40 Homilies on the Gospels

Gregory the Great (c. AD 540–604)

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40 HOMILIES ON THE GOSPELS Preface. To Secundinus, Bishop of Taormina.

To the most reverend and holy brother Secundinus, bishop, Gregory, servant of the servants of God. During the sacred solemnities of the Mass, I have expounded forty readings from the Holy Gospel, from those which are customarily read on certain days in this Church. The exposition of some was dictated and recited by a notary before the assembled congregation; but the explanation of others I myself spoke aloud before the people, and it was taken down just as I spoke. But certain brethren, burning with zeal for the sacred word, copied them before I could bring what I had said to its intended form through careful revision. I might rightly compare these men to hungry people who desire to eat food before it is fully cooked. Now regarding what is written, ”Jesus was led into the desert by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil,” I first expounded it as though under a certain ambiguity, but afterward I corrected that doubtful passage with a definite notation. I also took care to arrange these same homilies in two volumes in the order in which they were delivered, so that the first twenty, which were dictated, and the later twenty likewise, which were spoken before the eyes of the congregation, might be distinguished in separate books.

But the fact that certain passages which are read later in the Gospel have been placed before, and certain ones placed after which are found written earlier by the evangelist, should by no means disturb your fraternity, because just as they were delivered by me at different times, so also they were arranged in the volumes by the scribes. Therefore let your fraternity, always attentive to sacred readings, if it finds the aforesaid Gospel passage set forth with ambiguity, or discovers these same homilies not arranged as I have described, know that these have remained uncorrected, and let it correct them according to those which I have taken care to send through the present bearer, and by no means allow those to remain without correction. Moreover, the corrected copies are kept in the archives of our holy

Church, so that if any happen to be far from your fraternity, they may find here a source from which they may become certain about what has been corrected.

HOMILY 1. Delivered to the people in the basilica of Saint Peter the Apostle, on the Second Sunday of Advent of the Lord.

READING FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE. At that time, Jesus said to his disciples: There will be signs in the sun, and moon, and stars, and on the earth distress of nations, because of the confusion of the sound of the sea and the waves, men withering away from fear and expectation of what will come upon the whole world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and majesty. But when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near. And he told them a parable: Look at the fig tree and all the trees; when they now produce fruit from themselves, you know that summer is near. So also you, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. Amen I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things come to pass. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. Our Lord and Redeemer, most beloved brethren, desiring to find us prepared, announces what evils will follow upon the aging world, so that He might restrain us from love of it. He makes known what great calamities will precede its approaching end, so that if we are unwilling to fear God in times of peace, we may at least fear His judgment drawing near, worn down by these afflictions.

For to this reading of the Holy Gospel which your brotherhood has just heard, the Lord prefaced a little earlier, saying: ”Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be great earthquakes in various places, and pestilences, and famines. And after some intervening matters, He added what you have just heard: ”There shall be signs in the sun, and moon, and stars, and upon the earth distress of nations, from the confusion of the roaring of the sea and waves. Of all these things, we certainly see some already accomplished, and we dread others as soon to come. For we see nation rising against nation and their pressure bearing down upon the lands more in our own times than we read of in books. How often we have heard from other parts of the world that earthquakes have destroyed countless cities, you well know. We suffer pestilences without ceasing. Signs in the sun, and moon, and stars we do not yet see openly, but that these too are not far off we gather from the very changes in the atmosphere. Indeed, before Italy was handed over to be struck by the barbarian sword, we saw fiery battle lines in the sky, flashing with that very blood of the human race which was afterward shed. The confusion of the sea and waves has not yet newly arisen.

But since many things foretold have already been fulfilled, there is no doubt that the few which remain will also follow, for the fulfillment of past events is the certainty of things to come. We say these things, dearly beloved brethren, so that your

minds may be awakened to the pursuit of caution, lest they grow sluggish through security, lest they become feeble through ignorance, but that fear may always stir them and solicitude strengthen them in good work, considering what is added by the voice of our Redeemer: ”Men withering away from fear and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world. For the powers of heaven shall be moved. For what does the Lord call the powers of heaven except angels, archangels, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, which at the coming of the strict Judge will then visibly appear to our eyes, so that they may then strictly demand from us what the invisible Creator now patiently bears with us? And there it is added: ”And then they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and majesty. As if it were openly said: They shall see in power and majesty Him whom, placed in humility, they refused to hear, so that they may then feel His power all the more strictly, inasmuch as now they do not bow the neck of their heart to His patience. But because these things have been said against the reprobate, the words soon turn to the consolation of the elect. For it is added:

”But when these things begin to come to pass, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near. As if the Truth openly admonishes His elect, saying: When the calamities of the world increase, when the terror of judgment is shown by the powers being shaken, lift up your heads, that is, gladden your hearts, because while the world, to which you are not friends, comes to an end, the redemption which you have sought draws near. For in Sacred Scripture the head is often used to mean the mind, because just as the members are governed by the head, so thoughts are arranged by the mind. Therefore to lift up our heads is to raise our minds to the joys of the heavenly homeland. Those who love God are therefore commanded to rejoice and be glad at the end of the world, because indeed they soon find Him whom they love, while that which they did not love passes away. For far be it that any of the faithful who desires to see God should grieve over the afflictions of the world, knowing that it will end through these very afflictions. For it is written: ”Whoever wishes to be a friend of this world is made an enemy of God. Therefore whoever does not rejoice as the end of the world approaches testifies that he is its friend, and by this is convicted of being an enemy of God.

But far be this from the hearts of the faithful, far be it from those who both believe by faith that there is another life, and love it through their deeds. For to grieve over the destruction of the world belongs to those who have planted the roots of their heart in love of it, who do not seek the life to come, who do not even suspect that it exists. But we who have known the eternal joys of the heavenly homeland ought to hasten to them as quickly as possible. We should desire to journey there sooner and to arrive by a shorter way. For by what evils is the world not oppressed? What sadness, what adversity does not distress us? What is mortal life but a journey? And consider, my brothers, what it means to grow weary from the labor of the journey, and yet not want that same journey to end. Moreover, our Redeemer

shows by a thoughtful comparison that the world ought to be trampled upon and despised, when He immediately adds: ”See the fig tree and all the trees; when they now produce fruit from themselves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. As if He openly said: Just as the approaching summer is known from the fruit of trees, so from the ruin of the world it is recognized that the kingdom of God is near.

By these words it is certainly shown that the fruit of the world is ruin. For it grows in order to fall. It sprouts forth in order to consume with disasters whatever it has sprouted. But the kingdom of God is rightly compared to summer, because then the clouds of our sorrow pass away, and the days of life shine bright with the radiance of the eternal sun. All these things are confirmed with great certainty when the sentence is added which says: ”Amen I say to you, this generation shall not pass away until all things come to pass. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. For nothing in the nature of corporeal things is more enduring than heaven and earth, and nothing in nature passes as quickly as speech. For words, as long as they are incomplete, are not words; but when they have been completed, they no longer exist at all, because they cannot be completed except by passing away. Therefore he says: ”Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. As if he were saying openly: Everything that is enduring among you is not enduring unto eternity without change; and everything that is seen to pass away in me is held fixed and without passing away, because my speech which passes away expresses judgments that remain without mutability. Behold, my brothers, we now see what we used to only hear about. The world is pressed by new and ever-increasing evils daily.

You see how few remain from that countless multitude; and yet still daily scourges press upon us, sudden disasters overwhelm us, new and unforeseen calamities afflict us. For just as in youth the body thrives, the chest remains strong and healthy, the neck muscular, the lungs full; but in old age the stature becomes bent, the withered neck droops, the chest is burdened with frequent sighs, strength fails, and shortness of breath interrupts the words of one speaking; indeed even if illness is absent, for the senses their very health is often itself a sickness: so the world in its earlier years flourished as if in youth, was robust for propagating the offspring of the human race, vigorous in bodily health, rich in abundance of things; but now it is weighed down by its very old age, and is pressed as if toward imminent death by increasing troubles. Therefore, my brothers, do not love what you see cannot stand for long. Keep the apostolic precepts in your mind, by which he admonishes us, saying: Do not love the world, nor the things that are in the world, because if anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Three days ago, brothers, you learned how by a sudden whirlwind ancient trees were uprooted, houses destroyed, and churches overthrown from their foundations. How many who were

healthy and well at evening thought they would do something on the morrow, and yet that same night perished by sudden death, caught in the snare of ruin?

But we must consider, dearly beloved, that to accomplish these things the invisible judge moved the breath of the gentlest wind, stirred up the storm of a single cloud, and undermined the earth, shaking the foundations of so many buildings about to fall. What then will this judge do when he comes in person, and his wrath blazes forth in vengeance for sins, if he cannot be endured when he strikes us through the gentlest cloud? In the presence of his wrath, what flesh will stand, if he moved the wind and undermined the earth, stirred up the air, and laid low so many buildings? Paul, considering this severity of the coming judge, says: ”It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. The Psalmist expresses this, saying: ”God shall come manifestly, our God, and he shall not be silent. Fire shall burn in his sight, and around him a mighty tempest. For tempest and fire accompany the severity of such great justice, because the tempest tests those whom the fire will burn. Therefore, dearest brothers, place that day before your eyes, and whatever now seems burdensome is lightened in comparison to it. For concerning that day it is said through the prophet: ”Near is the great day of the Lord, near and exceedingly swift. The voice of the day of the Lord is bitter; there the mighty man shall be troubled.

A day of wrath, that day, a day of tribulation and distress, a day of calamity and misery, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of cloud and whirlwind, a day of trumpet and clamor. Concerning this day the Lord again says through the prophet: ”Yet once more I will move not only the earth, but also heaven. Behold, as we have said, he moved the air, and the earth did not stand; who then will endure when he moves heaven? What else shall we call the terrors we see but heralds of the wrath to come? Hence we must also consider that these tribulations differ from that final tribulation as much as the person of a herald differs from the power of the judge. Therefore, dearest brothers, think upon that day with all your attention, correct your life, change your ways, overcome evil temptations by resisting them, and punish sins committed with tears. For you will one day behold the coming of the eternal judge with as much greater security as you now anticipate his severity by fearing it.

HOMILY II. Delivered to the people in the basilica of Saint Peter the Apostle, on Quinquagesima Sunday.

READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE. At that time, Jesus took his twelve disciples and said to them: Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon. And after they have scourged him, they will put him to death, and on the third day he shall rise again. And they understood none of these

things. And this word was hidden from them, and they did not understand the things that were said. Now it came to pass, as he drew near to Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the wayside, begging. And when he heard the crowd passing by, he asked what this meant. And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he cried out, saying: Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. And those who went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace. But he cried out much more: Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus, standing still, commanded him to be brought to him. And when he had come near, he asked him, saying: What do you want me to do for you? And he said: Lord, that I may see. And Jesus said to him: Receive your sight, your faith has saved you. And immediately he saw, and followed him, glorifying God.

And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God. Our Redeemer, foreseeing that the souls of the disciples would be troubled by His passion, foretold to them long beforehand both the suffering of that same passion and the glory of His resurrection, so that when they saw Him dying, as had been predicted, they would not doubt that He would also rise again. But because the disciples, still carnal, were by no means able to grasp the words of the mystery, a miracle is performed. Before their eyes a blind man receives light, so that those who could not grasp the words of the heavenly mystery might be strengthened in faith by heavenly deeds. But the miracles of our Lord and Savior are to be received, dearest brothers, in such a way that we both believe them to have truly occurred, and yet understand that through their significance they indicate something to us. For His works both show one thing through their power and speak another through their mystery. For behold, we do not know who this blind man was according to the historical account, but yet we know whom he signifies through the mystery. For the blind man is the human race, which, expelled from the joys of paradise in its first parent, ignorant of the brightness of the light above, suffers the darkness of its condemnation;

but yet is illuminated through the presence of its Redeemer, so that it now sees the joys of the inner light through desire, and sets the steps of good work upon the way of life. It must be noted that when Jesus is said to draw near to Jericho, the blind man is illuminated. For Jericho is interpreted as ”moon,” and the moon in sacred speech stands for the weakness of the flesh, because as it wanes through its monthly phases, it signifies the weakness of our mortality. Therefore, while our Creator draws near to Jericho, the blind man returns to light, because when the divinity took on the weakness of our flesh, the human race received back the light it had lost. For by the very means through which God suffers human things, man is raised up to divine things. This blind man is rightly described as sitting beside the road and being a beggar; for the Truth himself says: ”I am the way. Therefore whoever does not know the brightness of eternal light is blind; but if he already believes in the Redeemer, he sits beside the way; if, however, he already believes but neglects to ask that he might receive eternal light, and ceases from prayers,

the blind man indeed sits beside the way but does not beg at all. But if he has both believed and recognized the blindness of his heart, and asks that he might receive the light of truth, the blind man sits beside the way and begs.

Therefore whoever recognizes the darkness of his own blindness, whoever understands that the light of eternity is what he lacks, let him cry out from the depths of his heart, let him cry out with the voices of his mind, saying: ”Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. But let us hear what is added as the blind man cries out: ”And those who were going before rebuked him, that he should be silent. Those who precede Jesus as he comes—what do they signify but the crowds of carnal desires and the tumults of vices, which, before Jesus comes to our heart, scatter our thoughts with their temptations and disturb the voice of the heart in prayer? For often when we wish to turn to the Lord after committing sins, when we strive to pray against those very vices we have committed, the phantoms of the sins we have done rush upon the heart, strike back against the vision of our mind, confuse the soul, and suppress the voice of our entreaty. Those who went before, therefore, were rebuking him to be silent, because before Jesus comes to the heart, the evils we have done, thrust upon our thoughts through their images, disturb us in the very midst of our prayer. But let us hear what this blind man who was to be illuminated did in response to these things. It follows: ”But he cried out all the more: Son of David, have mercy on me.

Behold, the one whom the crowd rebukes to be silent cries out more and more, because the more heavily we are pressed by the tumult of carnal thoughts, the more ardently we ought to persist in prayer. The crowd opposes us lest we cry out, because we often suffer the phantoms of our sins even in prayer. But indeed it is necessary that the voice of our heart insist all the more strongly the more harshly it is repelled, so that it may overcome the tumult of unlawful thought and burst forth to the merciful ears of the Lord by the excess of its importunity. Each one, as I suspect, recognizes in himself what we are saying, because when we turn our mind from this world to God, when we turn to the work of prayer, the very things we previously did with delight we afterward endure as troublesome and burdensome in our prayer. Scarcely is the thought of them driven away from the eyes of the heart by the hand of holy desire; scarcely are their phantoms overcome through the laments of penance. But when we persist intensely in our prayer, we fix Jesus as He passes by in our mind. Hence it is added there: And Jesus, standing still, commanded him to be brought to Him. Behold, He who was passing by before now stands still, because while we still suffer the crowds of phantasms in prayer, we perceive Jesus as somewhat passing by.

But when we persist intensely in prayer, Jesus stands still to restore our sight, because God is fixed in the heart, and the lost light is restored. Yet in this matter the Lord suggests something else to us, which can be usefully understood concerning

His humanity and divinity. For Jesus passing by heard the blind man crying out, but standing still He performed the miracle of illumination. For to pass by belongs to humanity, to stand still belongs to divinity. Through His humanity indeed He experienced being born, growing, dying, rising again, coming from place to place. Therefore, since in divinity there is no changeableness, and this very thing—to be changed—is to pass by, certainly that passing by is from the flesh, not from the divinity. But through His divinity it belongs to Him always to stand still, because He is present everywhere, neither coming through movement nor departing through movement. Therefore the Lord passing by hears the blind man crying out, but standing still illuminates him, because through His humanity He had compassion on the cries of our blindness and showed mercy, but He poured into us the light of grace through the power of His divinity. And it should be noted what He says to the blind man as he approaches: ”What do you want Me to do for you? Did He who was able to restore light not know what the blind man wanted? But He wishes to be asked for that which He foreknows both that we will ask and that He will grant.

For He urges us persistently to prayer, and yet says: ”For your heavenly Father knows what you need before you ask Him. Therefore He requires to be asked for this reason: He requires it in order to arouse the heart to prayer. Hence the blind man immediately added: ”Lord, that I may see. Behold, the blind man seeks from the Lord not gold, but light. He considers it worthless to seek anything apart from light, because even if a blind man can possess anything whatsoever, without light he cannot see what he has. Let us therefore imitate, dearly beloved brethren, him whom we have heard was saved both in body and in mind. Let us not seek from the Lord false riches, nor earthly gifts, nor fleeting honors, but light; and not that light which is confined to a place, which ends with time, which is interrupted by the variation of nights, which is perceived by us in common with beasts, but let us seek the light which we can see together with the angels alone, which no beginning commences nor any end confines. To this light, indeed, faith is the way. Hence rightly it is immediately answered to the blind man as he is enlightened: ”Receive your sight, your faith has saved you. But to these things carnal thinking says: How can I seek spiritual light, which I cannot see? How is it certain to me that it exists, since it does not shine upon my bodily eyes?

To which thought, indeed, anyone may briefly respond that even these very things which he perceives, he thinks not through the body but through the soul. And no one sees his own soul, yet he does not doubt that he has a soul which he does not see. For the visible body is governed by the invisible soul. But if what is invisible is taken away, immediately that which seemed to stand visibly collapses. Therefore from an invisible substance one lives in this visible life, and is the existence of an invisible life doubted? But let us now hear what happened to the blind man who was asking, or what he himself did. It follows: ”Immediately he saw, and followed him. He sees and follows who puts into practice the good that he understands. But

he sees and does not follow who indeed understands the good, but disdains to do good works. If therefore, dearest brothers, we now recognize the blindness of our pilgrimage, if by believing in the mystery of our Redeemer we sit by the wayside, if by praying daily we seek light from our Creator, if having been illuminated after our blindness we now see that same light through understanding, let us follow in our works the Jesus whom we perceive in our mind. Let us observe where he walks, and by imitating hold to his footsteps. For he follows Jesus who imitates him. For this reason he says: ”Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead. For ”follow” means ”imitate.

Again he admonishes on this point, saying: ”If anyone serves me, let him follow me. Let us therefore consider where he walks, that we may deserve to follow. Behold, though he is Lord and Creator of the angels, about to take up our nature which he created, he came into the womb of the Virgin. Yet he did not wish to be born in this world through the wealthy; he chose poor parents. Hence even a lamb to be offered for him was lacking; his mother found young doves and a pair of turtledoves for the sacrifice. He did not wish to prosper in the world; he endured reproaches and mockeries; he bore spitting, scourging, blows, a crown of thorns, and the cross; and because we fell from inner joy through delight in bodily things, he showed with what bitterness one returns there. What therefore ought man to suffer for himself, if God endured such things for men? He therefore who has now believed in Christ, but still pursues the gains of avarice, is lifted up in the pride of honor, burns with the torches of envy, pollutes himself with the filth of lust, desires the prosperous things that are in the world—he disdains to follow the Jesus in whom he has believed. For he walks by a different path, if he seeks joys and pleasures, when his guide showed him the way of bitterness. Let us therefore call back before our eyes the sins we have committed;

let us consider how terrible is the judge who comes to punish these things; let us form our mind for lamentation; let our life become bitter for a time in repentance, lest it feel eternal bitterness in punishment. For through weeping we are led to eternal joys, as Truth promises when it says: ”Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. But through joys one arrives at weeping, as this same Truth attests when it says: ”Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. If therefore we seek the joy of reward at our arrival, let us hold to the bitterness of repentance on the way. And so it happens that not only does our life advance toward God, but this very conversion of ours kindles others to the praise of God. Hence it is added there: ”And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.”

HOMILY III. Delivered to the people in the basilica of the holy martyr Felicitas, on the day of her nativity.

READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW. At that time, while Jesus was speaking to the crowds, behold, his mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with him. And someone said to him: Behold, your mother and your brothers are standing outside, seeking you. But he, answering the one who spoke to him, said: Who is my mother, and who are my brothers? And extending his hands toward his disciples, he said: Behold my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother. The reading recited from the Holy Gospel, dearly beloved brethren, is brief, but laden with the great weight of mysteries. For Jesus, our Creator and Redeemer, pretends not to know His mother, and indicates who is His mother and who are His relatives not through kinship of the flesh, but through union of the spirit, saying: ”Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? For whoever does the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother. By these words, what else does He suggest to us, except that He gathers many who are obedient to His commands from among the Gentiles, and does not acknowledge Judea, from whose flesh He was born?

Hence also His mother, when she is seemingly not acknowledged, is said to be standing outside, because clearly the Synagogue is not recognized by its Author, since, while holding to the observance of the Law, it lost spiritual understanding, and fixed itself outside in guarding the letter. But since he who does the will of the Father is called sister and brother of the Lord, on account of both sexes who are gathered to the faith, this is not surprising; yet it is greatly to be wondered how one is also called mother. For he deigned to call his faithful disciples brothers, saying: Go, announce to my brothers. Therefore, he who could become a brother of the Lord by coming to faith—it must be asked how he can also be a mother? But we should know that one who is a brother and sister of Christ by believing becomes a mother by preaching. For one gives birth to the Lord, as it were, when one has poured him into the heart of the hearer. And one becomes his mother if through one’s voice the love of the Lord is begotten in the mind of one’s neighbor. To confirm this matter fittingly for us, blessed Felicity is present, whose birthday we celebrate today, who by believing became a handmaid of Christ, and by preaching was made a mother of Christ.

For she feared to leave her seven sons, as is read in the more accurate accounts of her deeds, alive in the flesh after her, just as carnal parents usually fear to send their dead children before them. For when she was seized in the labor of persecution, she strengthened the hearts of her sons by preaching the love of the heavenly fatherland, and she brought forth in spirit those whom she had borne in the flesh, so that by preaching she might bear to God those whom she had borne in the flesh to the world. Consider, dearest brothers, a manly heart in a womanly body. She stood undaunted before death. She feared to lose the light of truth in her sons, if she had not been bereaved. Shall I then call this woman a martyr? Rather,

more than a martyr. Certainly the Lord, when He spoke of John, said: ”What did you go out into the desert to see? A prophet? Indeed I say to you, and more than a prophet. And John himself, when asked, answered, saying: ”I am not a prophet. For he who knew himself to be more than a prophet denied being a prophet. He is therefore called more than a prophet because the office of a prophet is to foretell things to come, not also to show them. But John is more than a prophet because he pointed out with his finger the one whom he proclaimed with his word.

I would therefore call this woman not a martyr, but more than a martyr, who, having sent seven pledges ahead to the kingdom, came first but arrived eighth. The mother beheld the death of her sons both in anguish and undaunted; she applied the joy of hope to the pain of nature. She feared for them while living, she rejoiced when they were dying. She wished to leave no one behind her, lest if she had any survivor, she could not have a companion. Let no one among you, dearest brothers, suppose that her heart was not at all struck by carnal affection when her sons were dying. For she could not see her sons, whom she knew to be her own flesh, dying without grief; but there was an inner force of love that conquered the pain of the flesh. Hence also to Peter, about to suffer, it is said: ”When you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and lead you where you do not wish to go. For if Peter had completely not wished to suffer for Christ, he could not have done so; but the martyrdom which he did not wish through the weakness of the flesh, he loved through the strength of the spirit. While through the flesh he trembles at punishments, through the spirit he exults toward glory; and it was accomplished that the torment of martyrdom... So we also, when we seek the joy of salvation, drink the bitter cup of purification.

The bitterness in the cup displeases, but the health to be restored through bitterness pleases. Therefore Felicity loved her sons according to the flesh, but for love of the heavenly fatherland she wished even those whom she loved to die before her eyes. She herself received their wounds, but she herself grew through those same ones who preceded her to the kingdom. Rightly therefore I would call this woman more than a martyr, who, having been desirably extinguished so many times in her sons, while she obtained multiple martyrdom, surpassed even the palm of martyrdom itself. It is said that among the ancients there was a custom that whoever became consul would hold his place of honor according to the order of time; but if anyone coming later to the consulship became consul not once, but perhaps twice or three times, he would surpass in praise and honor even those who had been consuls no more than once. Blessed Felicity therefore surpassed the martyrs, because, with so many sons dying before her, she frequently died for Christ, since her own death alone was not sufficient for her love of Him. Let us consider, brothers, this woman; let us consider ourselves, who are men in bodily members, and in comparison with her what shall we be thought? For often we propose to do certain good things, but if even the slightest word bursts forth against us from the mouth

of a mocker, we immediately recoil, broken and confused, from the intention of our action.

Behold, mere words often call us back from good work. But torments could not break Felicity from her holy intention. We stumble at a breath of cursing; she passed through even to the kingdom by the sword, and considered as nothing whatever stood in her way. We are unwilling to give away even our superfluous possessions at the Lord's commands; she not only offered her substance to God, but for His sake gave even her own flesh. We, when we lose children by divine decree, mourn without consolation; she would have lamented them as dead if she had not offered them. When therefore the strict Judge shall come to that terrible examination, what shall we men say when we see the glory of this woman? What excuse will there be for men on account of the weakness of their mind, when she shall be shown forth who conquered both the world and her sex? Let us therefore follow, dearest brothers, the strict and harsh way of the Redeemer; for by the practice of virtues it has already been made so smooth that women are pleased to walk upon it. Let us despise all present things, for those things which can pass away are nothing. Let it be shameful to love what clearly perishes quickly. Let not the love of earthly things overcome us, let not pride puff us up, let not anger tear us apart, let not luxury pollute us, let not envy consume us.

Out of love for us, dearest brothers, our Redeemer died, and let us learn through love of Him to conquer ourselves. If we do this perfectly, we shall not only escape impending punishments, but we shall be rewarded with glory together with the martyrs. For although the occasion of persecution is lacking, yet our peace also has its own martyrdom, because even if we do not subject the necks of our flesh to the sword, yet with the spiritual sword we slay carnal desires in our mind, with His help, etc.

HOMILY IV. Delivered to the people in the basilica of Saint Stephen the martyr, concerning the apostles.

READING OF THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW. At that time, Jesus sent his twelve disciples, instructing them and saying: Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter into the cities of the Samaritans, but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying that the kingdom of heaven has drawn near. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Do not possess gold, nor silver, nor money in your belts; no bag for the journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor a staff. For the laborer is worthy of his food. Since it is evident to all, dearest brothers, that our Redeemer came into the world for the redemption of the nations, and since we see Samaritans being called to faith daily, what does it mean that when sending the disciples to preach, He says: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter into the cities of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house

of Israel”? Unless we understand from the outcome of the event that He wished the preaching to be first to Judea alone, and afterward to all nations, so that when she, though called, refused to be converted, the holy preachers might come in due order to the calling of the nations, and thus our Redeemer’s preaching, rejected by His own people, might seek the Gentile peoples as though they were strangers;

and what was done as a testimony to the Jews might become an increase of grace for the Gentiles. For there were then some who were to be called from Judea, and some from the Gentiles who were not yet to be called. For in the Acts of the Apostles we read that when Peter preached, first three thousand Hebrews believed, and afterward five thousand. And when the apostles wished to preach to the Gentiles in Asia, they are recorded to have been forbidden by the Spirit; and yet the same Spirit who first forbade the preaching afterward poured it into the hearts of the Asians. For it has been a long time since all of Asia believed. Therefore He first forbade what He afterward brought about, because there were then in that land those who were not to be saved. There were then in that land those who did not yet deserve to be restored to life, nor yet to be judged more severely for having despised the preaching. By a subtle and hidden judgment, therefore, holy preaching is withdrawn from the ears of certain people, because they do not deserve to be raised up by grace. Hence it is necessary, dearest brothers, that in everything we do, we fear the hidden counsels of almighty God over us, lest while our mind, scattered outwardly, does not recall itself from its pleasure, the Judge within terribly arranges adversities against it. Perceiving this well, the Psalmist says:

”Come and see the works of the Lord, how terrible He is in His counsels over the sons of men. For he saw that one is mercifully called, while another is rejected as justice demands. And because the Lord arranges some things by sparing, and other things by showing wrath, he trembled at what he could not penetrate. And because he saw Him to be not only unsearchable, but also inflexible in certain of His judgments, he declared Him to be terrible in His counsels. Now let us hear what is commanded when the preachers are sent. ”Go and preach, saying: The kingdom of heaven is at hand. This, dearest brothers, even if the Gospel were silent, the world proclaims. For its ruins are its voices. For the world, which has fallen from its glory after being worn down by so many blows, shows us, as it were, from close at hand, another kingdom that follows. It is already bitter even to those by whom it is loved. Its very ruins proclaim that it should not be loved. For if a shaken house threatened to collapse, whoever lived in it would flee; and one who had loved it while it stood would hasten to withdraw as quickly as possible from it as it falls. If therefore the world is falling and we embrace it by loving it, we wish to be crushed rather than to dwell in safety, because no reasoning separates us from its ruin when love binds us to its sufferings.

It is easy, therefore, now when we see all things destroyed, to separate our heart from love of it. But this was most difficult at that time when they were sent to preach the invisible kingdom of heaven while they saw earthly kingdoms flourishing far and wide on every side. Hence also miracles were added to the holy preachers, so that the power displayed might give faith to their words, and that those who preached new things might do new things, as is added in this same reading: ”Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. When the world was flourishing, when the human race was increasing, when the flesh was subsisting long in this life, when the abundance of things was overflowing, who upon hearing would believe that there was another life? Who would prefer invisible things to visible things? But when the sick were returning to health, when the dead were rising to life, when lepers were receiving cleanliness of flesh, when demoniacs were snatched from the power of unclean spirits, with so many visible miracles performed, who would not believe what he heard about invisible things? For visible miracles shine forth for this purpose: that they may draw the hearts of those who see them to faith in invisible things, so that through what is done wondrously on the outside, what is within may be perceived to be far more wondrous.

Hence now also, when the number of the faithful has increased, there are many within the holy Church who hold to a life of virtues but do not have the signs of virtues, because a miracle is shown outwardly in vain if what it should work inwardly is lacking. For according to the voice of the Teacher of the Gentiles: ”Tongues are for a sign not to believers, but to unbelievers. Hence also that same distinguished preacher, amidst the words of his preaching, raised by praying, in the sight of all the unbelievers, Eutychus who had fallen asleep and fallen from the window and was completely extinguished from life. Coming to Malta, and knowing the island was full of unbelievers, he healed by praying the father of Publius who was afflicted with dysentery and fevers. But his companion on his journey and helper in his holy preaching, Timothy, who was growing weak from a stomach ailment, he does not cure by a word but restores by the art of medicine, saying: ”Use a little wine, for your stomach and your frequent infirmities. Why then does he who saves an unbelieving sick person with a single prayer not also strengthen his sick companion with prayer? Because surely that one who was not inwardly alive needed to be healed outwardly through a miracle, so that through what the external power displayed, the internal virtue might animate him to life. But to the faithful sick companion, outward signs did not need to be shown, since he was living healthily within.

But having granted the power of preaching, having granted the miracles of virtues, let us hear what our Redeemer adds: Freely you have received, freely give. For he foreknew that some would bend this very gift of the received Spirit to the use of commerce, and turn the signs of miracles to the service of avarice. Hence it is that Simon Magus, seeing miracles performed through the laying on of hands,

wished to obtain the gift of the Holy Spirit with money, namely so that he might sell more wickedly what he had acquired wrongly. Hence our Redeemer, having made a whip of cords, drove the crowds from the temple and overturned the seats of those selling doves. Indeed, to sell doves is to give the laying on of hands by which the Holy Spirit is received, not for the merit of life, but for payment. But there are some who indeed do not receive rewards of money from ordination, yet bestow sacred orders for human favor, and from that very generosity seek only the recompense of praise. These certainly do not bestow freely what was freely received, because from the service of holiness they have rendered, they seek the coin of favor. Hence the prophet spoke well when describing the just man, saying: Who shakes his hands free from every gift. For he does not say: Who shakes his hands from a gift, but added from every, because one thing is a gift from service, another a gift from the hand, another a gift from the tongue.

A gift from service is deference unduly rendered, a gift from the hand is money, a gift from the tongue is favor. Therefore he who bestows sacred orders shakes his hands free from every gift when in divine matters he seeks not only no money, but also no human favor. But you, most beloved brethren, whom the secular state holds, when you learn what our circumstances are, turn the eyes of your mind back to your own. Do all things among yourselves freely. Do not seek the reward of your work in this world, which you now perceive has failed with such great speed. Just as you wish your evil deeds to be hidden so that others may not see them, so take care that your good deeds do not appear for human praise. Do not do evil things in any way, nor good things for temporal reward. Seek as the witness of your work the very one whom you await as judge. Let him now see that your good deeds are hidden, so that at the time of his recompense he may display them publicly. Just as you provide food daily to your flesh lest it fail, so let your daily nourishment for your mind be good works. The body is fed with food; let the spirit be nourished with pious work. What you give to your mortal flesh, do not deny to your soul that will live forever.

For if ever a sudden fire consumes a dwelling, whoever was its owner seizes what he can and flees, counting it gain if he carries anything away from the flames. Behold, the flame of tribulations is burning up the world, and the end now near is devastating like fire all the things that seemed beautiful in it. Therefore, most beloved brethren, count it the greatest gain if you snatch something from it to take with you, if you carry anything away as you flee, if what could perish by remaining you preserve for your perpetual reward by giving it away. Indeed, we lose all earthly things by keeping them, but we preserve them by giving them away generously. Times flee with speed. Therefore, since we are driven with great urgency to see our judge more quickly, let us prepare ourselves for him with good deeds in haste, by the gift of our Lord, etc.

HOMILY V. Delivered to the people in the basilica of blessed Andrew the apostle, on the day of his nativity.

Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew. At that time, Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea (for they were fishermen), and he said to them: Come, follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men. And they immediately, leaving their nets, followed him. And going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. And they immediately, leaving their nets and their father, followed him. You have heard, dearest brothers, that at the voice of a single command, Peter and Andrew, leaving their nets, followed the Redeemer. They had seen him perform no miracles yet, they had heard nothing from him about the reward of eternal recompense; and yet at one command of the Lord they forgot what they seemed to possess. How many of his miracles do we see, with how many scourges are we afflicted, by how many harsh threats are we deterred, and yet we disdain to follow him when he calls? He who admonishes us about conversion already sits in heaven; he has already subjected the necks of the nations to the yoke of faith, he has already laid low the glory of the world, he already announces, as its ruins multiply, that the day of his strict judgment draws near;

and yet our proud mind does not wish to abandon willingly what it loses daily against its will. What then, dearest ones, what shall we say at his judgment, we who are neither bent by commands nor corrected by blows from the love of the present age? But perhaps someone may say to himself in silent thoughts: At the Lord’s voice, what or how much did each of these fishermen leave behind, who had almost nothing? But in this matter, dearest brothers, we ought to weigh the affection rather than the wealth. He left much who retained nothing for himself; he left much who, however little it was, abandoned everything. Certainly we both possess what we have with love, and seek from desire those things we do not have at all. Therefore Peter and Andrew left much, since each also abandoned the desires of having. He left much who renounced his longings along with the thing he possessed. Therefore those who followed gave up as much as could be desired by those who did not follow. Let no one therefore, even when he sees that certain people have left many things behind, say to himself: I want to imitate these despisers of the world, but I have nothing to leave behind. You leave many things, brothers, if you renounce earthly desires. For our external possessions, however small, are sufficient for the Lord. For he weighs the heart, not the substance; nor does he consider how much is offered in his sacrifice, but from how much it is brought forth.

For if we weigh external substance, behold, our holy merchants purchased the perpetual life of angels by giving up their nets and boat. Indeed it has no estimation of price, yet the kingdom of God is worth as much as you have. For it was worth half his substance to Zacchaeus, because he reserved the other half to restore fourfold what he had unjustly taken. It was worth the abandoned nets and boat to Peter and Andrew; it was worth two small coins to the widow; it was worth a cup of cold water to another. The kingdom of God, therefore, as we said, is worth as much as you have. Consider therefore, brothers, what is cheaper when purchased, what is more precious when possessed. But perhaps not even a cup of cold water is available to be offered to one in need; even then the divine word promises us security. For when the Redeemer was born, the citizens of heaven were revealed, who cried out: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will. For before the eyes of God the hand is never empty of a gift, if the treasury of the heart has been filled with good will. Hence the Psalmist says: In me, O God, are your vows which I shall pay, praises to you. As if he were saying openly:

Even if outwardly I do not have gifts to offer, yet within myself I find what I may place upon the altar of your praise, because you who are not fed by our giving are better pleased by the offering of the heart. For nothing richer than good will is offered to God. But good will is to fear the adversities of another as our own, to rejoice in the prosperity of our neighbor as in our own advancement, to consider the losses of others as our own, to reckon the gains of others as our own, to love a friend not for the sake of the world but for the sake of God, to tolerate even an enemy by loving him, to do to no one what you do not wish to suffer, to deny to no one what you justly desire to be rendered to yourself, not only to assist the needs of your neighbor according to your abilities, but to wish to help even beyond your abilities. What then is richer than this holocaust, when through what the soul sacrifices to God on the altar of the heart, it slays itself? But this sacrifice of good will is never fully paid unless desire for this world is perfectly abandoned. For whatever we covet in it, we without doubt envy our neighbors. For it seems that what another obtains is lacking to us. And because envy always conflicts with good will, as soon as the former seizes the mind, the latter departs.

Therefore the holy preachers, that they might perfectly love their neighbors, strove to love nothing in this age, never to desire anything, to possess nothing even without desire. Looking upon them well, Isaiah says: ”Who are these that fly as clouds, and as doves to their windows? For he saw them despise earthly things, draw near to heavenly things in mind, rain down words, flash forth miracles. And those whom holy preaching and sublime life had lifted up from earthly contagions, he calls both flying and clouds. Moreover our windows are our eyes, because through them the soul looks upon what it desires outwardly. But the dove is a simple animal, and free from the malice of gall. Therefore they are as doves to their windows who covet nothing in this world, who look upon all things simply, and are not drawn

by the zeal of rapacity in what they see. But on the contrary, the kite and not the dove is at its windows, who pants with desire for plunder at what it considers with its eyes. Therefore, dearest brothers, since we celebrate the birthday of blessed Andrew the apostle, we ought to imitate what we honor. Let the solemnity of a changed mind show the service of our devotion; let us despise what is earthly, and leaving behind temporal things, let us purchase eternal ones. But if we cannot yet leave our own possessions, let us at least not covet those of others.

If our mind is not yet kindled with the fire of charity, let it have the bridle of fear in its ambition, so that invigorated by the steps of its progress, while it is restrained from desire for others' goods, it may eventually be led to despise its own, with the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

HOMILY VI. Delivered to the people in the basilica of Saints Marcellinus and Peter, on the third Sunday of the Advent of the Lord.

READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW. At that time, when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, sending two of his disciples, he said to him: Are you he who is to come, or do we look for another? And Jesus answering, said to them: Go and report to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the gospel preached to them, and blessed is he who shall not be scandalized in me. And when they went their way, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Behold, those who are clothed in soft garments are in the houses of kings. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written: Behold, I send my angel before your face, who shall prepare your way before you. We must inquire, dearly beloved brethren, why John—a prophet and more than a prophet, who pointed out the Lord coming to the baptism at the Jordan, saying: "Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sin of the world"; who, considering both his own humility and the power of Christ's divinity, says:

"He who is of the earth speaks of the earth, but he who comes from heaven is above all"—why, when placed in prison and sending his disciples, he asks: "Are you he who is to come, or do we look for another? As if he did not know the one he had pointed out, and did not know whether he was the one whom he had proclaimed by prophesying, baptizing, and pointing him out. But this question is quickly resolved if the time and order of events is considered. For standing at the waters of the Jordan, he declared that this was the Redeemer of the world; but sent to prison, he asks whether he himself is coming—not because he doubts that he is the Redeemer of the world, but he asks in order to know whether he who had come into the world by himself would also descend by himself to the prison of hell. For he whom John

had announced to the world as his forerunner, he was now preceding to hell by dying. Therefore he says: ”Are you he who is to come, or do we look for another? As if he were openly saying: Just as you deigned to be born for mankind, indicate whether you also deign to die for mankind, so that I who have been the forerunner of your birth may also become the forerunner of your death, and may announce to hell that you are coming, whom I have already announced as having come to the world.

Hence also, when the Lord was asked, after enumerating the miracles of his power, he immediately responded about the humility of his death, saying: ”The blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise, the poor have the gospel preached to them, and blessed is he who is not scandalized in me. Seeing so many signs and such great powers, no one could be scandalized, but only marvel. But the mind of unbelievers suffered grave scandal in him when they saw him dying even after so many miracles. Hence Paul also says: ”But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews indeed a scandal, but to the Gentiles foolishness. For it seemed foolish to men that the author of life should die for mankind; and from this, man took scandal against him, from which he ought rather to have become more indebted. For God is to be honored by men all the more worthily, the more he undertook even unworthy things for mankind. What therefore does it mean to say: ”Blessed is he who is not scandalized in me,” except to signify openly the abjection and humility of his death? As if he were plainly saying: I indeed do wondrous things, but I do not disdain to suffer lowly things. Therefore, since I follow you in dying, men must take great care not to despise in me the death, while they venerate the signs. But after John’s disciples were dismissed, let us hear what He says to the crowds about the same John:

”What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind? This He clearly brought forth not by affirming, but by denying. For a reed, as soon as a breeze touches it, bends to the other side. And what is signified by the reed but a carnal mind? Which, as soon as it is touched by favor or detraction, immediately inclines to either side. For if a breeze of favor blows from human lips, it rejoices, is lifted up, and bends itself entirely, as it were, toward grace. But if from the same place whence the breeze of praise was coming, a wind of detraction bursts forth, it immediately inclines him, as it were, to the other side, toward the violence of fury. But John was not a reed shaken by the wind, because neither did flattery make him gentle, nor did anyone’s detraction make him harsh with anger. Neither did prosperity know how to lift him up, nor adversity to cast him down. Therefore John was not a reed shaken by the wind, whom no change of circumstances bent from the uprightness of his position. Let us learn therefore, dearest brothers, not to be a reed shaken by the wind; let us make firm our mind placed amid the breezes of tongues, let the posture of our mind stand unbending. Let no detraction provoke us to anger, and let no favor incline us to the relaxation of useless grace.

Let not prosperity lift us up, nor adversity disturb us, so that we who are fixed in the solidity of faith may in no way be moved by the changeableness of passing things. But still more is added about the description of him: ”But what did you go out into the desert to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Behold, those who are clothed in soft garments are in the houses of kings. For John is described as having been clothed in woven camel’s hair. And what does it mean to say, ”Behold, those who are clothed in soft garments are in the houses of kings,” except to demonstrate by a clear statement that those who flee from enduring hardships for God do not serve the heavenly King but an earthly one, but rather, devoted only to external things, they seek the softness and pleasure of the present life? Therefore let no one think that there is no sin in the extravagance and pursuit of clothing, because if this were not a fault, the Lord would in no way have praised John for the roughness of his garment. If this were not a fault, the apostle Peter would never have restrained women through his epistle from the desire for costly garments, saying: ”Not in costly apparel. Consider, therefore, what a fault it is for men also to desire that from which the pastor of the Church took care to prohibit even women.

Although what is said about John not being clothed in soft garments can also be understood in another way through its symbolic meaning. For he was not clothed in soft garments because he did not nurture the life of sinners with flatteries, but rebuked them with the force of harsh denunciation, saying: ”Brood of vipers, who has shown you how to flee from the wrath to come? Hence it is also said through Solomon: ”The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails driven deep. For the words of the wise are compared to nails and goads because they do not know how to caress the faults of sinners, but to pierce them. But what went you out into the desert to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. For the office of a prophet is to foretell things to come, not also to show them. John therefore is more than a prophet, because the one whom he had prophesied by going before, he also pointed out by showing. But since he is denied to be a reed shaken by the wind, since he is said not to be clothed in soft garments, since the name of prophet is declared to be inadequate for him, let us now hear what may worthily be said of him. There follows: This is he of whom it is written: Behold, I send my angel before your face, who will prepare your way before you.

For what is called angelus in Greek is called nuntius (messenger) in Latin. Rightly therefore he who is sent to announce the heavenly judge is called an angel, that he may preserve in his name the dignity which he fulfills in his work. It is indeed a lofty name, but his life is not inferior to his name. Beloved brothers, let us not say it to our judgment, since all who are designated by the name of priest are called angels, as the prophet attests when he says: ”The lips of the priest guard knowledge, and they seek the law from his mouth, because he is the angel of the Lord of hosts. But you too, if you wish, can merit the loftiness of this name. For each one of you, insofar as he is able, insofar as he has received the grace of heavenly inspiration,

if he calls back his neighbor from wickedness, if he takes care to exhort him to do good, if he proclaims the eternal kingdom or punishment to one who errs, when he bestows the words of holy proclamation, he surely becomes an angel. And let no one say: ”I am not sufficient to admonish, I am not fit to exhort. Offer what you can, lest what you received and kept badly be demanded of you in torments. For he who studied to hide his talent rather than to spend it had received no more than one talent.

And we know that in the tabernacle of God not only bowls but also, by the Lord’s command, cups were made. By bowls, indeed, abundant teaching is designated; by cups, however, small and limited knowledge. One person, full of the teaching of truth, intoxicates the minds of his hearers. By what he says, therefore, he surely offers a bowl. Another cannot fully express what he perceives, but because he proclaims it in some way, he surely offers a taste through a cup. Therefore, placed in God’s tabernacle, that is, in the holy Church, if you cannot minister bowls through the wisdom of teaching, give to your neighbors cups of a good word insofar as you are able according to divine generosity. Insofar as you perceive yourselves to have progressed, draw others along with you; desire to have companions on the way to God. If any of you, brothers, goes to the forum or perhaps to the baths, he invites someone he sees to be idle to come with him. Let that same earthly activity of yours be fitting for you, and if you are heading toward God, take care not to come to him alone. For thus it is written: ”Let him who hears say: Come”; so that he who has already received in his heart the voice of heavenly love may also give forth to his neighbors the voice of exhortation. And perhaps he does not have bread to offer alms to the needy; but he who has a tongue has something greater to give.

For it is more to restore with the food of the word a mind that will live forever than to satisfy with earthly bread the belly of flesh that will die. Therefore, brothers, do not withhold from your neighbors the alms of the word. I admonish you together with myself that we refrain from idle speech, that we avoid speaking uselessly. Insofar as we are able to restrain our tongue, let not words flow away into the wind, since the Judge says: ”Every idle word that men have spoken, they will render an account of it on the day of judgment. An idle word is one that lacks either the usefulness of righteousness or the reason of just necessity. Therefore turn idle conversations to the pursuit of edification: consider how swiftly the times of this life flee away; attend to how strictly the Judge comes. Place him before the eyes of your heart; make him known to the minds of your neighbors; so that insofar as your strength allows, if you do not neglect to proclaim him, you may be worthy to be called angels by him along with John; which may he himself deign to grant, who lives and reigns as God forever and ever. Amen.

HOMILY VII. Delivered to the people in the basilica of Saint Peter the Apostle, on the Fourth Sunday of the Advent of the Lord.

READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN. At that time, the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to John, to ask him: Who are you? And he confessed, and did not deny. And he confessed: I am not the Christ. And they asked him: What then? Are you Elijah? And he said: I am not. Are you the Prophet? And he answered: No. Therefore they said to him: Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself? He said: I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord, as the prophet Isaiah said. And those who had been sent were from the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said to him: Why then do you baptize, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet? John answered them, saying: I baptize in water; but there has stood in your midst one whom you do not know. He it is who is to come after me, who was made before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie. These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing. From the words of this reading, dearest brothers, the humility of John is commended to us, who, though he was of such great virtue that he could have been believed to be Christ, chose to stand firmly in himself, lest he be carried away vainly above himself by human opinion.

For he confessed and did not deny, and he confessed: ”I am not the Christ. But because he said ”I am not,” he plainly denied what he was not, but did not deny what he was, so that by speaking the truth he might become a member of Him whose name he would not falsely claim for himself. Therefore, because he did not wish to grasp at the name of Christ, he became a member of Christ, since by striving to acknowledge his weakness humbly, he merited to truly obtain His loftiness. But when the statement of our Redeemer from another reading is brought to mind, a very complex question arises for us from the words of this reading. For in another place, when asked by his disciples about the coming of Elijah, the Lord replied: ”Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. And if you wish to know, John himself is Elijah. But when John was asked, he says: ”I am not Elijah. What is this, dearest brothers, that what Truth affirms, the prophet of Truth denies? For ”He is” and ”I am not” are very different from each other. How then is he a prophet of Truth if he does not agree with the words of that same Truth? But if the truth itself is carefully examined, what sounded contradictory between them is found not to be contradictory. For the angel says to Zechariah concerning John: ”He will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah.

He is said to be coming in the spirit and power of Elijah because just as Elijah will precede the second coming of the Lord, so John preceded the first. Just as the former will be the precursor of the Judge, so the latter was made the precursor of the Redeemer. John therefore was Elijah in spirit; he was not Elijah in person. What the Lord therefore declares concerning the spirit, John denies concerning the person, since it was also fitting that the Lord should speak to his disciples a

spiritual statement about John, and that John should answer the carnal crowds not about his spirit but about his body. Therefore what John said seems to be contrary to truth, yet he did not depart from the path of truth. When he also denies that he is a prophet, because evidently he was able not only to preach the Redeemer but also to demonstrate him, he immediately expresses who he is when he adds: I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness. You know, dearest brothers, that the only-begotten Son is called the Word of the Father, as John testifies when he says: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And from your own manner of speaking you recognize that the voice sounds first, so that the word may afterward be heard. Therefore John asserts that he is the voice, because he precedes the Word.

And so, going before the coming of the Lord, he is called a voice, because through his ministry the Word of the Father is heard by men. He also cries out in the wilderness, because he announces the comfort of the Redeemer to abandoned and forsaken Judea. But what he cries out he indicates when he adds: Make straight the way of the Lord, as Isaiah the prophet said. The way of the Lord is made straight to the heart when the word of truth is humbly heard. The way of the Lord is made straight to the heart when one's life is prepared according to his commandment. Hence it is written: If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him. Therefore whoever raises his mind in pride, whoever pants with the fevers of avarice, whoever defiles himself with the pollutions of lust, closes the door of his heart against the truth; and lest the Lord come to him, he condemns the gates of his soul with the bars of vices. But still those who were sent inquire further: "Why then do you baptize, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet? Because this was said not from a desire to learn the truth, but from the malice of pursuing rivalry, the Evangelist silently made known when he added, saying: "And those who had been sent were from the Pharisees. As if he openly said:

Those men inquire of John about his actions who do not know how to seek teaching, but only how to envy. But every holy person, even when questioned with a perverse mind, is not changed from his pursuit of goodness. Hence John also responded to the words of envy with proclamations of life. For immediately he adds: "I baptize in water; but there has stood in your midst one whom you do not know. John baptizes not with the Spirit, but with water, because, not being able to forgive sins, he washes the bodies of the baptized through water, but nevertheless does not wash the mind through pardon. Why then does he baptize who does not remit sins through baptism, unless, preserving the order of his role as precursor, he who had preceded by being born the one who was to be born, might also precede by baptizing the Lord who was to baptize; and he who by preaching became the precursor of Christ, might also become his precursor in baptizing through imitation of the sacrament? Who, announcing the mystery amid these things, asserts that

he both stood in the midst of men and was unknown, because the Lord appearing through flesh both existed visible in body and invisible in majesty. Of whom he also adds: ”He who comes after me was made before me. For it is said thus: ”Made before me,” as if it were said, ”Placed before me. Therefore he comes after me, because he was born afterward;

but he was made before me, because he was preferred to me. But saying these things a little earlier, he also opened the reasons for his preference when he added: ”Because he was before me. As if he openly said: Hence he surpasses me even though born after me, because the times of his birth do not confine him. For he who is born in time through a mother was begotten without time from the Father. He shows by adding with what great reverence of humility he is indebted to him: ”Whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie. The custom among the ancients was that if someone did not wish to take as wife the one who was suited to him, he who came as bridegroom by right of kinship to her would untie his sandal. What then did Christ appear as among men, if not the bridegroom of holy Church? Of whom the same John also says: ”He who has the bride is the bridegroom. But because men thought John was the Christ, which the same John denies, he rightly declares himself unworthy to untie the strap of his sandal. As if he openly said: I am unable to uncover the footsteps of our Redeemer, because I do not undeservedly usurp for myself the name of bridegroom. This however can also be understood in another way. For who does not know that sandals are made from dead animals?

But the Lord coming incarnate appeared as if shod, because in his divinity he assumed the dead flesh of our corruption. Hence also through the Prophet he says: ”Over Edom I will extend my sandal. For by Edom the Gentile world is signified, and by the sandal the assumed mortality is designated. Therefore the Lord asserts that he extends his sandal over Edom, because when he became known to the Gentiles through flesh, divinity came to us as if shod. But the human eye does not suffice to penetrate this mystery of the incarnation. For it can in no way be investigated how the Word becomes embodied, how the supreme and life-giving Spirit is animated within the womb of a mother, how he who has no beginning both exists and is conceived. The strap of the sandal therefore is the binding of the mystery. And so John is not able to untie the strap of his sandal, because he does not suffice to investigate even the mystery of his incarnation, he who recognized it through the spirit of prophecy. What therefore does it mean to say: ”I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandal,” except openly and humbly to profess one’s own ignorance? As if he plainly said: What wonder if he is preferred to me, whom I consider indeed born after me, but whose mystery of birth I do not comprehend? Behold John, filled with the spirit of prophecy, shines forth with wondrous knowledge, and yet he intimates concerning himself that which he does not know.

In this matter we must consider, dearest brothers, and reflect with all our attention how holy men, in order to preserve in themselves the virtue of humility, when they know certain things wonderfully, strive to recall before the eyes of their mind what they do not know, so that while they consider their weakness in one respect, their spirit may not be exalted in that respect in which it is perfect. For knowledge is a virtue, but humility is the guardian of virtue. It remains therefore that in all that it knows the mind should humble itself, lest the wind of pride carry away what the virtue of knowledge has gathered. When you do good things, brothers, always recall to memory the evil things you have done, so that while fault is carefully observed, the mind may never carelessly rejoice in good work. Consider as your superiors one another, especially those who are not committed to your charge, your neighbors, because even those whom you see doing certain wicked things—you do not know what good things may lie hidden in them. Therefore let each one strive to be great, but yet in some way not know that he is, lest while he arrogantly attributes greatness to himself, he lose it. For hence it is said through the prophet: ”Woe to you who are wise in your own eyes, and prudent before yourselves. Hence Paul says: ”Be not wise in your own eyes. Hence against the proud Saul it is said:

”When you were little in your own eyes, you were made head among the tribes of Israel. As if it were openly said: When you saw yourself as little, I made you great above others. But because you now see yourself as great, you are esteemed little by me. On the contrary, when David despised the power of his kingdom by dancing before the ark of the Lord’s covenant, he said: ”I will play and become more vile than I have become, and I will be humble in my own eyes. For whom would it not exalt to break the jaws of lions, to tear apart the arms of bears, to be chosen while his elder brothers were passed over, to be anointed to the governance of the kingdom when the previous king was rejected, to strike down Goliath—fearsome to all—with a single stone, to bring back the numerous foreskins proposed by the king after slaying the foreigners, to receive the kingdom by promise, and afterward to possess the entire Israelite people without any opposition? And yet in all these things he despises himself, who confesses that he is humble in his own eyes. If therefore holy men, even when they do mighty deeds, think lowly of themselves, what will those say in their own excuse who swell with pride without any virtuous work? But even if any good works are present, they are nothing unless they are seasoned with humility. For a wondrous deed accompanied by pride does not elevate but weighs down.

For he who gathers virtues without humility carries dust in the wind; and from the very source whence he seems to carry something, he is more grievously blinded. In all things that you do, therefore, my brothers, hold fast to humility as the root of good work; and look not to those to whom you are already superior, but to those to whom you are still inferior, so that while you set before yourselves the examples

of better persons, you may always be able to ascend to greater things through humility.

HOMILY VIII. Delivered to the people in the basilica of the blessed Virgin Mary, on the day of the Nativity of the Lord.

READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE. At that time, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. This first enrollment was made by Quirinius, the governor of Syria. And all went to be enrolled, each to his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. And it came to pass that while they were there, the days were fulfilled for her to give birth. And she brought forth her firstborn son; and she wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for him in the inn. And there were shepherds in the same region, keeping watch and guarding their flock through the watches of the night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood near them, and the glory of God shone around them, and they feared with great fear. And the angel said to them: Do not be afraid. For behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all the people, for today a Savior has been born to you, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign to you: You will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will. Because, by the Lord’s bounty, we are going to celebrate the solemnities of Mass three times today, we cannot speak at length about the Gospel reading. But our Redeemer’s nativity itself compels us to say something, even briefly. What does it mean that the world is enrolled when the Lord is about to be born, except that this is openly shown: that he was coming in the flesh who would enroll his elect in eternity? Concerning the reprobate, by contrast, it is said through the Prophet: Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and let them not be written with the just. He is also fittingly born in Bethlehem: for Bethlehem is interpreted as ”house of bread. For he himself is the one who says: I am the living bread who came down from heaven. The place, therefore, in which the Lord is born was previously called ”house of bread,” because it was surely going to happen that he would appear there through the substance of flesh, who would refresh the minds of the elect with inner satisfaction. He who is born not in his parents’ house, but on the way, surely showed that through the humanity which he had assumed, he was being born as if in a foreign place. I say ”foreign,” of course, not according to power, but according to nature.

For concerning his power it is written: He came unto his own. In his own nature, indeed, he was born before all ages; in our nature he came in time. He, therefore, who remaining eternal appeared temporal—the place where he descended is foreign to him. And because it is said through the prophet: All flesh is grass, he, having been made man, turned our grass into grain, he who said of himself: Unless a grain of wheat falling into the earth dies, it remains alone. Hence also, when born, he is laid in a manger, so that he might refresh all the faithful, namely his holy animals, with the grain of his flesh, lest they remain fasting from the food of eternal understanding. But what does it mean that the angel appears to shepherds keeping watch, and the glory of God shines around them, except that they deserve above others to see sublime things, who know how to preside over their faithful flocks with care? And while they themselves watch piously over their flock, divine grace flashes upon them more abundantly. An angel announces the King's birth, and choirs of angels join their voices with his, and rejoicing together they cry out: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will. Indeed, before our Redeemer was born in the flesh, we were at discord with the angels, from whose brightness and purity we stood far distant through the guilt of the first sin and through our daily transgressions.

For since by sinning we were estranged from God, the angels, citizens of God, regarded us as strangers from their fellowship. But because we have come to know our King, the angels have recognized us as their fellow citizens. For since the King of heaven assumed the earth of our flesh, that angelic majesty no longer despises our weakness. The angels return to peace with us, they set aside the intent of their former discord; and those whom they had previously despised as weak and cast off, they now honor as companions. This is why Lot and Joshua worshipped angels and were not forbidden to worship; but John in his Apocalypse wished to worship an angel, yet that same angel restrained him from worshipping him, saying: See that you do not do this, for I am your fellow servant and of your brethren. Why is it that before the Redeemer's coming angels are worshipped by men and remain silent, but afterward they refuse to be worshipped, unless it is that our nature, which they had previously despised, they now fear to see prostrate before them after they behold it assumed above themselves? Nor do they now dare to scorn as weak what is beneath them, since they venerate it above themselves in the King of heaven. Nor do they disdain to have man as a companion, since they adore man as God above themselves. Let us therefore take care, dearest brothers, that no uncleanness defile us, who in God's eternal foreknowledge are citizens of God and equal to his angels.

Let us vindicate our dignity by our conduct; let no lust stain us, let no shameful thought accuse us, let no malice gnaw at our mind, let no rust of envy consume us, let no pride puff us up, let no ambition tear us apart through earthly delights, let no anger inflame us. For men have been called gods. Therefore, O man, defend for

yourself against vices the honor of God, because for your sake God became man, who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

HOMILY IX. Delivered to the people in the basilica of Saint Sylvester, on the day of his birth.

READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW. At that time, Jesus told his disciples this parable: A certain man going on a journey called his servants and handed over his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability, and he departed immediately. Now he who had received five talents went and worked with them, and gained another five. Likewise he who had received two gained another two. But he who had received one went away and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. Now after a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received five talents came forward and offered another five talents, saying: Lord, you handed over five talents to me; behold, I have gained five more. His lord said to him: Well done, good and faithful servant; because you have been faithful over a few things, I will set you over many things; enter into the joy of your lord. And he who had received two talents came forward and said: Lord, you handed over two talents to me; behold, I have gained two more. His lord said to him: Well done, good and faithful servant; because you have been faithful over a few things, I will set you over many things; enter into the joy of your lord. And he who had received one talent came forward and said:

Lord, I know that you are a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter; and being afraid I went away and hid your talent in the ground; behold, you have what is yours. But his lord answered and said to him: Wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter; therefore you ought to have given my money to the bankers, and when I came I would have received what is mine with interest. Therefore take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken away. And cast the useless servant into the outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. The reading of the holy Gospel, dearest brothers, urges us to consider carefully, lest we who appear to have received something more than others in this world from the Author of the world be judged more severely on that account. For when gifts are increased, the accounts of those gifts also grow. Therefore, everyone ought to be more humble and more ready to serve in proportion to their gift, the more they see themselves obligated in rendering an account. Behold, a man going on a journey calls his servants and distributes talents to them for business.

After a long time he returns to settle accounts, rewards those who worked well for the profit they brought, but condemns the servant who was idle from good work.

Who then is this man who goes on a journey, if not our Redeemer, who departed into heaven in the flesh which he had assumed? For the proper place of flesh is earth, which is led as if to foreign lands when it is placed in heaven through our Redeemer. But this man going abroad handed over his goods to his servants, because he granted spiritual gifts to his faithful ones. And to one indeed he entrusted five talents, to another two, and to another one. For there are five senses of the body, namely sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch. By five talents, therefore, is expressed the gift of the five senses, that is, knowledge of external things. By two is designated understanding and action. By the term of one talent is designated understanding alone. But he who had received five talents gained another five, because there are some who, although they do not know how to penetrate internal and mystical things, nevertheless for the sake of their intention toward the heavenly homeland teach right things to those they can from those very external things they have received; and while they guard themselves from the wantonness of the flesh and from the pursuit of earthly things and from the pleasure of visible things, they also restrain others from these by admonishing them.

And there are some who, as if enriched with two talents, receive understanding and action, understand subtle things about internal matters, work wonders in external things; and when by both understanding and working they preach to others, they bring back, as it were, a doubled profit from their business. Moreover, it is rightly reported that another five or another two came as profit, because when preaching is expended on both sexes, the talents received are, as it were, doubled. But he who had received one talent went away, dug in the earth, and hid his lord's money. To hide the talent in the earth is to involve the received ability in earthly activities, not to seek spiritual profit, never to lift the heart from earthly thoughts. For there are some who have received the gift of understanding, but nevertheless think only of the things of the flesh. Of whom it is said through the prophet: They are wise to do evil, but they do not know how to do good. But the Lord who conferred the talents returns to settle accounts, because he who now piously grants spiritual gifts strictly examines merits in judgment, considers what each one received, and weighs what profit one brings back from what was received. The servant who returned the doubled talents is praised by the master and led to eternal reward, when it is said to him by the Lord's voice: "Well done, good and faithful servant; because you have been faithful over a few things, I will set you over many things;

enter into the joy of your lord. For all the goods of the present life are few things, however many they may seem, in comparison with the eternal reward. But then the faithful servant is set over many things when, having overcome all the trouble of corruption, he is glorified in that heavenly seat with eternal joys. Then he is perfectly admitted into the joy of his lord, when, taken up into that eternal homeland and mingled with the company of angels, he so rejoices inwardly at the gift that there is no longer anything to grieve him outwardly from corruption. The servant,

however, who refused to work with his talent, returns to his master with words of excuse, saying: ”Lord, I know that you are a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter; and being afraid, I went away and hid your talent in the ground; behold, you have what is yours. It should be noted that the useless servant calls his master hard, yet pretends not to serve him for gain, and says he was afraid to spend the talent for profit, when he should have feared only this: that he might return it to his master without profit. For there are many within the holy Church, whose image this servant represents, who fear to undertake the ways of a better life, and yet do not fear to lie in the sloth of their torpor;

and when they consider themselves sinners, they tremble to seize upon the ways of holiness, yet do not dread remaining in their iniquities. Peter, while still placed in weakness, well represents the likeness of these when, upon seeing the miracle of the fish, he said: ”Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man. On the contrary, if you consider yourself a sinner, you ought not to repel the Lord from yourself. But those who refuse to grasp the ways of a better habit and the citadel of a more upright life because they perceive themselves to be weak, as it were both confess themselves sinners and repel the Lord, and flee from Him whom they ought to have sanctified in themselves; and as if having no counsel in their confusion, they die while fearing life. Hence this servant is immediately answered: ”Wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter; therefore you ought to have given my money to the bankers, and upon my coming I would have received what is mine with interest. The servant is bound by his own words when the master says: ”I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter. As if he were openly saying: If according to your judgment I even demand what I did not give, how much more do I demand from you what I gave to be distributed;

therefore you ought to have given my money to the bankers, and upon my coming I would have received what is mine with interest. To give money to the bankers is to impart the knowledge of preaching to those who are able to exercise it. But just as you see our peril if we withhold the Lord’s money, so carefully consider your own peril, dearest brothers, because what you hear is demanded back from you with interest. For in usury, money is received back even though it was not given. For when that which was received is returned, something additional is paid beyond what was received. Consider therefore, dearest brothers, that you will pay interest on this money of the word you have received, and take care that from what you hear you also strive to understand other things which you do not hear, so that by gathering some things from others, you may also learn to do from yourselves those things which you have not yet learned from the mouth of the preacher. But let us hear with what sentence he strikes the lazy servant: Take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. It seemed very fitting that when the

one talent is taken from the wicked servant, it should be given rather to the one who had received two talents than to the one who had received five. For it ought to have been given to the one who had less rather than to the one who had more.

But, as we said above, by the five talents is signified knowledge of external things, that is, the five senses; while by the two talents are expressed understanding and action. Therefore the one who had received two talents had more than the one who had received five, because he who through the five talents merited the administration of external things was still empty of understanding of internal things. Therefore the one talent, which we said signifies understanding, ought to have been given to the one who had well administered the external things he had received. This we see daily in the holy Church, because many, while they well administer the external things they receive, are led through added grace also to mystical understanding, so that those who faithfully administer external things also excel in internal understanding. A general statement is also immediately added, in which it is said: ”For to everyone who has, it shall be given, and he shall abound; but from him who has not, even what he seems to have shall be taken away from him. For to him who has it shall be given, and he shall abound, because whoever has charity also receives other gifts. Whoever does not have charity loses even the gifts he seemed to have received. Therefore it is necessary, my brothers, that in everything you do, you watch over the keeping of charity. True charity is to love a friend in God, and to love an enemy for the sake of God.

Whoever does not have this loses every good thing he has, is deprived of the talent he had received, and according to the Lord’s sentence is cast into the outer darkness. For through punishment he falls into the outer darkness who through his own fault willingly fell into inner darkness; and there he suffers unwillingly the darkness of vengeance, who here willingly endured the darkness of pleasure. It must be known that no lazy person is secure from this receiving of the talent. For there is no one who can truly say: ”I have received no talent at all, there is nothing for which I can be compelled to give account. For by the name of talent, even this very thing will be reckoned to any poor person—that he received even the least thing. For one person received understanding; he owes the ministry of preaching from his talent. Another received earthly substance; he owes the distribution of his talent from his possessions. Another received neither understanding of interior things nor abundance of possessions, but nevertheless learned an art by which he is fed; that very art is reckoned to him as the receiving of a talent. Another has attained none of these things, but nevertheless has perhaps earned a place of familiarity with a rich person; he has certainly received the talent of familiarity. If therefore he says nothing to him on behalf of the needy, he is condemned for retaining his talent. Therefore let him who has understanding take care by all means not to be silent;

let him who has abundance of possessions watch lest he grow sluggish in the generosity of mercy; let him who has an art by which he is governed strive greatly to share its use and benefit with his neighbor; let him who has a place of speaking with a rich person fear condemnation for the retained talent if, when he is able, he does not intercede with him on behalf of the poor. For the coming Judge will require from each one of us as much as He gave. Therefore, that each person may be secure concerning the accounts of his talent when the Lord returns, let him consider daily with trembling what he has received. For behold, He who departed on a journey is now near to returning. For He went as if on a journey when He departed far from this earth on which He was born; but He certainly returns to settle accounts for the talents, because if we grow sluggish from good action, He judges us more strictly concerning those very gifts which He bestowed. Let us therefore consider what we have received, and let us be vigilant in their distribution. Let no earthly care impede us from spiritual work, lest if the talent is hidden in the earth, the lord of the talent be provoked to anger.

For the lazy servant lifts the talent from the earth when the Judge is now examining his faults, because there are many who only withdraw themselves from earthly desires or works when they are already being dragged to eternal punishment by the judgment of the Judge. Let us therefore be vigilant beforehand concerning the account to be rendered for our talent, so that when the Judge now looms to strike, the profit we have made may excuse us. May God, who lives, etc., grant this to us.

HOMILY 10. Delivered to the people in the basilica of Saint Peter the Apostle, on the day of Epiphany.

READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW. When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi came from the East to Jerusalem, saying: Where is he who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and we have come to worship him. But when King Herod heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ would be born. And they said to him: In Bethlehem of Judea. For thus it is written through the prophet: And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah, for from you shall come forth a leader who will rule my people Israel. Then Herod, secretly calling the magi, carefully learned from them the time of the star which had appeared to them. And sending them to Bethlehem, he said: Go and inquire carefully about the child, and when you have found him, report to me, so that I too may come and worship him. When they had heard the king, they departed. And behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, until it came and stood over where the child was. And seeing the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And entering the house, they found the child with Mary his mother; and falling down, they worshiped him.

And opening their treasures, they offered him gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having received a warning in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back to their own country by another way. As you heard in the Gospel reading, dearest brothers, when the King of heaven was born, the king of earth was troubled, because earthly height is confounded when heavenly height is revealed. But we must ask why, when the Redeemer was born, an angel appeared to the shepherds in Judea, while a star, not an angel, led the Magi from the East to worship him. The reason is that for the Jews, as those who use reason, a rational creature—that is, an angel—was the proper herald; but the Gentiles, because they did not know how to use reason, were led to know the Lord not through a voice but through signs. Hence Paul also says: Prophecies were given to believers, not to unbelievers; but signs to unbelievers, not to believers; because prophecies were given to the former as believers, not unbelievers, and signs to the latter as unbelievers, not believers. And it should be noted that when our Redeemer was already of mature age, the apostles preached him to those same Gentiles, but when he was an infant, not yet speaking through the function of a human body, a star announced him to the Gentiles, because the order of reason demanded that speaking preachers should make known to us the Lord who now spoke, while mute elements should proclaim him who did not yet speak.

But in all the signs which were shown either at the Lord’s birth or at His death, we must consider how great was the hardness in the hearts of certain Jews, which recognized Him neither through the gift of prophecy nor through miracles. For all the elements testified that their Author had come. To speak of them somewhat in human terms: the heavens recognized that He was God, because they immediately sent forth a star. The sea recognized Him, because it offered itself to be walked upon beneath His feet. The earth recognized Him, because it trembled when He died. The sun recognized Him, because it hid the rays of its light. The rocks and walls recognized Him, because at the time of His death they were split apart. Hell recognized Him, because it gave back the dead whom it held. And yet Him whom all the insensible elements perceived as Lord, the hearts of unbelieving Jews still do not at all recognize as God, and, harder than rocks, they refuse to be split open for repentance, and they deny to confess Him whom the elements, as we said, proclaimed as God either by signs or by being rent asunder. Moreover, to add to the measure of their damnation, Him whom they despise now that He is born, they knew long beforehand would be born. And they knew not only that He would be born, but also where He would be born.

For when questioned by Herod, they specify the place of His birth, which they had learned by the authority of Scripture. And they bring forth the testimony by which Bethlehem is shown to be honored by the birth of a new ruler, so that their very knowledge might become both a testimony of damnation for them and an aid to belief for us. Isaac indeed aptly prefigured them when he blessed his son Jacob;

for with eyes grown dim yet prophesying, he did not see his son present before him, to whom he foresaw so many things in the future, because indeed the Jewish people, filled with the spirit of prophecy yet blind, did not recognize in His present coming the One about whom they had foretold so many things concerning the future. But when the birth of our King became known, Herod turned to cunning schemes, lest he be deprived of his earthly kingdom. He requests that it be reported back to him where the child might be found; he pretends that he wishes to adore him, so that he might destroy him (as if he could find him). But how great is human malice against the counsel of divinity? For it is written: There is no wisdom, there is no prudence, there is no counsel against the Lord. For the star which appeared led the Magi onward; they find the newborn King, they offer gifts, and they are warned in dreams not to return to Herod;

and so it happens that Herod cannot find the Jesus whom he seeks. By his character, who else is signified but hypocrites, who, while they seek falsely, never deserve to find the Lord? But amid these matters it should be known that the Priscillianist heretics believe that each person is born under the configurations of the stars; and they take this in support of their error, that a new star appeared when the Lord appeared in the flesh, and they believe that the star which appeared was his fate. But if we consider the words of the Gospel, where it is said of the same star: ”Until it came and stood over where the child was,” since the child did not run to the star, but the star ran to the child, if it may be said, the star was not the fate of the child, but the child who appeared was the fate of the star. But far be it from the hearts of the faithful to say that fate is anything real. For the Creator alone who made this life of men governs it. For man was not made for the sake of the stars, but the stars were made for the sake of man. And if a star is called the fate of a man, man is declared to be subject to its own ministrations.

Certainly when Jacob, coming forth from the womb, held the heel of his elder brother with his hand, the first could by no means come forth completely unless the second had also begun; and yet although their mother brought forth both at one time and at the same moment, the quality of each one’s life was not the same. But the astrologers are accustomed to respond to this by saying that the power of a constellation is in the instant of a moment. To them we say in reply that the duration of birth is considerable. If therefore a constellation changes in the instant of a moment, it will now be necessary for them to declare as many fates as there are limbs of those being born. The astrologers are also accustomed to affirm that whoever is born under the sign of Aquarius will obtain the occupation of a fisherman in this life. But Getulia, as it is said, has no fishermen. Who then would say that no one is born there under the star of Aquarius, where there is absolutely no fisherman? Again, those whom they assert are born under the sign of Libra, they say will become money-changers; and the provinces of many nations know nothing of money-changers. Therefore they must confess either that this sign is absent

among them, or that it has no fated effect whatsoever. In the land of the Persians and Franks, kings come forth from their lineage;

and when these are born, who would estimate how many are born at the same moments of hours and times from a servile condition? And yet the sons of kings, born under one and the same star with slaves, advance to the kingdom, while the slaves who were born with them die in servitude. We have spoken briefly about the star, lest we seem to have passed over the foolishness of the astrologers without examination. But the Magi bring gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Gold indeed befits a king, frankincense was placed in sacrifice to God, and with myrrh the bodies of the dead are preserved. Therefore the Magi proclaim through mystical gifts the one whom they adore: by gold a king, by frankincense God, by myrrh a mortal. But there are certain heretics who believe him to be God, but do not believe that he reigns everywhere. These indeed offer him frankincense, but refuse to offer gold as well. And there are some who consider him a king, but deny he is God. These offer him gold, but refuse to offer frankincense. And there are some who confess him to be both God and king, but deny that he assumed mortal flesh. These offer him gold and frankincense, but refuse to offer myrrh of assumed mortality. Let us therefore offer gold to the newborn Lord, that we may confess he reigns everywhere; let us offer frankincense, that we may believe that he who appeared in time existed as God before time;

let us offer myrrh, that we may believe him whom we believe to be impassible in his divinity to have also been mortal in our flesh. Although in gold, frankincense, and myrrh something else can also be understood. For by gold wisdom is designated, as Solomon attests, who says: A desirable treasure rests in the mouth of the wise. By frankincense, which is burned to God, the power of prayer is expressed, as the Psalmist testifies, who says: Let my prayer be directed as incense in your sight. By myrrh the mortification of our flesh is figured; hence the holy Church says of her workers who strive for God even unto death: My hands have dripped with myrrh. Therefore we offer gold to the newborn King if we shine in his sight with the brightness of heavenly wisdom. We offer frankincense if we burn the thoughts of the flesh on the altar of the heart through holy devotion to prayer, that we may be able to give forth a sweet fragrance to God through heavenly desire. We offer myrrh if we mortify the vices of the flesh through abstinence. For by myrrh, as we said, dead flesh is prevented from putrefying. But for dead flesh to putrefy is for this mortal body to serve the flow of lust, as is said of certain people through the prophet: The beasts of burden have rotted in their dung. For beasts of burden to rot in their dung is for carnal men to end their lives in the stench of lust.

Therefore we offer myrrh to God when we preserve this mortal body from the putrefaction of lust through the seasoning of continence. The magi hint at something great for us by the fact that they return to their own country by another way. For

in doing what they were warned to do, they surely suggest to us what we should do. Our country is paradise, to which, once we have come to know Jesus, we are forbidden to return by the way we came. For we departed from our country by being proud, by being disobedient, by following visible things, by tasting the forbidden food; but we must return to it by weeping, by obeying, by despising visible things, and by restraining the appetite of the flesh. Therefore we go back to our country by another way, because we who departed from the joys of paradise through pleasures are called back to them through lamentations. Hence it is necessary, dearest brothers, that we, always fearful and always watchful, set before the eyes of our heart on one side the sins of our deeds, on the other the judgment of final severity. Let us consider how severe the judge comes who threatens judgment yet remains hidden; who holds out terrors to sinners and yet still forbears; and therefore delays coming sooner so that he may find fewer to condemn. Let us punish our sins with weeping, and with the voice of the Psalmist let us come before his face in confession.

