed matters well according to the Christian law and the will of God, I must again thank the good God for having preserved me in preference to many others from many sins during the day, and I must heartily rejoice in the Lord and go quietly to rest. But if I find that I have done wrong, I must blot out my fault at once by sorrow and repentance, and make a firm resolution to avoid it in future. And this last point of the examen is most important and must not by any means be omitted.

Thirdly, sorrow for sin is just.

When one examines his conscience thus every day, he will find often that he has sinned, and sometimes grievously, during the day, and his conscience will answer him as Christ answered

¹ *Quantum tu debes Domino meo?*

Judas at the last supper. When our Lord said that one was about to betray Him, all the Apostles were in the greatest consternation, and asked Him : " Is it I, Lord ? " ¹ And when Judas also asked : " Is it I, Rabbi ? " ² Christ answered : " Thou hast said it ; " ³ thou art the traitor who wilt deliver Me to my enemies. In the same way, when many a Christian will examine himself in the evening and ask : " Is it I, Lord, " who have voluntarily entertained so many impure thoughts and imaginations against Thy holy law ? Is it I who in company have uttered so many uncharitable and harsh words against my neighbor ? Is it I who have indulged my gluttony by excessive eating and drinking ? Is it I who have squandered the time in idleness, gambling and sinful amusements ? Ah, my Lord, am I the wicked servant who have to-day sinned grievously against Thy law ? Yes, your conscience will answer, in place of God : " Thou hast said it ; " thou art the man ! And if such is the case, oh, most unhappy mortal, what are you ? ⁴ You are an enemy of God, a slave of the devil, a child of hell. And will you dare to go to sleep without first regaining the friendship of God ? Suppose you were to die during the night ? And that is nothing new in the world ; it has happened to very many men who went to bed at night strong and healthy and were found dead in the morning. St. Paul warns us all : " Let not the sun go down upon your anger. " ⁵ Why ? Because you do not know if you will live to see the sun rise again. Does not even Jesus Christ Himself warn you : " Be you, then, also ready, for at what hour you think not, the Son of man will come, " ⁶ and bring you from time into eternity ? Can that not be the case with you to-night ? If it were so, where would you go, unhappy man ? Your body would be found dead in the bed in the morning, but your soul would be in hell ! Could you go to sleep peacefully under such circumstances ? The Emperor Augustus wondered how a certain Roman noble, who was a hundred thousand crowns in debt, could go to sleep quietly, and after the latter's death, when the creditors had seized upon everything else, the Emperor kept his pillow for himself, thinking that it must contain some wonderful charm, since one so heavily laden with debt could sleep peacefully upon it. Oh, sinner, how many millions do you owe to

¹ Numquid ego sum, Domine ?—Matth. xxvi. 22.

² Numquid ego sum, Rabbi ?—Ibid. 25.

³ Tu dixisti.—Ibid. ⁴ Tu quis es ?

⁵ Sol non occidat super iracundiam vestram.—Ephes. iv. 26.

⁶ Et vos estote parati, quia qua hora non putatis, Filius hominis veniet.—Luke xii. 40.

God, when you have even one mortal sin on your conscience? Must we not look upon the pillow on which you sleep as something wonderful?

How dangerous to go to sleep without repentance. Shown by an example.

One of our Missionary Fathers wrote from India, that as he was once on a journey with his companions, they were surprised by the night, and had to sleep in a forest under a tree. Both were very tired and slept soundly; but when they awoke the next morning they found quite close to where they had slept the cave of a fierce tiger, while a huge serpent was coiled round the branches of the tree under which they had lain. You can easily imagine, my dear brethren, how frightened they were at finding themselves in such dangerous company. They stole away from the place as quietly as possible, thanking God heartily that He had saved them by means of their angels guardian from such imminent danger. Now, do you think that if the Fathers had known what a perilous position they were in, they would have slept quietly under the tree? I certainly would not have done so, and I think none of you either. Oh, mortal, who have a grievous sin on your conscience, and go to sleep without repenting of it, what a much more dangerous companion you have, not merely near you, but actually within you; a companion far more dangerous than all the serpents, and dragons, and tigers on earth, and all the spectres and demons of hell! If all these monsters surrounded my bed at night, I should not have so much to fear, as if I had a single mortal sin on my soul; for they could not hurt me, as long as God protects me. If God allowed them, they could kill my body, but they could not harm my soul in the least; while if I am so unfortunate as to die with even one mortal sin on my conscience, both body and soul are lost forever. Sinners, how is it possible for you to sleep calmly in such circumstances? for you have always cause to fear and to think that if you die during the night, you are lost eternally!

We can escape that danger by repentance.

Ah, do not allow that dangerous guest to remain with you any longer! Drive it away at once before you go to bed, by heartfelt sorrow. There is no softer pillow than a good conscience. How calmly and peaceably he sleeps who can say to himself: Now I have squared my accounts with God, and I am quite ready to obey His will; I do not refuse to live, I am not afraid to die; we have a good Master to obey; I give Him my body and soul; I am a friend, a child of God; if I die to-night I shall inherit the kingdom of Heaven; come, then, sleep, and do your office! What a consolation, Christians, to be able to say that with truth!

But we cannot do so, unless we make our evening examen, and repent of our sins.

Scaliger writes of a nobleman suspected of conspiracy, who was thrown into prison, and who, through fear of losing his life, became quite gray in one night ; but this sudden change was the very means of saving his life, for Francis Gonzaga, against whom the conspiracy was directed, became touched with pity when he saw the state of the unfortunate noble, and set him free.¹ Another young man, through fear of death, was so changed in a single night, that when he was brought the next day to hear his sentence pronounced, the judges did not know him. The emperor, hearing this, was moved with pity, says Lemnius, and pardoned the young man, thinking that he had been sufficiently punished already.² Oh, mortal, who offend God by grievous sin, who are you ?³ You are a rebel who conspires against his Supreme Lord ; you are a captive of the devil, and the sentence of death must be pronounced upon you. What are you to do ? Ah, think of the extreme danger in which you are ! Do not go to bed until you have, through fear of death and judgment, changed yourself into another man, by perfect contrition and detestation of your sins ; if you do that, you will have made matters all right ; God, who before was angry with you, will no longer look upon you as His enemy, but will pardon your sin and receive you again into His grace and friendship. What were the circumstances under which Assuerus held out his sceptre to Esther as a sign of his love and favor ? She saw the king looking fierce and angry, and she grew pale with fright and was on the point of fainting away. Assuerus thereupon came down from his throne, supported the fainting queen in his arms, and laid the sceptre on her breast. This, says Richard of St. Victor, is a symbol of a soul standing before the judgment seat of God, and trembling at the recollection of its past sins. “ Whom does Assuerus signify here, but God ? What does Esther represent, but the soul ? Esther was terrified when she looked at the king, and the soul trembles at the sight of the majesty and strict justice of God.”⁴ Ah, Christians who sin during the day, place

Shown by
examples.

¹ Qui propterea et veniæ et vitæ fecit gratiam.

² Cæsar ex vindicta in commiserationem animum deflexit, itaque satis poenarum dedisse ratus, culpam illi remisit.

³ Tu quis es ?

⁴ Quem in hoc loco Assuerus Rex significat, nisi Deum ? Quem Esther, nisi animam ? Esther intuita regem expavescens cecidit ; et anima Deum, et districta Dei iudicia contemplan-
do coram divina majestate contremisit. — Apoc. L. l. c. 4.

yourselves in the evening as poor criminals before the angry countenance of your Judge, tremble through fear, go down on your knees and repent of your sins, and you will appease your Judge and turn Him into your loving Spouse, who will at once receive you with love and tenderness into His arms. Then, as we have seen already, you may think and say, to your great consolation : Now I am again a child and friend of God : “ In peace, in the selfsame, I will sleep and I will rest.”¹

Exhortation to make the evening examen, representing the many advantages to be derived from it.

Besides that, my dear brethren, what a great advantage we can gain from that evening examen ! What purity of conscience must not be the result of such a daily custom ! The oftener a room is swept out, the cleaner it is ; the less the broom is used, the more does dirt accumulate. An old priest, as Pelagius says, used to teach his disciple as follows : The devil is an enemy, your conscience is a house ; be careful, then, of the craft of your enemy, who always tries to throw dirt and filth into your house ; your duty is to sweep it out, and to cleanse your conscience daily. If you neglect that, your house will soon become full of filth. Therefore, be on your guard, and since your enemy throws in the dirt every day, do you throw it back on him daily, and you will keep your house clean ; otherwise, your conscience will become as unclean as a pig-sty and will be stained with all sorts of sins. You know what happens in a ship ; the water is always forcing its way in on every side, and there must be some one to pump it out now and then ; if he neglects his duty, the ship will soon fill and sink. It is the same with our conscience ; daily, almost hourly, sins find their way into it, either in thought, word, or deed ; we must, therefore, be careful to get rid of them again. Do that, then, in the evening ; pump the water out of the ship ; that is, cleanse your conscience from the sins that stain it, lest it become too full of them and be miserably lost. And what a safe-guard it is against future sin, when we make our evening examen with a firm resolution of amendment ! What little trouble we have afterwards in confession, when we thus examine our faults and failings and imprint them on our memory ! There is no doubt that many confessions are bad on account of sins that are concealed through culpable negligence in examining the conscience, especially in the case of those who seldom go to confession. But if he who always keeps up the holy custom of making his evening examen, afterwards forgets a mortal sin in confession, he can certainly console himself with the assurance that it is through in-

¹ In pace in idipsum dormiam et requiescam.

culpable forgetfulness, since he knows well that he uses all human diligence in examining his conscience. How does it happen that many who go to confession every month, or every two months, yet do not know what they have to say? They can hardly find a sin to confess; but they would find enough if they examined themselves daily. As it is, they keep no account, they pay no attention to their actions, and live in a state of indifference, although they are always involved in temporal cares; is it any wonder that their sins should escape their memory and be forgotten? We do not know, however, whether the devil will forget those sins, so as not to bring them forward in judgment against those negligent people. I do not say, my dear brethren, that we are bound under pain of sin to make that examen, and therefore we must not be anxious on that account; but think only how reasonable and how advantageous the practice is. Let no one imagine that it is fit only for religious in a convent. I admit that these latter can make it more easily and conveniently on account of their daily order of life; but I am still of the opinion that the evening examen is more necessary for lay-people, because during the day they pay less attention to themselves and to their own thoughts, words, and actions, while they have less time to spend in devotion with recollection. Therefore, Christians, since that examen takes no more than a quarter of an hour, why should we refuse to give that much time to God and to our souls?

There are many Christian families in which master and mistress kneel down every evening with their children and servants, to say the Rosary or the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, and to make the examen of conscience, reciting afterwards their usual evening prayers. May God give eternal rest to the souls of my own father and mother, who always took turns with each other in reciting those prayers! If both of them were away, or were otherwise hindered, they ordered me, when I was still a student, to take their place and recite the prayers for the household; an office that I then looked upon as a great honor and pleasure. What joy God and His angels must have in such assemblies, a fact that I then did not understand. What holy families those are; what blessings they receive from God! For in that way the children learn from their youth to fear God and to keep their conscience pure; the servants are encouraged to piety and devotion, and thus father and mother, master and mistress, are helped to fulfil their two principal duties. Thus

According to the example of pious Christians.

the children and servants are kept out of the streets in the evening, and are prevented from spending the summer's evenings sitting at the door till night, laughing and joking, and exposing themselves to the danger of sin; for they certainly do not then say the Rosary or their night prayers, or make the examen of conscience. On the contrary, a great deal of sin is committed in that way, as I know to be the case, and humanly speaking, it would be impossible in such circumstances to avoid sin. Woe to parents who allow such things to take place! Another advantage of the evening examen is, that the children afterwards, when they are settled in life, teach that devotion to their own families, for they remember the custom that was observed at home, and thus piety and the fear of the Lord are transmitted from one generation to another. Holy indeed, I repeat, are such families! If we do not wish to follow this example, my dear brethren, although it were much to be desired that every household did so, at least let each one practise this devotion for himself, and let every master and mistress often exhort their children and servants thereto, confiding in the divine promise, of which St. Paul speaks, that if we judge ourselves, our divine Judge will afterwards be favorable to us: "But if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged."¹ Yes, O Lord, such shall be our resolution; we shall begin this very evening, and continue always to judge ourselves by the evening examen. Holy angels guardian, excite all those under your charge to this holy practice. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost:

Text.

Bene omnia fecit.—Mark vii. 37.

"He hath done all things well."

Oh, my good God, would that I could say that with truth of myself: I have done all things well!² During the whole time that Thou hast preserved me in life, I have done everything well; my thoughts, words, and actions were all good! But, alas, how different will be Thy judgment of me when Thou wilt examine my life and scrutinize all my thoughts, words, and actions! Past years, where are you, what testimony can you

¹ Quod si nosmetipsos dijudicemus, non utique judicemur.—I. Cor. xi. 31.

² Bene omnia feci!

give when the words will be pronounced: "Behold the man and his works"?' You will say: "He hath done all things ill."² Almost all the thoughts he had during those years were directed to evil, almost every word he spoke was bad, almost all his acts were wicked and sinful. Alas, what will become of me if I do not now repent of my past sins and transgressions, and amend my life? How many weeks, nay, how many days can I now count up and say of them with truth: 'Thanks be to God, in that week, on that day, I have done all things well?' Alas, the contrary is the case as often as I examine my conscience; nearly always I find something that was not done properly and in accordance with the will of God. My dear brethren, every true Christian ought, in justice, to make that examen frequently; nay, every day, even, especially before going to bed at night. If we do so, we shall find out whether our thoughts, words, and actions are good or evil, and this daily examen is one of the best and surest means of doing all things well, according to the example of our Lord Jesus Christ. Such is the fruit that I hope you and I will derive from this sermon, namely, to make our daily examen of conscience. Therefore, I say,—*continues as before.*

SEVENTY-SIXTH SERMON.

ON THE USE OF THE PRESENT TIME.

Subject.

1st. This present day is especially the day of our salvation.
 2d. Therefore, each one, according to his state of life, must make a good use of every day.—*Preached on the Feast of the Circumcision of Our Lord.*

Text.

Et postquam consummati sunt dies octo.—Luke ii. 21.

"And after eight days were accomplished."

Introduction.

A happy New Year! Such is the wish we hear to-day from every one, in every house, in every street, although no one has it

¹ Ecce homo et opera ejus.

² Omnia male fecit.

in his power to give away an hour, or a moment, much less a year. We are very generous as far as wishes and promises go; we give away years by wholesale, just as some merchants do, who talk about their wares, when they have hardly a yard of cloth they can call their own. That it may not be the same with me, I will not be too generous with my wishes and promises in disposing of whole years. But I will confine myself to a single day; I will measure my wishes by the space of one day only. Indeed, to tell the truth, I do not set much store by the ordinary New Year's sermons, nor do I think that the devil dreads them any more than if the preacher were to ascend the pulpit and distribute therefrom all sorts of New Year's gifts to the congregation. Besides, the people come to such sermons, generally speaking, out of mere curiosity, so that preachers must lay aside their usual office for that day. Yet, not to depart altogether from the established custom, and at the same time to fulfil in some degree my duty as preacher, which requires me to use the precious time for the spiritual profit and advantage of my hearers, I will try to unite both, as far as I can, with God's help. I therefore confine myself to this, the first day of the New Year, and I wish, with all my heart, that it may be a happy one for you and me, as far as our souls' salvation is concerned. I will show the cause of that wish in the first place, and I say—

Plan of Discourse.

This present day is especially the day of our salvation. The first part. May it be a good day, then, for us all. The wish that I will present to all, according to their different states of life, in the second part. What I say of to-day, in particular, let each one say of every day, and then all our days and years will be spent in a good and salutary manner.

To this end may He give us His grace, who on this day was pleased to be called Jesus, that is, Saviour. We ask it of Him, through the intercession of His Mother, and the holy angels guardian.

**Every day is
a day of sal-
vation.**

But is not every day of the year a day of salvation? Can we not, must we not, work out our salvation every day of our lives, to-morrow, as well as to-day? Certainly, we should do so. Is not God ready to help us to our salvation by His grace every day? Yes, there is no doubt of it, provided we only wish it. And, even supposing that one had lost the days that are past,

and neglected his salvation ; suppose that to-day, also, he is as idle and careless as usual ; can he not make good the loss on any and every day of his future life ? Does not God Himself assure us of that clearly enough by the Prophet Ezechiel : “ The wickedness of the wicked shall not hurt him, in what day soever he shall turn from his wickedness ” ?¹

That is all quite true, my dear brethren, and still I say that this day is especially a day of salvation. Do you know why ? First, because it is the first day of the New Year, and warns us to work out our salvation with all earnestness, for it reminds us of the vanity and transitoriness of all else on earth, and of the importance of our eternal salvation. It tells us that another year of our lives has passed, and is vanished forever, with all its temporal cares and joys, so that there is nothing lasting, nothing constant in this world but to serve God alone and to heap up treasures for Heaven. We could be reminded of that fact by the first day of every month, or every week, nay, even by every day in the year, for each day might remind us that our lives are shorter by another month, week, or day. However, we do not reckon by months, weeks, and days. No one asks himself : how many months old am I now ? how many weeks have I lived ? much less, how many days have I spent in this life ? It is by years that we measure our age ; we say, whenever a new year begins : Now I am so many years old.

Since this is, then, the first day of the year, it gives us occasion to remember a great truth. For instance, the thirty-ninth year of the century has now vanished with all the former years. Where are the pleasures I enjoyed during that year ? Where is the praise, where are the marks of honor given me by others, of which I boasted publicly and on account of which I thought great things of myself ? Where is the money I have invested and spent ? Where are the labor and toil that I so readily undertook for temporal things ? All is past and gone with the year that has just come to an end ; all is as if it had never been. I have had a great deal of pleasure in eating and drinking ; what has become of it all now ? Nothing ; no more than if that pleasure had never been ; I feel no more of it now than a poor beggar does, who must be content with bread and water the whole year round. I have often delighted my eyes by looking on beautiful things, and my ears by listening to agreeable conversation and to fine music,

But especially the present day.

For it teaches us that everything in this world is vanity.

¹ Impietas impii non nocet ei, in quacunq; die conversus fuerit ab impietate sua.-
Ezech. xxxiii. 12.

and my other senses by seeking change, by frequenting agreeable company, by walking out, sleeping and other pleasures, and would to God that I had not sometimes, perhaps, thereby offended Him, by acting against my conscience. What have I now of it all? Nothing: it is all vanished like a dream, and has left me nothing but the mere remembrance that I have enjoyed myself. If I had only dreamt of it last night, would I not have just as much to-day? Such is really the case. Now I am beginning a new year; will it not be just like the last? This day twelve-months, if I live so long, will I not have the same to say of it, as I now have of the years that are past? It is clear, then, that everything I can desire, seek, or find in this world is only empty, short-lived, and transitory, and cannot content or fully satisfy my heart, as my own eyes and past experience now prove to me. Therefore the Prophet David is quite right in saying: foolish mortals: "O ye sons of men, why do you love vanity, and seek after lying,"¹ with greater eagerness and longing than if Heaven and earth depended on it? Why do I not, then, devote all my efforts to securing a better and more constant, a real and eternal good, which I can find only in my God? Why do I not, then, make the business of my soul and the service of my God the only business of my life?

They alone
are happy
who do
good.

Again, I can remember what I have done during the past year for God and for my soul, and ask myself: What have I now from it? The labor and trouble are past, and I suffer them now as little as I enjoy now the pleasures of last year; but the treasure and exceeding great reward which I have gained thereby, are stored up for me in Heaven, and I have besides the spiritual consolation that I now experience. Sometimes I have been forced to suffer hunger and thirst, or else I have by voluntary fasting abstained from food and drink, and what worse am I now? I have just as much as if I had eaten and drunk always to satiety. I have sometimes done great violence to myself and closed my eyes, so as not to see dangerous objects, or to indulge in curiosity; I have sometimes chastised my body by voluntary penances, and what do I suffer now? Just as little as if I had always indulged myself. The pains that I bore in illness, the contradictions I endured from different individuals, the poverty, want, and annoyance that I bore patiently for the love of God, where are they all now? They are now nothing more than an unpleasant dream; but the merit gained for my soul by them is real and lasting.

¹ *Nulli hominum, utquid diligatis vanitatem, et queritis mendacium?*—Ps. lv. 3.

The prayers, the masses, sermons, confessions, communions, visits to the sick, the works of Christian charity and mercy, the morning devotions and the sleep lost on account of them and the cold suffered, the good intention so often renewed during the employments of every day, where are they all now? The difficulty and trouble attached to them have all disappeared with the year that is past; but the increase of sanctifying grace, the contentment and the eternal goods of Heaven gained thereby are mine still. So that I must confess, that he alone is happy on earth who serves God zealously, and the business of my soul is the only one in which I can always profitably employ myself, without any fear of losing my labor. Therefore, if I am wise I will devote myself to it alone. Such is the sermon that this first day of the year preaches to us.

Again, this day not only warns us to work out our salvation, but also to do so more zealously than in the past years, and to do so without delay. Why? Because the less time one knows he has to do some important business, the quicker and more zealously must he set to work. "This, therefore, I say, brethren," is the admonition that this first day of the year gives us, in the words of St. Paul, to the Corinthians: "The time is short." The more years you live, the shorter your lives become; the time was short even when you began to live; but now it is shorter in proportion to the time you have hitherto lived; shorter in this year than in the last; shorter to-day than yesterday. "This, therefore, I say, brethren: The time is short." You know how many years' old you are, and that the same years will never return. You know that you are nearer to death now than formerly, that you have less time to pay off the debts you have contracted, less time to prepare for judgment, less time to secure the grace of a happy death by good works. Therefore, if you love your salvation you must now begin to work for it with greater zeal and earnestness than ever before; that follows as a necessary conclusion.

There is still another reason why I say that the present day alone is the day of our salvation. What is that? It is a very evident reason; for when can we work out our salvation? In the days that are past? But where are they now; they are gone, and we cannot use them any more. In the days that still remain to us? Where are they then? We have not got them yet; they are still far away from us, and beyond our power. I know how

The time remaining to us is now shorter, and therefore must be employed more zealously for our salvation.

The present day alone is ours.

¹ Hoc itaque dico, fratres: Tempus breve est.—I. Cor. vii. 29.

many years I have lived, but I cannot say how many days I have still to live. Even to-morrow is uncertain for me, for you, and for all. How many of those who were assembled here on this day last year to hear the sermon, are now lying in their graves! So that the present day is the only one (if we can be sure even of living till the end of it) in which we are certain of being able to serve God, in which we can and must work out our salvation.

A wicked life is the result of making a bad use of the present day.

Finally, the chief fault of most people, the principal reason why they do not serve God and attend to their souls as they ought, comes almost solely from their neglect of the present day, for how is it that we make so many good resolutions, that we fulfil so seldom? We are quite ready to say in confession: Now, with the grace of God, I will commit no more sin; I will give up cursing, backbiting, fault-finding, wilful pleasure in impure thoughts, etc. After a sermon and under the influence of the truths we hear in it, we say: I will be more patient in crosses and trials; I will be satisfied with the will of God; I will be more devout in prayer; I will serve God better and more zealously, etc. And we do not make the least change in our former mode of life. The next time we go to confession, we find in the examination of conscience the same faults and sins, in greater number than before. Why so? Because our resolutions are not made for the present day; they regard an indefinite future time. I will amend, we say; but when? In future. I will serve God more zealously; when? In future; and so things remain as they were. Thus the good resolutions are like a shot fired in the air; they do not aim at anything, and they hit nothing. We should rather say: I will amend my life, and to prove my sincerity, I will begin at once. I will not curse to-day, nor backbite, nor be impatient, etc., and to-morrow and the day after I will also be on my guard; I will avoid this or that vice to-day. If we made our resolutions in that way, we should soon find a great change for the better in our lives. You see, now, my dear brethren, that the present day is really the day of our salvation, and in the second part of my sermon I shall give expression to my heartfelt wishes that it may be a happy day for you and me.

Second Part.

Wish and instruction for the cler-

Reverend members of the clergy, may this be a happy day for you! How many New Years' days have now passed since we

were separated from the world by a great grace that was given to us in preference to so many others, and by a special vow made either in religion, or in ordination, to devote ourselves wholly, body and soul, to the service of God? From that time we have been bound to make profession of a more perfect and holy life; as God commanded even the priests in the Old Law (and of course much more those of the New Law): Go, Moses, go, you who have to announce my Gospel: "Speak to the priests" and say to them: "They shall be holy to their God, and shall not profane His name, for they offer the burnt offering of the Lord, and the bread of their God, and therefore, they shall be holy."¹ They must keep holy the promise they made, and give others a holy example of a blameless, edifying, pure, and chaste life, so as to encourage souls to virtue and to the service of God. They must behave holily in the Church, on the altar, in choir, in singing and praying, at home and in company, in thought, conversation, and manner. The holy state to which I have called them requires that. It is required by the consecrated, priestly hands, which every day have the great honor of touching and sacrificing the Most Sacred Body and Blood of my Son under the appearance of bread. It is required by the esteem in which all men hold them. It is required by the inheritance left them by Jesus Christ, the Eternal Priest, for their support, so that, being free from worldly cares and business, they may serve their God alone and attend to the salvation of their souls. This day suggests to us the question: It is now so many years since I entered this holy state; has every day been passed in a holy manner? If so, oh, great God, what reason have we not to thank Thee! If not, what a strict account we must render to our Judge hereafter, as St. Gregory says: "Christ warns us to be careful, lest we, who seem to have received more than others in this world, should be judged more severely by the Author of the world."² What have we to do, then? Will we not amend what it faulty? But when? In future. Oh, that is too indefinite. To-day must be the happy day for us, on which our amendment is to commence. To-day, if we have not already done so, we shall say Mass devoutly, after having purified our consciences; to-day we shall recite attentively the praises of God, or sing them in the divine Office; to-day we shall give good example in all our actions, manners, and

¹ Loquere ad sacerdotes. . . Sancti erunt Deo sro, et non polluent nomen ejus; incensum enim Domini, et panes Dei sui offerunt, et ideo sancti erunt.—Levit. xxi. 1-6.

² Sollicite nos Christus considerare admonet, ne nos, qui plus ceteris in hoc mundo accepisse aliquid cernimur ab Auctore mundi gravius inde judicemur.

behaviour. Let that be our earnest resolution ; let us constantly renew and always keep it every day of our lives. "They shall be holy to their God ;"¹ in that way we shall serve our God holily every day. Amen.

For laymen
in a high
position.