Therefore let no deceit of pleasures deceive us, let no vain joy seduce us. For near is the judge who said: ”Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. For hence Solomon says: ”Laughter shall be mingled with sorrow, and mourning takes hold of the end of joy. Hence he says again: ”I counted laughter an error, and to joy I said: Why are you vainly deceived? Hence again he says: ”The heart of the wise is where sadness is, and the heart of fools is where gladness is. Let us therefore fear the precepts of God, if we truly celebrate the solemnity of God. For a sacrifice pleasing to God is affliction against sin, as the Psalmist testifies who says: ”A sacrifice to God is a contrite spirit. Our past sins were forgiven in the receiving of baptism, and yet after baptism we have committed many sins, but we cannot be washed again by the water of baptism. Since therefore we have defiled our life even after baptism, let us baptize our conscience with tears, so that, seeking our country again by another way, we who departed from it delighted by good things may return to it embittered by evils, through the grace of our Lord, etc.

HOMILY XI. Delivered to the people in the basilica of Saint Agnes, on her birthday.

READING OF THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW. At that time, Jesus told his disciples this parable: The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid, and out of joy over it he goes and sells everything he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls; and finding one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net cast into the sea, gathering fish of every kind. When it was full, they drew it out and, sitting on the shore, sorted the good into vessels but threw the bad away. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will go out and separate the wicked from among the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire. There will be weeping and gnashing of

teeth. Have you understood all these things? They said to him: Yes, Lord. He said to them: Therefore every scribe learned in the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.

The kingdom of heaven, dearest brothers, is said to be like earthly things so that from those things which the mind knows it may rise to things unknown, that by the example of visible things it may carry itself off to invisible things, and through those things which it has learned by experience, being as it were rubbed together, it may grow warm, so that through knowing how to love what is known, it may learn to love also things unknown. For behold, the kingdom of heaven is compared to a treasure hidden in a field, which when a man finds, he hides, and for joy of it goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. In this matter it should also be noted that the found treasure is hidden so that it may be kept safe, because the pursuit of heavenly desire is not sufficient to guard from malign spirits if one does not hide it from human praises. For in the present life we are as it were on a road by which we journey to our homeland. But malign spirits beset our journey like certain robbers. Therefore he who carries treasure openly on the road desires to be plundered. But I say this not so that our neighbors may not see our good works, since it is written: Let them see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven, but so that through what we do we may not seek praises from without.

Let the work be in public in such a way that the intention remains in secret, so that we may both offer an example to our neighbors from our good work, and yet through the intention by which we seek to please God alone, we may always desire secrecy. The treasure is heavenly desire, and the field in which the treasure is hidden is the discipline of heavenly pursuit. This field indeed one purchases by selling all things, who, renouncing the pleasures of the flesh, tramples all his earthly desires through the guardianship of heavenly discipline, so that nothing which the flesh flatters may please him, nothing which kills the carnal life may the spirit dread. Again the kingdom of heaven is said to be like a merchant man seeking good pearls, but he finds one precious pearl, which indeed once found, he buys by selling all things, because whoever has perfectly known the sweetness of the heavenly life, insofar as possibility allows, willingly abandons all things that he loved on earth; in comparison with it all things become worthless, he forsakes what he possessed, he scatters what he had gathered, his soul burns with desire for heavenly things, nothing on earth pleases him, whatever pleased him about the appearance of earthly things is seen as ugly, because the brightness of the precious pearl alone shines in his mind. Concerning the love of which it is rightly said through Solomon:

Love is strong as death, because indeed just as death kills the body, so the love of eternal life slays attachment to bodily things. For whomever it has perfectly absorbed, it renders outwardly insensible to earthly desires. For indeed this holy

woman, whose birthday we celebrate today, could not have died for God in body, if she had not first died to earthly desires in mind. For her soul, raised to the height of virtue, despised torments and trampled upon rewards. Led before armed kings and governors, she stood firmer than those who struck her, more exalted than those who judged her. What do we bearded yet feeble men say amid these things, we who see girls going to the heavenly kingdoms through the sword, while anger overcomes us, pride puffs us up, ambition disturbs us, and lust defiles us? If we cannot attain the heavenly kingdoms through the wars of persecution, let this itself be a shame to us: that we are unwilling to follow God even in peace. Behold, at this time God says to none of us: Die for me, but only: Kill the unlawful desires within you. We who in peace are unwilling to subdue the desires of the flesh—when would we give up that very flesh for the Lord in battle? Again, the kingdom of heaven is said to be like a net cast into the sea, gathering fish of every kind, which when filled is drawn to shore, and the good fish are selected into vessels, while the bad are thrown away.

The Holy Church is compared to a net, because it has been entrusted to fishermen, and through it each person is drawn from the waves of the present age to the eternal kingdom, lest they be plunged into the depths of eternal death. It gathers fish of every kind, because it calls to the forgiveness of sins the wise and the foolish, the free and the enslaved, the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak. Hence it is said to God through the Psalmist: To you all flesh shall come. This net, namely, is universally filled when at its end the sum total of the human race is enclosed. They draw it out and sit beside the shore, because just as the sea signifies the world, so the shore of the sea signifies the end of the world. At which end, namely, good fish are selected into vessels, while the bad are thrown away, because each of the elect is received into eternal tabernacles, and having lost the light of the inner kingdom, the reprobate are dragged away to outer darkness. For now the net of faith holds us together, both good and bad, as if we were fish mixed together, but the shore reveals what the net, that is, the Holy Church, was dragging. And indeed fish that have been caught cannot be changed; but we are caught as evil, yet we are transformed into goodness. Let us therefore think about our capture, lest we be divided at the shore.

Behold how pleasing today's solemnity is to you, so that it would be no small loss if anyone happened to be absent from this assembly of yours. What then will he do on that day, who is seized from the sight of the Judge, separated from the company of the elect, who is darkened from the light, tortured by eternal burning? Hence the Lord also explains this same comparison briefly when he adds: So it will be at the end of the world. The angels will go out and separate the wicked from among the righteous, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. This, dearest brothers, is to be feared rather than expounded. For the torments of sinners have been spoken in plain words, lest anyone resort

to the excuse of ignorance if something about eternal punishment were spoken obscurely. Hence it is also added: Have you understood all these things? They say to him: Yes, Lord. And in the conclusion it is added: ”Therefore every scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like a householder bringing forth from his treasure things new and old. If by the new and old that is spoken of we understand both Testaments, we deny that Abraham was instructed, who although he knew the deeds of the New and Old Testament, by no means proclaimed their words. Nor can we compare Moses to the instructed householder, who although he taught the Old Testament, nevertheless did not bring forth the sayings of the New.

Since therefore we are excluded from this interpretation, we are called to another. But in what the Truth says: ”Every scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like a householder,” it can be understood that He was speaking not of those who had existed, but of those who could exist in the Church. They bring forth new and old things when they speak the proclamations of both Testaments by their words and their conduct. Yet this can also be understood in another way. For it was ancient for the human race to descend to the prison of hell, to endure eternal punishments for their sins. To this, through the coming of the Mediator, something new was added, so that if one rightly strives to live here, he may be able to enter the kingdom of heaven: and man, born on earth, may die from a corruptible life, to be placed in heaven. And so it is old that the human race should perish in eternal punishment for its guilt; and it is new that, being converted, it should live in the kingdom. What therefore the Lord added in the conclusion of His discourse is certainly what He had stated beforehand. For first He brought forth the treasure found and the good pearl concerning the likeness of the kingdom, but afterward He narrated the punishments of hell concerning the burning of the wicked, and in conclusion He adds: ”Therefore every scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like a householder bringing forth from his treasure things new and old.

As if it were openly said: That preacher is instructed in the holy Church who knows both how to bring forth new things concerning the sweetness of the kingdom, and to speak old things concerning the terror of punishment, so that at least punishments may terrify those whom rewards do not attract. Let each one hear of the kingdom that he may love, let him hear of punishment that he may fear, so that if love does not draw the sluggish soul clinging vehemently to the earth toward the kingdom, at least fear may drive it. For behold, concerning the description of hell it is said: ”There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. But because present joys are followed by perpetual lamentations, here, dearest brothers, flee vain joy if you dread weeping there. For no one can both rejoice here with the world and reign there with the Lord. Therefore restrain the fleeting pleasures of temporal joy, subdue the lusts of the flesh. Whatever in the soul smiles upon you from the present age, let it become bitter from the consideration of eternal fire. Whatever rejoices in the mind in a childish manner, let the censure of youthful discipline restrain it,

so that while you willingly flee temporal things, you may seize eternal joys without labor, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

HOMILY XII. Delivered to the people in the basilica of Saint Agnes, on the day of her birthday.

READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW. At that time, Jesus told his disciples this parable: The kingdom of heaven is like ten virgins who, taking their lamps, went out to meet the bridegroom and the bride. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. But the five foolish ones, having taken their lamps, did not take oil with them; the wise ones, however, took oil in their vessels along with their lamps. And as the bridegroom was delayed, they all grew drowsy and fell asleep. But at midnight a cry arose: Behold, the bridegroom comes, go out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise: Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out. The wise answered, saying: Lest perhaps there not be enough for us and for you, go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves. But while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready entered with him to the wedding feast, and the door was shut. Finally the other virgins also come, saying: Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answering said: Amen I say to you, I do not know you. Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. Often, most beloved brethren, I admonish you to flee wicked works and to avoid the defilements of this world;

but by today's reading of the holy Gospel I am compelled to say that you should also fear with great caution even the good things you do, lest through what is rightly done by you, human favor or gratitude be sought, lest the desire for praise creep in, and what is shown outwardly be emptied of its reward inwardly. For behold, by the voice of the Redeemer ten virgins are mentioned, and all are called virgins, yet not all were received within the door of blessedness, because some of them, while seeking outward glory from their virginity, were unwilling to have oil in their vessels. But first we must ask what the kingdom of heaven is, or why it is compared to ten virgins, and why they are called wise and foolish virgins. For since it is certain that no reprobate enters the kingdom of heaven, why is it said to be like even the foolish virgins? But we should know that often in sacred speech the kingdom of heaven refers to the Church of the present time. Concerning this the Lord says in another place: The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all scandals. For in that kingdom of blessedness, where there is supreme peace, no scandals could be found to be gathered. And from which again it is said: Whoever therefore breaks one of these least commandments and teaches men so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven.

But whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For one breaks a commandment and teaches it when someone proclaims by voice what he does not fulfill by living. But one who is unwilling to fulfill by work

what he teaches cannot attain to the kingdom of eternal blessedness. How then shall he be called least in it who is in no way permitted to enter it? What therefore does this statement mean except that the present Church is called the kingdom of heaven? In which a teacher who breaks a commandment is called least, because when someone's life is despised, it follows that his preaching is also condemned. Now each person exists in five bodily senses, and five doubled makes ten. And because the multitude of the faithful is gathered from both sexes, the holy Church is declared to be like ten virgins. In this Church, because the bad are mixed with the good and the reprobate with the elect, it is rightly said to be like both wise and foolish virgins. For there are many continent persons who guard themselves from outward desire, and are carried by hope toward inner things, who mortify the flesh, and pant with all longing for the heavenly homeland, who seek eternal rewards and are unwilling to receive human praises for their labors. These indeed do not place their glory on the lips of men, but conceal it within their conscience.

And there are many who afflict the body through abstinence, but from that very abstinence seek human favor, who devote themselves to teaching and give much to the needy. But these are certainly foolish virgins, because they seek only the recompense of passing praise. Hence it is aptly added: Five were foolish, and having taken their lamps, did not take oil with them; but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. For by oil the splendor of glory is signified; and our vessels are our hearts, in which we carry all that we think. The wise therefore have oil in their vessels, because they retain the splendor of glory within their conscience, as Paul attests when he says: Our glory is this, the testimony of our conscience. But the foolish virgins do not take oil with them, because they do not have glory within their conscience, since they seek it from the lips of their neighbors. But it should be noted that all have lamps, yet not all have oil, because often the reprobate display good works in themselves along with the elect, but only those come to the bridegroom with oil who seek glory inwardly for what they have done outwardly. Hence through the Psalmist also it is said of the holy Church of the elect: All the glory of the king's daughter is from within.

While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept, because while the Judge delays His coming to the final judgment, both the elect and the reprobate are lulled in the sleep of death. For to sleep is to die. But to slumber before sleep is to languish from health before death, because through the weight of illness one arrives at the sleep of death. And at midnight a cry was made: Behold, the bridegroom comes, go out to meet him. The cry concerning the arrival of the bridegroom happens at midnight, because the day of judgment creeps up in such a way that it cannot be foreseen when it comes. Hence it is written: The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. Then all the virgins rise, because both the elect and the reprobate are awakened from the sleep of their death. They trim their lamps, because they count up their works with them, for which they expect to

receive eternal blessedness. But the lamps of the foolish virgins are extinguished, because their works, which had appeared outwardly bright to men, are inwardly darkened at the coming of the judge. And they find no recompense from God, because for those works they received from men the praises which they loved. But what does it mean that they then seek oil from the wise, except that at the coming of the judge, when they find themselves empty within, they seek testimony from without? As if, deceived by their own confidence, they say to their neighbors:

Since you see us being rejected as if without works, tell us what you saw of our works. But the wise virgins answer, saying: Lest perhaps there be not enough for us and for you. For on that day (though I speak of certain ones resting in the peace of the Church) the testimony of each one barely suffices for oneself; how much less for both oneself and one's neighbor? Hence they also immediately add by way of rebuke: Go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves. For the sellers of oil are flatterers. For those who, when any grace has been received, offer the brightness of glory through their vain praises, as it were sell oil. Concerning this oil indeed the Psalmist says: But let not the oil of the sinner anoint my head. For our principal part is the head. And by the term "head" is meant the mind which rules the body. Therefore the oil of the sinner fattens the head when the favor of the flatterer soothes the mind. But while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, because while they seek testimony of their life from their neighbors, the judge comes, who is witness not only of works but also of hearts. And those who were ready entered with him to the wedding, and the door was shut. Oh, if wisdom in the palate of the heart could taste what wonder lies in the words: The bridegroom comes! What sweetness in: They entered with him to the wedding feast! What bitterness in:

And the door was shut! For he comes whose arrival shakes the elements, at whose presence heaven and earth tremble. Whence also through the prophet he says: Yet once more, and I will shake not only the earth, but also heaven. Before his judgment all the human race is brought. To him for the punishment of the wicked and the reward of the good, angels, archangels, thrones, principalities, and dominions render service. Consider, dearest brothers, before the presence of so great a judge what terror there will be on that day when there will be no remedy in punishment, what confusion will befall the one whom his own guilt compels to blush with shame in the assembly of all the angels and men, what dread to see him angry whom the human mind cannot comprehend even when he is calm. Gazing upon this day, the prophet rightly says: A day of wrath, that day, a day of tribulation and distress, a day of calamity and misery, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of cloud and whirlwind, a day of trumpet and clamor. Consider therefore, dearest brothers, with what harshness the prophet saw the last day of judgment embitter the hearts of the reprobate, which he cannot express with so many names. But how great will

be the joy of the elect, who merit to rejoice in the sight of him at whose presence they see all the elements tremble, to enter with him together to the wedding feast!

They both rejoice at the wedding of the bridegroom and yet are themselves the bride, because in that bridal chamber of the eternal kingdom God is joined to our sight. This vision will never again be torn from the embraces of its love for all eternity. Then the door of the kingdom will be closed to those who mourn, which now is opened daily to the penitent. For there will be repentance then too, but it will no longer bear fruit, because he who now wastes the time fit for pardon will by no means find forgiveness then. Hence Paul says: Behold, now is the acceptable time, behold, now is the day of salvation. Hence the prophet says: Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near. Therefore the Lord does not hear those same foolish virgins when they call upon Him, because with the door of the kingdom closed, He who could have been near will no longer be near. For it is added: ”At last the other virgins come, saying: Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answering, said: Amen I say to you, I know you not. There one who refused to hear what He commanded here can no longer obtain from God what he asks; one who lost the time for fitting repentance comes in vain before the door of the kingdom with prayers. For this is why the Lord says through Solomon: ”I called, and you refused;

I stretched out my hand, and there was no one who paid attention; you despised all my counsel, and neglected my reproofs. I also will laugh at your destruction, and will mock when what you feared comes upon you. When sudden calamity rushes in, and destruction presses on like a storm, when tribulation and anguish come upon you, then they will call upon me, and I will not hear; they will rise early, and they will not find me. Behold, they cry out to be opened to, and, compelled by the pain of their rejection, they double the title of Lord, saying: ”Lord, Lord, open to us. They offer prayers, but they are not known, because the Lord then abandons as if unknown those whom He now does not recognize as His own through the merit of their life. Wherefore also a general exhortation to the disciples is fittingly added, when it is said: Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour. Because God accepts repentance after sins, if anyone knew at what time he would depart from this present world, he could have devoted one time to pleasures and another to repentance. But He who promised pardon to the penitent did not promise tomorrow to the sinner. Therefore we ought always to fear the last day, which we can never foresee. Behold, this very day in which we speak we have received as a respite for conversion, and yet we refuse to weep for the evils we have done.

Not only do we not lament what we have committed, but we even increase the things that should be wept over. But if some sickness seizes us, if signs of illness announce approaching death, we seek a respite for living that we may weep for our

sins, and we seek with great fervor of desire those respites which, when we have received them, we now consider as nothing. 7. I relate a matter, dearest brethren, which if your charity wishes to hear attentively, you will be greatly instructed by considering it. There was a certain nobleman in the province of Valeria named Chrysaorius, whom the common people in rustic speech called Chryserius: a very capable man, but as full of vices as of possessions; swollen with pride, subject to the pleasures of his flesh, inflamed with the torches of avarice in acquiring things. But when the Lord had decreed to put an end to so many evils, as I learned from a certain religious man who still survives, a relative of his, he was struck with bodily illness. When he came to his end, at the very hour when he was about to depart from the body, with open eyes he saw foul and utterly black spirits standing before him, and vehemently pressing upon him to drag him away to the prison of hell.

He began to tremble, to grow pale, to sweat, and with loud cries to beg for a respite, and to call his son named Maximus, whom I myself, now a monk, saw as a monk, with excessive and agitated shouts, saying: Maximus, run, I have never done you any harm, receive me into your protection. Maximus, disturbed, was present at once; the household gathered, weeping and making noise. But those malign spirits whom he so grievously endured pressing upon him they could not see, but they saw their presence in the confusion, in the pallor and trembling of him who was being dragged away. From fear of their hideous appearance he was turning this way and that on his bed; he lay on his left side, he could not bear the sight of them; he turned toward the wall, there they were. And when, exceedingly constrained, he despaired of being able to be released, he began to cry out with loud voice, saying: A respite at least until morning, a respite at least until morning. But while he was crying out these things, in the midst of his very cries he was torn from the dwelling of his flesh. From which it is certainly clear that he saw these things for us, not for himself, so that his vision might profit us whom divine patience still waits for with longsuffering.

For what did it profit him to have seen the foul spirits before death and to have begged for a respite, when he did not receive the very respite he begged for? Let us therefore, dearest brethren, now carefully consider these things, lest our time pass away in vain, and then we seek to live for doing good when we are already being compelled to depart from the body. Remember what the Truth says: Pray that your flight be not in winter or on the Sabbath. For by the commandment of the law it is not permitted to walk far on the Sabbath; winter also is a hindrance to walking, because the numbness of cold restrains the steps of those who walk. He says therefore: Pray that your flight be not in winter or on the Sabbath. As if He were to say openly: See that you do not seek to flee your sins when it is no longer permitted to walk. That time therefore when flight is not permitted ought to be thought about now while it is permitted. That hour of our departure is always to be kept in view, this admonition of our Redeemer is always to be placed before the

eyes of our mind, wherein He says: Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour.

HOMILY 13. Delivered to the people in the basilica of blessed Felix the confessor, on the day of his nativity.

READING OF THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE. At that time, Jesus said to his disciples: Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning in your hands. And you yourselves be like men waiting for their lord, when he shall return from the wedding, so that when he comes and knocks, they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the lord, when he comes, shall find watching. Amen I say to you, that he will gird himself and make them recline at table, and passing by will minister to them. And if he comes in the second watch, and if he comes in the third watch, and finds them so, blessed are those servants. But know this, that if the master of the house knew at what hour the thief would come, he would surely watch and not allow his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, because at an hour you do not expect, the Son of man will come. The reading of the Holy Gospel, dearest brothers, has been recited openly to you. But lest its very plainness perhaps seem profound to some, let us run through it briefly, so that its exposition may become known to the ignorant without being burdensome to those who already know. That lust resides in the loins in men and in the navel in women, the Lord testifies when speaking of the devil to blessed Job, saying: ”His strength is in his loins, and his power is in the navel of his belly.

Therefore, by the principal sex, lust is designated by the name of loins, when the Lord says: ”Let your loins be girded. For we gird our loins when we restrain the lust of the flesh through continence. But because it is not enough to refrain from evil unless one also strives to labor in good works, it is immediately added: ”And have burning lamps in your hands. For we hold burning lamps in our hands when through good works we show examples of light to our neighbors. Concerning these works the Lord indeed says: ”Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven. Now two things are commanded: both to restrain the loins and to hold lamps, so that there may be both the purity of chastity in the body and the light of truth in action. For one without the other can in no way please our Redeemer, whether he who does good has not yet abandoned the defilements of lust, or he who excels in chastity does not yet exercise himself in good works. Neither is chastity great without good work, nor is any work good without chastity. But even if both are practiced, it remains that whoever he is should reach toward the heavenly homeland by hope, and should not restrain himself from vices merely for the sake of this world’s respectability.

For even if he sometimes begins certain good things for the sake of respectability, he ought not to remain in that intention, nor seek the glory of the present world through good works, but should place all his hope in the coming of his Redeemer.

Hence it is immediately added: ”And be like men waiting for their lord, when he returns from the wedding. For the Lord went to the wedding because, rising from the dead and ascending into heaven, the new man joined to himself the heavenly multitude of angels. He returns when he is manifested to us through judgment. And well is it added concerning the waiting servants: ”That when he comes and knocks, they may open to him immediately. For the Lord comes when he hastens to judgment; he knocks when through the troubles of illness he indicates that death is near. We open to him immediately if we receive him with love. For he who trembles to depart from the body does not wish to open to the judge who knocks, and fears to see as judge him whom he remembers having despised. But he who is confident in his hope and work opens immediately to the one who knocks, because he awaits the judge joyfully; and when he recognizes that the time of approaching death has come, he rejoices in the glory of recompense. Hence it is immediately added: ”Blessed are those servants whom the lord, when he comes, shall find watching.

He watches who keeps the eyes of his mind open to behold the true light; he watches who preserves in action what he believes; he watches who repels from himself the darkness of torpor and negligence. Hence Paul says: ”Awake, you righteous, and do not sin. Hence again he says: ”It is now the hour for us to rise from sleep. But let us hear what the coming Lord shows to his watchful servants: ”Amen I say to you, that he will gird himself, and make them recline, and passing by will minister to them. He will gird himself, that is, he will prepare himself for recompense; and he will make them recline, that is, to be refreshed in eternal rest. For our reclining in the kingdom is to rest. Whence again the Lord says: ”They will come and recline with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But the Lord passing by ministers, because he satisfies us with the illumination of his light. And it is said ”passing,” when he returns from judgment to the kingdom. Or certainly the Lord passes by for us after the judgment, because he raises us from the form of humanity to the contemplation of his divinity. And his passing is to lead us into the vision of his glory, when him whom we perceive in humanity at the judgment, we also see in divinity after the judgment. For coming to judgment, he appears to all in the form of a servant, because it is written: ”They will look upon him whom they pierced.

But when the reprobate fall into punishment, the just are drawn to the glory of his brightness, as it is written: ”Let the impious one be taken away, lest he see the glory of God. But what if servants are negligent in the first watch? For the first watch is the guarding of the first age. But even so, one should not despair or cease from good work. For the Lord, suggesting the patience of his long-suffering, adds: ”And if he comes in the second watch, and if he comes in the third watch, and finds them so, blessed are those servants. For the first watch is the earliest time, that is, childhood. The second is adolescence or youth, which according to the authority of sacred Scripture are one, as Solomon says: ”Rejoice, young man,

in your adolescence. The third, however, is understood as old age. Therefore, he who was unwilling to keep watch in the first watch should guard at least the second, so that he who neglected to turn from his wickedness in childhood may awaken to the ways of life at least in the time of youth. And he who was unwilling to watch in the second watch should not lose the remedies of the third watch, so that he who did not awaken to the ways of life in youth may at least come to his senses in old age. Consider, dearest brothers, that the mercy of God has enclosed our hardness. There is nothing left for a person to find as an excuse.

God is despised, and he waits; he sees himself scorned, and he calls back; he receives injury from contempt of himself, and yet he still promises rewards to those who eventually return. But let no one neglect this long-suffering of his, because he will demand justice at the judgment all the more strictly, the longer the patience he extended before the judgment. For Paul says about this: ”Do you not know that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But according to your hardness and impenitent heart, you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath and revelation of the just judgment of God. About this the Psalmist says: ”God is a just judge, strong and long-suffering. For about to call him long-suffering, he first said just, so that you may know that he whom you see patiently bearing the sins of transgressors for a long time will also at some point judge strictly. About this it is said through a certain wise man: ”For the Most High is a patient rewarder. He is called a patient rewarder because he both endures and repays the sins of men. For those whom he tolerates for a long time so that they may convert, if they do not convert, he condemns more harshly. But to shake off the sloth of our mind, even external losses are brought forward through a comparison, so that through these the soul may be roused to guard itself. For it is said:

”Know this, that if the master of the house knew at what hour the thief was coming, he would certainly watch and would not allow his house to be broken into. From this comparison set forth, an exhortation is also added, when it is said: ”And you, be ready, because at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come. For while the master of the house is unaware, the thief breaks into the house, because while the spirit sleeps from guarding itself, unforeseen death coming bursts into the dwelling of our flesh, and slays as if sleeping the one it found as master of the house, because when the spirit fails to foresee the coming losses, death snatches him unknowing to punishment. But he would resist the thief if he were watching, because being on guard against the coming of the judge who secretly seizes the soul, he would meet him by repenting, lest he perish impenitent. Our Lord willed that the final hour be unknown to us so that it might always be regarded with suspicion, so that since we cannot foresee it, we might prepare ourselves for it without ceasing. Therefore, my brothers, fix the eyes of your mind upon the condition of your mortality; prepare yourselves for the coming Judge through daily weeping and

lamentation. And since certain death awaits all, do not think about the uncertain provision of temporal life. Let not the care of earthly things weigh you down.

For however great the masses of gold and silver that surround the flesh, however precious the garments in which it is clothed, what is it other than flesh? Therefore do not consider what you have, but what you are. Do you wish to hear what you are? The prophet declares, saying: ”Truly the people are grass. For if the people are not grass, where are those who celebrated with us the feast of blessed Felix’s birthday a year ago, which we celebrate today? O how many and how great were the thoughts they had about provision for the present life, but when the moment of death crept upon them, they were suddenly found in those circumstances they had been unwilling to foresee, and they lost all the temporal things at once which, having been gathered together, they seemed to hold securely. If therefore the multitude of the human race that has passed flourished in the flesh through birth and withered to dust through death, it was evidently grass. Since therefore the hours flee with their moments, act, dearest brothers, so that they may be retained in the reward of good work. Hear what the wise Solomon says: ”Whatever your hand is able to do, work at it earnestly, for there will be neither work, nor knowledge, nor reason, nor wisdom in the underworld, to which you are hastening. Since therefore we do not know the time of coming death, and after death we cannot work, it remains that before death we seize the time that has been granted.

For thus, yes thus, death itself when it comes will be conquered, if before it comes it is always feared.

HOMILY 14. Delivered to the people in the basilica of the blessed apostle Peter, on the second Sunday after Easter.

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN. At that time, Jesus said to the Pharisees: I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. But the hireling, who is not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and abandons the sheep and flees; and the wolf seizes and scatters the sheep. The hireling flees because he is a hireling, and the sheep are not his concern. I am the good shepherd, and I know my sheep, and my sheep know me. As the Father knows me, and I know the Father, and I lay down my life for my sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold, and I must bring them also, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one fold and one shepherd. 1. You have heard, dearest brothers, from the Gospel reading your instruction; you have heard also our peril. For behold, he who is good not by an accidental gift but essentially, says: I am the good shepherd. And he adds the pattern of that same goodness for us to imitate, saying: The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. He did what he taught; he showed what he commanded. The good shepherd laid down his life for his sheep, so that in our sacrament he might

transform his body and blood, and satisfy with the nourishment of his flesh the sheep he had redeemed.

The way has been shown to us through contempt of death that we should follow; the pattern has been set before us upon which we should be formed. First it is ours to mercifully spend our external goods on his sheep; but finally, if necessary, even to offer our death for those same sheep. From that first and lesser thing one arrives at the final and greater. But since the soul by which we live is incomparably far better than the earthly substance we possess externally, when will someone who does not give his substance for his sheep give his life for them? And there are some who, because they love earthly substance more than the sheep, deservedly lose the name of shepherd. Of whom it is immediately added: But the hireling, who is not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and abandons the sheep and flees. He is called not a shepherd but a hireling who feeds the Lord's sheep not out of heartfelt love but for temporal wages. Indeed, a hireling is one who holds the position of shepherd but does not seek the profit of souls; he gapes after earthly advantages, rejoices in the honor of his office, feeds on temporal gains, and delights in the reverence shown him by men. For these are the wages of the hireling: that for the very labor he performs in governance, he finds here what he seeks, and remains a stranger to the inheritance of the flock hereafter.

But whether one is truly a shepherd or a hireling cannot be known with certainty if no occasion of necessity arises. In times of tranquility, the hireling often stands guard over the flock just as the true shepherd does; but when the wolf comes, it reveals with what spirit each one was standing guard over the flock. For the wolf comes upon the sheep when any unjust man and plunderer oppresses the faithful and humble. But he who appeared to be a shepherd and was not abandons the sheep and flees, because while he fears danger to himself from the wolf, he does not presume to resist his injustice. He flees not by changing his location but by withdrawing his support. He flees because he saw injustice and remained silent. He flees because he hid himself in silence. To such men it is rightly said through the prophet: "You have not gone up against the enemy, nor have you set up a wall for the house of Israel, to stand in battle on the day of the Lord. To go up against the enemy is to oppose with the free voice of reason any powers that act wickedly. And we stand in battle on the day of the Lord for the house of Israel and set up a wall if we defend the faithful and innocent against the injustice of the perverse with the authority of justice. Because the hireling does not do this, when he sees the wolf coming, he flees.

But there is another wolf who without ceasing daily tears apart not bodies, but minds, namely the malignant spirit, who prowling around lies in wait for the sheepfolds of the faithful and seeks the deaths of souls. Concerning this wolf it is soon added: "And the wolf seizes and scatters the sheep. The wolf comes and the

hireling flees, because the malignant spirit tears apart the minds of the faithful in temptation, and he who holds the place of pastor has no care of solicitude. Souls perish, and he himself rejoices in earthly advantages. The wolf seizes and scatters the sheep when he drags one person into lust, inflames another with avarice, raises another up in pride, divides another through wrath, goads this one with envy, trips up that one in deceit. The devil, as it were, scatters the flock like a wolf when he slays the faithful people through temptations. But against these things the hireling is kindled by no zeal, aroused by no fervor of love: because while he seeks only external advantages, he negligently permits the internal losses of the flock. Hence it is soon added: ”But the hireling flees, because he is a hireling, and the sheep do not pertain to him. For the sole reason why the hireling flees is because he is a hireling. As if it were said openly: He who in presiding over the sheep does not love the sheep but seeks earthly gain cannot stand firm in danger to the sheep.

For while he embraces honor, while he rejoices in temporal advantages, he trembles to oppose himself against danger, lest he lose what he loves. But because our Redeemer made known the faults of the false pastor, He again shows the form upon which we ought to be imprinted, saying: ”I am the good Shepherd. And He adds: ”And I know my sheep,” that is, I love them, ”and my sheep know me. As if He were saying openly: Those who love follow in obedience. For he who does not love the truth has not yet come to know it at all. Of which sheep indeed he says again: ”My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give them eternal life. Of which he also says a little earlier: ”If anyone enters through me, he will be saved, and will go in and go out, and will find pastures. For he will go in to faith, but will go out from faith to sight, from belief to contemplation, and will find pastures in eternal refreshment. His sheep therefore find pastures, because whoever follows him with a simple heart is nourished by the food of eternal greenness. But what are the pastures of these sheep, if not the inner joys of ever-verdant paradise? For the pastures of the elect are the present countenance of God, which when it is beheld without failing, the mind is satisfied without end by the food of life.

In these pastures those have rejoiced in the fullness of eternity who have already escaped the snares of pleasurable temporality. There are the hymn-singing choirs of angels, there is the fellowship of the heavenly citizens. There is the sweet solemnity of those returning from the sad labor of this pilgrimage. There are the foreseeing choirs of prophets, there is the judging number of apostles, there is the victorious army of innumerable martyrs, the more joyful there as they were more harshly afflicted here; there is the constancy of confessors, consoled by the reception of their reward; there are faithful men whom the pleasure of the world could not soften from the strength of their manliness; there are holy women who conquered both the world and their sex; there are children who here transcended their years by their conduct; there are the elderly whom age rendered weak here,

yet the power of good works did not abandon. Since, therefore, you have heard, most beloved brethren, our peril, consider in the Lord's words also your own peril. See whether you are his sheep, see whether you know him, see whether you know the light of truth. But I say "know" not through faith, but through love. I say "know" not from belief, but from action. For the same John the Evangelist who speaks these things testifies, saying: "He who says that he knows God, and does not keep his commandments, is a liar. Hence in this passage the Lord immediately adds:

"As the Father knows me, and I know the Father, and I lay down my life for my sheep. As if he were openly saying: In this it is established that I both know the Father and am known by the Father, because I lay down my life for my sheep; that is, by that charity with which I die for the sheep, I show how much I love the Father. But because he had come to redeem not only Judea but also the Gentiles, he adds: "And I have other sheep which are not of this fold, and those I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd. The Lord was looking upon our redemption, we who come from the Gentile people, when he said he would bring other sheep also. This you see happening daily, brethren; this you see accomplished today with the reconciled Gentiles. For he makes one fold, as it were, from two flocks, because he unites the Jewish and Gentile peoples in his faith, as Paul attests, who says: "He is our peace, who has made both one. For while he chooses the simple from both nations for eternal life, he leads his sheep to their proper fold. Let us seek, therefore, dearly beloved brethren, these pastures, in which we may rejoice with the solemnity of so many fellow citizens. Let the very festivity of those who rejoice invite us.

Surely if the people were celebrating a market somewhere, if they were gathering at the dedication of some church with a proclaimed solemnity, we would all hasten to be found there together, and each one would be eager to be present, and would consider himself afflicted with grave loss if he did not witness the solemnity of common joy. Behold, in the heavens the joy of the elect citizens is celebrated, all rejoice together over one another in their assembly, and yet we, lukewarm in our love of eternity, burn with no desire, we do not seek to be present at so great a solemnity, we are deprived of joys, and yet we are happy. Let us therefore kindle our spirit, brethren, let faith grow warm again in what it has believed, let our desires burn toward heavenly things, and thus to love is already to go. Let no adversity call us back from the joy of the inner solemnity, because even if someone desires to go to an intended place, no roughness of the road changes his desire. Let no flattering prosperity seduce us, because he is a foolish traveler who, seeing pleasant meadows along the way, forgets to go where he was heading.

Therefore let the soul yearn with all desire for the heavenly homeland, let it seek nothing in this world, which it knows it will soon leave behind, so that if we are

truly sheep of the heavenly Shepherd, because we are not fixed on the delight of the way, we may be satisfied with eternal pastures upon arrival.

HOMILY XV. Delivered to the people in the basilica of Saint Paul the Apostle, on Sexagesima Sunday.

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE. At that time, when a very great crowd was gathering, and they were hastening to Jesus from the cities, he spoke by a parable: A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and it was trampled upon, and the birds of the air ate it. And some fell upon rock, and when it sprang up, it withered away because it had no moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns springing up together choked it. And some fell on good ground, and when it sprang up, it brought forth fruit a hundredfold. Saying these things, he cried out: He who has ears to hear, let him hear. And his disciples asked him what this parable might mean. To them he said: To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but to the rest in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand. Now this is the parable: The seed is the word of God. And those by the wayside are they who hear; then the devil comes and takes the word from their heart, lest believing they should be saved. For those upon the rock are they who, when they hear, receive the word with joy. And these have no roots, because they believe for a time, and in the time of temptation they fall away.

And that which fell among thorns, these are they who have heard, and going their way are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and they bring forth no fruit. But that which fell on good ground, these are they who in a good and perfect heart, hearing the word, retain it, and bring forth fruit in patience. 1. The reading of the holy Gospel which you have just heard, dearest brothers, does not need exposition, but exhortation. For human frailty does not presume to examine what Truth itself has expounded. But there is something you ought carefully to consider in this very exposition of the Lord: that if we were to tell you that the seed signifies the word, the field the world, the birds demons, the thorns riches, your mind would perhaps hesitate to believe us. Hence the same Lord deigned to expound through himself what he was saying, so that you might learn to seek the meanings of things even in those matters which he did not wish to explain through himself. Therefore by expounding what he said, he made it known that he was speaking figuratively, so that he might make you certain when our frailty opened up to you the figures of his words. For who would ever have believed me if I had wished to interpret thorns as riches, especially since the former prick while the latter delight?

And yet they are thorns, because they tear the mind with the prickings of their thoughts, and when they drag it all the way to sin, they cause it to bleed as if by an inflicted wound. These, in this passage, as another evangelist attests, the Lord

calls not simply riches, but deceitful riches, and rightly so. For they are deceitful because they cannot remain with us for long; they are deceitful because they do not drive away the poverty of our mind. Only those riches are true which make us rich in virtues. If therefore, dearest brothers, you desire to be rich, love true riches. If you seek the summit of true honor, strive toward the heavenly kingdom. If you love the glory of high positions, hasten to be enrolled in that supernal court of the angels. The words of the Lord which you perceive with your ears, retain in your mind. For the word of God is food for the mind. And just as food taken in is rejected when the stomach is weak, so a word that is heard is not retained in the belly of memory. But whoever does not retain nourishment, his life is surely despaired of. Therefore fear the danger of eternal death, if you receive the food of holy exhortation but do not keep in memory the words of life, that is, the nourishment of righteousness. Behold, everything you do passes away, and to the final judgment, without any intervening moment, you hasten daily, whether willing or unwilling.