May this day be a happy one for you, gentlemen, who occupy high positions ! Once when Charles V. went to confession, the confessor said to him : "I have heard the sins of Charles ; let me now hear the sins of the emperor." The priest meant thereby that it was not enough for him to examine and confess his own personal sins, but that he must also take into account the sins that others committed, of which he might perhaps be the cause, owing to his position as emperor. And so I say also to you, that it is not enough for you to see what you have done for your souls during the past days and years ; you must also see whether you have done what was necessary for the well-being of the city and country, as far as it depends on the different duties and charges intrusted to you. On your care, intelligence, diligence, writing, and advice depend the execution of justice, the protection of poor widows and orphans, the prevention of punishment, and amendment of bad customs, scandals, and public vices, and the defence and spread of religion and of the honor and glory of God. This day should admonish you to examine your past years, and see whether you have filled your different offices to the general welfare ; whether you have not sometimes neglected your duty through human respect, which fetters both tongue and pen, so that one does not always speak, or write, or give the advice that justice requires ; or through avarice and greed of gold, which makes one ready to accept bribes and to shut one's eyes to the claims of justice, so that cases are decided against the innocent and in favor of the guilty ; or through ignorance, so that offices and employments are sought for which one has not the necessary talents and qualifications ; or through carelessness, so that to avoid trouble one does not examine or pay attention to what ought to be corrected or punished. A shepherd would in vain try to excuse himself by saying : I did not know or think that the wolf was coming to injure my flock ; or a general by saying : I did not think the enemy would dare to attack us ; or a house steward by saying : I did not know that thieves were about to break in and rob my master. You should have known ; your duty was to attend to those things and to prevent the injury. In the same way, it is

¹ Sancti erunt Deo suo.

of no use for a superior to say : I did not know that there were bad and suspicious houses in the town and country, and that so many public vices were commonly practised. This excuse is of no avail for one who has authority to rule over the town or country. The words of God by the Prophet Ezechiel are: "The wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but I will require his blood at thy hand."¹ They who sin against Me will die in their sins, unless they do penance in time ; but I will require their souls at the hands of those whose duty it was to look after them. This day, then, since it is the day of salvation, must put an end to many faults that have, perhaps, been committed in this way, and suggest means to avoid them in future. Therefore, you must say: To-day I will do my duty diligently, honestly, and in a Christian manner ; to-day I will be on my guard, so as not to do, nor say, nor write the least thing contrary to justice ; to-day, if I have the opportunity, I will serve the poor and the orphan solely for the love of God ; to-day, if I can, I will uphold the honor and the cause of religion ; and so on. Oh, what happy and meritorious days you can thus spend !

You married people, as Christ warns you in the Gospel of St. Matthew: "Be not solicitous for to-morrow."² Yes, you think, but what would become of us if we were only to provide for to-day ? That may do for you and for those who, without any trouble, at a given signal, find food and drink prepared for them, and who, therefore, have not to bother themselves about the price of bread. But we have a house full of children and servants, who must have something to eat to-morrow as well as to-day, and who expect their share even after our death. All that is not the work of one day alone ; we must have many a long day to do it in. But wait a little and understand me: You can have as many days as you like, for to-morrow will be another to-day ; I mean to say that the care of temporal things and of an uncertain future time must not absorb your hearts and minds too much, so as to make you forget or put off the care of your eternal salvation. Whether you expect to live with those under your care to-morrow, or not, you must to-day manage the business of your soul, as if it were to be your last day on earth. Do what you may to support your children, and to provide for them, in future ; but in such a way as to observe the chief duty of Chris-

For married people.

¹ *Impius in iniquitate sua morietur, sanguinem autem ejus de manu tua requiram.*—Ezech. iij. 18.

² *Nolite solliciti esse in crastinum.*—Matth. vi. 34.

tian parents and to bestow all your principal care on it, namely, the training them up in piety and the fear of God for Heaven. Love each other ; but not to such a degree that you would be ready to offend God in the least for each other's sake. Nor must you fear the ordinary trials, difficulties, and losses that you have to bear, as if they were to last an eternity ; the trials of to-day will end with the day. May this day be a happy one, then, for you married people ! May you to-day be faithful and loving to each other ; may you help each other in bearing the burden of your household,' according to the advice of St. Paul to the Galatians : may you live in peace and harmony ; may you train up your children and servants to fear God ; may you bear with patience the troubles caused you by servants, children, husband, wife, business, and other cares ! We know not what will happen to-morrow ; but whatever it be, deal with it as you ought to deal with what happens to-day, and every day in the year will be a happy one for you.

**For the un-
married.**

May this be a happy day for you, unmarried youths and maidens ! St. Jerome writes of a young man who was bound hand and foot, and delivered up to the insults of a wicked woman. He could only defend himself with his mouth, and as he was unable to do anything else, he bit off his tongue and spat it with his blood into her face. Cardinal de Vitriaco tells us of a maiden who was persecuted by the impure solicitations of a young man. Acting on divine inspiration, she plucked out her eyes and sent them to him, with the message, that since she could not free herself from him, she would at least have the consolation of not being able to see him. The English Annals tell us of another maiden who cut off her lips and nose, so as to destroy her beauty, and save herself and others from temptation to sin. What do I mean by all this ? Do not be afraid. This day does not require you to cut off your lips or pluck out your eyes ; if it did, you would not thank me for my New Year's greeting ; although it would be far better to inflict those injuries on yourselves, than to injure your purity by sin. Only one question I will ask you: How old are you now ? Are you fifteen, eighteen, twenty, twenty-four (I will not put you down as being older, for you would not be pleased at that) ! How many of these years have you given to God alone and to your salvation ? Shall I measure out your years by days, and your days by hours ? I will try to guess how you have spent them. The most of the days of your childhood passed

¹ *Alter alterius onera portate.*—Gal. vi. 2.

day and amusements, but that cannot be found fault with in childhood ; later on, how many hours have you perhaps passed at the door and the window ; half days, perhaps, before the looking-glass ; whole days in pleasure and amusement ? How much time have you lost in sleeping, joking, laughing, and recreation ? This day reminds you that all that time is now gone from you, and the greater part of it, too, without profit for your souls. Must not a day, then, come, at last, on which you will begin to look after your soul, as you ought ? I do not now allude to all of you, but only to those who have been wanting in this point. And when is that day to come ? In future. Oh, that will never do ; that is firing in the air. You must commence to-day and continue every day of your lives. You are still young, but you are not on that account a bit more certain of life. Therefore, you must say : To-day I will live chastely, modestly, and purely ; to-day I will pluck out my eyes, that is, I will guard them from looking on dangerous objects ; to-day I will bite off my tongue, that is, I will refrain from all unbecoming conversation ; to-day I will disfigure myself, that is, I will at least avoid excessive luxury and immodesty in dress. In all these faults, the old, whether they are married or not, are very often to blame, for the young readily follow their example. But no matter ; may this be a happy day for you.

A boy was once sent into the garden to pluck up the weeds. After having worked for a short time, and seen how large and how full of weeds the garden was, he began to cry, and despairing of being able to finish his work, he lay down and fell asleep. He went afterwards to his master and said : I cannot pull up all the weeds, there are too many of them. What nonsense, said the master ; go back at once and do what you can to-day ; you have to-morrow to work also ; I did not expect you to do it all in one day. The boy did as he was told, and found that he was quite able to finish the work. Widows and orphans, poor, oppressed Christians who live in the midst of trials, this parable may be applied to you ! It is hard, indeed, to be despised, abandoned, persecuted, to suffer hunger, want, and trouble, to pass the year in trials and misery ; but that which, as a general rule, causes impatience, loss of hope, despair, and want of courage is the fact that your imagination prolongs your trials too far into the future. Ah, you think, will there never be an end to my sufferings ? Must I spend my whole life in this manner ? Must I be tormented till I die ? I see no hope of a change ; how can I

For widows
and the op-
pressed.

bear this for many long years to come? Christ says: "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof."¹ You must not look so far forward; if you do you will be overcome by present and future evil together. Let every day bear its own burden, and you will not suffer so much. Never think of the time that has still to come, for you may not see a day of it; but think only of the present day. For instance, can I not for this day at least, bear with abandonment, poverty, annoyance and trouble for the love of God, who for my sake spent thirty-three years in poverty, persecution, pain, and suffering? What I suffered yesterday and last year does not hurt me now; what may come to-morrow I do not feel yet, and perhaps I may not have anything to suffer. Therefore, to-day I will resign myself with patience and contentment to the divine decrees, and suffer to-day, for the sake of gaining Heaven, whatever is to be suffered. When I get up to-morrow morning, I will make the same resolution, and will thus continue to the joyful end.

For servants. Such should also be your thought at morning prayers, Christian servants. Renew every day your resolution to serve your employers faithfully, with ready, humble, and patient obedience, as you would God Himself, and to perform your allotted duties after the example of submission given by our Saviour Jesus Christ. Never forget to renew, with all sincerity, the good intention frequently during your work. If you do that my wish will be fulfilled, and this will be a happy day for the salvation of your souls.

For sinners. Sinners (I hope there are none here present), may this be a happy day for you! Oh, certainly, it is especially necessary for you that it should be! As long as you have lived in sin, you have not had a single happy day, but days full of misery and wickedness. How long will you continue to utter your raven's cry of "to-morrow, to-morrow"?² some other time I will do penance, amend my life, and begin to serve God. You said the same thing yesterday, and last month, and one, two, three, or more years ago. You are making matters worse by long-continued habits of sin, and the more you put off repentance, the more difficult it will become. The Prophet says to you: "To-day, if you shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts,"³ that when the day comes which has no morrow for you, you may not die in your sins. Many have waited for the morrow and when they

¹ Sufficit dies malitia sua.—Matth. vi. 34.

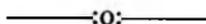
² Cras, cras!

³ Hodie, si vocem ejus audieritis, nolite obdurare corda vestra.—Ps. xciv. 8.

least expected it, they were hurled into hell before that morrow came. Oh, woe to you if that should be your end ! Perhaps you think it too hard to live always without your forbidden pleasures and accustomed sins ? Then take the advice that an experienced confessor once gave to a penitent of his, who was complaining of the same difficulty. The penitent said : How can I keep from seeing that person my whole life long ? How can I refrain from that pleasure ? How can I always so overcome myself that I will never violate this or that commandment of God ? It is impossible. Listen, answered the confessor, and I say the same to you to-day, oh, sinners ; could you not keep from sin for one day ? Oh, certainly, answered the penitent. Very well, answered the other, and for your penance you shall do so, and come to me to-morrow. The next day the confessor said to him : Now you see that is not so difficult, can you not do to-day what you did yesterday ? Try it, the day is not so long. In that way he brought his penitent on from day to day, until the latter had completely conquered the bad habit. Oh, sinner, try that plan ; begin to-day, and renew your resolution every morning for each day, so that you may save your soul from the snares of the devil, and bring it safely to eternal happiness. Yes, O my God, it shall be so ; to-day, with Thy grace, I will begin. Amen.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

To the greater honor and glory of God, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Queen of Heaven, and of the holy angels guardian, and for the salvation of souls.



INDEX OF SERMONS.

FOR ALL THE SUNDAYS OF THE YEAR.

In some cases, another Text and Introduction are here given to a Sermon, so that it may be used on the day quoted in this Index.

First Sunday in Advent.

| | VOL. | PAGE. |
|---------------------------------|------|-------|
| SERMON 35.—On Adultery. | i. | 421 |

Text taken from the Epistle of the day. "Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in chambering and impurities."—Rom. xiii. 13.

Among all the vices, not one is more opposed to Christian morality, than lust, or impurity. Hence the Apostle, while exhorting us always to walk "in honesty," and especially during this sacred time of Advent, at the same time warns us particularly to abstain from this foul sin, concerning which he says elsewhere: Do not name among yourselves a crime so vile and abominable; so common, alas, to-day, in every condition of mankind! I do not wish to-day to take up all the sins which come from this one. There is one in particular which is in the highest degree repugnant, both to morality and to the welfare of the human race. *Then proceed as in the Introduction of the Sermon.*

Second Sunday in Advent.

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| SERMON 54.—On the Duties of Masters and Mistresses towards their Servants. | ii. | 197 |
|--|-----|-----|

Third Sunday in Advent.

| | | |
|---|-----|-----|
| SERMON 75.—On the Examination of Conscience in the Evening. | ii. | 480 |
|---|-----|-----|

Fourth Sunday in Advent.

| | | |
|---|-----|-----|
| SERMON 52.—On the Duties of Subjects to their Spiritual and Temporal Superiors. | ii. | 170 |
|---|-----|-----|

Sunday in the Octave of Christmas.

| | | |
|---|----|-----|
| SERMON 13.—On the Duties of the Young to God. | i. | 146 |
|---|----|-----|

First Sunday after Epiphany.

| | | |
|---|----|-----|
| SERMON 20.—On the Course to be Followed by Young People in Selecting a State of Life. | i. | 234 |
|---|----|-----|

| | VOL. | PAGE. |
|---|------|-------|
| Second Sunday after Epiphany. | | |
| SERMON 26. —On the Course to be Adopted by those who Intend Embracing the Married State. | i. | 314 |
| Third Sunday after Epiphany. | | |
| SERMON 27. —On the Disposition of those who Receive the Sacrament of Matrimony. | i. | 326 |
| Fourth Sunday after Epiphany. | | |
| SERMON 28. —On the Necessity of Married People being in the Friendship of God, that they may not Lose their Souls. | i. | 338 |
| Fifth Sunday after Epiphany. | | |
| SERMON 29. —On the Necessity of Friendship with God in the Married State, in order to have Temporal Happiness. | i. | 350 |
| Sixth Sunday after Epiphany. | | |
| SERMON 66. —On the All-wise Providence of God in Arranging Different States of Life. | ii. | 363 |
| Septuagesima Sunday. | | |
| SERMON 22. —On the Happiness of the Religious Life. | i. | 262 |
| Septuagesima Sunday. | | |
| SERMON 67. —On the Contentment of each one in his State of Life, as far as the Service of God is Concerned. | ii. | 378 |
| Sexagesima Sunday. | | |
| SERMON 23. —On the Great Grace of a Vocation to the Religious Life. | i. | 274 |
| Sexagesima Sunday. | | |
| SERMON 58. —On the Goodness of God towards the Rich. | ii. | 250 |
| Quinquagesima Sunday. | | |
| SERMON 72. —On Shrove-Tide. | ii. | 445 |
| First Sunday in Lent. | | |
| SERMON 24. —On the Happiness of the Unmarried State. | i. | 290 |
| Second Sunday in Lent. | | |
| SERMON 25. —On the Dangers and Graces of the Unmarried State. | i. | 300 |
| Third Sunday in Lent. | | |
| SERMON 30. —On the Love of Married People for, and their Unity with Each Other. | i. | 364 |
| Fourth Sunday in Lent. | | |
| SERMON 31. —On the Duty of Husbands to their Wives. | i. | 375 |
| Fifth Sunday in Lent. | | |
| SERMON 32. —On the Conduct of Wives whose Husbands give them Cause for Disunion. | i. | 386 |

Easter Sunday.

SERMON 69.—On the Childlike Confidence with which Every One Ought to Abandon Himself to Divine Providence. ii. 402

First Sunday after Easter.

SERMON 33.—On the Duty of Wives to their Husbands. i. 397

Second Sunday after Easter.

SERMON 34.—On Jealousy in the Married State. i. 410

Third Sunday after Easter.

SERMON 36.—On the Unnecessary Troubles of Married People. i. 431

Fourth Sunday after Easter.

SERMON 37.—On the Consolation of Married People in Trouble. i. 445

Fifth Sunday after Easter.

SERMON 38.—On the Prayer of Married People in their Trouble. i. 456

Sixth Sunday after Easter.

SERMON 21.—On Reflection in the Actual Selection of a State of Life. i. 250

Text.

“These things I have told you: that when the hour shall come, you may remember that I told you of them.”—John xvi. 4.

Christ applies these words to you to-day, Christian sons and daughters! Wherefore, this much having been said concerning the different states of life and their difficulties, as well as their obligations, let it suffice for your instruction, that when the time will come for choosing a certain state, you may remember His words and ponder well on the subject beforehand, nor proceed blindly in an affair of such moment. Let us suppose, now, that the time has come for some to deliberate on the selection of a state of life. What shall I do? they think. Which one shall I choose from the number already described to me?

Pentecost Sunday.

SERMON 3.—On the Dignity of Christians who are Children of God. i. 33

First Sunday after Pentecost.

SERMON 4.—On the Life Becoming the Children of God. i. 42

Second Sunday after Pentecost.

SERMON 56.—On the Evil of being Too Much Occupied. ii. 224

| | VOL. | PAGE |
|--|------|------|
| Third Sunday after Pentecost. | | |
| SERMON 57.—On the Guiltiness of a Too Busy Life. | ii. | 237 |
| Fourth Sunday after Pentecost. | | |
| SERMON 2.—On the Great Benefit of the Divine Vocation to the Catholic Faith. | i. | 24 |
| <i>The text and introduction come after the first Sermon, and then it continues—Oh! What a grace for those who were before in darkness, etc.</i> | | |
| Fifth Sunday after Pentecost. | | |
| SERMON 8.—On the Sins of Christians. | i. | 85 |
| Sixth Sunday after Pentecost. | | |
| SERMON 49.—On the Usefulness of Alms-giving for the Temporal Welfare of Parents and Children. | ii. | 131 |
| Seventh Sunday after Pentecost. | | |
| SERMON 50.—On the Usefulness of Alms-giving for Eternal Life. | ii. | 145 |
| Eighth Sunday after Pentecost. | | |
| SERMON 63.—On the Decent Poor. | ii. | 318 |
| Ninth Sunday after Pentecost. | | |
| SERMON 9.—On the Necessity of Hearing the Word of God in Sermons. | i. | 95 |
| Tenth Sunday after Pentecost. | | |
| SERMON 10.—How One should Go to Sermons. | i. | 108 |
| Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost. | | |
| SERMON 11.—How One should Hear Sermons. | i. | 119 |
| Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost. | | |
| SERMON 12.—How One should Act after Hearing a Sermon. | i. | 132 |
| Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost. | | |
| SERMON 53.—On the Duties of the Laity towards Priests. | ii. | 184 |
| Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost. | | |
| SERMON 55.—On the Duties of Servants towards their Masters and Mistresses. | ii. | 209 |
| Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost. | | |
| SERMON 39.—On the Christian Training of Children. | ii. | 7 |
| Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost. | | |
| SERMON 40.—On the Reasons why Parents should Bring up their Children in a Christian Manner. | ii. | 19 |
| Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost. | | |
| SERMON 41.—On the Teaching that Parents should Give their Children. | ii. | 31 |

| | VOL. | PAGE. |
|---|------|-------|
| Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost. | | |
| SERMON 42.—On the Watchfulness of Parents over their Children. | ii. | 47 |
| Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost. | | |
| SERMON 43.—On the Due Chastisement of Children. | ii. | 58 |
| Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost. | | |
| SERMON 44.—On the Paternal Chastisement of Children. | ii. | 70 |
| Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost. | | |
| SERMON 45.—On the Good Example that Parents Should Give their Children. | ii. | 80 |
| Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost. | | |
| SERMON 46.—On the Necessity of Parents Giving Good Example to their Children. | ii. | 92 |
| Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost. | | |
| SERMON 4.—On the Duty of Feeding and Supporting Children. | ii. | 106 |
| Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost. | | |
| SERMON 48.—On the Excessive Care that some Parents take of their Children, as far as Temporal Things are concerned. | ii. | 118 |

INDEX OF SERMONS.

FOR ALL THE PRINCIPAL FEAST-DAYS OF THE YEAR.

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| Feast of St. Andrew, Apostle. | | |
| SERMON 58.—On the Goodness of God towards the Rich. | ii. | 250 |
| Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the B. V. Mary. | | |
| SERMON 70.—On the Redeeming in Old Age of Lost Time. | ii. | 418 |
| Feast of St. Thomas, Apostle. | | |
| SERMON 71.—On Making a Good Use of Present and Future Time, especially for Young People. | ii. | 432 |
| Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord. | | |
| SERMON 64.—On the Happiness of the Poor. | ii. | 332 |
| Feast of St. Stephen. | | |
| SERMON 39.—On the Ingratitude of the Rich towards God. | ii. | 262 |

| | VOL. | PAGE |
|--|------|------|
| Feast of St. John the Evangelist. | | |
| SERMON 65.—On the Divine Decree, which has Appointed a State and Condition of Life for Each One. | ii. | 350 |
| Feast of the Circumcision of Our Lord. | | |
| SERMON 76.—On the Use of the Present Time. | ii. | 493 |
| Feast of the Epiphany of Our Lord. | | |
| SERMON 7.—On the False and True Happiness of Christians. | i. | 74 |
| Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary. | | |
| SERMON 67.—On the Contentment of Each One in his State of Life, as far as the Service of God is concerned. | ii. | 378 |
| Feast of St. Matthias, Apostle. | | |
| SERMON 68.—On the Contentment of Each One in his State of Life, as far as the Dangers of the Soul are concerned. | ii. | 391 |
| Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. | | |
| SERMON 6.—On the Necessary Occupation of Christians. | i. | 63 |

Text.

“Behold the handmaid of the Lord.”—Luke i. 38.

What a beautiful example of the Incarnate Wisdom Mary places before us to-day : Behold the handmaid of the Lord ! What humility ! says St. Bernard :—She is chosen to be the Mother of God, and calls herself “handmaid” ! Would that we, my dear brethren, imitated in all our actions this great virtue of the Blessed Virgin ! Would that we followed her example in being servants and handmaids of the Lord ! For this is, in truth, the sole end for which we were created ; this is the most necessary business we have to transact all through this life ; namely, to serve God and save our souls, a business, nevertheless, which too many, alas ! neglect. This is the division of my sermon to-day, etc.

Feast of SS. Philip and James, Apostles.

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| SERMON 73.—On Morning Prayer. | ii. | 457 |
|---------------------------------------|-----|-----|

Feast of St. John the Baptist.

| | | |
|--|----|-----|
| SERMON 14.—Our After Life Depends on our Conduct during Youth. | i. | 159 |
|--|----|-----|

Feast of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul.

| | | |
|--|----|----|
| SERMON I.—On the Truth of the Catholic Religion. | i. | 11 |
|--|----|----|

Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

| | | |
|--|----|-----|
| SERMON 18.—On the Care of One’s Precious Soul. | i. | 312 |
|--|----|-----|

Text.

“And Mary, rising up, in those days, went into the hill country, with haste.”—Luke i. 39.

How great an undertaking for the delicate Virgin Mary, who had scarcely ever appeared in the sight of man outside of the Temple walls! Now, at once, she undertook to perform a long and arduous journey, over hills and mountains. "She went into the hill country, with haste," even. Why did she do this? She saluted Elizabeth. Why? Was that a sufficient reason for undertaking such a journey? No, my dear brethren, something else was of greater moment in this journey. Mary had a purpose. What was it? It was to free a soul from slavery, to liberate it from the power of the devil, and to increase the number of the children of God; namely, the thought of the soul of John, as yet enclosed in his mother's womb, lent wings to the Virgin, that by her presence she might sanctify the aforesaid mother, cleansed from original sin. O human soul! I think, here, O human soul! What a precious treasure thou art, since to gain thee to God a few moments sooner, the Mother of God sets out in such haste! And this precious soul is held in such poor esteem by the greater part of mankind, that very often they are unwilling to move hand or foot to preserve it! On the one hand, we have cause to rejoice, on the other, to deplore. I shall take up both subjects to-day. The most precious thing in the world is the human soul. I will show this in the first part, etc.

Feast of St. James, Apostle.

SERMON 15.—On the Respect that Children Owe their Parents.

i. 173

Text.

"Then came to Him the mother of the sons of Zebedee, with her sons."—Matth. xx. 20.

Why did not the sons themselves ask that favor of Christ, when they stood together close at hand? Or why did they not strengthen their mother's request with their own prayers? Among other reasons for this, I should ascribe a feeling of reverence for their mother, whom they did not wish to deprive of the honor of obtaining the first place in Heaven for them, by her intercession alone. Moreover, it is only proper that children should be silent, while their mother speaks, etc. Christian children, behold the lesson set forth for you, according to which you should conduct yourselves towards your parents. In what manner? Continue—Honor thy father and thy mother, etc.

Feast of St. Anne.

SERMON 19.—On the Care of One's Only Soul.

i. 223

Text.

"When he had found one pearl of great price, he

went his way, and sold all that he had, and bought it."—Matth. xiii. 46.

The holy Mother Anne found and gave to the world a precious pearl, and in truth an only one, when she brought forth the Virgin Mary, who was to give birth to the Saviour of the whole human race. Therefore, the Church justly sings to-day: Let us rejoice in the Lord while celebrating this feast-day in honor of St. Anne, etc. My dear brethren, we carry about with us that precious as well as only pearl, that is to say, our only soul!

Feast of St. Laurence, Martyr.

SERMON 16.—On the Obedience that Children Owe their Parents.

i. 185

Text.

"What displeases you in me, Father? Have you found me degenerate?"—Ecclesia.

Life of St. Laurence.

Thus spoke St. Laurence to Pope Sixtus, his spiritual Father, using the words which St. Ambrose sets before the Church to-day. Sixtus was dragged away to martyrdom; hence Laurence wept bitterly, and called after him: How can a father proceed without his son? How can the priest hasten on without his deacon? In what have I offended you that you leave me here? What displeases you in me, Father? Have you found me a degenerate son? Thus, without doubt, Laurence loved his spiritual Father, so that he could not separate himself from him except with great sorrow; or, rather, I should say, so much did he glow with love for God, that he suffered torments, because he could not receive martyrdom together with his Father. My dear brethren, from this I take the occasion of following up the sermon begun some time ago, concerning the duty of children towards their parents. Would that all children could say these same words truthfully to their parents: What is displeasing to you in me, Father? Father, mother, have I never given you any cause for sorrow? You have not found me degenerate? Happy children, to whom their parents could with truth reply: No, my son, no, my daughter, I can remember nothing which displeases me! I will endeavor, as far as in me lies, to make this truth manifest in to-day's sermon. I have discussed the reverence due to parents; hear, now, Christian children, another honor which you ought to show them, namely, the honor of obedience, etc.

Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

SERMON 17.—On the Love that Children owe their Parents.

i. 199

Text.

"Mary was taken up into Heaven."—Ecclesia.

This reward was due to that Mother who loved her Son so much, who gave Him a hospitality far different from that which He received from Martha; who bore Him in her womb, and suckled Him and carried Him in her arms; it was a reward fitting to be bestowed by that Son who specially commands all children to love and honor their parents; and therefore He brought His Mother, body and soul, into eternal glory.