Why then is what must be left behind loved? Why is that to which we are heading neglected? Remember what is said: If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear. For all who were present there had bodily ears. But he who says to all having ears, If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear, without doubt seeks the ears of the heart. Take care therefore that the word received remains in the ear of the heart. Take care that the seed does not fall by the wayside, lest the evil spirit come and take the word from memory. Take care that rocky ground does not receive the seed and send forth the fruit of good work without the roots of perseverance. For many are pleased by what they hear and propose beginnings of good work; but as soon as they begin to be wearied by adversities, they abandon what they have begun. Rocky ground therefore lacked moisture, which did not bring what had sprouted to the fruit of perseverance. For many, when they hear the word against avarice, detest that same avarice and praise contempt for all things; but as soon as the mind sees what it desires, it forgets what it was praising. Many, when they hear the word against lust, not only do not desire to commit defilements of the flesh, but even blush at those committed;

but as soon as the beauty of the flesh appears before their eyes, the mind is so carried away to desires as if nothing had yet been resolved by it against these same desires; and it does condemnable things, which whatever it remembers having done, it has already itself condemned. Often too we are pierced with remorse against sins, and yet after weeping we return to the same sins. So Balaam, having gazed upon the tents of the Israelite people, wept and begged to be made like them in death, saying: Let my soul die the death of the just, and let my last end be like theirs; but as soon as the hour of compunction passed, he burned with the wickedness of avarice. For on account of promised gifts he gave counsel for the death of that people whose death he had wished to resemble; and he forgot what he had lamented, since he was unwilling to extinguish what burned through avarice.

It should be noted that the Lord, in His explanation, says that cares, pleasures, and riches choke the word. For they choke it because by their importunate thoughts they strangle the throat of the mind; and since they do not allow good desire to enter the heart, they kill, as it were, the passage of the breath of life. It should also be noted that He joins two things with riches, namely cares and pleasures, because indeed they both oppress the mind through anxiety and dissolve it through abundance.

For by their contrary nature they make their possessors both afflicted and unstable. But since pleasure cannot coexist with affliction, at one time they afflict through the anxiety of guarding them, and at another time they soften toward pleasures through abundance. But the good earth brings forth fruit through patience, because clearly our good works are nothing if we do not also bear with equanimity the evils of our neighbors. For the higher anyone has advanced, the more he finds in this world what he must bear more harshly, because when our mind's love for the present age diminishes, the adversity of that same age increases. Hence it is that we see many both doing good and yet laboring under the heavy burden of tribulations. For they now flee earthly desires, and yet are wearied by harsher afflictions. But according to the word of the Lord they bring forth fruit through patience, because when they humbly accept afflictions, after the afflictions they are sublimely received into rest. Thus the grape is crushed by treading and is liquefied into the flavor of wine. Thus the olive, pressed by crushing, leaves behind its bitter residue and grows rich into the liquid of oil. Thus by the threshing of the floor the grains are separated from the chaff and arrive purified at the granary.

Therefore whoever desires to fully conquer vices, let him strive to humbly endure the afflictions of his purification, so that he may come before the Judge all the more pure afterward, the more the fire of tribulation now purges away his rust. In that portico which serves as a passageway for those going to the church of blessed Clement, there was a certain man named Servulus, whom many of you knew along with me—poor in possessions, rich in merits—whom a long illness had weakened. For from his earliest age until the end of his life he lay paralyzed. What shall I say, that he could not stand? He was never able to rise in his bed even to sit, never able to bring his hand to his mouth, never able to turn himself to his other side. His mother with his brother was present to serve him, and whatever he was able to receive from alms, he distributed to the poor through their hands. He knew no letters at all, but he had purchased for himself books of Sacred Scripture, and receiving any religious persons in hospitality, he had them read before him without ceasing. And so it came about that, according to his own measure, he learned Sacred Scripture fully, though, as I said, he was entirely ignorant of letters. He strove always to give thanks in his pain, to devote himself to hymns and praises to God day and night.

But when the time had come that his great patience ought to be rewarded, the pain of his limbs returned to his vital organs. And when he recognized that he was now near death, he urged the traveling men received in hospitality to rise and sing psalms with him in expectation of his departure. And while he himself, dying, was singing psalms with them, he suddenly silenced the voices of those singing, with the terror of a great cry, saying: ”Be silent! Do you not hear how great are the praises resounding in heaven? And while he was directing the ear of his heart toward those same praises which he heard within, that holy soul was released from the flesh. But as it departed, such a fragrance of scent was spread there that all who were present were filled with inestimable sweetness, so that through this they clearly recognized that praises in heaven had received it. A monk of ours was present at this event, who still lives, and with great weeping he is accustomed to attest that until his body was handed over for burial, the fragrance of that scent did not depart from their nostrils. Behold with what end he departed from this life who in this life calmly endured afflictions. According to the Lord’s word, therefore, the good earth brought forth fruit through patience, which, having been plowed by the plowshare of discipline, arrived at the harvest of reward.

But I ask you, dearest brothers, consider what argument of excuse we shall have in that strict judgment—we who, sluggish from good work, have received both resources and hands—if a beggar without hands fulfilled the Lord’s commands. May the Lord not then display against us the apostles who by preaching drew crowds of the faithful with him to the kingdom, may he not bring forth against us the martyrs who by shedding their blood arrived at the heavenly homeland. What shall we say then, when we see this Servulus of whom we have spoken, whose arms a long illness held bound, yet did not bind them from good work? Do these things with yourselves, brothers, so urge yourselves to zeal for good work, that when you now set good men before you for imitation, you may then be able to be their companions.

HOMILY 16. Delivered to the people in the basilica of Saint John, which is called the Constantiniana, on the first Sunday in Lent.

READING FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW IV, 1-11. At that time, Jesus was led into the desert by the Spirit, to be tempted by the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him: If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread. He answered and said: It is written: Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Then the devil took him into the holy city, and set him upon the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him: If you are the Son of God, cast yourself down. For it is written: He has given his angels charge over you, and in their hands they shall bear you up, lest perhaps you strike your foot against a stone. Jesus said to him: Again it is written: You shall not tempt

the Lord your God. Again the devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory, and said to him: All these things I will give you, if you fall down and worship me. Then Jesus said to him: Begone, Satan. For it is written: You shall worship the Lord your God, and him alone shall you serve. Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and ministered to him.

It is often doubted by some by what spirit Jesus was led into the desert, because of what follows: ”The devil took him up into the holy city. And again: ”He took him up onto a high mountain. This question is properly understood if we believe he was led into the desert by the Holy Spirit, so that his own Spirit would lead him there, where the evil spirit would then find him to tempt him. But behold, when it is said that God made man was taken up by the devil either onto a high mountain or into the holy city, the mind recoils, human ears are terrified to hear this. Yet we recognize that these things are not incredible if we consider other things that were done to him. Certainly the devil is the head of all the wicked, and all the wicked are members of this head. Was not Pilate a member of the devil? Were not the Jews who persecuted and the soldiers who crucified Christ members of the devil? What wonder is it then if he allowed himself to be led onto a mountain by him, who also allowed himself to be crucified by his members? Therefore it is not unworthy of our Redeemer that he willed to be tempted, he who had come to be killed. For it was just that he should overcome our temptations by his temptations, just as he had come to conquer our death by his death. But we should know that temptation occurs in three ways:

by suggestion, by delight, and by consent. And when we are tempted, we frequently fall into delight or even into consent, because having been propagated from the sin of the flesh, we bear within ourselves that from which we endure struggles. But God, who was incarnate in the womb of a Virgin and came into the world without sin, tolerated no contradiction within himself. Therefore he could be tempted through suggestion, but the delight of sin did not bite his mind. And so all that diabolical temptation was external, not internal. But if we examine the very order of his temptation, let us consider with what great power we are freed from temptation. The ancient enemy raised himself against the first man, our parent, in three temptations, because he tempted him with gluttony, vainglory, and avarice; but by tempting he overcame him, because he subjected him to himself through consent. Indeed, he tempted him through gluttony when he showed him the food of the forbidden tree and persuaded him to eat. He tempted him through vainglory when he said: You shall be as gods. And he tempted him through the advancement of avarice when he said: Knowing good and evil. For avarice is not only of money, but also of exaltation. For it is rightly called avarice when loftiness is sought beyond measure. For if the seizure of honor did not pertain to avarice, Paul would never say of the only-begotten Son of God: He did not consider it robbery to be equal to God.

Moreover, the devil drew our parent to pride in this, that he aroused him to avarice for exaltation. But by the same means by which he overthrew the first man, by those same means he was overcome when he tempted the second man. For he tempts through gluttony when he says: ”Command that these stones become bread. He tempts through vainglory when he says: ”If you are the Son of God, cast yourself down. He tempts through the greed of ambition when he shows all the kingdoms of the world, saying: ”All these things I will give you, if you fall down and worship me. But by the same means by which he boasted of having conquered the first man, he is conquered by the second man, so that he might depart from our hearts, captured at the very entrance by which he had entered and held us. But there is something else, dearest brothers, that we ought to consider in this temptation of the Lord: that when tempted by the devil, the Lord responded with the precepts of sacred Scripture, and he who could have plunged his tempter into the abyss by that Word which he was, did not display the power of his might, but gave only the precepts of divine Scripture, so that he might offer us an example of his patience, that whenever we suffer anything from wicked people, we might be stirred to teaching rather than to vengeance. Consider how great is the patience of God, and how great is our impatience.

If we are provoked by injuries or some harm, moved by fury, we either avenge ourselves as much as we can, or we threaten what we cannot do. Behold, the Lord endured the adversity of the devil, and answered him with nothing but words of gentleness. He bore him whom he could have punished, so that his praise might grow higher from this: that he overcame his enemy not by destroying him, but by enduring him for the time being. But it should be noted what follows: that when the devil departed, angels ministered to him. By this, what else is shown but both natures in one person? For he is man whom the devil tempts, and he is the same God to whom angels minister. Let us therefore recognize our nature in him, for unless the devil perceived him to be man, he would not have tempted him. Let us venerate his divinity in him, for unless he were God above all things, angels would in no way minister to him. But since the reading is fitting for these days—for we have heard of the forty days’ abstinence of our Redeemer as we begin the season of Lent—we must discuss why this very abstinence is observed for the number of forty days. For Moses fasted twice for forty days in order to receive the law. Elijah abstained for forty days in the desert. The very Author of humanity, coming to humanity, took no food at all for forty days.

Let us also, as much as we can, strive to afflict our flesh through abstinence during the annual season of Lent. Why then is the number forty observed in abstinence, unless because the power of the Decalogue is fulfilled through the four books of the holy Gospel? For ten multiplied by four produces forty, because we fulfill the commandments of the Decalogue when we indeed keep the four books of the holy Gospel. From this another meaning can also be perceived. For in this mortal body

we subsist from four elements, and through the pleasures of this same body we act contrary to the Lord's commandments. But the Lord's commandments were received through the Decalogue. Since therefore through the desires of the flesh we have despised the commandments of the Decalogue, it is fitting that we afflict that same flesh four times ten. Although concerning this season of Lent there is still another thing that can be understood. For from the present day until the joys of the Paschal solemnity, six weeks come, whose days indeed amount to forty-two. When the six Sundays are subtracted from the abstinence, no more than thirty-six days remain in abstinence. But while the year is reckoned through three hundred and sixty-five days, and we afflict ourselves through thirty-six days, we give as it were the tithes of our year to God, so that we who have lived for ourselves through the year we received, may mortify ourselves to our Author in his tithes through abstinence.

Therefore, dearest brothers, just as you are commanded in the law to offer tithes of your possessions, so strive to offer him also tithes of your days. Let each one, as much as strength allows, mortify the flesh and afflict its desires, and slay shameful lusts, so that according to Paul's words, one may become a living sacrifice. For a sacrifice is both offered and is living when a person both does not depart from this life, and yet slays himself from carnal desires. Let the flesh that drew us joyfully to sin, bring us back afflicted to pardon. For the author of our death transgressed the precepts of life through the fruit of the forbidden tree. Let us therefore who fell from the joys of paradise through food, rise again to them as much as we can through abstinence. But let no one believe that abstinence alone can suffice for him, since the Lord says through the prophet: "Is not this rather the fast that I have chosen? adding: "Break your bread for the hungry, and bring the needy and homeless into your house; when you see the naked, cover him, and do not despise your own flesh. Therefore God approves that fast which raises hands of almsgiving to His eyes, which is performed with love of neighbor, which is seasoned with piety. Therefore what you take away from yourself, give generously to another, so that from that by which your flesh is afflicted, the flesh of your needy neighbor may be restored.

For hence the Lord says through the prophet: "When you fasted and mourned, did you fast a fast for me? And when you eat and drink, do you not eat for yourselves and drink for yourselves? For he eats and drinks for himself who receives the nourishment of the body, which is the common gift of the Creator, without sharing with the needy. And each one fasts for himself if he does not give to the poor what he subtracts from himself for a time, but keeps it to be offered later to his belly. Hence it is said through Joel: "Sanctify a fast. Indeed, to sanctify a fast is to show abstinence of the flesh worthy of God by joining other good works to it. Let anger cease, let quarrels be stilled. For the flesh is worn down in vain if the mind is not restrained from its wicked pleasures, since the Lord says through the prophet:

”Behold, on the day of your fast your own will is found. Behold, you fast for strife and contention, and you strike with the fist impiously, and you demand payment from all your debtors. For indeed one who demands back from his debtor what he gave does nothing unjust, but it is fitting that whoever mortifies himself in penance should forbid himself even what is justly owed to him. Thus, thus what we have done unjustly is forgiven by God when we are afflicted and penitent, if for love of Him we also release what is justly owed to us.

HOMILY XVII. Delivered to the bishops at the Lateran baptistery.

READING FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE. At that time, the Lord appointed also another seventy-two, and sent them two by two before his face into every city and place where he himself was about to come. And he said to them: The harvest indeed is great, but the laborers are few. Pray therefore the lord of the harvest to send laborers into his harvest. Go, behold I send you as lambs among wolves. Do not carry a purse, nor a bag, nor sandals, and greet no one along the way. Into whatever house you enter, first say: Peace be to this house. And if a son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon him; but if not, it shall return to you. And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they have. For the laborer is worthy of his hire. Do not go from house to house. And into whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat what is set before you; and heal the sick who are there, and say to them: The kingdom of God has drawn near to you. Our Lord and Savior, dearest brothers, sometimes admonishes us through words, and sometimes through deeds. For His very actions are commandments, because when He does something in silence, He makes known what we ought to do.

For behold, He sends His disciples out to preach in pairs, because there are two commandments of charity, namely the love of God and of neighbor, and charity cannot exist between fewer than two persons. For no one is properly said to have charity toward himself, but love extends toward another so that it may be charity. The Lord sends His disciples to preach in pairs, so that by this He may silently indicate to us that whoever does not have charity toward another should by no means undertake the office of preaching. It is well said that he sent them before his face into every city and place where he himself was about to come. For the Lord follows his preachers, because preaching comes first, and then the Lord comes to the dwelling place of our mind, when words of exhortation run ahead, and through these truth is received in the mind. For thus Isaiah says to these same preachers: Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight the paths of our God. Thus the Psalmist says to them: Make a way for him who ascends over the setting. For the Lord ascended over the setting because from that by which he fell in his passion, from that same thing he manifested his greater glory by rising again. He ascended over the setting, namely, because he trampled down by rising again the death which he had endured.

Therefore we make a way for him who ascends over the setting when we preach his glory to your minds, so that he himself also, coming afterward, may illuminate them through the presence of his love. When the preachers were sent, let us hear what he says: ”The harvest indeed is great, but the laborers are few. Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send laborers into his harvest. For the great harvest the laborers are few, which we cannot speak of without heavy grief, because even if there are those who hear good things, there are none to speak them. Behold, the world is full of priests, yet in God’s harvest a worker is found very rarely, because we have indeed taken up the priestly office, but we do not fulfill the work of the office. But consider, dearest brothers, consider what is said: ”Pray the Lord of the harvest, that he send laborers into his harvest. Petition on our behalf, that we may be able to work worthily for you, lest our tongue grow sluggish from exhortation, lest after we have taken up the place of preaching, our silence condemn us before the just judge. For often the tongue of preachers is restrained because of their own wickedness; but often indeed it happens through the fault of those subject to them that the word of preaching is withdrawn from those who are in charge. Indeed the tongue of preachers is restrained because of their own wickedness, as the Psalmist says: ”But to the sinner God said:

Why do you declare my justices? And again, because of the fault of those subject to them, the voice of preachers is forbidden, as the Lord says to Ezekiel: ”I will make your tongue cleave to your palate, and you shall be mute, and not as a man who rebukes, because it is a provoking house. As if he were to say openly: Therefore the word of preaching is taken from you, because while the people provoke me in their actions, they are not worthy to receive the exhortation of truth. From whose fault, therefore, the word is withdrawn from the preacher is not easily known. But it is known most certainly that the silence of the Pastor sometimes harms himself, but always harms those subject to him. But would that if we are not sufficient for the power of preaching, we might at least maintain the duty of our position in innocence of life. For it is added: Behold, I send you as lambs among wolves. But many, when they receive the rights of governance, burn to tear apart their subjects, display the terror of power, and harm those whom they ought to have benefited. And because they do not have the bowels of charity, they desire to be seen as lords, they do not at all recognize themselves to be fathers, they change the place of humility into the exaltation of domination, and if ever they flatter outwardly, inwardly they rage. Concerning whom the Truth says elsewhere:

They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. Against all these things, we must consider that we are sent as lambs among wolves, so that, preserving the sense of innocence, we may not have the bite of malice. For he who undertakes the position of preaching ought not to inflict evils, but to endure them, so that by his very meekness he may soften the anger of those who rage, and he himself, wounded by afflictions, may heal the wounds of sins in others. And

if ever the zeal of righteousness demands that he rage against his subjects, let that fury be from love, not from cruelty, so that he may both display the rights of discipline outwardly, and inwardly love with fatherly affection those whom he chastises as if pursuing them outwardly. This a Ruler exhibits well when he does not know how to love himself through private affection, when he desires nothing of the things of the world, when he in no way bends the neck of his mind to the burdens of earthly desire. Hence it is also added: ”Do not carry a money bag, nor a wallet, nor sandals, and greet no one along the way. For the preacher ought to have such great trust in God that, although he does not provide for the expenses of the present life, he nevertheless knows most certainly that these will not be lacking to him, lest while his mind is occupied with temporal things, he provide less for others concerning eternal things.

He is also permitted to greet no one along the way, to show with what great haste he ought to proceed on the journey of preaching. If anyone wishes to understand these words also allegorically: in a money bag, money is enclosed; but enclosed money is hidden wisdom. Therefore, whoever has the word of wisdom but neglects to distribute it to his neighbor holds money bound up in a bag, as it were. Hence it is written: ”Hidden wisdom and a concealed treasure, what profit is there in either? And what is signified by the wallet, except the burdens of the world; and what in this place by sandals, except the examples of dead works? Therefore, whoever undertakes the office of preaching, it is not fitting that he carry the burden of worldly affairs, lest while this weighs down his neck, he not rise up to preach heavenly things. Nor ought he to look upon the examples of foolish works, lest he believe he is protecting his own works, as it were, with the skins of dead animals. For there are many who defend their own depravity from the depravities of others. Because they consider that others have done such things, they think they may do these things freely. What else do these people do except try to protect their feet with the skins of dead animals? But everyone who greets on the way greets by occasion of the journey, not from zeal for wishing that same salvation.

Therefore, whoever preaches salvation to his hearers not from love of the eternal homeland but from ambition for rewards greets, as it were, on the journey, because he wishes salvation for his hearers by occasion and not by intention. There follows: Into whatsoever house you enter, first say: Peace be to this house. And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon him; but if not, it shall return to you. The peace which is offered from the mouth of the preacher either rests in the house, if there be a son of peace in it, or returns to the same preacher; because either someone will be predestined to life, and follows the heavenly word which he hears; or if no one shall have been willing to hear, the preacher himself will not be without fruit, because peace returns to him, since a reward is recompensed to him from the Lord for the labor of his work. Behold, however, he who forbade carrying a purse and bag grants expenses and food from that same preaching. For

it is added: ”And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as are with them. For the laborer is worthy of his hire. If our peace is received, it is fitting that we remain in the same house eating and drinking such things as are with them, so that we may obtain earthly provisions from those to whom we offer the rewards of the heavenly homeland.

Hence Paul also, receiving these very things as of little account, says: ”If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? And it should be noted what is added: ”The laborer is worthy of his hire,” because the very food for sustenance is already part of the wages of the work, so that here the reward from the labor of preaching may begin, which is perfected there in the vision of truth. In this matter it should be considered that two rewards are owed to our one work: one on the way, the other in the homeland; one which sustains us in labor, another which recompenses us in the resurrection. Therefore the reward which is received in the present ought to accomplish this in us: that we may strive more vigorously toward the subsequent reward. Therefore every preacher should not preach in order to receive a reward in this time, but should receive a reward in order to continue preaching. For whoever preaches in order to receive here a reward of either praise or gift, without doubt deprives himself of the eternal reward.

But whoever desires that what he says please men so that, while what is said pleases, through those same words not he himself but the Lord may be loved, or who therefore obtains earthly provisions in preaching lest he be wearied from the voice of preaching through want—for this one without doubt nothing stands in the way of receiving the reward in the homeland, because he took expenses on the way. But what do we—and I cannot say this without grief—what do we, O Pastors, do, who receive wages and yet are by no means workers? For we receive the fruits of holy Church in daily payment, yet we labor not at all in preaching for the eternal Church. Let us consider what condemnation it is to receive here the wages of labor without the labor. Behold, we live from the offerings of the faithful, but what do we labor for the souls of the faithful? We take for our payment those things which the faithful offered for the redemption of their sins, and yet we do not sweat against those same sins with the zeal of prayer or preaching, as is fitting. We scarcely rebuke anyone openly for their fault. And still—what is more serious—sometimes if a person is powerful in this world, their errors are perhaps praised, lest, if opposed, they withdraw in anger the gift they were bestowing. But we must remember without ceasing what is written about certain ones: They shall eat the sins of my people.

Why are they said to eat the sins of the people, unless because they encourage the sins of transgressors, lest they lose their temporal payments? But we also who live from the offerings of the faithful, which they offered for their sins, if we eat and

remain silent, we without doubt eat their sins. Let us consider, therefore, what a crime it is before God to eat the price of sins and to do nothing against sins by preaching. Let us hear what is said in the voice of blessed Job: If my land cries out against me, and its furrows weep together with it, if I have eaten its fruits without payment. For the land cries out against its possessor when the Church justly murmurs against its pastor. Its furrows also weep if the hearts of hearers, which have been plowed by the preceding fathers with the voice of preaching and the vigor of rebuke, see something to mourn in the life of their pastor. The good possessor does not eat the fruit of this land without payment, because the discerning pastor invests the talent of the word, lest he take the payment of sustenance from the Church to his own damnation. For we eat the fruits of our land with payment when, receiving ecclesiastical support, we labor in preaching. For we are heralds of the coming Judge. Who then will announce the coming Judge if the herald is silent?

Therefore we must consider that, insofar as each person is able, insofar as he is capable, he should strive to impress upon the Church entrusted to him both the terror of the coming judgment and the sweetness of the kingdom. And he who cannot admonish everyone at once with one and the same voice of exhortation ought to instruct individuals as much as he can, to edify them through private conversations, and to seek fruit in the hearts of his children through simple exhortation. For we must continually weigh what is said to the holy apostles, and through the apostles to us: You are the salt of the earth. If therefore we are salt, we ought to season the minds of the faithful. You then, who are shepherds, consider that you are feeding God’s animals. Concerning these animals indeed it is said to God through the Psalmist: Your animals shall dwell in it. And we often see that a block of salt is set before brute animals, so that they may lick that same block of salt and be improved. Therefore, like a block of salt among brute animals, so should the priest be among the people. For the priest must take care what he says to each person, how he admonishes each one, so that whoever is joined to the priest may be seasoned with the taste of eternal life, as if from the touch of salt. For we are not the salt of the earth if we do not season the hearts of our hearers.

Indeed, he truly bestows this seasoning upon his neighbor who does not withhold the word of preaching. But then we truly preach right things to others if we show our words by deeds, if we ourselves are pierced with divine love, and wash with tears the daily stains of human life, which can in no way pass without fault. But then we are truly pierced with compunction about ourselves if we carefully consider the deeds of the fathers who went before, so that from beholding their glory, our own life may become vile in our own eyes. Then we are truly pierced with compunction when we diligently search the commandments of the Lord, and through these we ourselves strive to advance, through which we know those whom we venerate have already advanced. For hence it is written of Moses: He placed also the bronze

laver in which Aaron and his sons were to wash when they entered the holy of holies, which he made from the mirrors of the women who kept watch at the door of the tabernacle. For Moses places the bronze laver in which the priests ought to be washed and enter the holy of holies, because the law of God first commands us to be washed through compunction, so that our uncleanness may not be unworthy for penetrating the purity of God's secrets. Which laver is rightly said to have been made from the mirrors of the women who ceaselessly kept watch at the door of the tabernacle.

For the mirrors of the women are the commandments of God, in which holy souls always behold themselves, and detect if there are any stains of defilement in them. They correct the faults of their thoughts, and as if arranging resisting countenances, they compose them as from a reflected image, because while they diligently attend to the Lord's commandments, in them they doubtless recognize both what pleases and what displeases the heavenly spouse in themselves. As long as they are in this life, they can in no way enter the eternal tabernacle. But yet the women keep watch at the door of the tabernacle, because holy souls, even while they are still weighed down by the weakness of the flesh, nevertheless with continual love await the entrance of eternal entry. Therefore Moses made the laver for the priests from the mirrors of the women, because the law of God provides the washing of compunction for the stains of our sins, while it presents for our contemplation the heavenly commandments through which holy souls have pleased the heavenly spouse. If we diligently attend to these, we see the stains of our inner image. But seeing the stains, we are pierced with the sorrow of repentance; and being pierced with compunction, we are washed as in the laver made from the mirrors of the women. It is very necessary that when we are moved by compunction concerning ourselves, we also be zealous for the life of those entrusted to us.

Therefore, let the bitterness of compunction affect us in such a way that it does not turn us away from the care of our neighbors. For what does it profit if, loving ourselves, we abandon our neighbors? Or again, what does it profit if, loving or being zealous for our neighbors, we abandon ourselves? Indeed, in the adornment of the tabernacle, twice-dyed scarlet is commanded to be offered, so that before the eyes of God our charity may be colored with love of God and neighbor. But he truly loves himself who purely loves his Creator. Therefore, the scarlet is dyed twice when the soul is inflamed with love of truth toward both itself and its neighbor. But amid these things we must understand that zeal for righteousness should be exercised against the wicked deeds of our neighbors in such a way that the virtue of gentleness is by no means abandoned in the fervor of severity. For the anger of a priest ought never to be hasty and disturbed, but rather tempered with the gravity of deliberation. And so we ought both to bear with those whom we correct and to correct those whom we bear with, lest if one of these two be lacking, the priestly action fail either in fervor or in gentleness. For this is why in the service

of the temple, lions and oxen and cherubim were carved by sculptural work on the bases of the temple. For cherubim signifies fullness of knowledge.

But what does it mean that on the bases lions are not made without oxen, nor oxen without lions? For what else do the bases in the temple represent but priests in the Church? Who, while they bear the burden of governance, carry, as it were in the manner of bases, a weight placed upon them. Therefore cherubim are depicted on the bases, because it is certainly fitting that the hearts of priests be filled with fullness of knowledge. By lions, moreover, the terror of severity is symbolized, while by oxen the patience of gentleness is represented. And so on the bases neither lions without oxen nor oxen without lions are depicted, because in the priestly heart the virtue of gentleness must always be preserved along with the terror of severity, so that gentleness may season anger, and that same gentleness, lest it perhaps become lax, may be kindled by zeal for severity. But why do we speak of these things, when we still see many burdened by more atrocious deeds? For I speak to you priests with grief, because we have learned that some of you perform ordinations for payments, selling spiritual grace and accumulating temporal gains from the iniquities of others along with the harm of sin. Why then does the voice of the Lord commanding not return to your memory, saying: Freely you have received, freely give?

Why do you not recall before the eyes of your mind that our Redeemer, entering the temple, overturned the seats of those selling doves and poured out the money of the money-changers? For who are those in the temple of God today who sell doves, if not those who in the Church receive payment for the imposition of hands? Through which imposition, namely, the Holy Spirit is given from heaven. Therefore the dove is sold, because the imposition of hands, through which the Holy Spirit is received, is offered for a price. But our Redeemer overturned the seats of those selling doves, because he destroys the priesthood of such merchants. For hence it is that the sacred canons condemn the simonian heresy, and command that those be deprived of the priesthood who seek payment for bestowing ordinations. Therefore the seat of those selling doves is overturned when those who sell spiritual grace are deprived of the priesthood, either before human eyes or before the eyes of God. And indeed there are many other evils of those in authority which now escape human eyes. And often they present themselves to people as holy pastors, yet in their hidden deeds they are not ashamed to appear shameful before the eyes of the internal Judge.

It will come, it will surely come, that day, nor is it far off, in which the Pastor of pastors will appear, and will bring forth into public the deeds of each one, and he who now avenges the faults of subjects through those in authority, will then raging condemn the evils of those in authority through himself. Whence also entering into the temple, he made as it were a whip from cords by himself, and casting out the

wicked merchants from the house of God, he overturned the seats of those selling doves, because he strikes the faults of subjects through pastors, but he strikes the vices of pastors through himself. Behold, now what is done secretly can be denied to people. That Judge will certainly come, from whom no one can hide himself by keeping silent, whom no one can deceive by denying. There is also another thing, dearest brothers, that greatly afflicts me concerning the life of Pastors; but lest what I assert perhaps seem injurious to anyone, I equally accuse myself as well, although, compelled by the necessity of barbarous times, I lie in these matters very much against my will. For we have slipped away to external affairs, and we have received one thing from the honor, yet we exhibit another through the duty of action. We abandon the ministry of preaching, and to our own punishment, as I see it, we are called bishops, we who hold the name of honor, not its virtue.

For those who have been committed to us abandon God, and we remain silent. They lie in wicked deeds, and we do not extend the hand of correction. Daily they perish through many iniquities, and we negligently watch them heading toward hell. But when can we correct the life of others, we who neglect our own? For intent upon worldly cares, we become all the more insensible within, the more zealous we appear toward things that are outside. Indeed by the habit of earthly care the soul grows hard against heavenly desire; and while it becomes hardened by its very habit through worldly action, it cannot be softened toward those things that pertain to the love of God. Hence holy Church rightly says of her weakening members: They made me a keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have not kept. For our vineyards are the deeds which we cultivate through the habit of daily labor. But placed as keepers in the vineyards, we scarcely keep our own vineyard, because while we are entangled in others' affairs, we neglect the ministry of our own action. I think, dearest brothers, that God tolerates no greater injury from others than from priests, when He sees those whom He placed for the correction of others giving examples of wickedness from themselves, when we ourselves sin, we who ought to have restrained sins. Very often, what is more serious, priests who should have given their own possessions even plunder those of others.

Very often, if they observe any living humbly, any living continently, they mock them. Consider therefore what is happening to the flocks, when the shepherds become wolves. For those undertake the guardianship of the flock who do not fear to lie in wait against the Lord's flock, against whom God's flocks ought to have been protected. We seek no gain of souls, we attend daily to our own pursuits, we desire earthly things, we eagerly chase human glory with intent mind. And because by the very fact that we are placed over others, we have greater license to do whatever we wish, we turn the ministry of the blessing we received into an instrument of ambition; we abandon God's cause, we attend to earthly business; we receive a place of holiness, and we are entangled in earthly activities. What is written has surely been fulfilled in us: And it shall be, as with the people, so

with the priest. For the priest does not differ from the people when by no merit of his own does he transcend the common conduct. Let us implore the tears of Jeremiah; let him consider our death, and lamenting say: ”How is the gold become dim, the most fine color is changed, the stones of the sanctuary are scattered at the head of every street. For the gold has become dim, because the life of priests, once bright through the glory of virtues, is now shown to be reprobate through the basest actions.

The most fine color is changed, because that habit of holiness has come to the disgrace of contempt through earthly and abject works. But the stones of the sanctuary were kept within, nor were they placed on the body of the high priest except when, entering the holy of holies, he appeared in the secret place of his Creator. We therefore, dearest brothers, we are the stones of the sanctuary who ought always to appear in the secret place of God; whom it is never necessary to be seen outside, that is, never to be seen in external affairs. But the stones of the sanctuary are scattered at the head of every street, because those who through their life and prayer ought always to have been within, through their reprobate life are occupied outside. Behold, now there is almost no worldly business which priests do not administer. Therefore, while established in the holy habit, they perform external things, and like stones of the sanctuary they lie outside. For since in the Greek tongue ”platea” is named from breadth, the stones of the sanctuary are in the streets when religious persons follow the broad ways of the world. Nor are they scattered only in the streets, but also at the head of the streets, because they both carry out works through desire for this world, and yet seek the height of honor from their religious habit.

Therefore they are scattered at the head of the streets, because they both lie prostrate through the service of worldly work, and wish to be honored for the appearance of holiness. You see how greatly the world is struck by the sword, you observe with what daily blows the people perish. By whose sin is this brought about if not especially by ours? Behold, cities have been depopulated, fortresses overthrown, churches and monasteries destroyed, fields reduced to wilderness. But we who ought to have been guides to life stand as authors of death to the perishing people. For through our sin the multitude of the people has been laid low, because through our negligence they were not instructed for life. What else shall we call the souls of men but the food of the Lord, which were created for this purpose: that they might be taken into his body, that is, that they might tend toward the increase of the eternal Church? But we ought to have been the seasoning of this food. For as we said a little earlier, it is said to the preachers who were sent: You are the salt of the earth. If therefore the people are the food of God, the priests ought to have been the seasoning of the food. But because while we cease from the practice of prayer and holy instruction, the salt has become tasteless;

it cannot season the food of God, and therefore it is not taken up by the Creator, because through our prevailing foolishness it is not seasoned at all. Let us consider, then, who were ever converted through our tongue, who, rebuked by our reproof for their perverse deeds, have done penance, who abandoned luxury through our instruction, who turned away from avarice, who from pride? Let us consider what profit we have made for God—we who, having received a talent, were sent by him to trade. For he says: Trade until I come. Behold, he has already come; behold, he seeks profit from our trading. What profit of souls shall we show him from our trading? How many sheaves of souls shall we bring before his sight from the harvest of our preaching? Let us place before our eyes that day of such great severity, when the Judge will come and settle accounts with his servants to whom he entrusted the talents. Behold, in terrible majesty, he will be seen among the choirs of angels and archangels. In that great examination, the multitude of all the elect and the reprobate will be brought forth, and what each one has done will be shown. There Peter will appear with converted Judea, which he drew after himself. There Paul, leading the converted world, so to speak. There Andrew will lead Achaia after himself, there John will lead Asia, Thomas will lead India, converted, into the sight of their king.

There all the rams of the Lord's flock will appear with the gains of souls, who by their holy preaching draw after themselves a flock made subject to God. Therefore, when so many shepherds with their flocks have come before the eyes of the eternal Shepherd, what shall we wretches say, who return to our Lord empty-handed after the business, who have had the name of shepherds and do not have the sheep we ought to show from our nurturing? Here we are called shepherds, and there we lead no flock. But surely if we neglect our duties, does Almighty God abandon His sheep? By no means; for He Himself, as He promised through the prophet, feeds them by Himself, and He instructs all whom He has predestined to life through the goads of afflictions and the spirit of compunction. And indeed through us the faithful come to holy baptism, they are blessed by our prayers, and through the laying on of our hands they receive the Holy Spirit from God, and they themselves attain to the kingdom of heaven, and behold, we through our negligence tend downward. The elect enter the heavenly homeland, purified by the hands of priests; and the priests themselves through their reprobate life hasten to the punishments of hell. To what thing, then, to what shall I compare wicked priests, if not to the water of baptism, which, washing away the sins of the baptized, sends them to the heavenly kingdom, and itself afterward descends into the sewers? Let us fear these things, brothers;

let our ministry be fitting to our conduct. Let us think daily about the forgiveness of our sins, lest our life remain bound by sin, through which Almighty God daily releases others. Let us consider without ceasing what we are, let us weigh our business, let us weigh the burden we have undertaken. Let us make daily reckon-

ings with ourselves, which we will have with our Judge. And so we ought to attend to our own care that we do not neglect the care of our neighbor, so that whoever is joined to us may be seasoned with the salt of our tongue. When we see someone idle and dissolute, he must be admonished to strive to restrain his wickedness with marriage, so that through what is permitted he may learn to overcome what is not permitted. When we see a married person, he must be admonished to exercise the care of the world in such a way that he does not set aside the love of God; to please the will of his spouse in such a way that he does not displease his Creator. When we see a cleric, he must be admonished to live in such a way that he provides an example of life to the laity, lest if anything is justly criticized in him, the very reputation of our religion be burdened by his vice.

When we see a monk, he must be admonished to always observe the reverence of his habit in his conduct, in his speech, in his thought, so that he may perfectly abandon the things of the world, and what he displays to human eyes by his habit, he may show forth before the eyes of God by his character. This one, therefore, is already holy; let him be admonished to grow. That one, however, is still wicked; let him be admonished to correct himself, so that whoever has joined himself to a priest may depart seasoned with the salt of his speech. Think carefully on these things with yourselves, brothers, and bestow them also on your neighbors; prepare to render fruit to Almighty God from the business you have received. But these things that we say we shall obtain with you better by praying than by speaking. LET US PRAY. O God, who has willed to call us as shepherds over peoples, grant, we beseech You, that what we are called by human mouth, we may be able to be in Your eyes. Through our Lord, etc.

HOMILY 18. Delivered to the people in the basilica of the holy apostle Peter, on Passion Sunday.

READING FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN. At that time, Jesus said to the crowds of the Jews and to the chief priests: Which of you will convict me of sin? If I speak the truth, why do you not believe me? He who is of God hears the words of God; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God. The Jews therefore answered and said to him: Do we not say well that you are a Samaritan.and have a demon? Jesus answered: I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father; and you have dishonored me. But I do not seek my own glory; there is one who seeks and judges. Amen, amen I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will not see death forever. The Jews therefore said: Now we know that you have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets, and you say: If anyone keeps my word, he will not taste death forever. Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died. Who do you make yourself to be? Jesus answered: If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, whom you say is your God, and you have not known him. But I know him. And if I say that I do not know

him, I will be like you, a liar; but I know him, and I keep his word. Abraham your father rejoiced that he might see my day; he saw it and was glad.

The Jews therefore said to him: You are not yet fifty years old, and you have seen Abraham? Jesus said to them: Amen, amen I say to you, before Abraham was made, I am. They therefore took up stones to cast at him. But Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple. Consider, dearest brothers, the gentleness of God. He had come to forgive sins, and yet he said: ”Which of you can convict me of sin? He did not disdain to show by reasoning that he was not a sinner, he who by the power of his divinity could justify sinners. But what follows is very terrifying: ”He who is of God hears the words of God; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God. For if he who is of God hears the words of God, and whoever is not of him cannot hear his words, let each one ask himself whether he perceives the words of God in the ear of his heart, and he will understand where he is from. The Truth commands us to desire the heavenly homeland, to crush the desires of the flesh, to shun the glory of the world, not to covet what belongs to others, and to give away what is our own. Therefore let each one of you consider within himself whether this voice of God has taken hold in the ear of his heart, and he will recognize that he is already of God.

For there are some who do not deign to receive the precepts of God even with the ear of the body. And there are some who indeed receive them with the bodily ear, but embrace them with no desire of the mind. And there are some who gladly receive the words of God, so that they are even moved to tears of compunction, but after the time of weeping they return to iniquity. These certainly do not hear the words of God, who scorn to put them into practice by their deeds. Therefore, dearest brothers, call your life back before the eyes of your mind, and with profound consideration fear what sounds from the mouth of Truth: ”Therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God. But what the Truth says about the reprobate, the reprobate themselves show about themselves by their own works. For it follows: ”The Jews therefore answered and said to him: Do we not say rightly that you are a Samaritan and have a demon? But having received such an insult, let us hear what the Lord responds: ”I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you have dishonored me. For since ”Samaritan” is interpreted as ”guardian,” and he himself is truly the guardian of whom the Psalmist says: ”Unless the Lord guards the city, in vain do those who guard it keep watch”; and to whom it is said through Isaiah: ”Guardian, what of the night? Guardian, what of the night?” — the Lord did not wish to answer:

”I am not a Samaritan”; but rather, ”I do not have a demon. For indeed two things were charged against him: one he denied, the other he conceded by remaining silent. For he had come as the guardian of the human race; and if he had said that he was not a Samaritan, he would have denied that he was a guardian. But he kept

silent about what he acknowledged, and patiently repelled what he heard falsely spoken, saying: ”I do not have a demon. In these words, what else is confounded but our pride? For if it is provoked even slightly, it returns more savage injuries than it received: it does the evils it can, and threatens even those it cannot do. Behold, the Lord receiving an injury does not grow angry, does not answer with insulting words. If he had wished to respond to those saying these things: ”You have a demon,” he would certainly have spoken the truth, because unless they had been filled with a demon, they could not have spoken such perverse things about God. But having received the injury, Truth did not wish to say even what was true, lest he should seem not to have spoken truth, but to have returned insult when provoked. From this matter, what is suggested to us except that at the time when we receive insults from neighbors out of falsehood, we should also keep silent about their true evils, lest we turn the ministry of just correction into weapons of fury?

But because whoever uses zeal for God is dishonored by wicked men, the Lord provided us an example of patience in himself, when he says: ”But I honor my Father, and you have dishonored me. But what we should do in such matters, he still admonishes us by example, when he adds: ”But I do not seek my own glory; there is one who seeks and judges. We know certainly what is written, that the Father has given all judgment to the Son, and yet behold the same Son, receiving injuries, does not seek his own glory. He reserves the insults inflicted for the Father’s judgment, so that he might surely intimate to us how patient we ought to be, since he who judges does not yet wish to avenge himself. But when the perversity of the wicked increases, preaching must not only not be broken off, but even increased. The Lord admonishes us of this by his own example, who after being said to have a demon bestowed the benefits of his preaching more generously, saying: ”Amen, amen, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he shall not see death forever. But just as it is necessary for the good to become even better through insults, so the reprobate always become worse from benefit. For having received the preaching, they say again: ”Now we know that you have a demon.

For since they had clung to eternal death, and did not see the same death to which they clung, while they looked only at death of the flesh, they were blind to the word of Truth, saying: ”Abraham is dead, and the prophets are dead, and you say: ’If anyone keeps my word, he shall not taste death forever’? Hence they also set Abraham himself and the prophets before Truth itself, as if venerating them. But it is shown to us by clear reasoning that those who do not know God also falsely venerate God’s servants. And it should be noted that the Lord saw them resisting Him with open hostility, and yet He did not cease to preach to them with repeated words, saying: ”Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; he saw it, and was glad. For Abraham saw the day of the Lord when, as a figure of the supreme Trinity, he received three angels as guests; and having received them, he spoke to the three as if to one, because although there is a number of Trinity in the persons, there is

a unity of divinity in nature. But the carnal minds of the listeners do not raise their eyes above the flesh, while they consider only the age of His flesh, saying: ”You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham? Our gracious Redeemer draws them away from gazing at His flesh and leads them to the contemplation of His divinity, saying:

”Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham was made, I am. For ”before” belongs to past time, ”I am” to present time. And because the Divinity has neither past nor future time, but always has being, He did not say ”Before Abraham I was,” but ”Before Abraham I am. Hence also it is said to Moses: ”I am who am. And: ”You shall say to the children of Israel: He who is has sent me to you. Therefore Abraham had both a before and an after, because he was able both to arrive through the manifestation of his presence and to depart through the course of his life. But Truth always has being, because nothing in it either begins at an earlier time or ends at a later one. But the minds of the unbelievers, unable to endure these words of eternity, ran to stones, and sought to overwhelm Him whom they could not understand. But what the Lord did against the fury of those stoning Him is shown when it is immediately added: ”But Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple. It is very remarkable, dearest brothers, why the Lord avoided His persecutors by hiding Himself, when if He had wished to exercise the power of His divinity, He could have bound them in their very blows by a silent command of His mind, or overwhelmed them with the punishment of sudden death. But because He had come to suffer, He did not wish to exercise judgment.

Indeed, at the very time of His passion He both showed how much He could do, and yet endured that for which He had come. For when He said to His persecutors seeking Him, ”I am He,” by this voice alone He struck down their pride and laid them all flat on the ground. He who therefore could have escaped the hands of those stoning Him in this place without hiding Himself—why did He hide Himself, unless because our Redeemer, made man among men, speaks some things to us by word, other things by example? But what does He say to us by this example, except that even when we are able to resist, we should humbly avoid the wrath of the proud? Hence it is also said through Paul: ”Give place to wrath. Let man consider with how great humility he ought to flee the anger of his neighbor, if God avoided the furies of the wrathful by hiding Himself. Let no one therefore raise himself up against insults received, let no one return reproach for reproach. For in imitation of God, it is more glorious to flee injury by keeping silent than to overcome it by responding. But against this pride says in the heart: It is shameful that, having received an injury, you remain silent. Whoever observes that you receive an insult and remain silent does not think that you are showing patience, but that you are acknowledging guilt.

But from where does this voice arise in our heart against patience, unless because we have fixed our thought on base things, and while we seek glory on earth, we do not care to please Him who watches us from heaven? Therefore, having received an insult, let us meditate in our work on the voice of God: I do not seek my own glory; there is one who seeks and judges. Moreover, what is written about the Lord, He hid himself, can be understood in another way. For He had preached many things to the Jews, but they mocked the words of His preaching. They also became worse from the preaching, who went so far as to throw stones. And what does the Lord signify by hiding Himself, except that the truth itself is hidden from those who disdain to follow His words? For truth flees the mind which it does not find humble. And how many are there today who detest the hardness of the Jews, because they refused to hear the preaching of the Lord, and yet such as they accuse those of having been toward the faith, such are they themselves toward works. They hear the precepts of the Lord, they recognize the miracles, but they refuse to turn from their depravities. Behold, He calls, and we do not wish to return. Behold, He waits, and we disregard His patience.

Therefore, while there is time, brothers, let each one abandon his depravity, let him fear the patience of God, lest he whom one now despises as tranquil, one may by no means be able to escape when He is angry.

HOMILY 19. Delivered to the people in the basilica of the blessed martyr Lawrence, on Septuagesima Sunday.

READING FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW. At that time, Jesus told his disciples this parable: The kingdom of heaven is like a man, a householder, who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. And having made an agreement with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And going out about the third hour, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and he said to them: Go also into my vineyard, and whatever is just, I will give you. And they went. And again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. But about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing, and he said to them: Why do you stand here idle all day? They said to him: Because no one has hired us. He said to them: Go also into my vineyard. And when evening had come, the lord of the vineyard said to his steward: Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning from the last even to the first. When therefore those who had come about the eleventh hour came, they received each a denarius. And when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more. But they also received each a denarius. And upon receiving it, they murmured against the householder, saying: These last worked one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who have borne the burden of the day and the heat? But he, answering one of them, said:

Friend, I do you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go. But I wish to give to this last one even as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish? Or is your eye evil because I am good? So shall the last be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few are chosen. In its explanation, the reading of the holy Gospel demands much to be said, which I wish, if I can, to cover briefly, lest both an extended procession and a lengthy exposition seem to burden you. The kingdom of heaven is said to be like a householder who hires workers to cultivate his vineyard. But who more fittingly holds the likeness of a householder than our Creator, who rules those whom he created, and possesses his elect in this world just as a master possesses his subjects in a house? He has a vineyard, namely the universal Church, which, from righteous Abel to the last elect who will be born at the end of the world, has sent forth as many branches as it has produced saints. This householder, therefore, hires workers to cultivate his vineyard at dawn, the third hour, the sixth, the ninth, and the eleventh, because from the beginning of this world until its end he has not ceased to gather preachers to instruct the faithful people.

For the morning of the world was from Adam to Noah, the third hour from Noah to Abraham, the sixth from Abraham to Moses, the ninth from Moses to the coming of the Lord, and the eleventh from the coming of the Lord to the end of the world. In this last hour the holy apostles were sent as preachers, who received their full wage though they came late. Therefore the Lord has never ceased to send workers to instruct his people, as if to cultivate his vineyard, because both earlier through the patriarchs, and afterward through the teachers of the law and the prophets, and finally through the apostles, while he cultivated the character of his people, he labored, as it were, through workers in the cultivation of the vineyard. Although, in whatever measure or degree, whoever lived with right faith and good action was a worker of this vineyard. The worker at dawn, the third, sixth, and ninth hour designates that ancient Hebrew people, who among their elect from the very beginning of the world, while they strove to worship God with right faith, did not cease, as it were, to labor in the cultivation of the vineyard. But at the eleventh hour the Gentiles are called, to whom it is also said: Why do you stand here idle all day? For those who, after so long a time of the world had passed, had neglected to labor for their life, stood idle, as it were, all day. But consider, brothers, what they answer when questioned:

For they say: Because no one has hired us. Indeed, no patriarch, no prophet had come to them. And what does it mean to say: No one has hired us for labor, except: No one has preached to us the ways of life? What then shall we, who cease from good work, say in our excuse, we who came to the faith almost from our mother’s womb, who heard the words of life from the very cradle, who from the breasts of holy Church have drunk the draught of heavenly preaching along with the milk of the flesh? We can indeed also distinguish these same diversities of hours according

to the stages of ages for each individual person. For the morning of our understanding is childhood. The third hour can be understood as adolescence, because the sun, as it were, advances higher as the heat of age increases. The sixth hour is youth, because the sun is fixed as if at its center, while in that age the fullness of strength is established. The ninth hour is understood as old age, in which the sun descends as if from its high axis, because that age declines from the heat of youth. The eleventh hour is that age which is called decrepit or advanced. Hence the Greeks call the very elderly not γέροντας but πρεσβυτέρους, to indicate that those whom they call more advanced are more than old.

Therefore, since one person is led to a good life in childhood, another in adolescence, another in youth, another in old age, another in decrepit age, workers are called to the vineyard at different hours, as it were. Examine your ways, therefore, dearest brothers, and see if you are already workers of God. Let each one weigh what he does, and consider whether he labors in the Lord's vineyard. For he who in this life seeks his own things has not yet come to the Lord's vineyard. For they labor for the Lord who think not of their own things but of the Lord's gains, who serve with zeal of charity, with eagerness of piety, who are watchful for gaining souls, who hasten to lead others along with themselves to life. For he who lives for himself, who feeds on the pleasures of his flesh, is rightly reproached as idle, because he does not pursue the fruit of divine work. 3. He who has neglected to live for God even until the last age has stood idle until the eleventh hour, as it were. Hence it is rightly said to those who are sluggish until the eleventh hour: Why do you stand here idle all day? As if it were openly said: If you did not wish to live for God in childhood and youth, at least come to your senses in the last age, and come to the ways of life, even if late, when you will not have much labor ahead.

And such ones, therefore, the householder calls, and often they are rewarded first, because they depart from the body to the kingdom before those who seemed to have been called from childhood. Did not the thief come at the eleventh hour, who, even if he did not have time through age, yet had it late through punishment, who confessed God on the cross, and breathed out the spirit of life almost with the voice of his sentence? The householder began to give the denarius from the last, because he led the thief to the rest of paradise before Peter. How many fathers were there before the law, how many under the law, and yet those who were called at the Lord's coming arrived at the kingdom of heaven without any delay. Therefore those who labored until the eleventh hour receive the same denarius that those who labored from the first hour awaited with all their desire, because those who came to the Lord at the end of the world obtained an equal reward of eternal life with those who had been called from the beginning of the world. Hence those who had preceded in labor also say, murmuring: These last worked one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the heat?

For those have borne the burden of the day and the heat whom it befell from the beginning of the world, because they happened to live here for a long time, to endure also longer temptations of the flesh. For to bear the burden of the day and the heat is for each one to be wearied by the heat of his flesh through the times of a longer life. But it can be asked how those who are called to the kingdom even at a late hour are said to have murmured. For no one who murmurs receives the kingdom of heaven, and no one who receives it can murmur. But because the ancient fathers, up until the coming of the Lord, no matter how justly they had lived, were not led to the kingdom unless He descended who would open the gates of paradise to men by the interposition of His death, their murmuring was this very thing: that they both lived rightly for the sake of receiving the kingdom, and yet were long delayed in receiving the kingdom. For those whom the places of hell, however tranquil, received after their righteousness was completed, for them indeed it was both to have labored in the vineyard and to have murmured. Therefore they receive the denarius as if after murmuring, who after long periods in hell arrived at the joys of the kingdom.

But we who come at the eleventh hour do not murmur after our labor and receive the denarius, because after the coming of the Mediator, coming into this world, we are led to the kingdom as soon as we depart from the body, and we receive without delay what the ancient fathers deserved to receive with great delay. Hence the same householder says: ”I wish to give to this last one even as to you. And because the very reception of the kingdom is the goodness of His will, He rightly adds: ”Or is it not lawful for me to do what I wish? For it is a foolish complaint of man against the kindness of God. For there would be no cause for complaint if He does not give what He does not owe, but only if He did not give what He owed. Hence it is fittingly added: ”Or is your eye evil because I am good? But let no one exalt himself on account of his work, let no one exalt himself on account of time, since with this statement completed, the Truth subsequently cries out: ”So the last shall be first, and the first last. For behold, even if we already know what and how great the good things we have done are, we still do not know with what subtlety the heavenly Judge examines these things. And indeed each one should rejoice greatly to be even the last in the kingdom of God. But after these things, what follows is very terrible:

”For many are called, but few are chosen,” because many come to faith, yet few are led to the heavenly kingdom. For behold, how many of us have gathered for today’s feast, we fill the walls of the Church, yet who knows how few there are who are numbered in that flock of God’s elect? For behold, the voice of all proclaims Christ, but the life of all does not proclaim Him. Most follow God with their voices, but flee from Him by their conduct. Hence Paul says: ”They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him. Hence James says: ”Faith without works is dead. Hence through the Psalmist the Lord says: ”I have declared and spoken, they have

multiplied beyond number. For when the Lord calls, the faithful are multiplied beyond number, because sometimes even those come to faith who do not attain to the number of the elect. For here they are mingled with the faithful through confession, but because of their reprobate life they do not deserve to be numbered there in the lot of the faithful. This fold of holy Church receives goats together with lambs; but, as the Gospel attests, when the Judge comes, He separates the good from the wicked, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. For those who here serve the pleasures of their flesh cannot be numbered there in the flock of sheep. There the Judge separates from the lot of the humble those who here exalt themselves in the horns of pride.

Those who here, though established in heavenly faith, seek the earth with all their desire, cannot receive the kingdom of heaven. And you see many such people within the Church, dearest brothers, but you ought neither to imitate them nor to despair of them. For we see what someone is today, but what each one will be tomorrow we do not know. Often one who is seen to come after us surpasses us through the swiftness of good work, and tomorrow we scarcely follow him whom today we seemed to precede. Certainly when Stephen was dying for the faith, Saul was guarding the garments of those who were stoning him. Therefore he himself stoned with the hands of all who were stoning, since he rendered them all free to stone, and yet in the holy Church he surpassed in labors that very one whom by persecuting he made a martyr. There are therefore two things which we ought to consider carefully. For since many are called but few are chosen, the first is that no one should presume too much of himself, because even if he has already been called to the faith, he does not know whether he is worthy of the eternal kingdom. The second is that no one should dare to despair of his neighbor, whom he perhaps sees lying in vices, because he does not know the riches of divine mercy.

I am relating a matter that happened recently, brothers, so that if you recognize yourselves to be sinners from the heart, you may love the mercy of almighty God more abundantly. In the present year, a certain brother came to conversion in my monastery, which is situated near the Church of the blessed martyrs John and Paul; he was devoutly received, but he himself lived even more devoutly (Dialogues, Book IV, Chapter 38). His brother followed him to the monastery in body, not in heart. For greatly detesting the life and habit of conversion, he dwelt in the monastery as a guest, and while fleeing the life of the monks by his conduct, he could not depart from dwelling in the monastery, because he had neither anything to do nor means to live. His wickedness was burdensome to all, but everyone bore with him patiently out of love for his brother. For, proud and dissolute, he did not know whether any life followed after this world, and indeed he mocked anyone who wished to preach this to him. And so he lived in the monastery in secular dress, frivolous in speech, unstable in movement, puffed up in mind, refined in clothing, dissolute in action. But in the month of July just past, he was struck by the plague of that pestilence

which you know, and coming to his end, he began to be pressed to surrender his soul. And with the lower part of his body already dead, vital strength remained only in his chest and tongue.

The brothers were present and were protecting his departure with prayer as much as they could with God's help. But he, suddenly seeing a dragon coming to devour him, began to cry out with loud voices, saying: "Behold, I have been given to a dragon to be devoured, who cannot devour me because of your presence. Why do you cause me delay? Give way so that he may be permitted to devour me. And when the brothers urged him to make the sign of the cross upon himself, he responded with what strength he could, saying: "I want to sign myself, but I cannot, because I am pressed by the dragon. The foam of his mouth smears my face, my throat is suffocated by his mouth. Behold, my arms are compressed by him, who has already swallowed my head in his mouth. And while he, pale and trembling and dying, was saying this, the brothers began to press more vehemently with prayers, and to aid him who was oppressed by the dragon's presence with their supplications. Then suddenly freed, he began to cry out with loud voices, saying: "Thanks be to God; behold, he has departed, behold, he has gone out, the dragon who had seized me has fled before your prayers. Soon he vowed that he would serve God and be a monk, and from that time until now he is pressed by fevers, worn out by pains. He has indeed been withdrawn from death, but he has not yet been fully restored to life.

For because he was pressed by long and lasting iniquities, he is worn out by long illness, and a harder fire of purgation burns his hard heart, because it is brought about by divine dispensation that a more prolonged sickness may burn away more prolonged vices. Who would ever have believed that he would be preserved for conversion? Who can sufficiently consider such mercy of God? Behold, a wicked young man saw in death the dragon whom he served in life, yet he did not see him so as to lose his life utterly, but so that he might know whom he had served, by knowing might resist, and by resisting might overcome him, and he who was formerly held by him without seeing later saw him so as not to be held. What tongue, then, can sufficiently narrate the depths of divine mercy? What spirit does not stand amazed at the riches of such great kindness? The Psalmist considered these riches of divine kindness when he said: "My helper, to you I will sing praise, for you, O God, are my protector, my God, my mercy. Behold, perceiving in what labors human life is placed, he called God his helper; and because he receives us from present tribulation into eternal rest, he also calls him protector. But considering that he looks upon and bears our evils, tolerates our faults, and yet reserves us through penitence for rewards, he did not wish to call God merciful, but called him mercy itself, saying: "My God, my mercy.

Let us therefore recall before our eyes the evils we have done, let us weigh with how great benignity of God we are tolerated, let us consider what are the depths of his kindness, so that he not only pardons faults but also promises the heavenly kingdom to the penitent even after their faults. And from all the depths of our heart let us say individually, let us all say: ”My God, my mercy,” who lives and reigns, three in unity and one in trinity, through infinite ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY 20. Delivered to the people in the basilica of Saint John the Baptist, on the Saturday of the Four Seasons before the Nativity of Christ.

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE. In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governing Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, under the high priests Annas and Caiaphas, the word of the Lord came upon John, the son of Zechariah, in the wilderness. And he went into all the region of the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low. And the crooked shall become straight, and the rough ways shall become smooth. And all flesh shall see the salvation of God. Therefore he said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him: Offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance; and do not begin to say: We have Abraham as our father. For I tell you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. For even now the axe is laid at the root of the tree. Therefore every tree not bearing good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. And the crowds asked him, saying:

What then shall we do? And he answered and said to them: He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none, and he who has food, let him do likewise. The time when the precursor of our Redeemer received the word of preaching is indicated by mention of the prince of the Roman commonwealth and the kings of Judea, when it is said: ”In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, under the high priests Annas and Caiaphas, the word of the Lord came upon John, the son of Zechariah, in the wilderness. For since he was coming to preach him who would redeem some from Judea and many from the Gentiles, the times of his preaching are indicated by the king of the Gentiles and the rulers of the Jews. Moreover, because the Gentiles were to be gathered in and Judea was to be scattered on account of the guilt of faithlessness, the very description of earthly rule shows that one man is described as having been in charge of the Roman commonwealth, while in the kingdom of Judea very many ruled over a fourth part each.

For by the voice of our Redeemer it is said: ”Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste.

It is clear, therefore, that Judea had come to the end of its kingdom, since it lay subject to so many kings by whom it was divided. It is also fittingly demonstrated not only under which kings but also under which priests this took place; because John the Baptist was preaching him who would be both king and priest at the same time, Luke the Evangelist indicated the times of his preaching through both the kingdom and the priesthood. And he came into all the region of Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. It is clear to all readers that John not only preached the baptism of repentance, but also gave it to some, yet nevertheless he was not able to give his baptism for the remission of sins. For the remission of sins is granted to us only in the baptism of Christ. Therefore it must be noted what is said: Preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, because the baptism that would loose sins, since he was not able to give it, he preached: so that just as he preceded the incarnate Word of the Father with the word of preaching, so he might precede the baptism of repentance, by which sins are loosed, with his own baptism, by which sins cannot be loosed; so that because his speech preceded the presence of the Redeemer, his baptism also by preceding might become a shadow of the truth. There follows:

As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Indeed, the same John the Baptist, when asked who he was, answered, saying: I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness. He, as was said by us before, was called a voice by the prophet because he preceded the Word. But what he cried out is revealed when it is added: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Everyone who preaches right faith and good works, what else does he do but prepare a way for the coming Lord into the hearts of his hearers? So that the power of grace may penetrate, so that the light of truth may illuminate, so that he may make straight paths for God, while he forms pure thoughts in the mind through the word of good preaching. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low. What is designated by the name of valleys in this place except the humble, what by mountains and hills except proud people? At the coming of the Redeemer, therefore, valleys were filled, but mountains and hills were brought low, because according to his voice: Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and everyone who humbles himself will be exalted.

For a valley that is filled grows, but a mountain and hill that is brought low decreases, because indeed in the faith of the Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus, the Gentiles received the fullness of grace, while Judea through the error of unbelief lost that by which it was puffed up. For every valley shall be filled, because the hearts of the humble will be filled with the grace of virtues

through the eloquence of sacred teaching, according to what is written: He sends forth springs in the valleys. And from which again it is said: And the valleys shall abound with grain. For water flows down from mountains; because the teaching of truth abandons proud minds. But springs rise in the valleys, because humble minds receive the word of preaching. Already we see, already we perceive that the valleys abound with grain, because their mouths are filled with the food of truth who, being meek and simple, seemed despicable to this world. The people, seeing that John the Baptist himself was endowed with wonderful holiness, believed him to be that singularly lofty and solid mountain of which it is written: ”In the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared on the top of the mountains. For they thought he was Christ, as it is said through the Gospel: ”And as the people were in expectation, and all were reasoning in their hearts concerning John, whether perhaps he might be the Christ,” whom they also sought out saying:

”Are you the Christ? But unless John had been a valley within himself, he would not have been filled with the spirit of grace. To show what he was, he said: ”There comes one mightier than I after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to loose. And again he said: ”He who has the bride is the bridegroom, but the friend of the bridegroom who stands and hears him rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. This my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease. Behold, although he was such through his wonderful working of virtues that he was believed to be Christ, he not only answered that he was not Christ, but also declared that he was not worthy to loose the strap of his sandal, that is, to scrutinize the mystery of his incarnation. Those who thought John was Christ believed the Church to be his bride. But he said: ”He who has the bride is the bridegroom. As if to say: I am not the bridegroom, but the friend of the bridegroom. Nor did he declare that he rejoiced because of his own voice, but in the voice of the bridegroom, because he did not rejoice in his heart because he was humbly heard by the people when he spoke, but because he himself heard the voice of truth within so that he might speak outwardly. He rightly says his joy was fulfilled, because whoever rejoices in his own voice does not have full joy. And he adds:

”He must increase, but I must decrease.” 5. In this matter we must ask in what way Christ increased and in what way John decreased, unless it be that the people, seeing John’s abstinence and observing that he was withdrawn from men, thought he was Christ; but seeing Christ eating with tax collectors and walking among sinners, they believed he was not Christ but a prophet. But as time passed, Christ who was thought to be a prophet was recognized as Christ, and John who was believed to be Christ became known to be a prophet, and thus was fulfilled what his forerunner predicted about Christ: ”He must increase, but I must decrease. Indeed, in the estimation of the people Christ increased because he was recognized as what he was; and John decreased because he ceased to be called what he was not. There-

fore, since John persisted in holiness because he persevered in humility of heart, and many fell because they swelled up with proud thoughts within themselves, let it rightly be said: ”Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low,” because the humble receive the gift which the hearts of the proud repel from themselves. The text continues: ”And the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth. The crooked are made straight when the hearts of the wicked, twisted by injustice, are directed to the rule of justice.

And the rough are changed into smooth ways when harsh and wrathful minds, through the infusion of heavenly grace, return to the gentleness of meekness. For when the word of truth is not received by a wrathful mind, the roughness of the path, as it were, repels the step of one journeying. But when a wrathful mind, through the received grace of meekness, accepts the word of correction or exhortation, there the preacher finds a smooth way where previously, because of the roughness of the path, he was unable to proceed—that is, to set the step of preaching. There follows: ”And all flesh shall see the salvation of God. Because by ”all flesh” is meant every person, not every person was able to see the salvation of God, namely Christ, in this life. Where then does the prophet direct the eye of prophecy in this statement except to the day of the last judgment? When, with the heavens opened, angels ministering, apostles seated alongside, Christ shall appear on the throne of His majesty, all—both the elect and the reprobate alike—will see Him, so that the just may rejoice without end in the gift of recompense, and the unjust may groan perpetually in the vengeance of punishment. For because this statement aims at this—that He will be seen by all flesh at the final examination—it is rightly added: ”He said therefore to the crowds that went out to be baptized by him: You offspring of vipers, who has shown you to flee from the wrath to come?

For the wrath to come is the punishment of final vengeance, which the sinner cannot then escape who does not now have recourse to the laments of penance. And it should be noted that evil offspring, imitating the actions of evil parents, are called offspring of vipers, because by envying the good and persecuting them, by returning evil to some, by seeking injuries against their neighbors—since in all these things they follow the ways of their carnal forebears—they are as if venomous children born from venomous parents. But because we have already sinned, because we are entangled by the habit of evil custom, let him say what we must do in order to be able to flee from the wrath to come. There follows: ”Therefore bring forth fruits worthy of repentance. In these words it should be noted that the friend of the bridegroom admonishes that not only fruits of repentance should be brought forth, but fruits worthy of repentance. For it is one thing to bring forth a fruit of repentance, another to bring forth a fruit worthy of repentance. For to speak according to fruits worthy of repentance, it must be known that whoever has committed no unlawful things, to him it is rightly granted to use lawful things; and so let him do

works of piety, yet if he does not wish, he need not abandon the things that are of the world.

But if anyone has fallen into the sin of fornication, or perhaps, what is more serious, into adultery, he ought to cut off from himself lawful things to the same degree that he remembers having perpetrated unlawful things. For the fruit of good work ought not to be equal for him who has sinned less and him who has sinned more, or for him who has fallen into no crimes and him who has fallen into some crimes, and him who has fallen into many. Therefore by what is said, ”Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance,” the conscience of each person is addressed, so that one may seek greater gains of good works through repentance to the same degree that one has brought upon oneself greater losses through sin. But the Jews, glorying in the nobility of their lineage, were unwilling to acknowledge themselves as sinners for this reason: that they had descended from the stock of Abraham. To them it is rightly said: ”And do not begin to say, ’We have Abraham as our father’; for I say to you that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. For what were the stones but the hearts of the Gentiles, insensible to the understanding of Almighty God? As it is also said to certain ones among the Jews: ”I will take away the heart of stone from your flesh. Nor is it undeserved that the Gentiles were signified by the name of stones, because they worshipped stones. Whence it is written:

”Let those who make them become like them, and all who trust in them. From these stones, indeed, children of Abraham were raised up, because when the hard hearts of the Gentiles believed in the seed of Abraham, that is, in Christ, they became children of him to whose seed they were united. Whence also it is said to these same Gentiles through the outstanding preacher: ”But if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed. If therefore we, through faith in Christ, are now the seed of Abraham, the Jews on account of their unbelief have ceased to be children of Abraham. That indeed on that day of the dreadful judgment good parents cannot benefit wicked children, the prophet testifies who says: ”If Noah, Daniel, and Job were in the midst of them, as I live, says the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter, but they themselves shall deliver their own souls by their righteousness. And again, that good children profit wicked parents nothing, but rather the goodness of children increases the guilt of wicked parents, the Truth Himself says to the unbelieving Jews: ”If I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. There follows: ”For now the axe is laid to the root of the tree. For every tree not producing good fruit will be cut down and cast into the fire. The tree of this world is the entire human race.

The axe, however, is our Redeemer, who is held as if by a handle and iron through His humanity, but cuts through His divinity. This axe is now laid to the root of the tree because, although He waits through patience, it is nevertheless seen what

He is about to do. ”For every tree not producing good fruit will be cut down and cast into the fire,” because every perverse person more quickly finds the prepared burning of Gehenna who scorns to produce the fruit of good work here. And it should be noted that he says the axe is laid not beside the branches, but to the root. For when the children of the wicked are taken away, what else is done but the branches of an unfruitful tree are cut off? But when an entire lineage together with the parent is taken away, the unfruitful tree is cut off from the root, so that nothing may remain from which a wicked offspring might grow again. From these words of John the Baptist it is clear that the hearts of the hearers were disturbed, since it is immediately added: ”And the crowds asked him, saying: ’What then shall we do?’” For they had been struck with terror who were seeking counsel. It follows: ”But he answered and said to them: He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.

By the fact that a tunic is more necessary for our use than a cloak, it pertains to fruit worthy of repentance that we ought to share with our neighbors not only whatever external and less necessary things we have, but even those things that are very necessary to us—namely, either the food by which we live bodily, or the tunic by which we are clothed. For since it is written in the law: ”You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” he is proven to love his neighbor less who does not share with him even those things necessary to himself in his neighbor’s time of need. Therefore the precept is given about dividing two tunics with one’s neighbor, because this could not be said of one tunic, since if one is divided, no one is clothed. For with half a tunic, both he who receives remains naked and he who gave remains naked. But amid these things it should be known how greatly works of mercy avail, since for fruits worthy of repentance these are commanded above all others. Hence Truth also says through itself: ”Give alms, and behold, all things are clean to you. Hence again he says: ”Give, and it shall be given to you. Hence it is written: ”Water extinguishes a burning fire, and almsgiving resists sins. Hence again it is said: ”Store up almsgiving in the bosom of the poor, and it will pray for you. Hence a good father admonishes his innocent son, saying: ”If you have much, give abundantly;

if you have little, take care to impart even that little willingly. But so that our Redeemer might show how great is the virtue in continence and in receiving the needy, he says: ”He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward. In these words it should be noted that he does not say ”a reward from the prophet” or ”a reward from the righteous man,” but ”he shall receive a prophet’s reward” and ”a righteous man’s reward. For a reward from the prophet is one thing, and the prophet’s reward is another; and a reward from the righteous man is one thing, and the righteous man’s reward is another. For what does it mean to say ”He shall receive a prophet’s reward,” except

that he who sustains a prophet by his generosity, even though he himself does not have the gift of prophecy, will nevertheless have the rewards of prophecy before the almighty Lord? For perhaps this man is righteous, and the less he possesses in this world, the greater confidence he has in speaking for justice.

When he who possesses something in this world sustains this man, and perhaps does not yet presume to speak freely for justice, he makes himself a sharer in that man's freedom of justice, so that he may receive equally with him the rewards of justice—he whom he helped by sustaining him, so that he might be able to speak that same justice freely. That man is full of the spirit of prophecy, but nevertheless needs bodily nourishment. And if the body is not refreshed, it is certain that the voice itself is diminished. Therefore, he who provides food to the prophet because he is a prophet gives strength to that man's prophecy for speaking. He will therefore receive a prophet's reward along with the prophet, because even if he was not full of the spirit of prophecy, he nevertheless displayed before God's eyes what he assisted. Hence it is said to Gaius through John concerning certain traveling brothers: "For they went forth for the name of Christ, taking nothing from the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such persons, that we may be fellow workers for the truth. For he who provides temporal assistance to those who have spiritual gifts becomes a fellow worker in those very spiritual gifts. For since few are those who receive spiritual gifts, and many are those who abound in temporal things, through this the rich insert themselves into the virtues of the poor: by providing comfort to those same holy poor from their riches.

Hence when the Lord promised to the abandoned Gentile world, that is, to the holy Church, the merits of spiritual virtues through the voice of Isaiah, as if promising trees to a desert, he also promised the elm at the same time, saying: "I will turn the desert into pools of water, and the pathless land into streams of water; I will place in the wilderness the cedar and the thorn, the myrtle and the olive tree; I will set in the desert the fir, the elm, and the box tree together, that they may see and know, and consider and understand together. The Lord indeed turned the desert into pools of water and the pathless land into streams of water, because to the Gentile world, which previously through the dryness of its mind bore no fruits of good works, he gave the streams of holy preaching, and it, to which previously because of the harshness of its dryness no way lay open to preachers, afterward poured forth rivers of doctrine. To this is still promised from a great gift: "I will give in the wilderness the cedar and the thorn. The cedar, because it is of great fragrance and incorruptible nature, we rightly accept in the promise. But concerning the thorn, since it was said to sinning man, "Your land shall bring forth thorns and thistles for you," what wonder is it if what is multiplied as punishment for sinning man is promised to the holy Church?

But by the name of cedars are signified those who display virtues and signs in their work, who are able to say with Paul: ”We are a good fragrance of Christ to God. Their hearts are so solidified in eternal love that no rot of earthly love any longer corrupts them. By the thorn are signified men of spiritual teaching who, while they discourse on sins and virtues, now threatening eternal punishments, now promising the joys of the heavenly kingdom, pierce the hearts of their hearers. And thus they pierce through the mind with the pain of compunction, so that from their eyes, as if a kind of blood of the soul, tears flow down. The myrtle indeed is of tempering virtue, so that it restrains loosened limbs by tempering. What therefore is signified by the myrtle except those who know how to suffer with the afflictions of their neighbors and temper their tribulation through compassion? According to what is written: ”Thanks be to God, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any distress. For when they bring a word or work of consolation to afflicted neighbors, they undoubtedly restrain them to a state of uprightness, lest they be dissolved into despair by immoderate tribulation. Whom do we understand by the olive except the merciful? For in Greek mercy is called ἔλεος, and the fruit of mercy shines before the eyes of almighty God like the liquid of the olive. To this is still added in the promise:

”I will set in the desert the fir, the elm, and the box tree together. By the fir, which by growing greatly rises up to the heights of the air, who are designated except those who, placed within the holy Church still in earthly bodies, already contemplate heavenly things? And although by being born they came forth from the earth, yet by contemplating they already raise up the summit of their mind near the heavens. And what is expressed by the elm except the minds of worldly people? For while they still serve earthly cares, they bear no fruit of spiritual virtues. But although the elm does not have its own fruit, it is accustomed nevertheless to carry the vine with its fruit, because worldly men within the holy Church, although they do not have the gifts of spiritual virtues, yet when they sustain holy men full of spiritual gifts by their generosity, what else do they carry but the vine with its clusters? And whom else does the box tree designate, which does not grow to height and although it has no fruit nevertheless has greenness, except those who within the holy Church still cannot bear good works because of the weakness of their age, but nevertheless, following the belief of their faithful parents, hold the faith of perpetual greenness? After all these things it is fittingly added: ”That they may see and know, and consider and understand together.

For the cedar is placed in the Church so that whoever draws the fragrance of spiritual virtues from a neighbor may not himself grow sluggish in the love of eternal life, but may be set ablaze with desires for heavenly goods. The thorn is placed so that whoever has been pierced by the word of its preaching may himself also learn by that example to pierce the hearts of his followers with the word of preaching. The myrtle is placed so that whoever in the heat of tribulation has received

the tempering of consolation from the mouth or work of a compassionate neighbor may himself also learn how to bring forth the tempering of his consolation to afflicted neighbors. The olive is placed so that whoever knows the works of another's mercy may learn how he himself ought to show mercy to a needy neighbor. The fir is placed so that whoever has recognized its power of contemplation may himself also be set ablaze to contemplate eternal rewards. The elm is placed so that whoever has observed him who cannot have the fruit of spiritual virtues but nevertheless sustains those who are full of spiritual gifts may himself also serve the life of the saints with whatever generosity he can, and may bear by sustaining the clusters of heavenly goods that he cannot bear by producing. The box tree is placed so that whoever considers that many still placed in weakness have the greenness of true faith may himself also be ashamed to be faithless.

Therefore, after the trees have been described first, it is well said: "That they may see and know, and consider and understand. Where it is also fittingly added "together," because since within the holy Church the different characters of people are different orders, it is necessary that all learn together, while in it spiritual men of diverse quality, age, and order are seen together for imitation. But behold, while we seek to show the elm, we have wandered rather far through many trees. Let us therefore return to that for which we brought forth the testimony of the prophet. "He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward," because even if the elm has no fruit, yet carrying the vine with its fruits, it makes its own what it sustains well from another. But because John admonishes us to great works, saying: "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance. And again: "He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise"; now it is clearly given to understand what Truth means when it says: "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent seize it. These words of the heavenly pronouncement must be thoroughly examined by us. For it must be asked how the kingdom of heaven can suffer violence. For who inflicts violence upon heaven?

And again it must be asked, if the kingdom of heaven can suffer violence, why it endured that same violence from the days of John the Baptist, and not also before. But since the law says: "If anyone does this or that, let him die the death," it is clear to all who read that it struck all sinners with the punishment of its severity, but did not lead them back to life through repentance. But when John the Baptist, preceding the grace of the Redeemer, preaches repentance, so that the sinner who is dead from guilt may live through conversion, surely from the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven suffers violence. But what is the kingdom of heaven, if not the place of the just? For the rewards of the heavenly homeland are owed only to the just, so that the humble, the chaste, the meek, and the merciful may arrive at the joys above. But when someone swollen with pride, or defiled by a sin of the flesh, or inflamed by anger, or impious through cruelty, returns to repentance

after his faults and receives eternal life, the sinner enters, as it were, into a place not his own. Therefore from the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent seize it, because he who proclaimed repentance to sinners—what else did he teach but that violence should be done to the kingdom of heaven?