Mary was taken up into Heaven! Rejoice, O angels, in the glory of your Queen! Let the whole world exult, because now it has an advocate in Heaven! Queen of the whole world, our Mother! We rejoice and we praise thee with our whole heart! Ah! look down to-day from thy throne of glory upon us miserable ones, sighing to thee in this valley of tears, and grant us the grace of so living that we may see thee one day in glory! Grant also to all thy sons and daughters, that, according to the example of thy Divine Son, who thus honors thee, they may show to their parents the love and honor they owe them! And this is, finally, another obligation incumbent on you, Christian children; namely, the honor of love that you owe to your parents, as I will now prove.

Feast of St. Bartholomew, Apostle.

SERMON 74.—On the Use and Nature of Morning Prayer. ii. 467

Feast of St. Matthew, Apostle.

SERMON 62.—How Deserving of Help the Poor are. ii. 304

Feast of St. Michael, Archangel.

SERMON 5.—On the Dignity and Obligation of Men who have Angels as their Guardians. i. 52

Feast of SS. Simon and Jude.

SERMON 60.—On the Duty of the Rich towards the Poor. ii. 274

Feast of All-Saints.

SERMON 51.—On the Just Claims that the Poor Souls in Purgatory have on our Help. ii. 159

Feast of the Dedication of a Church.

SERMON 61.—On the Vain Excuses of the Rich with regard to Alms-giving. ii. 289

ALPHABETICAL INDEX OF SUBJECTS.

— A. —

Abraham.

| | SERMON. | MARGINAL NOTE. | VOL. | PAGE. |
|---|---------|-------------------|------|-------|
| Sacrifices his son in obedience to the will of God. | 20 | 10 | i. | 245 |

Adultery.

| | | | | |
|---|----|-----------|----|-----|
| A terrible sin. The whole Sermon. | 35 | | i. | 421 |
| Hated by every one. | 35 | 2, 3 | i. | 423 |
| Injurious to the whole human race. | 35 | 4 | i. | 424 |
| Many other sins come from it. | 35 | 5 | i. | 425 |
| All Christians should avoid it. | 35 | 7 | i. | 425 |
| An abomination before God and brings severe punishment. | 35 | 9 to end. | i. | 426 |

Age (old).

| | | | | |
|---|----|------------|-----|-----|
| When we consider ourselves, as we should often do, we can find out that we are growing old. | 70 | 2, 3, 4, 6 | ii. | 420 |
| Many reject this thought. | 70 | 5 | ii. | 423 |

Alms-giving.

| | | | | |
|---|----|-----------|-----|-----|
| Usefulness of alms-giving to secure temporal welfare. The whole Sermon. | 49 | | ii. | 131 |
| Alms-giving the best way to become rich. | 49 | 11 | ii. | 138 |
| Niggardliness towards the poor a way to become poor. | 49 | 14 | ii. | 142 |
| Eternal treasures gained by alms-giving. The whole Sermon. | 50 | | ii. | 145 |
| Folly of those who give alms sparingly, in order to save up more for their children. | 50 | 9 to end. | ii. | 153 |
| Alms-giving obligatory under pain of sin. The whole Sermon. | 60 | | ii. | 274 |
| Many lost eternally through neglect of alms-giving. | 60 | 7 | ii. | 281 |
| How much alms one is bound to give. | 60 | 12 | ii. | 286 |
| Useless excuses of the rich, who say they can give little or no alms. The whole Sermon. | 61 | | ii. | 289 |
| Even the poor can and must give alms. | 61 | 7, 8 | ii. | 296 |

Ambition.

| | | | | |
|--|---|---|----|----|
| Has driven many so far that they sought for divine honors. | 3 | 1 | i. | 34 |
|--|---|---|----|----|

| Angels. | SERMON. | MARGINAL NOTE. | VOL. | PAGE. |
|--|---------|-------------------|------|-------|
| God has given to every one an angel as tutor. | 5 | 4 | i. | 54 |
| Greatness and excellence of the angels. | 5 | 5 | i. | 55 |
| Their beauty. | 5 | 6 | i. | 56 |
| These great princes of heaven are guardians of our bodies and souls. | 5 | 7 | i. | 57 |
| The benefits we receive from them deserve our deepest gratitude. | 5 | 10 | i. | 59 |
| Especially since they are much greater and more excellent than we. | 5 | 11 | i. | 60 |
| They do good to us, although we are unworthy. | 5 | 12 | i. | 61 |

Apostles.

| | | | | |
|---|---|----|----|----|
| The Christian religion preached throughout the world by twelve Apostles. | 1 | 8 | i. | 17 |
| They had neither high position, nor money, nor influence, nay, were hated everywhere. | 1 | 9 | i. | 17 |
| And yet they undertook and accomplished the spread of religion in the greatest cities of the world. | 1 | 10 | i. | 18 |

—B.—

Benefit.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|----|----|
| The greatness of a benefit measured by its utility and necessity to eternal life. | 2 | 1 | i. | 25 |
|---|---|---|----|----|

Blanche, St.

| | | | | |
|--|----|---|-----|----|
| How she brought up her son Louis in the fear of God. | 41 | 7 | ii. | 31 |
|--|----|---|-----|----|

Blind.

| | | | | |
|---|----|---|-----|-----|
| We mortals are blind in the understanding, even in things that we actually see. | 67 | 4 | ii. | 382 |
|---|----|---|-----|-----|

Body.

| | | | | |
|---|----|-------|----|-----|
| Generally better cared for than the soul. | 18 | 9, 10 | i. | 218 |
|---|----|-------|----|-----|

Busy.

| | | | | |
|--|----|------------|-----|-----|
| Too busy a life is an idle and useless one before God. The whole Sermon. | 56 | | ii. | 224 |
| Is a sinful life. The whole Sermon. | 57 | | ii. | 237 |
| Withdraws the heart from heavenly things. | 57 | 4 to 8 | ii. | 240 |
| How to arrange one's business so as not to neglect the soul. | 57 | 10 to end. | ii. | 246 |

—C.—

Catholics.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|----|----|
| Can nowadays hardly bear to hear the truths of religion that Jews and heathens formerly received. | 1 | 6 | i. | 16 |
|---|---|---|----|----|

| | SERMON. | MARGINAL NOTE. | VOL. | PAGE. |
|---|---------|----------------|------|-------|
| Owe God heartfelt thanks for vocation to the true faith. The whole Sermon. | 2 | | i. | 24 |
| Many are thankless for this grace, to their own deeper damnation. | 2 | 8, 9 | i. | 31 |
| Children. | | | | |
| As they are in their youth, so they will be, generally, in their after life. The whole Sermon. | 14 | | i. | 159 |
| Owe their parents honor and reverence in all their actions. | 15 | 1 to 8 | i. | 173 |
| Many grievous faults against this duty. | 15 | 8 to 13 | i. | 178 |
| Some threaten to beat their parents, and bring down fearful punishments on themselves from God. | 15 | 13, 14 | i. | 182 |
| Must obey their parents. The whole Sermon. | 16 | | i. | 185 |
| Are ignorant and must be instructed by their parents. | 16 | 2 and fol. | i. | 186 |
| Commanded by God to obey their parents in all things not contrary to His law. | 16 | 7, 8 | i. | 190 |
| Many sin against this in various ways. | 16 | 11 | i. | 192 |
| Grievous punishments inflicted in the Old Law on such children. | 16 | 16 | i. | 195 |
| And in our days, too. | 16 | 17 | i. | 196 |
| They are bound to love their parents. The whole Sermon. | 17 | | i. | 199 |
| Of what kind this love must be. | 17 | 5 | i. | 203 |
| Many sin against this in troubling their parents by leading bad lives. | 17 | 6, 7 | i. | 204 |
| Or by refusing to serve and help them in want. | 17 | 8, 9, 10, | i. | 205 |
| Or by forgetting their deceased parents. | 17 | 12 | i. | 208 |
| Those who have no children should rejoice. | 36 | 8, 9 | i. | 438 |
| Also those who have too many. | 36 | 13, 14 | i. | 440 |
| Also those whose children die young. | 36 | 16 | i. | 442 |
| Naughty children a great trial for parents. | 37 | 1 | i. | 445 |
| Sickly children must also be loved by their parents. | 37 | 3, 4 | i. | 447 |
| Children must thank their parents for correction. | 43 | 14 | ii. | 68 |
| Children must thank their parents for correction. | 44 | 15 | ii. | 79 |
| Children are like monkeys and imitate all they see their parents do. | 45 | 5 to 10 | ii. | 84 |
| How they must act in choosing a state of life. <i>See State.</i> | | | | |
| Training of children. <i>See Parents.</i> | | | | |
| Christ. | | | | |
| In Him alone true happiness to be found. | 7 | 8 | i. | 82 |
| Is an example of childlike obedience. | 16 | 10 | i. | 192 |
| Loves His Church. | 31 | 4 | i. | 378 |
| Christians. | | | | |
| Have cause to rejoice that they are in the true religion. | 1 | 12 | i. | 20 |

| | SERMON. | MARGINAL NOTE. | VOL. | PAGE |
|--|---------|----------------|------|------|
| Impious Christians have cause for shame, since they do not live according to their religion. | 1 | 13 | i. | 21 |
| Christian Church complains of bad Christians. | 1 | 14 | i. | 22 |
| Christians become children of God in Baptism. | 3 | 2 | i. | 35 |
| What honor and happiness this is. | 3 | 4, 5, 6, 8 | i. | 36 |
| Good Christians have not been able to contain their joy at this. | 3 | 7 | i. | 38 |
| Many tepid Christians think little of this honor. | 3 | 9 | i. | 39 |
| Christians must live as becomes children of God and brethren of Jesus Christ. The whole Sermon. | 4 | | i. | 42 |
| They must live according to their heavenly Father and according to the example of Jesus Christ. | 4 | 5, 6 | i. | 45 |
| Few Christians do so. | 4 | 7 | i. | 46 |
| A great shame for a child of God to be a slave of the devil. | 4 | 9 | i. | 48 |
| Many act thus shamefully. | 4 | 10 | i. | 49 |
| Christians have more light and grace than the Jews and Gentiles formerly had; therefore their sins are less to be excused. | 8 | 2 and fol. | i. | 86 |
| They have more helps and opportunities to good. | 8 | 8 | i. | 90 |
| Have sworn an oath of special fealty to God. Therefore their sins are worse than those of Jews and heathens. | 8 | 10, 12 | i. | 92 |
| | 8 | 11, 12 | i. | 93 |
| Confidence in God. | | | | |
| Childlike confidence in divine providence makes men happy. The whole Sermon. | 69 | | ii. | 402 |
| How unreasonably they act who do not trust in God. | 69 | 10 to end. | ii. | 413 |
| Contentment. | | | | |
| All should be content with the will of God. | 36 | 18 | i. | 444 |
| All should be content with the will of God. | 37 | 15 | i. | 455 |
| Contentment of each one in his state. <i>See State.</i> | | | | |
| Conscience. | | | | |
| A good conscience is the best comfort in all adversities. | 37 | 10 | i. | 452 |
| Examination of conscience before going to bed. <i>See Time.</i> | | | | |
| Correction. | | | | |
| Every one is bound to practise fraternal correction. | 43 | 1 | ii. | 59 |

| | SERMON. | MARGINAL NOTE. | VOL. | PAGE. |
|--|---------|-------------------|------|-------|
|--|---------|-------------------|------|-------|

—D.—

Day.

| | | | | |
|--|----|-----------|-----|-----|
| The first day of the year is especially a day of salvation. | 76 | 1 to 6. | ii. | 494 |
| The present day alone is ours. | 76 | 6 | ii. | 497 |
| A wicked life is the result of not employing well the present day. | 76 | 7 | ii. | 498 |
| How people of every state must act to employ well the present day. | 76 | 8 to end. | ii. | 498 |

David.

| | | | | |
|---|----|---|----|-----|
| Teaches us how to take care of our souls. | 19 | 5 | i. | 226 |
|---|----|---|----|-----|

Devil.

| | | | | |
|---|----|----|----|-----|
| Tries to keep sinners from hearing sermons. | 9 | 10 | i. | 103 |
| Values the human soul very highly. | 18 | 5 | i. | 216 |
| Finds many who help him to destroy souls. | 19 | 13 | i. | 231 |

—E.—

Edmund, St.

| | | | | |
|--|----|---|-----|----|
| How his mother instructed him in the fear of the Lord. | 41 | 7 | ii. | 38 |
|--|----|---|-----|----|

End.

| | | | | |
|---|----|---|----|-----|
| We must consider, not whether we wish to attain our end, but the means of attaining it. | 21 | 1 | i. | 251 |
|---|----|---|----|-----|

—F.—

Faith.

| | | | | |
|--|---|------|----|----|
| The Catholic is the only true Faith. | 1 | 11 | i. | 20 |
| Vocation to the Catholic Faith is the greatest benefit bestowed on us by God, and deserves our constant gratitude. | | | | |
| The whole Sermon. | 2 | | i. | 24 |
| This Faith is absolutely necessary to eternal life. | 2 | 2 | i. | 25 |
| Without this no other benefit of God can be of any use to us. | 2 | 3 | i. | 25 |
| God has called us to this Faith, in preference to countless thousands of infidels and heretics. | 2 | 4, 5 | i. | 26 |
| Special benefit that we are born and reared in this Faith, when the Church enjoys peace and tranquillity. | 2 | 6, 7 | i. | 28 |

SERMON. MARGINAL NOTE. VOL. PAGE.