Let us therefore reflect, dearly beloved brethren, on the evils we have done, and let us wear ourselves down with constant lamentations. The inheritance of the righteous, which we did not hold through our life, let us seize through repentance. Almighty God wills to suffer such violence from us. For the kingdom of heaven wills to be seized by our tears, since it is not owed to our merits. Therefore let no quality, no quantity of our evils break us from the certainty of hope. That venerable thief provides great confidence in pardon—venerable not because he was a thief, for he was a thief from cruelty, but venerable from his confession. Think therefore, think how incomprehensible are the depths of mercy in Almighty God. This thief, dragged away with bloody hands from the throat of the road, was hung on the gibbet of the cross; there he confessed, there he was healed, there he deserved to hear: ”Today you will be with me in paradise. What is this? Who would be sufficient to speak of, who to estimate such goodness of God? From the very punishment of his crime he arrived at the rewards of virtue. For this reason Almighty God permitted His elect to fall in certain lapses, so that He might restore hope of pardon to others lying in fault, if they rise up to Him with their whole heart, and open to them through the laments of repentance the way of His mercy.

Let us therefore exercise ourselves in lamentations, let us extinguish with tears and worthy fruits of repentance the faults we have committed; let not the time granted us for forgiveness perish, because when we see many already healed from their iniquities, what else do we hold but a pledge of heavenly mercy?

HOMILY 21. Delivered to the people in the basilica of the blessed Virgin Mary, on the holy day of Easter.

READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK. At that time, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Jesus. And very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb, the sun having already risen. And they were saying to one another: Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb? And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away. For it was very large. And entering into the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a white robe, and they were amazed. He said to them: Do not be afraid. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified one; he has risen, he is not here. Behold the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he goes before you into Galilee. There you will see him, as he told you. To many of you, dearest brothers, I have been accustomed to speak through dictation in the readings; but

because, with my stomach growing weary, I am unable to read aloud what I have dictated, I observe that some of you listen less willingly. Therefore I now wish to require of myself, contrary to custom, that during the sacred solemnities of the Mass I expound the reading of the holy Gospel not by dictating, but by conversing.

And so let it be received as we speak, because the voice of conversation rouses torpid hearts more than the discourse of a reading, and strikes them as if with a certain hand of solicitude that they might awaken. And indeed I do not see that I am sufficient for this work; but nevertheless the strength that inexperience denies, charity supplies. For I know Him who said: ”Open your mouth, and I will fill it. Therefore let the good work be in our will, for from divine assistance it will be in its completion. The very great solemnity of the Lord’s resurrection itself also gives boldness for speaking, because it is very unworthy that on that day the tongue of flesh should be silent from due praises, on which day, namely, the flesh of the Author rose again. You have heard, most beloved brethren, that the holy women who had followed the Lord came to the tomb with spices, and to him whom they had loved while living, they render service with devoted care even when dead. But this deed signifies something to be done in holy Church. For we must hear what was done in such a way that we may also consider what we ought to do in imitation of them. We therefore, believing in him who died, if we seek the Lord filled with the fragrance of virtues and with a reputation for good works, we indeed come to his tomb with spices.

Those women see angels who came with spices, because those souls behold the heavenly citizens who set out toward the Lord with the fragrance of virtues through holy desires. But we must note what it means that the angel is seen sitting on the right side. For what is designated by the left except the present life, and what by the right except eternal life? Hence it is written in the Song of Songs: His left hand is under my head, and his right hand shall embrace me. Since therefore our Redeemer had already passed beyond the corruption of the present life, rightly the angel who had come to announce his eternal life was sitting on the right. He appeared covered with a white robe because he announced the joys of our festival. For the brightness of the garment proclaims the splendor of our solemnity. Should we say ours, or his? But to speak more truly, let us say both his and ours. For that resurrection of our Redeemer was both our festival, because it brought us back to immortality, and the festival of the angels, because by calling us back to heavenly things it filled up their number. Therefore at his own and our festival the angel appeared in white garments, because while we are brought back to heavenly things through the Lord’s resurrection, the losses of the heavenly homeland are repaired.
3. But let us hear what he says to the women as they arrive: Do not be afraid. As if he were saying openly:

Let those fear who do not love the coming of the heavenly citizens; let those be terrified who, weighed down by carnal desires, despair of being able to reach their fellowship. But why should you be afraid, who see your fellow citizens? Hence Matthew also, describing the angel's appearance, says: His appearance was like lightning, and his garments like snow. For in lightning there is the terror of fear, but in snow there is the gentleness of brightness. Since indeed almighty God is both terrible to sinners and gentle to the just, rightly the angel, witness of his resurrection, is shown both with a countenance like lightning and with garments of brightness, so that by his very appearance he might both terrify the reprobate and soothe the devout. Hence also the pillar of fire by night and the pillar of cloud by day rightly went before the people journeying through the desert. For in fire there is terror, but in cloud there is the gentle comfort of vision; and day is taken as the life of the just, and night as the life of the sinner. Hence Paul also says to converted sinners: You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Therefore by day the pillar was shown through cloud, and by night through fire, because almighty God will appear both gentle to the just and terrible to the unjust. Coming in judgment, he soothes the former through the mildness of gentleness, but terrifies the latter through the severity of justice.

But now let us hear what the angel adds: "You seek Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus in the Latin tongue means "salutary," that is, it is interpreted as "Savior. But indeed many at that time could be called Jesus, yet not substantially, but only nominatively. Therefore the place is also added, so that it might be made clear which Jesus is meant: "of Nazareth. And he immediately added the reason: "the Crucified One. And he added: "He has risen, He is not here. "He is not here" is said with respect to the presence of His flesh, though He is nowhere absent with respect to the presence of His majesty. "But go, tell His disciples and Peter that He goes before you into Galilee. We must ask why, when the disciples are named, Peter is designated by name. But if the angel had not expressly named him who had denied his Master, he would not have dared to come among the disciples. Therefore he is called by name, lest he despair because of his denial. In this matter we must consider why Almighty God permitted him whom He had determined to place over the whole Church to fear the voice of a servant girl and to deny himself. This we recognize was done by a dispensation of great mercy, so that he who was to be the Pastor of the Church might learn through his own fault how he ought to show mercy to others.

Therefore He first showed him to himself, and then set him over the rest, so that from his own weakness he might learn how mercifully he should bear with the weaknesses of others. It is well said of our Redeemer: "He goes before you into Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you. For Galilee is interpreted as "migration accomplished. Indeed, our Redeemer had already migrated from passion to resurrection, from death to life, from punishment to glory, from corruption to

incorruption. And he was first seen by the disciples in Galilee after the resurrection, because we will joyfully see the glory of his resurrection afterward, if we now migrate from vices to the heights of virtues. Therefore, he who is announced at the tomb is shown in the migration, because he who is recognized in the mortification of the flesh is seen in the migration of the mind. These things, dearest brothers, we have run through from the exposition of the Gospel reading on account of so great a solemnity of the day, but it is fitting that we speak somewhat more subtly about this same solemnity. For there were two lives, of which we knew one and did not know the other. One indeed is mortal, the other immortal; one of corruption, the other of incorruption; one of death, the other of resurrection. But the Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, came, took up the one, and showed forth the other.

He endured the one by dying, and showed forth the other by rising again. If therefore He had promised us, who knew only mortal life, the resurrection of the flesh, and yet had not visibly displayed it, who would believe His promises? Therefore, having been made man, He appeared in the flesh, deigned to die by His own will, rose again by His own power, and showed by example what He promised us as a reward. But perhaps someone may say: He rightly rose again who, being God, could not be held by death. Therefore, to instruct our ignorance, to strengthen our weakness, He did not wish the example of His own resurrection alone to suffice for us. He alone died at that time, and yet He by no means rose again alone. For it is written: Many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep arose. Therefore all arguments of unbelief have been removed. For lest anyone say: A man ought not to hope for himself what God made man displayed in His flesh, behold we know that men rose again together with God, and we do not doubt that they were mere men. If therefore we are members of our Redeemer, let us presume in ourselves what is established to have taken place in the Head. If we greatly abase ourselves, we who are the lowest members ought to hope in ourselves for what we have heard concerning His higher members. Behold, there comes to mind what the Jews said in mockery to the crucified Son of God:

”If he is the King of Israel, let him come down from the cross, and we will believe him. If he had then come down from the cross, yielding to the mockers, he would not have demonstrated to us the virtue of patience. But he waited a little, endured the insults, bore the ridicule, preserved his patience, and deferred their amazement; and he who was unwilling to come down from the cross rose from the tomb. Therefore it was a greater thing to rise from the tomb than to come down from the cross. It was a greater thing to destroy death by rising than to preserve life by coming down. But when the Jews did not see him come down from the cross at their taunts, when they saw him dying, they believed they had conquered him; they rejoiced that they had, as it were, extinguished his name. But behold, from his death his name has grown throughout the world—that death by which the faith-

less crowd believed they had extinguished it; and the one whose killing they celebrated, they now grieve as dead, because they recognize that he has attained his glory through suffering. This is well signified by the deeds of Samson in the Book of Judges, who, when he had entered Gaza, a city of the Philistines, the Philistines, immediately learning of his entry, suddenly surrounded the city with blockades, appointed guards, and rejoiced that they had captured the mighty Samson. But we know what Samson did.

At midnight he carried off the gates of the city and climbed to the top of a mountain. Whom, dearest brothers, does Samson signify in this deed, if not our Redeemer? What does the city of Gaza designate except hell? What is demonstrated by the Philistines except the treachery of the Jews? When they saw the Lord dead and his body already placed in the tomb, they immediately appointed guards, and they rejoiced that they had captured in the prison of hell, like Samson in Gaza, him who had shone forth as the author of life. But Samson at midnight not only went out but also carried off the gates, because our Redeemer, rising before dawn, not only went out free from hell but also destroyed the very bars of hell. He carried off the gates and climbed to the top of the mountain, because by rising he removed the bars of hell, and by ascending he entered the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, dearest brothers, let us love with our whole mind this glory of his resurrection, which was first shown through a sign and afterward was made manifest through the deed; let us die for love of him. Behold, in the resurrection of our Author we have recognized his ministers, the angels, as our fellow citizens. Let us therefore hasten to that crowded solemnity of these citizens. Let us join ourselves to them in desire and mind, since we cannot yet do so in vision.

Let us pass over from vices to virtues, that we may deserve to see our Redeemer in Galilee. May almighty God aid our desire for life, he who gave his only Son to death for us, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns as God with him in the unity of the Holy Spirit, through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY 22. Delivered to the people in the basilica of blessed John, which is called the Constantiniana, on the Saturday after Easter.

READING OF THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN. At that time, on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came early, while it was still dark, to the tomb, and she saw the stone taken away from the tomb. Therefore she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them: They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we do not know where they have put him. Peter therefore went out, and that other disciple, and they came to the tomb. But the two were running together; and that other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter, and came first to the tomb. And when he had stooped down, he saw the linen cloths lying there, yet he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and entered the tomb. And he saw the linen cloths lying there, and the cloth that

had been over his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded up separately in one place. Then therefore that disciple who had come first to the tomb also entered, and he saw, and believed. For they did not yet know the Scriptures, that he must rise from the dead. My stomach, broken by long illness, has for a long time prevented me from speaking to your charity about the exposition of the Gospel reading. For my very voice fails in the strength of its cry; and because I cannot be heard by many, I confess I am ashamed to speak among many.

But I myself reproach this embarrassment in me. For what? If I cannot benefit many, shall I not care to benefit even a few? And if I cannot carry many sheaves from the harvest, must I therefore return to the threshing floor empty-handed? For although I cannot carry as many as I ought, surely I shall carry at least a few, surely at least two, surely at least one. For the very intention of weakness has the certainty of its reward, because our heavenly Judge, although He considers the weight in the recompense, nevertheless weighs the strength against the weight. The reading of the holy Gospel which you have just heard, brothers, is very clear on the surface of its historical meaning, but we must seek out its mysteries in brief. Mary Magdalene came to the tomb while it was still dark. According to the historical account, the hour is noted; but according to the mystical understanding, the intelligence of the one seeking is signified. For Mary was seeking at the tomb the author of all things, whom she had seen dead in the flesh; and because she did not find him, she believed he had been stolen. Therefore it was still dark when she came to the tomb. She ran quickly and announced it to the disciples. But those ran before the others who loved more than the others, namely Peter and John. Now the two were running together, but John ran ahead more quickly than Peter and arrived first at the tomb, but did not presume to enter.

Peter came later, and entered. What, brothers, what does this running signify? Surely this very subtle description by the evangelist is not to be thought devoid of mysteries? Not at all. For John would not have said that he both arrived first and did not enter, if he had believed that mystery was absent from his very hesitation. What then is designated by John except the Synagogue, what by Peter except the Church? Nor should it seem strange that the Synagogue is said to be signified by the younger and the Church by the elder, because even if the Synagogue is prior to the Church of the Gentiles in the worship of God, nevertheless the multitude of the Gentiles is prior to the Synagogue in the practice of the world, as Paul attests when he says: ”Because what is spiritual is not first, but what is natural. Therefore by the elder Peter is signified the Church of the Gentiles, but by the younger John the Synagogue of the Jews. Both ran together, because from the time of its origin until its setting, the Gentile world ran with the Synagogue by a common and equal path, even if not with a common and equal understanding. The Synagogue came first to the tomb, but did not enter, because although it received the commandments of

the law and heard the prophecies concerning the incarnation and passion of the Lord, it refused to believe in the one who died.

For John saw the linen cloths lying there, yet did not enter, because the Synagogue both recognized the mysteries of sacred Scripture and yet delayed entering through faith by believing in the Lord's passion. The one whom it had long prophesied from afar, it saw present and rejected; it despised him as a man and refused to believe that God had been made mortal in flesh. What does this mean, except that it both ran more quickly and yet stood empty before the tomb? But Simon Peter came following him and entered the tomb, because the Church of the Gentiles, coming after, both recognized the mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ, dead in the flesh, and believed him to be the living God. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the cloth that had been over his head, not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up separately in one place. What do we believe it means, brothers, that the cloth from the Lord's head is not found with the linen cloths in the tomb, except that, as Paul attests, God is the head of Christ, and the incomprehensible mysteries of his divinity are separated from the knowledge of our weakness, and his power transcends the nature of creation? And it should be noted that it is said to be found not only separately but also rolled up in one place. For when a cloth is rolled up, neither its beginning nor its end can be seen.

Rightly therefore was the cloth from his head found rolled up, because the majesty of divinity neither began to exist nor ceases; it is neither born through a beginning nor confined by an end. And rightly is it added: "In one place," because God is not in the division of minds. For God is in unity, and those merit to have His grace who do not divide themselves from one another through the scandals of sects. But because sweat is usually wiped away from workers by a cloth, the labor of God can also be expressed by the name of cloth—He who indeed always remains quiet and unchangeable in Himself, yet nevertheless declares that He labors when He bears the harsh depravities of men. Whence He also says through the prophet: "I have labored in enduring. Now God appeared in the flesh, He labored from our infirmity. When unbelievers saw this labor of His passion, they refused to venerate Him. For they disdained to believe that He whom they saw mortal in the flesh was immortal in His divinity. Whence Jeremiah also says: "You will render to them their recompense, O Lord, according to the works of their hands; You will give them as a shield for the heart Your labor.

For lest the darts of preaching should penetrate their hearts, since they disdained the labor of His passion, they held that same labor of His as if it were a shield, so that by the very fact that they saw Him labor even unto death, they would not permit His words to pass through to them. But what are we except members of our Head, that is, of God? Therefore by the linens of the body are signified the bonds of labors which now bind all the elect, that is, His members. The cloth, therefore,

which had been upon His head is found separately, because the passion itself of our Redeemer is far removed from our passion, since He without guilt bore what we endure with guilt. He willingly chose to succumb to death, to which we come unwilling. Then therefore that disciple who had come first to the tomb also entered. After Peter entered, John also went in. He who had come first entered later. It should be noted, brothers, that at the end of the world Judea too will be gathered to faith in the Redeemer, as Paul testifies when he says: ”Until the fullness of the Gentiles should enter, and so all Israel should be saved. And he saw and believed. What, brothers, what are we to think he believed? Was it that the Lord whom he was seeking had risen? Certainly not, because there was still darkness at the tomb, and the words that follow also contradict this when it says:

”For they did not yet know the Scriptures, that he must rise from the dead. What then did he see, and what did he believe? He saw the linen cloths lying there, and he believed what the woman had said, that the Lord had been taken from the tomb. In this matter the greatness of divine providence must be considered, that the hearts of the disciples are both kindled to seek and yet delayed from finding, so that the weakness of the soul, tormented by its own sorrow, might become purer for finding, and might hold on more firmly when it found, the later it found what it was seeking. We have run through these things briefly from the Gospel reading, dearest brothers; now it remains for us to say something about the nobility of so great a solemnity itself. For rightly shall I call this the nobility of the solemnity, because it surpasses all other solemnities. For just as in sacred Scripture we speak of the holy of holies, or the Song of songs, because of their greatness, so this festival can rightly be called the solemnity of solemnities. From this solemnity indeed the example of resurrection was given to us, the hope of the heavenly homeland was opened, and the glory of the supernal kingdom was made something we might already anticipate. Through this, the elect, who although they were in the bosom of tranquility, were nevertheless held in the confines of hell, were led back to the delights of paradise.

What the Lord said before His passion, He fulfilled in His resurrection: ”If I am lifted up from the earth,” He said, ”I will draw all things to myself. For He drew all things, He who left none of His elect in the underworld. He took away all things—that is, all the elect. For He did not restore to pardon by rising again any unbelievers or those consigned to eternal punishments for their crimes; but He snatched from the confines of hell those whom He recognized as His own in faith and in deeds. Whence rightly also He says through Hosea: ”I will be your death, O death; I will be your sting, O hell. For what we kill, we cause to exist no more entirely. But from what we bite, we take away a part and leave a part behind. Therefore, because in His elect He utterly killed death, He became the death of death. But because He took away a part from hell and left a part behind, He did not utterly kill but bit hell. Therefore He says: ”I will be your death, O death. As if He were

saying openly: Because in my elect I utterly destroy you, I will be your death; I will be your sting, O hell, because when they have been taken away, I pierce you in part. What then is this solemnity which destroyed the confines of hell and opened to us the gates of the heavenly kingdom? Let its name be inquired into more carefully.

Let the excellent preacher be consulted. Let us see what he declares concerning the estimation of Him. For he says: ”For Christ our Passover has been sacrificed. If therefore Christ is the Passover, we must consider what the law says about the Passover, so that we may investigate more carefully whether these things seem to have been said about Christ. For Moses says: ”They shall take of the blood of the lamb and put it on both doorposts and on the lintels of the houses in which they shall eat it; and they shall eat the flesh that night roasted with fire, and unleavened bread with bitter herbs. You shall not eat any of it raw, nor boiled in water, but only roasted with fire. You shall devour the head with its feet and entrails, and nothing of it shall remain until morning. If anything is left over, you shall burn it with fire. Where it is also added: ”And thus you shall eat it: You shall gird your loins, and you shall have sandals on your feet, holding staffs in your hands, and you shall eat in haste. All of which things indeed bring forth great edification for us, if they are examined through mystical interpretation. For who the blood of the lamb is, you have learned not now by hearing, but by drinking. This blood is placed on both doorposts when it is received not only by the mouth of the body but also by the mouth of the heart.

For the blood of the lamb is placed on both posts when the sacrament of His passion is received by the mouth for Redemption, and is also contemplated with attentive mind for imitation. For he who receives the blood of his Redeemer in such a way that he does not yet wish to imitate His passion has placed the blood on only one post; it must also be placed above on the lintels of the houses. For what do we understand spiritually by houses except our minds, in which we dwell through thought? The lintel of this house is the very intention that presides over action. Therefore, whoever directs the intention of his thought toward the imitation of the Lord’s passion places the blood of the lamb on the lintel of the house. Or certainly our houses are the bodies themselves, in which we dwell as long as we live. And we place the blood of the lamb on the lintel of the house because we bear the cross of His passion on our forehead. Concerning this lamb it is added further: ”And they shall eat the flesh that night roasted with fire. Indeed we eat the lamb at night, because we now receive the Lord’s body in the sacrament when we do not yet see one another’s consciences. Yet these meats must be roasted with fire, because fire indeed dissolves the meats that water has boiled; but those that fire cooks without water, it strengthens.

And so fire cooked the meats of our Lamb, because the very power of His passion rendered Him stronger for resurrection and strengthened Him for incorruption.

For He who recovered from death—clearly His flesh was hardened by fire. Hence also through the Psalmist He says: ”My strength has dried up like a potsherd. For what is a potsherd before fire except soft clay? But it is subjected to fire so that it may become solid. Therefore the strength of His humanity dried up like a potsherd, because from the fire of passion it grew into the power of incorruption. But having received the sacraments of our Redeemer alone is not sufficient for the true solemnity of the mind, unless good works are also joined to them. For what does it profit to receive His body and blood with the mouth, and to oppose Him with perverse conduct? Hence it is well added concerning the eating: ”And unleavened bread with wild lettuce. For he eats bread without leaven who performs righteous works without the corruption of vainglory, who shows the commands of mercy without admixture of sin, lest he wickedly seize what he seems to dispense rightly. They had also mixed this leaven of sin into their good action, to whom the Lord spoke through the voice of the prophet in rebuke: ”Come to Bethel and act impiously. And after a few words: ”And sacrifice praise from what is leavened. For he offers praise from what is leavened who prepares a sacrifice to God from robbery.

Wild lettuces are indeed very bitter. Therefore the flesh of the Lamb must be eaten with wild lettuces, so that when we receive the body of the Redeemer, we afflict ourselves with weeping for our sins, so that the very bitterness of repentance may cleanse from the stomach of the mind the humor of a perverse life. Where it is also added: ”You shall not eat any of it raw, nor cooked in water. Behold, now the very words of the history drive us from a historical understanding. Surely, dearest brothers, that Israelite people established in Egypt had not been accustomed to eat raw lamb, that the law should say to them: ”You shall not eat any of it raw”? Where it is also added: ”Nor cooked in water. But what does water signify except human knowledge, according to what is said by Solomon in the voice of heretics: ”Stolen waters are sweeter. What do the raw flesh of the Lamb signify except His humanity considered without reflection and left without reverence of thought? For everything that we consider carefully we, as it were, cook with the mind. But the flesh of the lamb is neither to be eaten raw nor cooked in water, because our Redeemer is neither to be considered a mere man, nor is how God was able to become incarnate to be thought through by human wisdom.

For everyone who believes our Redeemer to be a mere man, what else does he do but eat the raw flesh of the lamb, which he was unwilling to cook through understanding of His divinity? And everyone who attempts to examine the mysteries of His incarnation according to human wisdom wishes to cook the flesh of the lamb in water, that is, he wishes to penetrate the mystery of His dispensation through dissolute knowledge. Therefore, whoever desires to celebrate the solemnity of Paschal joy, let him neither cook the lamb in water nor eat it raw, so that he may neither seek to penetrate through human wisdom the depth of His incarnation, nor believe in Him as in a mere man; but let him eat the flesh roasted by fire, so that he may

know that all things were dispensed through the power of the Holy Spirit. Concerning which it is rightly added: ”You shall consume the head with the feet and the entrails,” because our Redeemer is the Alpha and Omega, that is, God before the ages and man at the end of the ages. And as we have already said, brothers, we have learned from Paul’s testimony that God is the head of Christ. Therefore, to consume the head of the lamb is to receive His divinity by faith. To consume the feet of the lamb is to seek out the footsteps of His humanity by loving and imitating. What indeed are the entrails except the hidden and mystical commands of His words?

These we consume when we take up the words of life with eagerness. In this word ”consuming,” what else is reproved but the torpor of our sloth? We who do not seek out His words and mysteries by ourselves, and hear the things spoken by others unwillingly. ”Nothing of it shall remain until morning,” because His words must be examined with great care, so that before the day of resurrection appears, in this night of the present life all His commands may be penetrated through understanding and doing. But because it is very difficult for all sacred eloquence to be understood and every mystery of it to be penetrated, it is rightly added: ”But if anything remains, you shall burn it with fire. What remains of the lamb we burn with fire when we humbly reserve to the power of the Holy Spirit that which we cannot understand and penetrate concerning the mystery of His incarnation, so that no one may proudly dare either to despise or to proclaim what he does not understand, but hands it over to the fire when he reserves it to the Holy Spirit. Since therefore we have learned how the Passover ought to be eaten, let us now recognize by whom it ought to be eaten. It follows: ”And thus shall you eat it. You shall gird your loins. What is understood by the loins except the delight of the flesh? Hence the Psalmist also asks, saying: ”Burn my loins.

For if he had not known that the pleasure of lust resides in the loins, he would by no means have asked that they be burned. Hence, because the power of the devil has prevailed over the human race especially through lust, it is said of him by the voice of the Lord: ”His power is in his loins. Therefore he who eats the Passover ought to have his loins girded, so that he who celebrates the solemnity of resurrection and incorruption may no longer be subject to corruption through any vices, may subdue pleasures, and may restrain the flesh from lust. For he does not know what the solemnity of incorruption is who still lies subject to corruption through incontinence. These things are hard for some, but narrow is the gate that leads to life. And we now have many examples of the continent. Hence it is also well added: ”You shall have sandals on your feet. For what are our feet except our works? And what are sandals except the skins of dead animals? Now sandals protect the feet. And what are the dead animals from whose skins our feet are protected, except the ancient fathers who have gone before us to the eternal homeland? When we contemplate their examples, we protect the feet of our works. Therefore to have

sandals on our feet is to contemplate the life of the dead and to guard our steps from the wound of sin. ”Holding staffs in your hands. What does the law designate by the staff except pastoral care?

And it should be noted that we are first commanded to gird our loins, afterward to hold staffs, because those ought to undertake pastoral care who already know how to subdue the excesses of lust in their own bodies, so that when they preach difficult things to others, they themselves do not weakly succumb to soft desires. And it is well added: ”And you shall eat in haste. Note, dearest brothers, note what is said: ”in haste. Learn the commandments of God, the mysteries of the Redeemer, the joys of the heavenly homeland with haste, and take care to fulfill the precepts of life with haste. For since we know that it is still permitted today to do good, we do not know whether it will be permitted tomorrow. Therefore eat the Passover in haste, that is, yearn for the solemnity of the heavenly homeland. Let no one grow sluggish on the journey of this life, lest he lose his place in the homeland. Let no one interweave delays in pursuing his endeavors, but let him complete what he has begun, lest he not be permitted to fulfill what he has started. If we are not lazy in the love of God, he whom we love helps us himself, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY 23. Delivered to the people in the basilica of the blessed apostle Peter, on the day after Easter.

READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE. At that time, two of Jesus’ disciples were going on that same day to a village which was sixty stadia from Jerusalem, called Emmaus, and they were talking with one another about all the things that had happened. And it came to pass, while they conversed and questioned among themselves, that Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were held, so that they did not recognize him. And he said to them: What are these words that you exchange with one another as you walk, and why are you sad? And one of them, whose name was Cleophas, answered and said to him: Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know what has happened there in these days? He said to them: What things? And they said: Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and all the people; and how our chief priests and rulers handed him over to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one who would redeem Israel. And now besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. But also certain women from among us astonished us, who were at the tomb before dawn, and not finding his body, came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive.

And some of our company went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not find. And he said to them: O foolish ones and slow of heart

to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into his glory? And beginning from Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. And they drew near to the village where they were going. And he made as if to go farther. And they urged him, saying: Stay with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is now far spent. And he went in with them. And it came to pass, as he reclined at table with them, he took bread and blessed it and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he vanished from their sight. And they said to one another: Was not our heart burning within us while he spoke on the road and opened the Scriptures to us? And rising up that same hour, they returned to Jerusalem and found the eleven gathered together, and those who were with them, saying: The Lord has truly risen and has appeared to Simon. And they related the things that had happened on the road, and how they recognized him in the breaking of the bread. Since you labor in daily observance, few words should be spoken to you;

and perhaps these will prove more useful because often food that is less abundant is consumed more eagerly. Therefore I have decided to discuss the meaning of the Gospel reading in summary rather than through individual words, lest a lengthy sermon of exposition burden your beloved selves. Behold, you have heard, dearest brothers, that to two disciples walking on the road—not indeed believing, but nevertheless speaking about Him—the Lord appeared, yet He did not show them an appearance they could recognize. Therefore the Lord performed outwardly in the eyes of the body what was happening within them in the eyes of the heart. For they themselves within were both loving and doubting, while the Lord outwardly was both present to them and yet did not reveal who He was. To those speaking about Him He showed His presence, but from those doubting Him He hid the appearance of His recognition. Indeed He exchanged words with them, He rebuked the hardness of their understanding; He opened up the mysteries of Sacred Scripture that pertained to Himself, and yet because He was still a stranger to faith in their hearts, He pretended to go farther. For we say ”fingere” means to fashion; hence we also call shapers of clay ”figuli” [potters]. Therefore the simple Truth did nothing through duplicity, but showed Himself to them in body such as He was with them in mind. Moreover they were to be tested, whether those who did not yet love Him as God could at least love Him as a stranger.

But because those with whom Truth walked could not be strangers to charity, they invite Him to lodging as a stranger. But why do we say ”invite,” when it is written there ”And they constrained Him”? From this example indeed it is gathered that strangers should not only be invited to lodging but even compelled. They set the table, they offer food, and the God whom they had not recognized in the exposition of Sacred Scripture, they recognize in the breaking of bread. Therefore, by hearing the precepts of God they were not enlightened; by doing them they were

enlightened, because it is written: Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. Whoever therefore wishes to understand what he has heard, let him hasten to fulfill in deed those things which he has already been able to understand. Behold, the Lord was not recognized while He was speaking, and He deigned to be recognized while He was being fed. Therefore, dearest brothers, love hospitality, love the works of charity. For hence it is said through Paul: Let brotherly love continue in you, and do not forget hospitality. For through this some have pleased, having received angels as guests. Hence Peter says: Be hospitable to one another without murmuring. Hence Truth itself says: I was a stranger, and you took me in. There is a story well regarded and handed down to us by the account of our elders.

A certain father of a household served with great zeal for hospitality along with his whole house; and while he received strangers at his table daily, one day a certain stranger came among others and was led to the table. And while the father of the household, from his custom of humility, wished to pour water on his hands, he turned and took the pitcher, but suddenly did not find the one on whose hands he had wished to pour water. And while he marveled at this occurrence to himself, that same night the Lord said to him through a vision: On other days you received me in my members, but yesterday you received me in myself. Behold, coming to judgment, He will say: What you did for one of my least ones, you did for me. Behold, before the judgment, when He is received through His members, He also visits His hosts through Himself; and yet we are sluggish toward the grace of hospitality. Consider, brothers, how great is the virtue of hospitality. Receive Christ at your tables, that you may be worthy to be received by Him at the eternal banquet. Offer now hospitality to Christ the stranger, that He may not disregard you as strangers at the judgment, but may receive you as His own into the kingdom, with the help of Him who lives and reigns as God forever and ever. Amen.

HOMILY XXIV. Delivered to the people in the basilica of the blessed martyr Lawrence, outside the walls of the City, on Wednesday of Easter Week.

READING OF THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN. At that time, Jesus manifested himself again to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. And he manifested himself thus. Simon Peter, and Thomas who is called Didymus, and Nathanael who was from Cana of Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. Simon Peter said to them: I am going fishing. They said to him: We are coming with you also. And they went out and got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing. But when morning came, Jesus stood on the shore, yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus therefore said to them: Children, do you have any fish? They answered him: No. And he said to them: Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some. They cast it therefore, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish. Therefore that

disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter: It is the Lord. When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his tunic (for he was naked) and cast himself into the sea. But the other disciples came in the boat (for they were not far from land, but about two hundred cubits away) dragging the net full of fish. When therefore they came to land, they saw coals laid there, and fish placed upon them, and bread. Jesus said to them:

Bring some of the fish that you have just caught. Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three. And although there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them: Come, dine. And none of those reclining dared to ask him: Who are you? knowing that it was the Lord. And Jesus came and took bread and gave it to them, and fish likewise. This was now the third time that Jesus was manifested to his disciples after he had risen from the dead. The reading of the holy Gospel which was just now read in your ears, my brothers, strikes the mind with a question, but by its striking it reveals the force of discernment. For it can be asked why Peter, who was a fisherman before his conversion, returned to fishing after his conversion; and since the Truth says: No one putting his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God, why did he return to what he had left behind? But if the virtue of discernment is examined, it is quickly seen that indeed the occupation which existed without sin before conversion was not a fault to take up again even after conversion. For we know that Peter was a fisherman, but Matthew was a tax collector;

and after his conversion Peter returned to fishing, but Matthew did not return to the business of tax collecting, because it is one thing to seek a living through fishing, but another thing to increase wealth through the profits of tax collecting. For there are many occupations which can be carried on without sins either with difficulty or not at all. Those occupations, therefore, which involve one in sin—it is necessary that the mind not return to these after conversion. It can also be asked why, when the disciples were laboring on the sea, the Lord stood on the shore after His resurrection, though before His resurrection He had walked on the waves of the sea before His disciples. The reason for this matter is quickly understood if the cause that was then present is considered. For what does the sea signify except the present age, which dashes itself against the tumults of affairs and the waves of corruptible life? What is figured by the solidity of the shore except that perpetuity of eternal rest? Because the disciples were still amid the waves of mortal life, they were laboring on the sea. But because our Redeemer had already passed beyond the corruption of the flesh, after His resurrection He was standing on the shore. As if He were speaking the very mystery of His resurrection to His disciples through these things, saying: I no longer appear to you on the sea, because I am not with you in the waves of disturbance.

Hence it is that in another place after His resurrection He says to these same disciples: ”These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you. For He was not absent from those to whom He appeared bodily present, yet He denies that He is still with them, from whose mortal body He was separated by the immortality of His flesh. What He there, while placed with them, confesses—that He is not with them—this He also indicates here by the position of His body, when, while they are still sailing, He shows Himself to be already on the shore. A great difficulty in fishing arose for the disciples, so that when the Master came there would be a great height of wonder. He immediately said: Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find. Twice in the holy Gospel it is read that the Lord commanded that nets be cast for fishing, namely before the Passion and after the Resurrection. But before our Redeemer suffered and rose again, He commands the net to be cast for fishing, but does not command whether it should be cast on the right or on the left; however, appearing to the disciples after the Resurrection, He commands the net to be cast on the right. In that fishing so many were caught that the nets were torn; but in this one both many were caught and the nets were not torn.

Who indeed does not know that the good are signified by the right and the wicked by the left? That fishing, therefore, in which it is not specifically commanded on which side the net should be cast, designates the present Church, which gathers the good together with the wicked, and does not choose whom it draws in, because it does not know whom it might choose. But this fishing done after the Lord’s Resurrection was cast only on the right, because only the Church of the elect attains to seeing the glory of His brightness, which will have nothing from sinful works. In that fishing the net is torn because of the multitude of fish, because now so many reprobate enter into the confession of faith along with the elect that they even tear the Church itself apart with heresies. But in this fishing both many fish and large ones are caught, and the net is not torn, because the holy Church of the elect, resting in the continual peace of its Author, is no longer torn apart by any dissensions. Now when such great fish were caught, Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land. I believe your charity now perceives what it means that Peter draws the net to land. To him indeed the holy Church was entrusted, to him specifically it is said: ”Simon son of John, do you love me? Feed my sheep. What therefore is later revealed in words is now signified in action.

Because therefore the preacher of the Church separates us from the waves of this world, it is surely necessary that Peter bring the net full of fish to land. For he himself draws the fish to the firmness of the shore, because by the voice of holy preaching he shows the faithful the stability of the eternal homeland. This he did by words, this by epistles, this he does daily by signs of miracles. As often as through him we are converted to the love of eternal rest, as often as we are separated from the tumults of earthly things, what else but fish cast into the net of faith

are we drawn to the shore? But when the net is said to be full of great fish, it is also added how many, namely one hundred fifty-three. The number is not without great mystery, but the depth of so great a mystery awaits your attention. For the evangelist would not have carefully expressed the sum of the quantity unless he had judged it to be full of sacred meaning. For you know that in the Old Testament all action is commanded through the precepts of the Decalogue, but in the New Testament the power of that same action is given through the sevenfold grace of the Holy Spirit as the faithful are multiplied. Announcing this, the prophet says: "The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and fortitude, the Spirit of knowledge and piety, and the Spirit of the fear of the Lord shall fill him.

But he receives action in this Spirit who acknowledges the faith of the Trinity, so that he believes the Father and the Son and the same Holy Spirit to be of one power and confesses them to be of one substance. Because therefore the seven things we mentioned above were given more broadly through the New Testament, but the ten precepts through the Old, all our virtue and action can be fully comprehended through ten and seven. Let us therefore multiply ten and seven by the triangular number, and they come to fifty-one. This number indeed is not without great mystery, because in the Old Testament we read that the fiftieth year was commanded to be called the jubilee, in which of course all the people would rest from all work. But true rest is in unity. For one cannot be divided; where there is a tear of division, there is no true rest. Let us therefore multiply fifty-one by the triangular number, so that they become one hundred fifty-three. Because therefore all our action exhibited in faith of the Trinity tends toward rest, we multiply ten and seven by three, so that we should arrive at fifty-one. And our true rest is then, when we now acknowledge that very brightness of the Trinity, which we hold certain to exist in the unity of divinity. We multiply fifty-one by three, and we hold the sum of the elect in the heavenly homeland as the number of one hundred fifty-three fish.

After the resurrection of the Lord, therefore, it was fitting that the cast net should catch so many fish as would designate only the elect citizens of the heavenly homeland. In the midst of these things, both yesterday's reading of the holy Gospel and today's admonishes us that we ought to carefully consider why our Lord and Redeemer is recorded to have eaten roasted fish after his resurrection. For what is repeated in deed is not without mystery. For in this reading he ate bread and roasted fish, but in that which was read yesterday he ate with the roasted fish also a honeycomb. What do we believe the roasted fish signifies, except the Mediator himself between God and men who suffered? For he deigned to hide in the waters of the human race, he willed to be caught, caught in the snare of our death, and was as it were roasted by tribulation at the time of his passion. But he who deigned to become a roasted fish in his passion, became a honeycomb for us in his resurrection. Or did he who wished to prefigure the tribulation of his passion in the roasted fish, wish to express both natures of his person in the honeycomb? For

a honeycomb is honey in wax, but honey in wax is divinity in humanity. This does not differ from this reading either, for he ate fish and bread. For he who could be roasted like a fish from his humanity, refreshes us with bread from his divinity, who says:

”I am the living bread who came down from heaven. Therefore he ate roasted fish and bread, so that by his own food he might show us that he both endured suffering from our humanity, and provided our refreshment from his divinity. If we consider this carefully, we see how it is also fitting for us to imitate. For thus the Redeemer shows his own things, that he might prepare the way of imitation for us who follow. Behold, in his food our Lord wished to join a honeycomb to the roasted fish, because clearly he receives into his body for eternal rest those who, while they feel tribulations here for the Lord, do not depart from the love of inner sweetness. The honeycomb is taken with the roasted fish, because those who here accept affliction for the truth are satisfied there with true sweetness. It should also be noted that the Lord is described as having his last banquet with seven disciples; for Peter and Thomas, Nathanael, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples are mentioned as having been present. Why does he celebrate the last banquet with seven disciples, unless because he announces that only those who are full of the sevenfold grace of the Holy Spirit will be with him in eternal refreshment? All this present time also unfolds in seven days, and often perfection is designated by the number seven.

Therefore those feast at the last banquet on the presence of truth who now transcend earthly things by the pursuit of perfection, whom the love of this world does not bind, for whom even if it somehow clamors through temptations, it still does not blunt their begun desires. Of this final banquet it is said elsewhere through John: ”Blessed are those who are called to the wedding supper of the Lamb. For this reason he relates that they are called not to a lunch but to a supper, because surely a banquet at the end of the day is a supper. Therefore those who, when the time of the present life is finished, come to the refreshment of heavenly contemplation, are called not to the lunch but to the supper of the Lamb. This supper is expressed by this last banquet, at which seven disciples are mentioned as being present, because, as we said, inner refreshment then restores those who are now full of sevenfold grace and pant in the love of the Spirit. Therefore, brothers, do these things with me, desire to be filled with the presence of this Spirit. Consider from the present what can follow you into the future. Weigh whether you are full of this Spirit; know whether you are able to arrive at that banquet. For whoever that person is whom this Spirit does not now restore, certainly fasts from the refreshment of that eternal banquet. Remember what Paul says about this same Spirit:

”If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not his. This spirit of love is like a certain title deed of divine possession. Does he have the Spirit of Christ whose

mind hatreds scatter, pride inflates, anger exasperates even to division of mind, avarice tortures, luxury weakens? Consider what the Spirit of Christ is. Surely it is that which makes friends and enemies be loved, earthly things be despised, makes one burn for heavenly things, makes the flesh be crushed on account of vices, makes the mind be restrained from lusts. If therefore you wish to know the right of God's possession, consider the person of your possessor. For behold what we said, Paul cries out with truthful voice: "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not his. As if he were to say openly: He who is not now ruled by God dwelling within him will not afterward rejoice in the sight of divine brightness. But we nevertheless are weakened toward these things that have been said, we do not yet attain the summit of perfection; let us place the steps of holy desire daily on the way of God. The Truth consoles us who says through the Psalmist: "Your eyes saw my imperfection, and in your book all shall be written. Our imperfection will not be entirely harmful to us if, established on the journey of God, we neither look back to things past nor hasten to pass over to those things which remain.

For he who graciously inflames the desires of the imperfect, at some time strengthens these to perfection, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who with him lives and reigns in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY 25. Delivered to the people in the basilica of Saint John, which is called the Constantiniana, on Thursday of Easter.

READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN. At that time, Mary stood outside the tomb weeping. As she wept, she bent down and looked into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been laid. They said to her: Woman, why are you weeping? She said to them: Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him. When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her: Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek? She, supposing him to be the gardener, said to him: Lord, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus said to her: Mary. She turned and said to him: Rabboni, which means teacher. Jesus said to her: Do not touch me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father. But go to my brothers and tell them: I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God. Mary Magdalene came announcing to the disciples: I have seen the Lord, and he said these things to me. Mary Magdalene, who had been a sinner in the city, by loving the truth, washed away the stains of her sin with tears: and the voice of Truth is fulfilled, by which it is said:

Many sins are forgiven her, because she loved much. For she who had previously remained cold through sinning, afterward burned ardently through loving. For after she came to the tomb, and did not find the Lord's body there, she believed it

had been taken away, and announced this to the disciples. They came and saw, and believed that it was as the woman had said. And of them it is immediately written: The disciples therefore went away to their own homes. And then it is added: But Mary stood at the tomb outside, weeping. In this matter it should be considered how great a force of love had kindled this woman's mind, who did not depart from the Lord's tomb even when the disciples departed. She was seeking the one she had not found, she wept while seeking, and inflamed by the fire of her love, she burned with desire for him whom she believed had been taken away. Hence it happened that she alone then saw him, she who remained to seek, because indeed the virtue of a good work is perseverance, and by the voice of Truth it is said: He who perseveres to the end, he shall be saved. And by the precept of the law, the tail of the victim is commanded to be offered in sacrifice. In the tail, of course, is the end of the body; and he sacrifices well who brings the sacrifice of a good work to the end of the required action.

Hence Joseph is described as having had a full-length tunic among the rest of his brothers. A tunic reaching to the heel is a good work carried through to completion. But Mary, as she wept, stooped down and looked into the tomb. Certainly she had already seen the tomb empty, had already announced that the Lord had been taken away; why is it that she stoops down again, desires to see again? But for one who loves, to have looked once is not enough, because the force of love multiplies the intensity of searching. Therefore she sought first, and did not find; she persevered in seeking, whence it happened that she found, and it came about that desires delayed grew, and growing, grasped what they had found. Hence it is that the Church says of the same bridegroom in the Song of Songs: "In my bed through the nights I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him, and did not find him. I will arise and go about the city; through the streets and squares I will seek him whom my soul loves. She also repeats the failure of finding, saying: "I sought him, and did not find him. But because discovery does not delay itself long if the search does not cease, she adds: "The watchmen who guard the city found me. Have you seen him whom my soul loves? When I had passed a little beyond them, I found him whom my soul loves.

For we seek the beloved in bed when in some little rest of the present life we sigh with longing for our Redeemer. We seek by night, because even if the mind is now awake in him, nevertheless the eye still grows dim. But whoever does not find his beloved, it remains that he arise and go about the city, that is, traverse the holy Church of the elect with mind and inquiry; let him seek him through streets and squares, that is, let him observe those walking through narrow and broad ways, so that if he can find any traces of him in them, he may search them out, because there are some, even of secular life, who have something to imitate in the practice of virtue. But as we seek, the watchmen who guard the city find us, because the holy fathers who guard the state of the Church meet our good endeavors, that they

may teach us by their word or their writing. When we pass a little beyond them, we find him whom we love, because our Redeemer, though by humility a man among men, was nevertheless by divinity above men. Therefore when the watchmen are passed by, the beloved is found, because when we perceive that the prophets and apostles are beneath him, we consider that he who is God by nature is above men. First, therefore, he is sought without being found, so that afterward, when found, he may be held more tightly. For holy desires, as we have said, grow by delay.

But if they fail by delay, they were not desires. With this love burned whoever was able to reach the truth. Hence David says: ”My soul has thirsted for the living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of God? Hence he admonishes us, saying: ”Seek his face always. Hence the prophet says: ”My soul has desired you in the night, but also with my spirit in my inmost heart I will watch for you from early morning. Hence again the Church says in the Song of Songs: ”I am wounded with love. For it is just that she should reach health from the sight of the physician, who bears the wound of love in her breast through the heat of her desire for him. Hence again she says: ”My soul melted when the beloved spoke. For the mind of a person not seeking the form of its Creator is badly hardened, because it remains cold in itself. But if it has now begun to burn with desire to follow him whom it loves, melted by the fire of love it runs. It becomes anxious with desire, all things in the world that pleased grow worthless, there is nothing that delights outside the Creator, and things that formerly delighted the soul afterward become grievously burdensome. Nothing consoles its sadness, as long as he who is desired is not yet seen. The mind grieves, the very light is wearisome;

and by such fire the rust of guilt is refined in the mind, and the kindled soul, as if in the manner of gold, because through use it lost its appearance, becomes bright through burning. And so she who loves thus, who bends down again to the tomb she had looked at, let us see by what fruit the force of love redoubles in her the work of seeking. It follows: She saw two angels in white, sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been laid. What does it mean that two angels are seen in the place of the Lord’s body, one sitting at the head, and the other at the feet, except that in the Latin language an angel is called a messenger, and he was to be announced through his passion, who is both God before all ages, and man at the end of the ages? It is as if the angel sits at the head, when through the apostle John it is proclaimed that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And it is as if the angel sits at the feet, when he says: The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. We can also understand the two Testaments by the two angels, one earlier and the other following.

These angels are joined to one another through the place of the Lord’s body, because indeed both Testaments, while they announce with equal meaning that the Lord became incarnate and died and rose again, sit as it were the earlier Testament

at the head, and the later Testament at the feet. Hence also the two cherubim that cover the mercy seat look upon one another with their faces turned toward the mercy seat. For cherubim means fullness of knowledge. And what is signified by the two cherubim except both Testaments? And what is figured by the mercy seat except the incarnate Lord? Of whom John says: For he is the propitiation for our sins. And while the Old Testament proclaims that this was to be done which the New Testament declares was done concerning the Lord, it is as if both cherubim look upon one another, while they turn their faces toward the mercy seat, because while they see the incarnate Lord placed between them, they do not disagree in their view, for they narrate the mystery of his dispensation in harmony. The angels seek Mary, saying: ”Woman, why do you weep? And she says to them: ”Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him. For indeed the sacred words which stir up tears of love in us also console those same tears, since they promise us the sight of our Redeemer. But it should be noted according to the historical sense that the woman did not say:

”They have taken away the body of my Lord,” but ”They have taken away my Lord. For it is the usage of sacred Scripture sometimes to signify the whole from a part, and sometimes a part from the whole. For it signifies the whole from a part, as it is written concerning the sons of Jacob: ”That Jacob went down into Egypt with seventy souls. For souls did not descend into Egypt without bodies; but through the soul alone the whole person is signified, because the whole is expressed from a part. And only the Lord’s body had lain in the tomb, and Mary was not seeking the body of the Lord, but the Lord who had been taken away, evidently designating a part from the whole. When she had said these things, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, and she did not know that it was Jesus. It should be noted that Mary, who still doubted about the Lord’s resurrection, turned around to see Jesus, because evidently through that very doubt of hers she had, as it were, turned her back to the Lord’s face, since she did not at all believe that he had risen. But because she both loved and doubted, she saw and did not recognize him, and love both showed him to her and doubt hid him. Her continued ignorance is expressed when it is added: ”And she did not know that it was Jesus. He said to her: ”Woman, why do you weep? Whom do you seek?

The cause of her grief is asked so that her desire might be increased, so that when she named the one she sought, she might burn more ardently in love for him. She, supposing that he was the gardener, said to him: ”Lord, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away. Perhaps this woman did not err even in erring, who believed Jesus to be the gardener. For was he not spiritually a gardener to her, who was planting the flourishing seeds of virtues in her heart through his love? But what is it that, seeing him whom she believed to be the gardener, to whom she had not yet said whom she was seeking, she says: ”Lord, if you have taken him away”? For as if she had already said from

whose desire she was weeping, she speaks of him whom she had not mentioned. But the force of love is accustomed to do this in the soul: that it believes no one else is ignorant of him whom it always thinks about. Rightly this woman does not say whom she seeks, and yet says: ”If you have taken him away,” because she does not think him unknown to another, whom she thus continuously mourns with desire. Jesus says to her: ”Mary. After he called her by the common word for her sex, and was not recognized, he calls her by name. As if he openly said to her: Recognize him by whom you are recognized.

To the perfect man also it is said: ”I know you by name,” because ”man” is the common word for all of us, but ”Moses” is proper, to whom it is rightly said that he is known by name, as if the Lord openly said to him: I do not know you generally as the rest, but specially. Therefore Mary, because she is called by name, recognizes her author, and immediately calls him rabbi, that is, teacher, because he himself was the one who was being sought outwardly, and he himself was the one who was teaching her inwardly to seek. Now indeed what the woman did is not added by the evangelist, but it is indicated by what she heard. To whom it is said: ”Do not touch me; for I have not yet ascended to my Father. For in these words it is shown that Mary wished to embrace the feet of him whom she recognized. But the teacher says to her: ”Do not touch me. Not because the Lord after the resurrection refused the touch of women, since of the two coming to his tomb it is written: ”They approached, and held his feet. But the reason why she should not touch him is also added when he continues: ”For I have not yet ascended to my Father. For in our heart Jesus ascends to the Father when he is believed to be equal to the Father.

For whoever does not believe him equal to the Father, in his breast the Lord has not yet ascended to the Father. Therefore that person truly touches Jesus who believes the Son to be coeternal with the Father. For in the heart of Paul, Jesus had already ascended to the Father when the same Paul was saying: ”Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal to God. Hence John also touched our Redeemer with the hand of faith, who says: ”In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him. Therefore that person touches the Lord who believes him equal to the Father in eternity of substance. But perhaps someone is troubled by the silent question of how the Son can be equal to the Father. In this matter, what human nature cannot grasp by wondering, it remains that it should know this to be credible from another wonder. For it has something by which it may briefly answer itself on these matters. For it is established that he himself created the mother in whose virgin womb he was to be created from humanity. What wonder then if he is equal to the Father, who is prior to his mother? With Paul also attesting, we have learned that Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Therefore whoever thinks the Son is lesser detracts particularly from the Father, whose wisdom he confesses to be unequal to him. For what powerful man would calmly bear it if someone said to him: ”You are indeed great, but nevertheless your wisdom is less than you”? The Lord himself also says: ”I and the Father are one. And again he says: ”The Father is greater than I. Of whom it is also written that he was subject to his parents. What wonder then if from his humanity he asserts himself less than the Father in heaven, from which he was also subject to his parents on earth? From which humanity it is now said to Mary: ”Go to my brothers and tell them: I ascend to my Father and your Father, my God and your God. Since he says ”my” and ”your,” why does he not say ”our” in common? But speaking distinctly he indicates that he has the same Father and God differently than we do. ”I ascend to my Father,” namely by nature; ”and your Father,” by grace. ”To my God,” because I descended; ”to your God,” because you will ascend. For because I too am man, God is mine; because you are freed from error, God is yours. Therefore distinctly is he my Father and God, because he whom he begot as God before the ages, he created as man with me at the end of the ages. ”Mary Magdalene came announcing to the disciples: I have seen the Lord, and he said these things to me.

Behold, the guilt of the human race is cut off from where it proceeded. For because in paradise a woman served death to man, from the tomb a woman announces life to men; and she narrates the words of her life-giver who had narrated the words of the death-bearing serpent. As if the Lord says to the human race not in words but in deeds: From the same hand by which the drink of death was brought to you, receive the cup of life. We have run through these matters concerning the exposition of the Gospel reading briefly; now, with the help of the same Lord of whom we speak, let us consider both the glory of His resurrection and the depths of His compassion. For He willed to rise from death more quickly, lest our soul remain long in the death of unbelief. Hence it is also well said through the Psalmist: ”He shall drink of the torrent in the way, therefore shall He lift up His head. For indeed from the very beginning of the world a torrent of death had flowed forth in the human race: but the Lord drank of this torrent in the way, because He tasted death in passing. And therefore He lifted up His head, because what He laid in the tomb by dying, He raised above the angels by rising again; and from that point He struck down the ancient enemy forever, from the very place where He temporarily permitted the hands of persecutors to rage against Him.

This the Lord openly indicates to blessed Job, saying: ”Will you catch Leviathan with a hook? By Leviathan, which means ”their addition,” that whale who devours the human race is designated. For while he promised to add divinity to man, he took away immortality. And the guilt of transgression, which he gave the first man to drink, he multiplies to those who follow him through the worst persuasion, heaping punishments upon them without end. On a hook, however, the bait is

shown while the barb is hidden. Therefore the almighty Father caught him with a hook, because he sent his incarnate only-begotten Son to that one's death, in whom both the passible flesh could be seen and the impassible divinity could not be seen. And when that serpent, through the hands of his persecutors, bit the bait of his body, the barb of divinity pierced him through. He had known him earlier as God through his miracles, but from his knowledge he fell into doubt when he saw him subject to suffering. The hook therefore held fast the jaws of the one swallowing, since in him the bait of flesh was visible, which the devourer might seize; and the divinity lay hidden during the time of the passion, which would slay him. He was caught on the hook of his incarnation, because while he seized the bait of the body in him, he was pierced by the barb of divinity. For there was present the humanity which would draw the devourer to itself;

there was the divinity which would pierce him through; there was the open weakness which would provoke him; there was the hidden power which would transfix the throat of the plunderer. He was caught, therefore, on the hook, because he perished from the very thing he bit. And he lost those mortals whom he rightfully held, because he presumed to attack with death the immortal one over whom he had no rightful claim. Hence it is also that this very Mary of whom we speak lives, because He who owed nothing to death lay down for the human race. Hence it is that we daily return to life after our sins, because our Creator descended without guilt to our punishment. Behold, the ancient enemy has now lost the spoils he had begun to take from the human race; he has lost the victory of his supplanting. Daily sinners return to life; daily they are snatched from his jaws by the hand of the Redeemer. Wherefore it is also well said again to blessed Job by the voice of the Lord: "Or will you pierce his jaw with a bracelet? Where a bracelet is placed, it constrains by encircling. What then is designated by the bracelet, if not the divine mercy embracing us? Which pierces the jaw of this Leviathan, when it still shows us the remedy of repentance after we have committed what it forbade.

The Lord pierces the jaw of Leviathan with a bracelet, because by the ineffable power of His mercy He so opposes the malice of the ancient enemy that sometimes he loses even those whom he had already seized. And they fall as if from his mouth, who return to innocence after committing sins. For who, once seized by his mouth, would escape his jaw, if it had not been pierced? Did he not hold Peter in his mouth when he denied? Did he not hold David in his mouth when he plunged himself into such a pit of lust? But when each returned to life through repentance, this Leviathan in a certain way lost them as if through the hole in his jaw. Therefore through the hole in his jaw those were withdrawn from his mouth who returned through repenting after committing such great wickedness. But what man escapes the mouth of this Leviathan so as to commit no unlawful thing? But from this we know how much we are debtors to the Redeemer of the human race, who not only forbade us to go into the mouth of Leviathan, but also granted us to return from

his mouth. He did not take away hope from the sinner, because He pierced his jaw to provide a way of escape, so that he who incautiously refused beforehand to beware lest he be bitten might at least flee after the bite.

Therefore heavenly medicine meets us everywhere, because He both gave man precepts lest he sin, and yet gave remedies to the sinner lest he despair. Wherefore it must be most carefully guarded against that anyone be seized by the mouth of this Leviathan through delight in sin; and yet if he has been seized, let him not despair, because if he perfectly mourns his sin, he still finds a hole in his jaw through which he may escape. A witness of divine mercy is present: this very Mary of whom we speak, about whom the Pharisee, wishing to obstruct the fountain of piety, said: ”If this man were a prophet, he would surely know who and what kind of woman this is who touches him, that she is a sinner. But she washed the stains of her heart and body with tears, and touched the feet of her Redeemer, she who had abandoned her wicked ways. She sat at the feet of Jesus and heard the word from his mouth. She had clung to him while living; she sought him when dead. She found living the one whom she had sought as dead. And she found such a place of grace with him that she herself announced him even to the apostles themselves, that is, to his messengers. What therefore, brothers, what ought we to observe in this matter, except the immense mercy of our Creator, who has set before us as a sign for an example of repentance those whom he caused to live after their fall through repentance?

For I consider Peter, I reflect upon the thief, I look at Zacchaeus, I gaze upon Mary, and I see nothing else in these except examples of hope and repentance placed before our eyes. For perhaps someone has fallen in faith; let him look to Peter, who wept bitterly because he had denied out of fear. Another has burned against his neighbor in the malice of cruelty; let him look to the thief, who even at the very moment of death arrived at the rewards of life through repentance. Another, panting with the fevers of avarice, has seized the property of others; let him look to Zacchaeus, who if he had taken anything from anyone, restored it fourfold. Another, inflamed by the fire of lust, has lost the purity of the flesh; let him look to Mary, who burned out the love of the flesh in herself with the fire of divine love. Behold, almighty God everywhere sets before our eyes those whom we ought to imitate, everywhere he places examples of his mercy before us. Therefore let evils now displease us, even those already experienced. Almighty God willingly forgets that we were guilty; he is ready to reckon our repentance as innocence for us. Defiled after the waters of salvation, let us be reborn from tears. Therefore, according to the voice of the first Pastor, like newborn infants desire milk. Return, little children, to the bosom of your mother, eternal wisdom; suck the abundant breasts of God’s mercy; lament what is past, avoid what is imminent.

Our Redeemer will console our momentary weeping with eternal joy, he who lives and reigns with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY 26. Delivered to the people in the basilica of blessed John, which is called the Constantiniana, on the octave of Easter.

READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN. At that time, when it was late on that day, the first of the week, and the doors were shut where the disciples were gathered together for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them: Peace be to you. And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples therefore rejoiced when they saw the Lord. He said to them again: Peace be to you. As the Father has sent me, I also send you. When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them: Receive the Holy Spirit: whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained. But Thomas, one of the twelve, who is called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him: We have seen the Lord. But he said to them: Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days, his disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in their midst and said: Peace be to you. Then he said to Thomas: Put your finger here, and see my hands; and bring your hand, and put it into my side; and be not unbelieving, but faithful.

40 Homilies on the Gospels (part 2)

Thomas answered and said to him: My Lord and my God. Jesus said to him: Because you have seen me, Thomas, you have believed: blessed are those who have not seen and have believed. Indeed Jesus performed many other signs in the sight of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name. The first question of this Gospel reading strikes the mind: how was the Lord's body truly real after the resurrection, if it could enter to the disciples through closed doors? But we must understand that if divine operation is comprehended by reason, it is not wondrous; nor does faith have merit when human reason provides proof. But these very works of our Redeemer, which cannot at all be understood from themselves, must be weighed by another of his operations, so that more wondrous deeds may lend credence to wondrous things. For that body of the Lord entered to the disciples through closed doors—the same body which, at his birth, came forth to human eyes from the closed womb of the Virgin. What wonder is it then if, after his resurrection, he who will now live forever entered through closed doors, when he who came to die went forth from the Virgin's unopened womb? But because the faith of those looking on doubted that body which could be seen, he immediately showed them his hands and side;

he offered his flesh to be touched, the same flesh he had brought in through closed doors. In this matter he showed two wondrous things, quite contrary to one another according to human reason: after his resurrection he demonstrated his body to be both incorruptible and yet tangible. For what is touched must necessarily be subject to corruption, and what is not subject to corruption cannot be touched. But in a wondrous and inestimable way our Redeemer presented his body after the resurrection as both incorruptible and tangible, so that by showing it incorruptible he might invite us to the reward, and by offering it as tangible he might strengthen us in faith. He demonstrated himself therefore both incorruptible and tangible, so that he might clearly show that his body after the resurrection was of the same nature and yet of a different glory. He said to them: Peace be with you. As the

Father has sent me, so I also send you. That is, as God the Father sent me who am God, so I who am man send you who are men. The Father sent the Son, whom he appointed to become incarnate for the redemption of the human race. He willed him to come into the world unto suffering, yet nevertheless he loved the Son whom he sent unto suffering. The Lord sends his chosen apostles into the world not to worldly joys, but, just as he himself was sent, unto sufferings.

Since therefore the Son is loved by the Father and yet is sent unto suffering, so also the disciples are loved by the Lord, who nevertheless are sent into the world unto suffering. And so it is said: As the Father has sent me, so I also send you, that is, I love you with that same love when I send you among the offenses of persecutors, with which love the Father loves me, whom he caused to come to endure sufferings. Although ”sent” can also be understood according to his divine nature. For the Son is said to be sent by the Father by the very fact that he is begotten by the Father. For the Son declares that he himself sends the Holy Spirit also, who, though coequal with the Father and the Son, nevertheless was not incarnate, saying: When the Paraclete comes, whom I will send to you from the Father. For if ”to be sent” ought to be understood only as ”to become incarnate,” the Holy Spirit would without doubt in no way be said to be sent, since he was in no way incarnate. But his being sent is that very procession by which he proceeds from the Father and the Son. Just as therefore the Spirit is said to be sent because he proceeds, so also the Son is not unfittingly said to be sent because he is begotten. When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them: Receive the Holy Spirit.

We must ask why it is that our Lord gave the Holy Spirit once while standing on earth, and once while presiding from heaven? For in no other place is the giving of the Holy Spirit openly shown, except now when it is received through breathing, and afterward when, coming from heaven, it is demonstrated in various tongues. Why then is it first given to the disciples on earth, and afterward sent from heaven, unless because there are two precepts of charity, namely the love of God and the love of neighbor? The Spirit is given on earth so that the neighbor may be loved; the Spirit is given from heaven so that God may be loved. Therefore, just as there is one charity and two precepts, so there is one Spirit and two givings. First from the Lord standing on earth, afterward from heaven, because in the love of neighbor one learns how to arrive at the love of God. Hence the same John says: He who does not love his brother whom he sees, how can he love God whom he does not see? And indeed the same Holy Spirit was previously in the minds of the disciples for faith, but nevertheless he was not given by manifest giving except after the resurrection. Hence it is also written: The Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus had not yet been glorified. Hence also it is said through Moses: They sucked honey from the rock, and oil from the solid rock.

For nothing of this kind is read according to history, if the whole sequence of the Old Testament is reviewed. Nowhere did that people suck honey from the rock, nowhere oil. But because according to Paul's words: The rock was Christ, they sucked honey from the rock who saw the deeds and miracles of our same Redeemer. But they sucked oil from the solid rock, because by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit after his resurrection they deserved to be anointed. Therefore, as it were, the weak rock gave honey, when the Lord, still mortal, showed to his disciples the sweetness of his miracles. But the solid rock poured forth oil, because, after his resurrection now made impassible, through the breathing of the Spirit he sent forth the gift of holy anointing. Of this oil it is said through the prophet: "The yoke shall decay because of the oil. For we were held under the yoke of demonic dominion, but we have been anointed with the oil of the Holy Spirit. And because the grace of liberty has anointed us, the yoke of demonic dominion has rotted away, as Paul attests when he says: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But it should be known that those who first received the Holy Spirit, so that they themselves might live innocently and benefit some through preaching, received Him openly after the Lord's resurrection so that they might benefit not a few but many. Hence in this very giving of the Spirit it is said:

"Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained. It is pleasing to observe to what height of glory those disciples were led, who were called to such great burdens of humility. Behold, not only do they become secure concerning themselves, but they also receive the power of releasing another's bond; and they obtain the principality of the heavenly judgment, so that in place of God they retain sins for some and release them for others. Thus, thus it was fitting that they be raised up by God, who had consented to be humbled so greatly for God's sake. Behold, those who fear the strict judgment of God become judges of souls; and they condemn or free others, who feared that they themselves would be condemned. Of these, certainly, the bishops now hold the place in the Church. Those who obtain the rank of governance receive the authority of binding and loosing. Great is the honor, but heavy is the burden of this honor. For it is hard that one who does not know how to maintain the governance of his own life should become a judge of another's life. And it very often happens that one holds the place of judgment whose life does not at all accord with the place. And it often occurs that he either condemns the innocent, or, being himself bound, looses others. Often in loosing and binding his subjects he follows the impulse of his own will rather than the merits of the cases.

Whence it happens that he deprives himself of this very power of binding and loosing who exercises it according to his own wishes rather than according to the conduct of his subjects. It often happens that a Pastor is moved by hatred or favor toward any neighbor; but those who follow their own hatreds or favor in the cases of their subjects cannot judge worthily concerning their subjects. Whence it is

rightly said through the prophet: They were putting to death souls that do not die, and giving life to souls that do not live. For he puts to death one who is not dying who condemns the just. And he strives to give life to one who will not live who attempts to absolve the guilty from punishment. Therefore the causes must be weighed, and then the power of binding and loosing must be exercised. It must be seen what fault preceded, or what repentance followed after the fault, so that those whom almighty God visits through the grace of compunction, the sentence of the pastor may absolve. For then the absolution of the one presiding is true, when it follows the judgment of the internal Judge. This is well signified by that resurrection of the man dead four days, which demonstrates that the Lord first called and gave life to the dead man, saying: ”Lazarus, come forth”; and afterward he who had come forth alive was loosed by the disciples, as it is written:

”And when he who had been bound with wrappings had come forth, then he said to the disciples: Loose him, and let him go. Behold, the disciples loose him now living, whom the Master had raised from the dead. For if the disciples had loosed Lazarus while dead, they would have shown forth a stench rather than power. From this consideration it must be observed that we ought to loose through pastoral authority those whom we recognize our Author vivifies through resurrecting grace. This vivification, indeed, before the work of righteousness is already recognized in the very confession of sin. Hence to this same dead Lazarus it is by no means said ”Come back to life,” but ”Come forth. For every sinner, while he hides his fault within his conscience, lies hidden within, is concealed in his own inner chambers. But the dead man comes forth when the sinner voluntarily confesses his iniquities. Therefore it is said to Lazarus, ”Come forth. As if it were openly said to anyone dead in fault: Why do you hide your guilt within your conscience? Come forth now through confession, you who lie hidden within yourself through denial. Let the dead man therefore come forth, that is, let the sinner confess his fault. And let the disciples loose him as he comes forth, so that the pastors of the Church may remove the punishment from him who deserved it, since he was not ashamed to confess what he did.

These things I have said briefly concerning the order of loosing, so that the pastors of the Church may strive to loose or bind with great moderation. But whether the pastor binds justly or unjustly, nevertheless the sentence of the pastor is to be feared by the flock, lest he who is subject, even when he is perhaps bound unjustly, may deserve the very sentence of his binding from another fault. Therefore let the pastor fear to absolve or to bind indiscreetly. But let him who is under the hand of the pastor fear to be bound even unjustly; nor let him rashly criticize the judgment of his pastor, lest even if he was bound unjustly, through the very pride of arrogant criticism a fault that did not exist may come to be. But since we have said these things briefly by way of digression, let us return to the order of the exposition. But Thomas, one of the twelve, who is called Didymus, was not with

them when Jesus came. This one disciple was absent; when he returned he heard what had happened; having heard, he refused to believe. The Lord came again, and offered his side to the unbelieving disciple to touch, showed his hands, and by displaying the scar of his wounds, healed the wound of that man's unbelief. What, dearest brothers, what do you observe in these things? Do you think it happened by chance that this chosen disciple was absent then, but coming later heard, hearing doubted, doubting touched, touching believed?

This did not happen by chance, but by divine dispensation. For heavenly mercy acted in a wondrous way so that the doubting disciple, while he touched the wounds of flesh in his master, might heal in us the wounds of unbelief. For the unbelief of Thomas profited us more for faith than the faith of the believing disciples, because while he is brought back to faith by touching, our mind, all doubt set aside, is strengthened in faith. For thus the Lord permitted his disciple to doubt after his resurrection, yet did not abandon him in his doubt, just as before his birth he willed Mary to have a spouse, who nevertheless did not attain to marriage with her. For thus the doubting and touching disciple became a witness of the true resurrection, just as the spouse had been the guardian of the mother's perfect virginity. But he touched, and exclaimed: My Lord, and my God. Jesus says to him: Because you have seen me, Thomas, you have believed. Since the apostle Paul says: Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not appearing, it is certainly clear that faith is the evidence of those things which cannot appear. For those things which appear no longer have faith, but recognition. Therefore when Thomas saw, when he touched, why is it said to him: Because you have seen me, you have believed? But he saw one thing, he believed another. For divinity could not be seen by a mortal man.

Therefore he saw the man, and confessed God, saying: My Lord, and my God. Therefore by seeing he believed, who considering the true man, exclaimed that this was God, whom he could not see. What greatly gladdens is what follows: "Blessed are they who have not seen and have believed. In this saying, we are indeed specially marked out, we who retain in our minds Him whom we have not seen in the flesh. We are marked out—but only if we follow our faith with works. For he truly believes who practices by his deeds what he believes. In contrast to these, concerning those who hold faith in name only, Paul says: "They profess that they know God, but in their deeds they deny Him. Hence James says: "Faith without works is dead. Hence the Lord says to blessed Job concerning the ancient enemy of the human race: "He will swallow up a river and not wonder, and he has confidence that the Jordan will flow into his mouth. For who is signified by the river except the flow of the human race? For this race flows from origin to end, and, as if in the manner of water, runs its course from the flux of the flesh until its appointed end. What is signified by the Jordan except the pattern of the baptized? For since the very Author of our redemption deigned to be baptized in the river Jordan, the multitude

of those who are held within the sacrament of baptism is rightly expressed by the name Jordan.

Therefore the ancient enemy of the human race swallowed up the river, because from the beginning of the world until the coming of the Redeemer, with scarcely a few elect escaping, he drew the human race into the belly of his malice. Of him it is rightly said: ”He will swallow up a river and not wonder,” because he does not consider it a great thing when he seizes unbelievers. But what is added is very grave: ”And he has confidence that the Jordan will flow into his mouth,” because after he seized all the unbelievers from the beginning of the world, he still presumes that he can receive even the faithful. For by the mouth of pestilent persuasion he daily devours those in whose case a wicked life is at variance with the confession of faith. Therefore, most beloved brethren, fear this with your whole attention, ponder this in your minds with anxious care. Behold, we celebrate the Paschal solemnities; but we must so live that we may deserve to attain to the eternal feasts. All things that are celebrated as temporal festivals pass away. Take care, you who are present at these solemnities, that you be not separated from the eternal solemnity. What does it profit to be present at the feasts of men, if it happens that one is absent from the feasts of angels? The present solemnity is a shadow of the solemnity to come. Therefore we celebrate this one yearly, that we may be led to that one which is not yearly, but continuous.

When this is observed at its appointed time, our memory is refreshed unto the desire of that one. Therefore, by the frequenting of temporal joy, let the mind grow warm and fervent for eternal joys, so that it may enjoy in truth in the homeland what it meditates upon as a shadow of joy on the way. Therefore, brethren, order your life and conduct. He who rose meek from death, foresee how strict He will come in judgment. Certainly on the day of the dreadful examination He will appear to His own, with angels, with archangels, with thrones, with dominations, with principalities and powers, while the heavens and earth burn, that is, with all the elements shaken in the terror of His service. Therefore set before your eyes this Judge of such great dread; fear Him who is to come, so that when He comes you may see Him not fearful, but secure. He is to be feared, then, lest He be feared. Let the terror of Him exercise us in the practice of good works, let fear of Him restrain our life from wickedness. Believe me, brethren, for we shall then be as secure in His presence as we now strive to be anxious about our guilt.

Certainly, if any of you were to be brought before my judgment tomorrow to plead a case against your adversary, you would perhaps spend the whole night sleepless, turning over in your anxious and troubled mind what might be said to you, how you would respond to objections, greatly fearing lest you find me harsh, dreading lest you appear guilty before me. And who am I? Or what am I? Surely one who will not long after become a worm after being a man, and after being a worm,

dust. If, therefore, the judgment of dust is feared with such great concern, with what attention must the judgment of such great majesty be considered, with what dread must it be foreseen? But because there are some who are uncertain about the resurrection of the flesh, and we teach this more rightly when we also address the hidden questions of your hearts: a few things must be said by us about this faith in the resurrection. For many doubt the resurrection, just as we ourselves once did, who when they see flesh reduced to decay and bones to dust in tombs, lose confidence that flesh and bones can be restored from dust, and thus say to themselves as if reasoning: When is man brought back from dust? When is it accomplished that ashes are given life? To these we briefly respond that it is far less for God to restore what was than to have created what was not.

Or what is remarkable if He who created all things at once from nothing refashions man from dust? For it is more marvelous to have founded heaven and earth from things that did not exist than to restore man himself from earth. But the ash is considered, and it is despaired that it can return to flesh, and the power of divine operation is sought to be comprehended as if by reason. They say these things in their thoughts precisely because God's daily miracles have become worthless to them through their constancy. For behold, in one grain of the tiniest seed lies hidden the entire mass of the tree that will be born. For let us place before our eyes the wondrous size of any tree; let us think about where it began by arising, which arrived at such great mass by growing. We find without doubt its origin, a very small seed. Let us now consider where in that small grain of seed lies hidden the strength of the wood, the roughness of the bark, the magnitude of flavor and fragrance, the abundance of fruits, the greenness of leaves. For the grain of seed when handled is not hard; from where then did the hardness of wood proceed? It is not rough; from where did the roughness of bark burst forth? It has no flavor; from where came the flavor in the fruits? When smelled it gives off no scent; from where does fragrance emanate in the fruits? It shows nothing green in itself;

from where did the greenness of leaves come forth? All things therefore lie hidden in the seed at once, which nevertheless do not come forth from the seed at once. For from the seed the root is produced, from the root the shoot comes forth, from the shoot the fruit arises, and in the fruit the seed is also produced. Let us add therefore that the seed also lies hidden in the seed. What then is remarkable if He who daily restores wood, fruits, and leaves in the great mass of a tree from a small seed brings back bones, sinews, flesh, and hair from dust? Therefore when a doubting mind seeks reason about the power of the resurrection, questions about those things should be brought before it which both happen unceasingly and yet can in no way be comprehended by reason, so that while one is unable from the sight of the thing to penetrate what one sees, one may believe from the promise of divine power what one hears. Therefore, dearest brothers, think upon those promised things with you which remain; but those things which pass away with

time, despise as already dismissed. Hasten with your whole intention to this glory of resurrection which the Truth showed in Himself. Flee earthly desires which separate from the Creator, because you reach the sight of Almighty God the more highly as you love the Mediator of God and men the more singularly.

Who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY 27. Delivered to the people in the basilica of the holy martyr Pancras, on the day of his birth

READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN. At that time, Jesus said to his disciples: This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love than this no one has, than that one lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I will no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know what his master is doing. But I have called you friends, because all things whatsoever I have heard from my Father, I have made known to you. You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and I have appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give you. While all of sacred Scripture is full of the Lord's commandments, why does the Lord speak of love as if it were a singular commandment, saying: "This is my commandment, that you love one another," unless it is because every commandment concerns love alone, and all commandments are one, since whatever is commanded is grounded in charity alone? For just as many branches of a tree proceed from one root, so many virtues are generated from one charity. Nor does the branch of a good work have any greenness if it does not remain in the root of charity. Therefore the Lord's commandments are both many and one: many through the diversity of works, one in the root of love.