—G.—

God.

| | | | | |
|--|----|------------|-----|-----|
| Love of God for us mortals in giving each of us an angel guardian. | 5 | 1 to 9 | i. | 53 |
| God is the Architect of the human soul. | 18 | 2 | i. | 213 |
| Has created it carefully according to His own image. | 18 | 3 | i. | 214 |
| Values the soul very highly. | 18 | 4 | i. | 214 |
| Must be asked for counsel in the selection of a state of life. <i>See State.</i> | | | | |
| Without His help no means can succeed. | 29 | 1, 2, 3 | i. | 351 |
| Arranges everything according to His own will. | 29 | 4 | i. | 353 |
| Some act without or against God, and have no luck. | 29 | 6 to 15 | i. | 354 |
| How we must act with God in all our affairs, so as to insure prosperity. | 29 | 15 to end. | i. | 360 |
| Confidence in God. <i>See Confidence.</i> | | | | |
| God can help us in all circumstances. | 69 | 3, 4 | ii. | 405 |
| Cares for us even in the least things. | 69 | 5 | ii. | 406 |
| His almighty power can do everything. | 69 | 6 | ii. | 408 |
| He wishes to arrange all things for our greater good. | 69 | 7 | ii. | 408 |
| He has promised to protect all who hope in Him. | 69 | 9 | ii. | 411 |

—H.—

Happiness.

| | | | | |
|--|---|------------|----|----|
| In what true happiness consists. | 7 | 1 | i. | 76 |
| Cannot be found in worldly goods. | 7 | 2 and fol. | i. | 76 |
| But in Christ our Lord alone. | 7 | 8 | i. | 82 |
| Is nevertheless least thought of by blind mortals. | 7 | 9 | i. | 83 |

Heathens.

| | | | | |
|--|---|---|----|----|
| The ancient heathens made gods of their heroes that the latter might act as gods. | 4 | 2 | i. | 44 |
| They looked upon it as a shame that one who represented the person of a god in a comedy should remain a slave. | 4 | 8 | i. | 47 |

Heretics.

| | | | | |
|--|----|---|----|-----|
| Their false doctrine about marriage. | 27 | 1 | i. | 327 |
|--|----|---|----|-----|

Honor.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|----|----|
| Honor and glory of Christians in becoming children of God by baptism. | 3 | 4 | i. | 36 |
| This honor not valued much by many. | 3 | 9 | i. | 39 |
| Honors change manners. | 4 | 1 | i. | 43 |

| | SERMON. | MARGINAL NOTE. | VOL. | PAGE. |
|--|---------|-------------------|------|-------|
| Humility. | | | | |
| Without humility, chastity cannot long be preserved. | 25 | 8, 9 | i. | 307 |
| Husband. | | | | |
| Must not allow his wife to pervert him. | 28 | 10, 11, 12 | i. | 344 |
| Has authority over his wife, but it should be an authority of love. | 31 | 1 to 6. | i. | 376 |
| Sins by being harsh with his wife. | 31 | 6 | i. | 381 |
| By not giving her proper food. | 31 | 7 | i. | 381 |
| By treating her as a servant. | 31 | 8 | i. | 382 |
| By hating her and loving others. | 31 | 9 | i. | 382 |
| How impiously such husbands act. | 31 | 12 | i. | 383 |
| They must expect severe punishment. | 31 | 13 | i. | 384 |
| Cannot be excused. | 31 | 14 | i. | 384 |
| Husbands who have bad wives, are deserving of pity. | 33 | 16 | i. | 407 |
| How they must act with them. | 33 | 17 | i. | 408 |
| How they must act so as not to give their wives occasion for jealousy. | 34 | 8 | i. | 416 |
| —I.— | | | | |
| Idleness. | | | | |
| An idle and voluptuous life is a sinful life. | 57 | 2 | ii. | 239 |
| Imagination. | | | | |
| Unnecessary troubles come from it. | 36 | 3 to 7. | i. | 434 |
| Such imaginations should be changed. | 36 | 7 | i. | 437 |
| Impurity. | | | | |
| Of Christians less to be excused, than that of Jews or heathens. | 8 | 6 | i. | 90 |
| Wickedness of those who lead the innocent into impurity. | 24 | 12 | i. | 299 |
| Ingratitude. | | | | |
| For the grace of vocation to the true faith causes a deeper damnation hereafter. | 2 | 8, 9 | i. | 31 |
| Injustice. | | | | |
| Leads to poverty and eternal damnation. | 48 | 7 to 11 | ii. | 124 |
| Isaac. | | | | |
| An example of childlike obedience. | 16 | 9 | i. | 191 |
| —J.— | | | | |
| Jealousy. | | | | |
| What it is. | 34 | 1 | i. | 411 |
| Never worse than in the married state. | 34 | 2 | i. | 412 |
| What evils and sins are caused by it. | 34 | 3, 4, 5, | i. | 412 |

| | SERMON. | MARGINAL NOTE. | VOL. | PAGE. |
|--|---------|-------------------|------|-------|
| How married people must act towards each other, so as to give no cause for jealousy. | 34 | 6 to end. | i. | 414 |

—L.—

Lay People.

| | | | | |
|---|----|----|-----|-----|
| Should honor priests. The whole Sermon. | 53 | | ii. | 184 |
| Many sin against this. | 53 | 17 | ii. | 195 |

Life.

| | | | | |
|--|---|---|----|----|
| The lives of Christians must be such as become children of God and brethren of Jesus Christ. The whole Sermon. | 4 | | i. | 42 |
| Life must be arranged according to the will of our heavenly Father. | 4 | 5 | i. | 45 |
| And to the example of Jesus Christ. | 4 | 6 | i. | 46 |

—M.—

Married State.

| | | | | |
|--|----|-------------|----|-----|
| They who wish to enter it must take counsel from God. | 26 | 2, 3, 5, 12 | i. | 315 |
| Difficulties of the married state. | 26 | 5, 6, 7, 8, | i. | 316 |
| Troubles of it. | 26 | 9, 10, 11 | i. | 320 |
| Marriages of many are unhappy because God is not consulted. | 26 | 12, 13 | i. | 322 |
| Advice for married people who have not consulted God. | 26 | 16 | i. | 325 |
| False teaching of heretics about the married state. | 27 | 1 | i. | 327 |
| Marriage a holy sacrament. | 27 | 2 | i. | 328 |
| Must be entered on with a pure conscience. | 27 | 3 | i. | 328 |
| Those who sin in this particular. | 27 | 4, 5, 6 | i. | 329 |
| No blessing in a marriage entered on unworthily. | 27 | 7 | i. | 332 |
| The chief end of marriage. | 27 | 8 | i. | 332 |
| Those who marry for sensual pleasure are often given over to the power of the devil. | 27 | 9, 10 | i. | 333 |
| Married state must be entered on with a pure love. | 27 | 11 | i. | 335 |
| Because this is wanting, many unhappy marriages. | 27 | 12 | i. | 336 |
| Instruction for married people who have been wanting in this point. | 27 | 13 | i. | 336 |
| Dangers of the soul in the married state. | 28 | 2, 3, 4 | i. | 340 |
| Dangerous obligations of the married state. | 28 | 5 to end. | i. | 341 |
| Amidst all these dangers, married people can be good, if they remain in the friendship of God. | 28 | 16 | i. | 348 |
| They must be in the friendship of God to have temporal prosperity. The whole Sermon. | 29 | | i. | 850 |

| | SERMON. | MARGINAL NOTE. | VOL. | PAGE. |
|--|---------|-------------------|------|-------|
| Married People. | | | | |
| Unity with each other most necessary. The whole Sermon. | 30 | | i. | 364 |
| A state pleasing to God when they are united. | 30 | 4 | i. | 367 |
| A happy state for people who live in harmony. | 30 | 5, 6 | i. | 368 |
| The devil tries to destroy that harmony. | 30 | 7 | i. | 369 |
| Unhappiness of married people when unity is wanting. | 30 | 8 | i. | 369 |
| Cause generally given for that unhappiness before marriage. | 30 | 12 | i. | 372 |
| How married people must console themselves in troubles caused by children | 37 | 1 to 8 | i. | 445 |
| Or when one of them gets sick, or dies. | 37 | 8 to end. | i. | 451 |
| Difficulties teach married people and their whole households to pray. | 38 | 7, 8 | i. | 460 |
| Martyr. | | | | |
| The life of a religious is a difficult martyrdom. <i>See Religious State.</i> | | | | |
| The martyrs rejoiced in their torments. | 23 | 6 | i. | 280 |
| Masters and Mistresses. | | | | |
| Are bound to care for the salvation of their servants. | 54 | 1, 2, 3, | ii. | 198 |
| They must encourage their servants to do good, and give them good example. | 54 | 4 | ii. | 200 |
| Many fail to do so. | 54 | 5 to 11 | ii. | 200 |
| The welfare of a household depends on how they lead on their servants to good. | 54 | 11 to end. | ii. | 205 |
| Modesty. | | | | |
| A means of preserving purity. | 25 | 9, 10 | i. | 308 |
| Mortals. | | | | |
| Are strangers and travellers in this world, exposed to countless dangers. | 5 | 2 | i. | 53 |
| God gives to all different helps against those dangers. | 5 | 3 | i. | 54 |
| And besides has given to each one an angel as tutor. | 5 | 4 | i. | 54 |
| Most mortals are ignorant of the art of living and dying well. | 9 | 3, 4 | i. | 97 |
| They must, therefore, be instructed herein by sermons. | 9 | 5, 6, 7 | i. | 99 |
| Morning Prayer. | | | | |
| The best and most useful prayer, and that which is most pleasing to God, is when many assemble together for the purpose. | 74 | 10 to end. | ii. | 474 |

Mothers.

| | SERMON. | MARGINAL NOTE. | VOL. | PAGE. |
|---|---------|-------------------|------|-------|
| Sin by not nursing their children, when they are able to do so. | 47 | 5, 6 | ii | 111 |

—O.—

Obedience.

| | | | | |
|---|----|--|----|-----|
| Due to parents from their children. The whole Sermon. | 16 | | i. | 185 |
|---|----|--|----|-----|

—P.—

Parents.

| | | | | |
|--|----|------------|-----|-----|
| Hold the place of princes and kings, nay, even of God Himself, with regard to their children. | 15 | 1, 2 | i. | 173 |
| Must be honored by their children always. | 15 | 5 | i. | 176 |
| Are the best guides of their children. | 16 | 4 | i. | 187 |
| Are specially enlightened by God to govern their children well. | 16 | 5 | i. | 188 |
| Are the greatest benefactors of their children. | 17 | 2, 3 | i. | 200 |
| Must therefore be specially loved by the latter. | 17 | 4 | i. | 202 |
| Must be preferred, as far as support is concerned, to one's own wife and children. | 17 | 11 | i. | 208 |
| How they must act in choosing a state of life for their children. <i>See State.</i> | 26 | | | |
| Have great trouble with their children. | 26 | 9 | i. | 320 |
| Must bring up their children for their last end. The whole Sermon. | 39 | | ii. | 7 |
| Most parents train up their children's bodies, but neglect their souls. | 39 | 3 to 8 | ii. | 9 |
| The salvation of children depends on the training their parents give them. | 39 | 8 to 13 | ii. | 13 |
| Children lost eternally cry out for vengeance against their parents. | 39 | 13 | ii. | 16 |
| The temporal happiness of parents consists in their giving their children a good training. | 40 | 1 | ii. | 21 |
| Training no good unless the children are brought up piously. | 40 | 2 to 5 | ii. | 21 |
| Sufferings of parents from ill-reared children. | 40 | 5 to 8 | ii. | 23 |
| The temporal and eternal misery of parents a just punishment for their neglect in training their children. | 40 | 8 | ii. | 25 |
| Bad training a grievous sin for parents. God and the whole heavenly court will take revenge for it. | 40 | 9 to 14 | ii. | 25 |
| Many are therefore lost eternally. | 40 | 14 | ii. | 29 |
| How they are to give their children good instruction. The whole Sermon. | 41 | | ii. | 31 |
| Many teach their children evil. | 41 | 11 to end. | ii. | 41 |
| How they must be watchful over their children. The whole Sermon. | 42 | | ii. | 47 |

| | SERMON. | MARGINAL NOTE. | VOL. | PAGE. |
|---|---------|-------------------|------|-------|
| To what this watchfulness must be directed. | 42 | 4, 5 | ii. | 50 |
| Great fault of parents in this respect. | 42 | 6 to end. | ii. | 51 |
| Must punish and chastise their children, when the latter do wrong. The whole Sermon. | 43 | | ii. | 58 |
| Most parents are wanting herein. | 43 | 4 to 12 | ii. | 62 |
| Thus bring their children to eternal ruin. | 43 | 12 | ii. | 66 |
| Must therefore expect severe punishment. | 43 | 13 | ii. | 67 |
| How children are to be chastised parentally. The whole Sermon. | 44 | | ii. | 70 |
| Great faults committed in this respect by parents. | 44 | 3 to 11 | ii. | 72 |
| Chastisement must be administered with moderation and love. | 44 | 11 to end. | ii. | 76 |
| Parents must give their children good ex- ample. The whole Sermon. | 45 | | ii. | 80 |
| When they sin they kill many other souls. | 45 | 10 to 14 | ii. | 87 |
| If all parents lived holily, the whole world would be good. | 45 | 15 | ii. | 90 |
| Without the parents' good example, all other means of rearing up children well are useless. The whole Sermon. | 46 | | ii. | 92 |
| Parents are bound to pray to God for them- selves and their children, that they may do their duty. | 46 | 14 | ii. | 103 |
| They must give their children proper nour- ishment. The whole Sermon. | 47 | | ii. | 106 |
| Manifold faults of parents in this respect. | 47 | 5 to end. | ii. | 111 |
| Folly of parents who are too anxious for their children's temporal welfare. The whole Sermon. | 48 | | ii. | 118 |
| They must look after their own souls first. | 48 | 5, 6 | ii. | 122 |
| Wicked parents who try to help their chil- dren by unjust means. | 48 | 7 to end | ii. | 124 |
| Those who have many children must give generous alms. The whole Sermon. <i>See Alms-giving.</i> | 49 | | ii. | 131 |

Peace.

| | | | | |
|---|----|---|-----|-----|
| True happiness consists in peace of mind. | 64 | 3 | ii. | 334 |
|---|----|---|-----|-----|

Persecution.

| | | | | |
|--|---|-------|----|----|
| In spite of persecutions the Christian faith was spread throughout the world. | 1 | 9, 10 | i. | 18 |
|--|---|-------|----|----|

Piety.

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|----|----|----|-----|
| Brings every happiness and blessing. | 29 | 12 | i. | 358 |
|--------------------------------------|----|----|----|-----|

Philosophers.

| | | | | |
|--|---|---|----|----|
| Looked upon the Christian religion as con- trary to all reason. | 1 | 3 | i. | 13 |
|--|---|---|----|----|

| | SERMON. | MARGINAL NOTE. | VOL. | PAGE. |
|--|---------|-------------------|------|-------|
| Poor. | | | | |
| Those who are poor through their own fault, must ascribe their misfortune to themselves. | 37 | 6 | i. | 449 |
| Consolation for those who are poor by divine decree. | 37 | 7, 8 | i. | 450 |
| All poor, no matter who they are, are deserving of help, since they represent the person of Christ. The whole Sermon. | 62 | | ii. | 304 |
| Even deceitful, ungrateful and wicked beggars are deserving of help. | 62 | 5 to 11 | ii. | 308 |
| The decent poor are especially deserving of help, because they are in greater necessity than any others. The whole Sermon. | 63 | | ii. | 318 |
| They who persecute and oppress the poor, must expect severe punishment. | 63 | 7, 8 | ii. | 325 |
| Advice and consolation for the poor. | 63 | 10 | ii. | 328 |
| Advice and consolation for the poor. | 64 | 19 | ii. | 346 |
| How happy the poor when they are satisfied with the will of God. The whole Sermon. | 64 | | ii. | 332 |
| They live in peace and contentment of mind. | 64 | 4 | ii. | 335 |
| They live more comfortably, eat, drink and sleep better than the rich. | 64 | 8, 9 | ii. | 339 |
| Are more like to Christ. | 64 | 11 | ii. | 340 |
| Therefore, many choose voluntary poverty. | 64 | 12 | ii. | 341 |
| The poor who are satisfied with the will of God, are more certain of their salvation than the rich. | 64 | 13 to end. | ii. | 342 |

Poverty of Spirit.

| | | | | |
|--|----|--------|----|-----|
| Must go with the care of temporal goods. | 28 | 14, 15 | i. | 346 |
|--|----|--------|----|-----|

Prayer.

| | | | | |
|--|----|------------|-----|-----|
| The gift of prayer a great benefit of God. | 38 | 1 | i. | 457 |
| Difficulties experienced in public and private necessities drive us to it. | 38 | 2 to 10 | i. | 458 |
| They drive us to the best kind of prayer. | 38 | 10 to end. | i. | 462 |
| Prayer must be humble. | 38 | 10 | i. | 462 |
| Prayer must be fervent. | 38 | 14 | i. | 464 |
| In time of prosperity our prayers are not fervent. | 38 | 15 | i. | 465 |
| Constant prayer a means of maintaining original purity. | 25 | 11, 12 | i. | 309 |
| Power of prayer to the Blessed Virgin. | 25 | 13, 14 | i. | 311 |
| Best prayer when many pray together. | 74 | 9 to end. | ii. | 474 |
| Morning and evening prayer. <i>See Time.</i> | | | | |

Pride.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|----|----|
| In a Christian is less to be excused, than in a Jew or heathen. | 8 | 4 | i. | 88 |
|---|---|---|----|----|

| | SERMON. | MARGINAL NOTE. | VOL. | PAGE. |
|--|---------|-------------------|------|-------|
| Priests. | | | | |
| Must be held in honor. The whole Sermon. | 53 | | ii. | 184 |
| Are raised by God to a great dignity. | 53 | 3 | ii. | 185 |
| Have the most excellent office of all. | 53 | 4, 5 | ii. | 187 |
| Represent the person of Jesus Christ. | 53 | 7 | ii. | 189 |
| Even crowned heads have bowed before them. | 53 | 13 | ii. | 193 |
| Even wicked priests must be honored. | 53 | 14, 15 | ii. | 193 |
| Providence. | | | | |
| Of God rules the world. | 65 | 1 to 4 | ii. | 351 |
| Has appointed a state for each one. | 65 | 4, 5 | ii. | 354 |
| Folly of those who complain of it. | 65 | 8 to end. | ii. | 357 |
| Folly of those who complain of it. | 66 | 11 | ii. | 373 |
| All-wise Providence of God in arranging different states. The whole Sermon. | 66 | | ii. | 363 |
| Which we must admire and praise. | 66 | 6 | ii. | 368 |
| Resignation to Providence for all states in general, and in particular. | 66 | 12 to end. | ii. | 373 |
| Happy they who confidently resign themselves to the Providence of God. The whole Sermon. | 69 | | ii. | 402 |
| Purgatory. | | | | |
| It is a most excellent act of charity towards our neighbor to help the souls in purgatory. The whole Sermon. | 51 | | ii. | 159 |
| Those souls are in great necessity. | 51 | 2 | ii. | 160 |
| They unceasingly sigh to be released. | 51 | 7, 8 | ii. | 163 |
| Wonderful charity of saintly Christians for those souls. | 51 | 10 | ii. | 165 |
| —R.— | | | | |
| Reckoning. | | | | |
| Strict reckoning demanded in judgment for having neglected to hear sermons. | 9 | 15 | i. | 106 |
| Religion. | | | | |
| Spread of the Christian religion throughout the world the greatest miracle, when all the circumstances are taken into account. The whole Sermon. | 1 | | i. | 11 |
| This religion comes from God alone and is the only true religion. | 1 | 11 | i. | 20 |
| Religious State. | | | | |
| How happy it is. The whole Sermon. | 22 | | i. | 262 |
| Is not happy according to the judgment of the world. | 22 | 1 | i. | 263 |
| Resembles the happiness of Heaven. | 22 | 2 | i. | 264 |
| Everything in it helps to constant knowledge and recollection of God. | 22 | 3, 4 | i. | 265 |
| Perfect love of God found in it with greatest certainty. | 22 | 5, 6 | i. | 266 |

| | SERMON. | MARGINAL NOTE. | VOL. | PAGE. |
|--|---------|----------------|------|-------|
| The soul enjoys in it constant peace with God. | 22 | 7, 8, 9 | i. | 268 |
| The lesson to be derived from this. | 22 | 11, 12 | i. | 270 |
| How great the grace of vocation to it. The whole Sermon. | 23 | | i. | 274 |
| Has all the marks of predestination. | 23 | 1 | i. | 275 |
| The life of a religious resembles martyrdom. | 23 | 2 to 5 | i. | 276 |
| This martyrdom cheerfully endured by a religious. | 23 | 5 to 9 | i. | 279 |
| Religious vocation a sure sign of eternal happiness. | 23 | 9 | i. | 283 |
| Happy they who get it. | 23 | 10 | i. | 283 |
| What parents, children and others must learn herefrom. | 23 | 11 to end. | i. | 284 |

Repentance.

| | | | | |
|---|----|----|-----|-----|
| How dangerous to go to sleep in the state of sin without repentance and sorrow. | 75 | 10 | ii. | 488 |
|---|----|----|-----|-----|

Revenge (Desire of).

| | | | | |
|--|---|---|----|----|
| On the part of a Christian is less to be excused than in a Jew or heathen. | 8 | 5 | i. | 88 |
|--|---|---|----|----|

Reverence.

| | | | | |
|---|----|--|----|-----|
| Due to parents from their children. The whole Sermon. | 15 | | i. | 172 |
|---|----|--|----|-----|

Rich.

| | | | | |
|---|----|---------|-----|-----|
| The rich spend their money on unnecessary things and forget the poor. | 50 | 11, 12 | ii. | 155 |
| The rich spend their money on unnecessary things and forget the poor. | 61 | 1 to 4 | ii. | 290 |
| Goodness of God to them. The whole Sermon. | 58 | | ii. | 250 |
| Threatened with woe. | 58 | 1 | ii. | 251 |
| Riches can be used for good and for evil. | 58 | 2, 3 | ii. | 252 |
| Riches serve for the welfare of the body and of the soul. | 58 | 5 to 8 | ii. | 254 |
| The rich can free themselves from all anxiety of soul. | 58 | 9 to 15 | ii. | 257 |
| Must therefore be grateful to God. | 58 | 15 | ii. | 261 |
| Most rich people are very ungrateful to Him. The whole Sermon. | 59 | | ii. | 262 |
| Bound under pain of sin to help the poor. The whole Sermon. | 60 | | ii. | 274 |
| What alms one is bound to give. | 60 | 13 | ii. | 286 |
| Vain excuses of the rich who say they can give little or no alms. The whole Sermon. | 61 | | ii. | 289 |
| Must expect severe punishment if their extravagance prevents them from giving alms. | 63 | 6, 7 | ii. | 324 |
| Still more severe if they oppress and persecute the poor. | 63 | 8 | ii. | 326 |

| | SERMON. | MARGINAL NOTE. | VOL. | PAGE. |
|---|---------|-------------------|------|-------|
| The rich generally lead troubled lives. | . 64 | 5 | ii. | 336 |
| Have a difficulty to gain Heaven. | . 64 | 11, 12 | ii. | 341 |

—S.—

Salvation.

| | | | | |
|--|-----|------------|----|----|
| Eternal salvation the only necessary business of Christians. The whole Sermon. | . 6 | | i. | 63 |
| All other things must give way to it. | . 6 | 3 | i. | 66 |
| All depends on it. | . 6 | 4 | i. | 67 |
| If it is neglected the loss is irreparable. | . 6 | 5 | i. | 68 |
| Yet it is generally neglected. | . 6 | 6 and fol. | i. | 69 |

Scandal.

| | | | | |
|---|-----|---|----|----|
| Given by Christians through immodesty in dress, less to be excused than that given by Jews or heathens. | . 8 | 7 | i. | 90 |
|---|-----|---|----|----|

Sermons.

| | | | | |
|--|------|-------------|----|-----|
| Necessary for the salvation of most people to hear sermons often. | . 9 | 1 to 8 | i. | 96 |
| Very useful for those who are in the state of sin. | . 9 | 8, 9, 10 | i. | 101 |
| Also for the just. | . 9 | 11 | i. | 104 |
| They are to be pitied who seldom hear sermons. | . 9 | 12, 13, 14 | i. | 105 |
| Must therefore give strict account. | . 9 | 15 | i. | 106 |
| How one should go to sermons. The whole Sermon. | . 10 | | i. | |
| A well prepared heart required for this. | . 10 | 3 | i. | 111 |
| In what this preparation consists. | . 10 | 4 and fol. | i. | 111 |
| To come too late to sermons an irreverence towards God. | . 10 | 8 | i. | 113 |
| An ingratitude to God. | . 10 | 10 | i. | 115 |
| A want of love for God. | . 10 | 11 | i. | 115 |
| Those who come too late derive little or no fruit. | . 10 | 12 and fol. | i. | 116 |
| How to hear sermons. The whole Sermon. | . 11 | | i. | 119 |
| God speaks to us in sermons of a most necessary business. | . 11 | 2 | i. | 121 |
| Therefore constant attention is required. | . 11 | 3 and fol. | i. | 122 |
| Sermons must be heard with great desire to profit by them. | . 11 | 9 to end. | i. | 127 |
| What must be done after the sermons. The whole Sermon. | . 12 | | i. | 132 |
| What is heard in sermons must be taken to heart and acted upon. | . 12 | 2 to 10 | i. | 133 |
| To learn truths in sermons and not act upon them brings reprobation from God in this life. | . 12 | 10, 11 | i. | 139 |
| A more severe account in judgment. | . 12 | 12 | i. | 142 |
| A deeper damnation in eternity. | . 12 | 13 | i. | 143 |

SERMON. MARGINAL NOTE. VOL. PAGE.

Servants.

| | | | | |
|--|----|-----------|-----|-----|
| How they must serve their employers. The whole Sermon. | 55 | | ii. | 209 |
| In what their fidelity consists. | 55 | 1 | ii. | 210 |
| In how many ways it may be violated. | 55 | 2 to 6 | ii. | 211 |
| Must obey their employers. | 55 | 7, 8 | ii. | 215 |
| Must obey with patience. | 55 | 13 | ii. | 222 |
| Many sin against this obedience. | 55 | 9, 10, 11 | ii. | 217 |

Service (of God).

| | | | | |
|--|----|---------|-----|-----|
| Consists in doing the will of God. | 67 | 7, 8, 9 | ii. | 384 |
| Although He may require lowly duties from us. | 67 | 10 | ii. | 386 |
| To omit them and do something better, would not be to serve God. | 67 | 11 | ii. | 387 |

Shrove-tide.

| | | | | |
|--|----|--|-----|-----|
| No more liberty is given to do wrong during this season, than at any other time. The whole Sermon. | 72 | | ii. | 445 |
|--|----|--|-----|-----|

Sin.

| | | | | |
|--|----|----|-----|-----|
| There is no sin that is not thought little of somewhere or other. | 35 | 1 | i. | 442 |
| The sins of Christians are greater and less to be excused than those of Jews and heathens. The whole Sermon. | 8 | | i. | 85 |
| Means of guarding against the dangers of sin. | 68 | 9 | ii. | 400 |
| Past sins can be made the occasion of gaining greater glory in Heaven. | 70 | 11 | ii. | 429 |

Sinners.

| | | | | |
|--|---|------|----|-----|
| Very necessary for them often to hear sermons. | 9 | 8, 9 | i. | 101 |
|--|---|------|----|-----|

Soul.

| | | | | |
|--|----|-------|----|-----|
| Is a most precious image, whose Maker is God. | 18 | 2 | i. | 213 |
| Is created most carefully to the image of God. | 18 | 3 | i. | 214 |
| Is held in great esteem by God. | 18 | 4 | i. | 214 |
| And even by the devil. | 18 | 5 | i. | 216 |
| Holy servants of God expose their lives to danger for the sake of saving one soul. | 18 | 6, 7 | i. | 216 |
| And yet it is thought little of by most people. | 18 | 8 | i. | 217 |
| Generally the body is more looked after. | 18 | 9, 10 | i. | 218 |
| It is sold for a most wretched price. | 18 | 11 | i. | 219 |

| | SERMON. | MARGINAL NOTE. | VOL. | PAGE. |
|---|---------|-------------------|------|-------|
| Blindness of men who thus undervalue their souls. | 18 | 12 | i. | 220 |
| We have only one soul, therefore we must guard it most carefully. | 19 | 1 to 6 | i. | 223 |
| Many treat their only soul as if they had thousands of souls to lose. | 19 | 7, 8, 9 | i. | 227 |
| Many sacrifice their souls to the devil, and help him to destroy other souls. | 19 | 11 to 14 | i. | 230 |
| Prayer to God to guard our souls. | 19 | 15 | i. | 234 |
| The soul loves the body. | 31 | 2 | i. | 377 |

State.

| | | | | |
|---|----|--------|----|-----|
| The choice of a state is a most important affair, for on it, generally speaking, depends eternal happiness or misery. | 20 | 2 | i. | 236 |
| Must not be determined on without asking advice. | 20 | 3 | i. | 237 |
| No one can give good advice herein but God alone. | 20 | 4 | i. | 238 |
| Not to follow that advice in this matter is to endanger one's eternal salvation. | 20 | 5 | i. | 239 |
| Most children select, without thinking, the first state that offers. | 20 | 7 | i. | 241 |
| They ask advice, but not from God. | 20 | 8 | i. | 243 |
| Many parents appoint, according to their own will, states for their children. | 20 | 9 | i. | 245 |
| Thus sinning against God and against their children. | 20 | 11 | i. | 246 |
| How to act in the selection of a state. The whole Sermon. | 21 | | i. | 256 |
| A certain state is the means of attaining our last end. | 21 | 2 | i. | 251 |
| Hence each one must consider which state is for him the safest means to attain his last end. | 21 | 3, 4 | i. | 252 |
| And whether he has the abilities necessary for this state. | 21 | 5 | i. | 254 |
| Many parents and children fail herein, to the detriment of both. | 21 | 6 | i. | 254 |
| We must consider whether the state is in accordance with the will of God. | 21 | 8 | i. | 256 |
| How to know the will of God herein. | 21 | 11, 12 | i. | 257 |
| Children must be careful not to incur the danger of eternal ruin by entering on a state without or against the will of God. | 21 | 13, 14 | i. | 259 |
| What they must do who have chosen a state without asking advice from God, or against His will. | 21 | 15 | i. | 261 |
| In all states there are temptations and dangers. | 25 | 1 | i. | 301 |
| In all states there are temptations and dangers. | 28 | 1 | i. | 339 |

| | SERMON. | MARGINAL NOTR. | VOL. | PAGE. |
|--|---------|-------------------|------|-------|
| In all states there are temptations and dangers. | 68 | 4 | ii. | 395 |
| God has appointed a state for each one, and therefore each one must be satisfied with his state. The whole Sermon. | 65 | | ii. | 350 |
| Folly of those who are not content, and there are many such. | 65 | 8 to end. | ii. | 357 |
| Folly of those who are not content, and there are many such. | 66 | 11 | ii. | 373 |
| Folly of those who are not content, and there are many such. | 67 | 2 to 5 | ii. | 380 |
| God has appointed different states for the general and particular welfare of all men. The whole Sermon. | 66 | | ii. | 363 |
| That difference necessary for the preservation of the world. | 66 | 1 to 8 | ii. | 364 |
| No one could serve God better in any other state than in his own. | 67 | 1 to 5 | ii. | 380 |
| He would not serve God in another state. | 67 | 5 to end. | ii. | 383 |
| How every one must serve God daily, according to his state. | 67 | 13 | ii. | 390 |
| Every one must be content with his state, even as far as spiritual dangers are concerned. The whole Sermon. | 68 | | ii. | 391 |
| To no purpose do we try to throw the blame of our sins on our state. | 68 | 3 | ii. | 394 |
| In another state one would sin more, although the dangers might be less. | 68 | 6 | ii. | 398 |
| How every one has to employ the present day, according to his state. | 76 | 8 to end. | ii. | 498 |

Subjects.

| | | | | |
|---|----|--------|-----|-----|
| Their duties towards temporal and spiritual superiors. The whole Sermon. | 52 | | ii. | 170 |
| Disobedienc and disrespect of subjects towards superiors punished by God. | 52 | 11, 12 | ii. | 180 |

Superiors.

| | | | | |
|--|----|----------|-----|-----|
| Must be for the general welfare. | 52 | 2, 3, 4 | ii. | 172 |
| Have their authority from God. | 52 | 5, 6 | ii. | 175 |
| Govern instead of God. | 52 | 7 | ii. | 176 |
| Must be held in honor, no matter what they are personally. | 52 | 8, 9, 10 | ii. | 177 |

—T.—

Temptation.

| | | | | |
|--------------------|----|---|----|-----|
| All men suffer it. | 25 | 1 | i. | 301 |
| Means against it. | 25 | 7 | i. | 306 |

Thankfulness.

| | | | | |
|--|---|--|----|----|
| How thankful we must be to God for calling us to the true faith. The whole Sermon. | 2 | | i. | 24 |
|--|---|--|----|----|

| | SERMON. | MARGINAL NOTE. | VOL. | PAGE. |
|--|---------|-------------------|------|-------|
| How thankful we must be to the holy guardian angels. | 5 | 10 to end. | i. | 59 |
| Thanksgiving. | | | | |
| Ought to be made every evening for benefits received. | 75 | 2 | ii. | 481 |
| Time. | | | | |
| How lost time may be redeemed in old age. The whole Sermon. | 70 | | ii. | 418 |
| In a short time a zealous person may merit more than another in a longer time. | 70 | 12, 13 | ii. | 428 |
| The present and future time must be made good use of. The whole Sermon. | 71 | | ii. | 432 |
| Value of time. | 71 | 2 to 5 | ii. | 434 |
| Time is lost, especially in youth, in doing nothing, in doing evil, and in doing something else besides what one ought to do. | 71 | 6 to end. | ii. | 436 |
| Time (Evening). | | | | |
| Every Christian should examine his conscience in the evening. The whole Sermon | 75 | | ii. | 480 |
| Utility of that examen. | 75 | 7 | ii. | 485 |
| Time (Morning). | | | | |
| The best time for prayer, and the most pleasing to God, is the early morning; therefore that time should be given to prayer, in preference to all other occupations. The whole Sermon. | 73 | | ii. | 457 |
| Vain excuses of many, who say they cannot give this time to prayer. | 73 | 9 to end. | ii. | 463 |
| How useful prayer is in the morning. | 74 | 2 to 9 | ii. | 468 |
| In what this prayer consists, and what is the best kind. | 74 | 9 to end. | ii. | 473 |
| Tobias. | | | | |
| How he taught his son. | 41 | 6 | ii. | 37 |
| Trouble. | | | | |
| In public as well as private trouble we learn best how to pray. The whole Sermon. | 38 | | i. | 456 |
| We must thank God for troubles as for a great benefit. | 38 | 18, 19 | i. | 467 |
| —U.— | | | | |
| Unity. | | | | |
| Makes the happiness of everything. <i>See Married People.</i> | 30 | 1, 2 | i. | 365 |

Alphabetical Index of Subjects.

535

| | SERMON. | MARGINAL NOTE. | VOL. | PAGE. |
|---|---------|----------------|------|-------|
| Unmarried State. | | | | |
| How happy it is. The whole Sermon. | 24 | | i. | 290 |
| Not all unmarried people belong to it. | 24 | 1, 2 | i. | 290 |
| Who belong to it. | 24 | 3 | i. | 292 |
| Praise of this state. | 24 | 4 and fol. | i. | 292 |
| Dangers and graces of this state. The whole Sermon. | 25 | | i. | 300 |
| Unmarried people are tempted by the devil, the world and the flesh. | 25 | 2 to 5 | i. | 302 |
| They are protected by Christ. | 25 | 5, 6 | i. | 304 |
| Means for the unmarried to preserve purity. | 25 | 7 | i. | 306 |

—V.—

Virgins.

| | | | | |
|---|----|---------|----|-----|
| Have God as their Bridegroom. | 24 | 7, 8, 9 | i. | 295 |
| Folly of those who lose their virginity in youth. | 24 | 10 | i. | 297 |
| What a great treasure they lose. | 24 | 11 | i. | 298 |
| Means of preserving it. | 25 | 7 | i. | 306 |

Vocation.

To the true faith. *See Faith.*
 To the religious life. *See Religious Life.*

—W.—

Wife.

| | | | | |
|--|----|----------|----|-----|
| Wives are in danger of being perverted by their husbands. | 28 | 10, 11 | i. | 344 |
| Many have reason to complain of their husbands. | 31 | 11 | i. | 383 |
| How they must behave when their husbands give them cause for dissension. The whole Sermon. | 32 | | i. | 386 |
| Duty of wives towards their husbands. The whole Sermon. | 33 | | i. | 397 |
| Must be subject to their husbands. | 33 | 3, 4, 5 | i. | 399 |
| How, and in what they must obey. | 33 | 6 | i. | 401 |
| Thus they will be able to rule their husbands. | 33 | 7, 8 | i. | 402 |
| Must be faithful to them in domestic matters. | 33 | 9 | i. | 402 |
| Must love them constantly. | 33 | 10, 11 | i. | 403 |
| Many act contrary to that. | 33 | 12 to 15 | i. | 405 |
| How to act so as not to give husbands cause for jealousy. | 34 | 6, 7 | i. | 414 |

Will (of God).

| | | | | |
|--|----|--------|----|-----|
| The state I choose must be in conformity with the will of God. | 21 | 8 | i. | 256 |
| The merit of a good work consists in that. | 21 | 9 | i. | 256 |
| How to know the will of God. | 21 | 11, 12 | i. | 257 |

| | SERMON. | MARGINAL NOTE. | VOL. | PAGE. |
|--|---------|-------------------|------|-------|
| Work. | | | | |
| A number of works, each of which is law- ful in itself, may be sinful. | 57 | 1 | ii. | 238 |
| The perfection of good works makes the merit, and not the length of time they take. | 70 | 10 | ii. | 427 |
| Worldly Goods. | | | | |
| In them true happiness not to be found. | 7 | 2 | i. | 76 |
| Are only empty goods. | 7 | 3 | i. | 77 |
| Uncertain goods. | 7 | 4 | i. | 78 |
| Imperfect and mixed with unhappiness. | 7 | 5 | i. | 79 |
| Inconstant and short-lived. | 7 | 6 | i. | 80 |
| Yet most men seek their happiness in them, but in vain. | 7 | 7 | i. | 81 |
| No joy in the Lord can be found in such goods. | 22 | 7, 8 | i. | 268 |

Worldly Judgment.

| | | | | |
|--|----|---|----|-----|
| Fails in considering the religious state. | 22 | 1 | i. | 263 |
|--|----|---|----|-----|

—Y.—

Youth.

| | | | | |
|---|----|-------------|-----|-----|
| God especially desires to be served in time of youth. | 13 | 3 | i. | 148 |
| Youth is the purest time. | 13 | 3 | i. | 148 |
| Is generally the time of temptation. | 13 | 4 | i. | 149 |
| Is especially loved by God. | 13 | 6 | i. | 150 |
| Is generally spent in a most miserable way, and is unjustly taken away from God. | 13 | 7, 8 | i. | 151 |
| Therefore a terrible curse must be feared. | 13 | 9 | i. | 154 |
| Very foolish to do in youth what one must afterwards be sorry for. | 13 | 10 and fol. | i. | 155 |
| As children are in their youth, so will they generally be in after life. The whole Sermon. | 14 | | i. | 159 |
| How ill the time of youth is spent. | 71 | 7 to end. | ii. | 463 |