Moreover, how this love should be maintained, he himself indicates, who in many passages of his Scripture commands both that friends be loved in him, and that enemies be loved for his sake. For he truly has charity who both loves a friend in God and loves an enemy for the sake of God. For there are some who love their neighbors, but through the affection of kinship and flesh, whom nevertheless sacred Scripture does not contradict in this love. But it is one thing that is freely given to nature, another that is owed to obedience from charity through the Lord's commandments. These indeed love their neighbor, and yet they do not attain those sublime rewards of love, because they bestow their love not spiritually but carnally. Therefore when the Lord said: "This is my commandment, that you love one another," he immediately added: "As I have loved you. As if he were saying openly: Love for the same purpose for which I loved you. In this matter, dearest brothers, we must carefully observe that the ancient enemy, when he draws our mind toward delight in temporal things, stirs up a weaker neighbor against us, one who strives

to take away those very things we love. Nor does the ancient enemy, in doing this, care about removing earthly things, but about striking charity within us. For we suddenly blaze up in hatred; and while we desire to be unconquered outwardly, we are gravely wounded within;

while we defend small things outwardly, we lose the greatest things within, because while we love temporal things, we lose true love. Indeed, everyone who takes what is ours is an enemy. But if we begin to hate our enemy, what we lose is within. Therefore, when we suffer something externally from a neighbor, let us be vigilant inwardly against the hidden thief, who is never better conquered than when the external robber is loved. For there is one supreme proof of charity: if even he who opposes us is loved. Hence it is that Truth itself both endures the gallows of the cross, and yet extends the affection of love to its very persecutors, saying: ”Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. What wonder is it, then, if disciples love their enemies while they live, when the Master loves his enemies even while he is being killed? He expresses the height of this love when he adds: ”Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. The Lord had come to die even for his enemies, and yet he said he would lay down his life for friends, to show us plainly that since by loving we can make a gain from our enemies, even those who persecute us are friends. But behold, no one persecutes us even unto death. How then can we prove whether we love our enemies?

Yet there is something that ought to be done in the peace of holy Church, by which it may become clear whether we would be able to die for love in a time of persecution. Certainly the same John says: ”He who has the substance of this world, and sees his brother in need, and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God remain in him? Hence also John the Baptist says: ”He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none. Therefore, he who in a time of tranquility does not give his tunic for God, when will he give his life in persecution? Therefore, let the virtue of charity, that it may be unconquered in disturbance, be nourished through mercy in tranquility, so that one may first learn to spend one’s possessions for almighty God, and afterward oneself. There follows: ”You are my friends. O how great is the mercy of our Creator! We are not worthy to be servants, and we are called friends. How great is the dignity of men to be friends of God! But you have heard the glory of this dignity; hear also the labor of the struggle: ”If you do what I command you. ”You are my friends, if you do what I command you. As if He were saying openly: You rejoice at the height; consider by what labors one arrives at the height.

Surely when the sons of Zebedee, through the intervention of their mother, sought that one should sit at the right hand of God and the other at the left, they heard: ”Can you drink the cup that I am about to drink? They were already seeking the place of exaltation; the Truth calls them back to the way by which they might come to exaltation. As if it were said: The place of exaltation already delights you, but

first let the way of labor exercise you. Through the cup one reaches majesty. If your mind desires what pleases, first drink what causes pain. Thus, thus through the bitter cup of affliction one arrives at the joy of salvation. ”I will no longer call you servants, because the servant does not know what his master does. But I have called you friends, because all things whatsoever I have heard from my Father, I have made known to you. What are all these things which He heard from His Father, which He wished to make known to His servants, that He might make them His friends, except the joys of interior charity, except those festivals of the heavenly homeland, which He daily imprints on our minds through the inspiration of His love? For when we love the heavenly things we have heard, we already know what we love, because love itself is knowledge. Therefore He had made all things known to those who, changed from earthly desires, were burning with the torches of supreme love.

Indeed the Prophet had beheld these friends of God when he said: ”But to me Your friends, O God, are exceedingly honored. For a friend is called, as it were, a guardian of the soul. Because therefore the Psalmist foresaw that the elect of God, separated from the love of this world, would guard the will of God in heavenly commandments, he marveled at the friends of God, saying: ”But to me Your friends, O God, are exceedingly honored. And as if we were immediately asking him to reveal to us the reasons for such great honor, he at once added: ”Their sovereignty is exceedingly strengthened. Behold, the elect of God subdue the flesh, strengthen the spirit, command demons, shine with virtues, despise present things, preach the eternal homeland by their conduct as well as by their voice; they love it even unto death, and reach it through torments. They can be killed, but they cannot be bent. Therefore their sovereignty is exceedingly strengthened. In that very passion by which they fell in the death of the flesh, see how great was the height of their minds. Whence this, except because their sovereignty was strengthened? But perhaps those who are so great are few? He added: ”I will count them, and they will be multiplied beyond the sand. Behold the whole world, brothers: it is full of martyrs. Now we are scarcely as many as we can see compared to how many witnesses of the truth we have.

Therefore those who are countable to God are multiplied beyond the sand for us, because how many they are cannot be comprehended by us. But whoever arrives at this dignity of being called a friend of God, let him look upon himself in himself, but upon the gifts he receives as above himself. Let him attribute nothing to his own merits, lest he break forth into enmity. Hence it is added: ”You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and have appointed you, that you should go and bring forth fruit. I have appointed you unto grace, I have planted you that you should go by willing, and bring forth fruit by working. For I said ”go” by willing, because to will to do something is already to go in the mind. But what kind of fruit they ought to bring forth is added: ”And your fruit should remain. Everything for which we labor

according to the present age barely suffices until death. For death intervening cuts off the fruit of our labor. But what is done for eternal life is preserved even after death; and it begins to appear when the fruit of carnal labors has begun to disappear. Therefore, that reward begins where this one ends. Whoever therefore has already come to know eternal things, let temporal fruits become worthless in his soul. Let us work such fruits as remain; let us work such fruits as, when death destroys all things, themselves take their beginning from death.

For the Prophet testifies that the fruit of God begins from death, when he says: ”When he shall give sleep to his beloved ones, this is the inheritance of the Lord. Everyone who sleeps in death loses his inheritance; but ”when he shall give sleep to his beloved ones, this is the inheritance of the Lord,” because after the elect of God have arrived at death, then they will find their inheritance. It follows: ”That whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, he may give it you. Behold, here he says: ”Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Again, elsewhere through the same Evangelist he says: ”If you shall ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto you have not asked anything in my name. If the Father gives us everything we ask in the name of the Son, what then does it mean that Paul asked the Lord three times and did not deserve to be heard, but it was said to him: ”My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness”? Did not that most excellent preacher ask in the name of the Son? Why then did he not receive what he asked?

How then is it true that whatever we ask the Father in the name of the Son, the Father gives us, if the Apostle asked in the name of the Son that the angel of Satan be removed from him, and yet did not receive what he asked? But since the name of the Son is Jesus, and Jesus means savior, or is also called salvation, therefore he asks in the name of the Savior who asks for that which pertains to true salvation. For if something that is not expedient is asked for, the Father is not being asked in the name of Jesus. Hence the Lord says to those same apostles while they were still weak: ”Hitherto you have not asked anything in my name. As if it were openly said: You have not asked in the name of the Savior because you do not know how to seek eternal salvation. Hence it is that Paul also is not heard, because if he were freed from the temptation, it would not profit him unto salvation. Behold, we see, dearest brothers, how many of you have gathered for the feast of the martyr: you bend your knees, you beat your breasts, you utter words of prayer and confession, you wet your faces with tears. But consider, I ask, your petitions; see whether you are asking in the name of Jesus, that is, whether you are seeking the joys of eternal salvation.

For in the house of Jesus you do not seek Jesus, if in the temple of eternity you pray inappropriately for temporal things. Behold, one person in prayer seeks a wife, another asks for an estate, another requests clothing, another begs that food

be given to him. And indeed when these things are lacking, they should be sought from almighty God. But we ought to remember continually what we have received from the command of our same Redeemer: ”Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. And so to ask these things from Jesus is not to err, provided they are not sought excessively. But still, what is more serious, another asks for the death of an enemy, and the one whom he cannot pursue with a sword, he pursues with prayer. And the one who is cursed still lives, yet the one who curses is already held guilty of his death. But God commands that an enemy be loved, and yet God is asked to kill an enemy. Whoever therefore prays in this way fights against the Creator in his very prayers. Hence it is said under the figure of Judas: ”Let his prayer become sin. For it is prayer becoming sin to ask for those things which the very one who is petitioned forbids. Hence the Truth says: ”When you stand to pray, forgive if you have anything in your hearts.

We show the virtue of forgiveness more clearly if we bring forward one testimony from the Old Testament. Certainly when Judea had offended the justice of its Creator through its demanding sins, the Lord, forbidding His prophet from prayer, says: ”Do not take up praise and prayer for them. If Moses and Samuel stood before me, my soul would not be toward this people. What is it that, with so many fathers passed over and left aside, Moses and Samuel alone are brought forward, whose wondrous power of obtaining is shown, while even they are said to be unable to intercede? As if the Lord were saying openly: I do not even hear those whom I by no means despise on account of the great merit of their petition. What then is it that Moses and Samuel are preferred to the other fathers in petition, except that these two alone in the entire sequence of the Old Testament are read to have prayed even for their enemies? One is assailed with stones by the people, and yet he entreats the Lord for the one who stoned him; the other is cast down from leadership, and yet when asked to pray, he confesses saying: ”Far be this sin from me against the Lord, that I should cease to pray for you. ”If Moses and Samuel stood before me, my soul would not be toward this people. As if He were saying openly:

I do not even now hear those on behalf of friends, whom I know by the merit of their great virtue to pray even for enemies. Therefore the power of true prayer is the loftiness of charity. And then each person obtains what he rightly asks, when his mind in petition is not darkened by hatred of an enemy. But often we overcome a reluctant mind if we also pray for enemies. The mouth pours forth prayer for adversaries, but would that the heart hold love. For often we also offer prayer for our enemies, but we pour it forth more from precept than from charity. For we ask for the life of our enemies, and yet we fear lest we be heard. But because the internal Judge considers the mind rather than words, he asks nothing for an enemy who does not pray for him out of charity. But behold, our enemy has grievously sinned against us, inflicted losses, harmed those who helped, persecuted those who loved. These things would need to be retained if our own sins were not to be

forgiven. For our Advocate has composed a prayer for us in our case; and he who is the Advocate is himself the Judge of that same case. Moreover, he inserted a condition into the prayer he composed, saying: Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. Therefore, since he who stood forth as Advocate comes as Judge, he who made the prayer hears it.

Either, then, we say without doing it, Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors, and by saying this we bind ourselves all the more; or perhaps we omit this condition in our prayer, and our Advocate does not recognize the prayer he composed, and immediately says to himself: I know what I instructed; this is not the prayer I made. What then must we do, brothers, except extend the affection of true charity to our brothers? Let no malice remain in our heart. Let almighty God consider our charity toward our neighbor, so that he may extend his mercy to our iniquities. Remember what we are admonished: Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Behold, something is owed to us, and we owe. Let us therefore forgive what is owed to us, so that what is owed by us may be forgiven. But the mind resists these things, and wants to fulfill what it hears, yet still struggles against it. We stand at the martyr's tomb, knowing by what death he reached the heavenly kingdom. If we do not lay down our body for Christ, let us at least conquer our spirit. God is appeased by this sacrifice; he approves in the judgment of his mercy the victory of our peace. For he beholds the struggle of our heart; and he who rewards the victorious afterward now helps those who are fighting, through our Lord Jesus Christ his Son, who lives and reigns with him in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, through all ages of ages.

Amen.

HOMILY 28. Delivered to the people in the basilica of Saints Nereus and Achilleus, on the day of their feast.

READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN. At that time, there was a certain royal official whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus was coming from Judea into Galilee, he went to him and begged him to come down and heal his son. For he was about to die. Jesus therefore said to him: Unless you see signs and wonders, you do not believe. The royal official said to him: Lord, come down before my son dies. Jesus said to him: Go, your son lives. The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and went his way. And as he was now going down, his servants met him and brought word, saying that his son was alive. He therefore inquired of them the hour in which he had improved. And they said to him that yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. The father therefore knew that it was at that hour in which Jesus had said to him: Your son lives. And he himself believed, and his whole household. The reading of the holy Gospel which you have just heard, brothers, does not require explanation. But lest we seem to have passed over it in silence, let us say something about it by way of

exhortation rather than exposition. Yet this one point from the exposition seems to me to require inquiry: why the man who had come seeking health for his son heard the words: ”Unless you see signs and wonders, you do not believe”?

For he who was seeking health for his son undoubtedly believed. For he would not have sought health from one whom he did not believe to be the Savior. Why then is it said, ”Unless you see signs and wonders, you do not believe,” to one who believed before he saw a sign? But remember what he asked for, and you will clearly recognize that he wavered in faith. For he asked that the Lord would come down and heal his son. Therefore he was seeking the bodily presence of the Lord, who through the Spirit was absent nowhere. Thus he believed less in him whom he did not think able to give health unless he were present in body. For if he had believed perfectly, he would undoubtedly have known that there is no place where God is not. Therefore to a great extent he was lacking in faith, because he gave honor not to the divine majesty but to bodily presence. Thus he sought health for his son, and yet wavered in faith, because he believed that the one to whom he came was powerful enough to heal, and yet thought him absent from his dying son. But the Lord, who is asked to come, indicates that he is not absent from where he is invited, and restored health by his command alone, he who created all things by his will. In this matter we must carefully observe that, as we have learned from another evangelist’s testimony, a centurion came to the Lord saying:

”Lord, my servant lies paralyzed in my house and is grievously tormented. To whom Jesus immediately responds: ”I will come and heal him. What does it mean that the royal official asks him to come to his son, and yet he refuses to go bodily; but to the centurion’s servant he is not invited, and yet he promises to go bodily? He does not deign to be present to the royal official’s son through bodily presence, yet he does not disdain to go to meet the centurion’s servant. What is this, except that our pride is rebuked, we who in men venerate not the nature by which they were made in the image of God, but honors and riches? And when we consider what surrounds them, we certainly fail to perceive their inner worth, while we consider what is despised in bodies, we neglect to weigh what they truly are. But our Redeemer, to show that what is lofty among men should be despised, and what is despised among men should not be despised by the saints, was unwilling to go to the royal official’s son, but was ready to go to the centurion’s servant. Therefore our pride is rebuked, which does not know how to value men for the sake of men themselves. It considers only, as we said, what surrounds men; it does not look at their nature; it does not recognize the honor of God in men.

Behold, the Son of God is unwilling to go to the royal official’s son, and yet he is ready to come for the health of a servant. Certainly if anyone’s servant asked us to go to him, immediately our pride would answer us in silent thought, saying: ”Do not go, because you degrade yourself, your honor is despised, your position is

cheapened. Behold, he comes from heaven who does not disdain to meet a servant on earth; and yet we, who are from the earth, scorn to be humbled on earth. But what can be more worthless, what more contemptible before God, than to preserve honor among men and not to fear the eyes of the inner witness? Hence also in the holy Gospel the Lord says to the Pharisees: ”You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts, because what is lofty among men is abominable before God. Note, brothers, note what is said. For if what is lofty among men is abominable before God, the thought of our heart is as low before God as it is high among men, and the humility of our heart is as high before God as it is low among men. Let us therefore despise whatever good we do; let no work of ours puff us up, let neither abundance of possessions nor glory exalt us. If we swell inwardly from any good things that abound to us, we are despised by God. On the contrary, the Psalmist says of the humble: ”The Lord preserves the little ones.

Because he calls the humble ”little ones,” after he brought forth this statement, he adds counsel; for as if we were asking what he himself would do about these things, he added: ”I was humbled, and he delivered me. Think on these things, therefore, brothers; weigh them with your whole attention. Do not venerate the goods of this world in your neighbors. Honor in people—to whom, however, you have not been entrusted—that which was made in the image of God, for the sake of God. This you will truly preserve toward your neighbors if you first do not swell up in your own heart. For whoever still exalts himself on account of transitory things does not know how to venerate in his neighbor what endures. Therefore, do not consider in yourselves what you have, but what you are. Behold, the world that is loved flees away. These saints, at whose tomb we stand, trampled the flourishing world with contempt of mind. There was long life, continual health, abundance in possessions, fruitfulness in offspring, tranquility in lasting peace; and yet while it flourished in itself, the world had already withered in their hearts. Behold, now the world has withered in itself, and still it flourishes in our hearts. Everywhere death, everywhere grief, everywhere desolation; from every side we are struck, from every side we are filled with bitterness; and yet with blind mind we love the very bitterness of carnal desire, we follow what flees, we cling to what is falling.

And because we cannot hold back what is falling, we fall with it, which we grasp as it collapses. Once the world held us by its delight; now it is so full of wounds that the world itself sends us to God. Consider, therefore, that the things that pass temporally are nothing. The end of temporal things shows how worthless is that which was able to pass away. The fall of things indicates that a passing thing was nearly nothing even when it seemed to stand. Therefore, dearest brothers, weigh these things with careful consideration; fix your heart on the love of eternity, so that while you despise the attainment of earthly heights, you may arrive at glory with him whom you hold through faith, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives

and reigns as God with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY 29. Delivered to the people in the basilica of the blessed apostle Peter, on the Ascension of the Lord.

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK. At that time, as the eleven disciples were reclining at table, Jesus appeared to them and reproached their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen him risen. And he said to them: Go into all the world, preach the Gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe. In my name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues, they will take up serpents, and if they drink anything deadly, it will not harm them. They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover. And the Lord Jesus indeed, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God. But they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs that followed. The fact that the disciples were slow to believe in the Lord's resurrection was not so much their weakness as, so to speak, our future strength. For the resurrection itself was demonstrated to them through many proofs while they doubted: and when we recognize these things as we read them, what else happens but that we are strengthened by their doubt? For Mary Magdalene, who believed more quickly, did less for me than Thomas, who doubted for a long time.

For by doubting he touched the scars of the wounds, and cut away the wound of doubt from our hearts. To establish the truth of the Lord's resurrection, we should also note what Luke reports, saying: "Eating together with them, he commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem. And a little later: "While they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud received him from their sight. Note the words, mark the mysteries. Eating together he was lifted up. He ate, and he ascended, so that through the act of eating the truth of his flesh might be made evident. Mark, however, recalls that before the Lord ascended to heaven, he rebuked the disciples for their hardness of heart and unbelief. In this matter, what should be considered except that the Lord rebuked the disciples at that time when he was leaving them bodily, so that the words he spoke as he departed might remain more deeply impressed upon the hearts of his hearers? Having rebuked their hardness, then, let us hear what he says in admonishing them: "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. My brothers, was the holy Gospel to be preached to insensible things or to brute animals, that it is said to the disciples concerning it: "Preach to every creature"? But by the name of every creature, man is signified. For there are stones, but they neither live nor feel. There are plants and trees; they live indeed, but they do not feel.

They live, I say, not through a soul, but through their verdure, because Paul also says: ”Foolish one, what you sow is not brought to life unless it first dies. Therefore that lives which dies, so that it may be brought to life. Stones therefore exist, but they do not live. Trees exist and live, but they do not feel. Brute animals exist, live, and feel, but they do not discern. Angels exist, live, feel, and discern. But man has something of every creature. For he has existence in common with stones, life with trees, sensation with animals, understanding with angels. If therefore man has something in common with every creature, in a certain sense every creature is man. Therefore the Gospel is preached to every creature when it is preached to man alone, because he is taught for whose sake all things were created on earth, and from whom all things are not alien through a certain likeness. By the name of every creature, every nation of the Gentiles can also be designated. For before it had been said: ”Do not go into the way of the Gentiles. But now it is said, ”Preach to every creature,” so that the preaching of the apostles, first rejected by Judea, might then become a help to us, when that proud people had rejected it as a testimony to their own condemnation. But when Truth sends the disciples to preach, what else does He do in the world but scatter grains of seed?

And He sends a few grains in the sowing, so that He may receive the fruits of many harvests from our faith. For so great a harvest of the faithful would never have arisen in the whole world, if those chosen grains of preachers had not come from the Lord’s hand upon the rational earth. There follows: 3. ”He who believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he who does not believe shall be condemned. Perhaps each one may say within himself: ”I have already believed; I shall be saved. He speaks truly, if he holds faith by works. For true faith is that which does not contradict in conduct what it says in words. Hence it is that Paul says of certain false believers: ”They profess to know God, but they deny Him by their deeds. Hence John says: ”He who says he knows God and does not keep His commandments is a liar. Since this is so, we ought to recognize the truth of our faith in the consideration of our life. For then we are truly faithful, if we fulfill in works what we promise in words. On the day of baptism indeed, we promised to renounce all the works of the ancient enemy and all his pomps. Therefore let each of you bring back the eyes of his mind to consideration of himself; and if he keeps after baptism what he pledged before baptism, let him rejoice, now certain that he is faithful.

But behold, if he has by no means kept what he promised, if he has slipped into practicing wicked works, into desiring the pomps of the world; let us see if he now knows how to lament that he has erred. For before the merciful Judge, not even he will be held a deceiver who returns to the truth, even after he has lied, because almighty God, when He willingly receives our repentance, Himself hides by His own judgment that in which we have erred. There follows: And these signs shall follow them that believe. In my name they shall cast out devils, they shall speak with new tongues, they shall take up serpents; and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it

shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. What then, my brethren, because you do not these signs, do you not believe? But these things were necessary in the beginning of the Church. For that faith might grow, it needed to be nourished by miracles, because we also, when we plant shrubs, pour water on them only until we see that they have taken root in the ground; and once they have fixed their roots, we cease watering. Hence it is that Paul says: Tongues are for a sign, not to believers, but to unbelievers. We have concerning these signs and powers things that we ought yet more carefully to consider. For holy Church daily does spiritually what then she did corporally through the apostles.

For when her priests lay hands upon believers through the grace of exorcism, and forbid evil spirits to dwell in their minds, what else do they do but cast out devils? And believers who now abandon the worldly words of their former life, and utter forth holy mysteries, and declare the praises and power of their Creator as much as they are able, what else do they do but speak with new tongues? They who by their good exhortations take away malice from the hearts of others, take up serpents. And when they hear pestilent persuasions, yet are not drawn thereby to evil works, they drink indeed what is deadly, but it shall not hurt them. They who, as often as they see their neighbors grow weak in good works, run to help them with all their strength, and by the example of their own deeds strengthen the lives of those who waver in their own actions; what else do they do but lay hands on the sick that they may recover? Which miracles are so much the greater as they are spiritual; so much the greater as by them not bodies but souls are raised to life. These signs therefore, dearest brethren, you can do by God’s help if you will. For by those outward signs, life cannot be obtained by those who work them. For those bodily miracles sometimes show holiness, but do not make it; but these spiritual ones, which are wrought in the mind, do not show but make the virtue of life.

The evil can have those, but only the good can enjoy these. Whence the Truth says of certain ones: Many will say to me in that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, and in your name cast out devils, and in your name done many mighty works? And then I will confess to them: I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of iniquity. Do not therefore, dearest brethren, love signs which may be had in common with the reprobate; but love these miracles of charity and piety which we have spoken of, which are so much the safer as they are hidden, and for which the recompense with the Lord is so much the greater as the glory among men is less. There follows: And indeed the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God. In the Old Testament we learned that Elijah was caught up into heaven. But the aerial heaven is one thing, the ethereal heaven another. For the aerial heaven is nearest to the earth; whence we also speak of the birds of heaven, because we see them flying in the air. Elijah therefore was lifted up into the aerial heaven, so that he might suddenly be led to a certain secret region of the earth, where he might live in great

rest of flesh and spirit, until he returns at the end of the world and pays the debt of death.

For he postponed death, he did not escape it. But our Redeemer, because he did not postpone it, overcame it, and by rising again consumed it, and by ascending declared the glory of his resurrection. It should also be noted that Elijah is recorded to have ascended in a chariot, so that it might be openly demonstrated that a mere man needed the help of another. For those aids were made and shown through angels, because he could not ascend even into the aerial heaven by himself, whom the weakness of his own nature weighed down. But our Redeemer is not recorded to have been lifted up by a chariot or by angels, because he who had made all things was certainly borne above all things by his own power. For he was returning to where he was, and he was going back from where he remained, because when he ascended into heaven through his humanity, through his divinity he equally contained both earth and heaven. Just as Joseph, sold by his brothers, prefigured the selling of our Redeemer, so Enoch, translated, and Elijah, raised up to the aerial heaven, designated the Lord's Ascension. Therefore the Lord had forerunners and witnesses of His Ascension, one before the law, the other under the law, so that He Himself might come in due time who could truly penetrate the heavens. Hence the very order in the elevation of both of them is also distinguished by certain gradations.

For Enoch is recorded as having been translated, but Elijah as having been carried up to heaven, so that He might come afterward who, neither translated nor carried up, would penetrate the ethereal heaven by His own power. Because He would bestow purity of the flesh upon those believing in Him, and under Him the virtue of chastity would increase through the progression of ages, the Lord showed this both in the translation of those who, as servants, designated the Lord's Ascension, and in Himself who ascended to heaven. For Enoch indeed had a wife and children; but Elijah is not recorded as having had either wife or children. Consider therefore how the purity of holiness grew by gradations, which is plainly shown both through the translated servants and through the person of the ascending Lord. For Enoch was translated, both begotten through intercourse and begetting through intercourse. Elijah was caught up, begotten through intercourse, but no longer begetting through intercourse. But the Lord was taken up, neither begetting through intercourse nor begotten through intercourse. We must consider what it means that Mark says: He sits at the right hand of God; while Stephen says: I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God. What does it mean that Mark testifies he is sitting, while Stephen testifies that he saw him standing? But you know, brothers, that sitting belongs to one who judges, while standing belongs to one who fights or helps.

Therefore, because our Redeemer, having been taken up into heaven, both now judges all things and at the end comes as judge of all, Mark describes him as sitting after his assumption, because after the glory of his Ascension he will be seen as judge at the end. But Stephen, placed in the labor of struggle, saw him standing whom he had as helper, because in order that Stephen might overcome on earth the unbelief of his persecutors, his grace fought for him from heaven. The following continues: ”And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. What is to be considered in these things, what is to be committed to memory, except that obedience followed the command, and signs indeed followed obedience? But because, with God as our author, we have briefly run through the exposition of the Gospel reading, it remains for us to say something about the consideration of so great a solemnity itself. But first we must inquire what it means that when the Lord was born, angels appeared, yet they are not recorded as having appeared in white garments, whereas when the Lord ascended, angels who were sent are recorded as having appeared in white garments. For it is written thus: ”While they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud received him from their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood beside them in white garments.

In white garments, joy and festivity of mind are shown. What does it mean, then, that when the Lord was born, angels appear not in white garments, but when the Lord ascended, angels appear in white garments, unless that then a great festivity was made for the angels, when God as man entered heaven? For when the Lord was being born, divinity seemed to be humbled; but when the Lord ascended, humanity was exalted. For white garments are more fitting for exaltation than for humiliation. Therefore at his assumption, angels ought to have been seen in white garments, because he who at his nativity appeared as humble God, at his Ascension was shown as exalted man. But this, dearest brothers, we must greatly consider on this solemnity: that on this day the handwriting of our condemnation has been blotted out, the sentence of our corruption has been changed. For that nature to which it was said, ”You are earth, and to earth you will go,” today went to heaven. For on account of this very lifting up of our flesh, blessed Job figuratively calls the Lord a bird. For since he saw that Judea would not understand the mystery of His Ascension, he pronounced sentence on their unbelief, saying, ”The bird knew not the path. For the Lord was rightly called a bird, because He raised His fleshly body to the heavens. Whoever did not believe that He ascended to heaven did not know the path of this bird.

Concerning this solemnity it is said through the Psalmist, ”Your magnificence is exalted above the heavens. Concerning this again he says, ”God ascended with jubilation, and the Lord with the sound of the trumpet. Concerning this again he says, ”Ascending on high, He led captivity captive, He gave gifts to men. For ascending on high, He led captivity captive, because He absorbed our corruption

by the power of His incorruption. And He gave gifts to men, because, sending the Spirit from above, to one He granted the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge, to another the grace of powers, to another the grace of healings, to another kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of speeches. Therefore He gave gifts to men. Concerning this glory of His Ascension, Habakkuk also says, ”The sun was lifted up, and the moon stood in its order. For who is designated by the name of sun except the Lord, and who by the name of moon except the Church? For until the Lord ascended to heaven, His holy Church utterly feared the adversities of the world; but after it was strengthened by His Ascension, it openly preached what it secretly believed. Therefore the sun was lifted up, and the moon stood in its order, because when the Lord sought heaven, His holy Church grew in the authority of preaching. Hence in the voice of this same Church it is said through Solomon, ”Behold, he comes leaping upon the mountains and bounding over the hills.

For she considered the heights of such great works and said, ”Behold, he comes leaping upon the mountains. For in coming for our redemption, He made certain leaps, so to speak. Do you wish, dearest brothers, to recognize His very leaps? From heaven He came into the womb, from the womb He came into the manger, from the manger He came to the cross, from the cross He came into the tomb, from the tomb He returned to heaven. Behold, so that He might make us run after Him, the Truth made manifest through the flesh made certain leaps for us, because ”He rejoiced as a giant to run His course,” so that we might say to Him from the heart, ”Draw us after You; we will run in the fragrance of Your ointments. Therefore, dearest brothers, we must follow with our heart to where we believe he ascended in body. Let us flee earthly desires; let nothing below delight us any longer, we who have our Father in heaven. And we must carefully consider this: that he who ascended gently will return terribly; and whatever he commanded us with gentleness, he will demand from us with severity. Let no one therefore make light of the time granted for repentance; let no one neglect to care for himself while he is able, because our Redeemer will come in judgment all the more severely then, the greater the patience he has extended to us before the judgment. Therefore, brothers, do these things among yourselves;

turn these things over in your mind with diligent thought. Although your spirit may still be tossed about by the disturbances of worldly affairs, nevertheless fix the anchor of your hope in the eternal homeland; establish the intention of your mind in the true light. Behold, we have heard that the Lord ascended into heaven. Let us therefore keep in meditation what we believe. And though we are still held here by the weakness of the body, let us nevertheless follow him with the steps of love. Nor does he who gave it abandon our desire: Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY 30. Delivered to the people in the basilica of Saint Peter the Apostle, on the holy day of Pentecost.

READING OF THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN. At that time, Jesus said to his disciples: If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and we will make our dwelling with him. He who does not love me does not keep my words. And the word which you have heard is not mine, but the Father's who sent me. These things I have spoken to you while remaining with you. But the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and will bring to your remembrance all things whatsoever I shall have said to you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid. You have heard that I said to you: I go away and I come to you. If you loved me, you would indeed rejoice, because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe. I will no longer speak much with you. For the prince of this world comes, and in me he has nothing. But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father has given me commandment, so I do.

Beloved brothers, it is fitting to pass through the words of the Gospel reading briefly, so that afterward we may be permitted to linger longer in the contemplation of so great a solemnity. For today the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples with a sudden sound, and changed the minds of carnal men into love of Him, and while tongues of fire appeared outwardly, their hearts were made flaming within, because as they received God in the vision of fire, they burned sweetly through love. For the Holy Spirit Himself is love. Hence John also says: ”God is love. Therefore whoever desires God with a whole heart already has Him whom he loves. For no one could love God if he did not have Him whom he loves. But behold, if any one of you were asked whether he loves God, he would respond with full confidence and a secure mind: ”I love. Yet in the very beginning of the reading you heard what the Truth says: ”If anyone loves me, he will keep my word. The proof of love, therefore, is the showing forth of works. Hence the same John says in his epistle: ”He who says, 'I love God,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar. For we truly love God if we restrain ourselves from our own pleasures for the sake of His commandments. For he who still flows away through illicit desires certainly does not love God, because he contradicts Him by his own will.

”And my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him. Consider, dearly beloved brothers, how great a solemnity this is: to have the coming of God as a guest in the lodging of the heart. Certainly if some wealthy and very powerful friend were to enter your house, the whole house would be cleaned with all haste, lest perhaps there be anything that might offend the eyes of the entering friend. Let him therefore wipe away the filth of wicked deeds who

prepares the house of his mind for God. But see what the Truth says: ”We will come, and we will make our abode with him. For He comes into the hearts of some and does not make His abode, because through compunction they indeed receive God’s regard, but in the time of temptation they forget that very thing for which they had been moved to compunction; and so they return to committing sins as if they had never lamented them at all. Therefore he who truly loves God, who keeps His commandments, in his heart the Lord both comes and makes His abode, because the love of divinity so penetrates him that he does not depart from this love in the time of temptation. He therefore truly loves whose mind wicked delight does not overcome through consent. For each person is separated from heavenly love to the extent that he delights in lower things. Hence it is still added: ”He who does not love me does not keep my words.

Return therefore inwardly to yourselves, dearly beloved brothers; examine whether you truly love God; yet let no one believe himself, whatever his mind has answered him without the testimony of works. Concerning love of the Creator, let tongue, mind, and life be examined. The love of God is never idle. For it works great things, if it exists; but if it refuses to work, it is not love. ”And the word which you have heard is not mine, but the Father’s who sent me. You know, dearly beloved brothers, that He who speaks, the only-begotten Son, is the Word of the Father, and therefore the word which the Son speaks is not the Son’s but the Father’s, because the Son Himself is the Word of the Father. ”These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. When would He not abide with them, who, about to ascend to heaven, promises, saying: ”Behold, I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world”? But the incarnate Word both abides and departs: He departs in body, He abides in divinity. He declares therefore that He then abided with them, because He who was always present by invisible power was already departing from corporeal sight. But the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all things whatsoever I have said to you. Most of you know, my brothers, that in Greek speech ”paraclete” is called in Latin ”advocate” or ”consoler.

He is called advocate because he intercedes with the justice of the Father for the error of sinners. He who is of one substance with the Father and the Son is said to entreat for sinners, because those whom he has filled, he makes into those who entreat. Hence Paul also says: For the Spirit himself makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. But he who entreats is less than he who is entreated; how then is the Spirit said to entreat, who is not less? But the Spirit himself entreats because he inflames those whom he has filled to entreat. Moreover, the same Spirit is called Consoler because for those who grieve over the commission of sin, while he prepares the hope of pardon, he lifts the mind from the affliction of sorrow. Of him it is rightly promised: He himself will teach you all

things. Because unless the same Spirit is present in the heart of the hearer, the word of the teacher is useless. Therefore let no one attribute to the human teacher what he understands from the mouth of the teacher, because unless there is one within who teaches, the tongue of the teacher labors outwardly in vain. Behold, you all equally hear the one voice of the speaker, yet you do not equally perceive the meaning of the voice heard.

Since therefore the voice is not different, why is the understanding of the voice different in your hearts, unless because through that which the voice of the speaker commonly admonishes, there is an interior master who specially teaches certain ones about the understanding of the voice? Concerning this anointing of the Spirit, it is again said through John: As his anointing teaches you concerning all things. Therefore one is not instructed by voice when the mind is not anointed by the Spirit. But why do we speak these things about human teaching, when even the Creator himself does not speak for the instruction of man, if he does not speak to that same man through the anointing of the Spirit? Certainly Cain, before he perpetrated fratricide in deed, heard: You have sinned; be still. But because, his sins demanding it, he was admonished by voice, not by the anointing of the Spirit, he was able to hear the words of God but scorned to keep them. But we must inquire why it is said of the same Spirit: He will bring all things to your remembrance, since to suggest is usually characteristic of an inferior. But because we sometimes say ”to suggest” means ”to supply,” the invisible Spirit is said to suggest, not because he brings knowledge to us from below, but from what is hidden. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. Here ”I leave,” there ”I give. I leave to those who follow, I give to those who arrive.

Behold, dearest brothers, we have briefly discussed the words of the sacred reading; now let us turn our mind to contemplation of so great a feast. But since the reading from the Acts of the Apostles was also recited to you along with the Gospel reading, let us therefore draw something from it for the use of our contemplation. For you have heard that the Holy Spirit appeared upon the disciples in tongues of fire and gave them knowledge of all languages. What indeed was signified by this miracle, except that the holy Church, filled with the same Spirit, would speak with the voice of all nations? Those who attempted to build a tower against God lost the communion of one language, but in these who humbly feared God all languages were united. Here therefore humility merited virtue; there pride earned confusion. But we must ask why the Holy Spirit, coeternal with the Father and the Son, appeared in fire; why in fire and tongues together; why He is shown sometimes in a dove, sometimes in fire; why He appeared over the only-begotten Son in the form of a dove, and over the disciples in fire—so that He neither came upon the Lord in fire nor was shown over the disciples in a dove. Let us therefore return by solving these four questions we have proposed. For the Spirit, coeternal with the Father

and Son, is shown in fire because God is incorporeal, ineffable, and invisible fire, as Paul attests: ”Our God is a consuming fire.

God is indeed called fire because through Him the rust of sins is consumed. Of this fire the Truth says: ”I came to cast fire upon the earth, and what do I desire except that it burn? For earthly hearts are called earth, which, while they always heap up base thoughts within themselves, are trampled by malignant spirits. But the Lord casts fire upon the earth when He kindles the hearts of carnal people with the breath of the Holy Spirit. And the earth burns when the carnal heart, cold in its wicked pleasures, abandons the desires of the present age and is set ablaze with love of God. Rightly therefore the Spirit appeared in fire, because from every heart He fills He shakes off the torpor of coldness and kindles it with desire for His eternity. Moreover He was shown in tongues of fire because the same Spirit is coeternal with the Son, and tongue has the greatest kinship with word. For the Son is the Word of the Father. And because the Spirit and the Word are of one substance, the same Spirit had to be shown in a tongue. Or certainly, because word proceeds through the tongue, the Spirit appeared in tongues because whoever is touched by the Holy Spirit confesses God’s Word, that is, the only-begotten Son, and cannot deny God’s Word because he now has the tongue of the Holy Spirit. Or certainly the Spirit appeared in tongues of fire because all whom He fills He makes both burning and speaking at once.

Teachers have tongues of fire because, when they preach that God is to be loved, they set the hearts of their hearers aflame. For the speech of a teacher is idle if it cannot provide the fire of love. Those who said had conceived this fire of teaching from the very mouth of Truth: ”Was not our heart burning within us while He spoke on the way and opened the Scriptures to us? For from the word heard the soul is set ablaze, the cold of torpor recedes, the mind becomes anxious with heavenly desire, estranged from earthly concupiscences. True love, when it has filled the soul, torments it with tears; but while it is tormented by such burning, it is fed by its very torments. It delights to hear heavenly precepts, and by as many commandments as it is instructed, it is inflamed as if by so many torches; and the soul that was formerly torpid through desires afterward burns through words. Hence it is well said through Moses: ”In His right hand was a fiery law. For the reprobate, who are also to be placed on the left, are indeed the left hand; but the elect are called the right hand of God. Therefore in God’s right hand is the fiery law, because the elect by no means hear heavenly commandments with a cold heart, but are set ablaze toward them with the torches of inward love. The word is brought to the ear, and their mind, angry at itself, is consumed by the flame of inward sweetness.

Now the Holy Spirit was shown both in a dove and in fire because all whom He fills He makes both simple and ardent: simple in purity, ardent in zeal. For neither can

simplicity without zeal please God, nor zeal without simplicity. Hence the Truth Himself says: ”Be wise as serpents and simple as doves. In this matter it should be noted that the Lord wished to admonish His disciples neither about the dove without the serpent nor about the serpent without the dove, so that both the cunning of the serpent might sharpen the simplicity of the dove and the simplicity of the dove might temper the cunning of the serpent. Hence Paul says: ”Do not become children in understanding. Behold, we have heard of the prudence of the serpent; now let us be admonished about the simplicity of the dove: ”But in malice be infants. Hence it is said of blessed Job: ”He was a simple and upright man. But what is uprightness without simplicity, or what is simplicity without uprightness? Therefore, because this Spirit teaches both uprightness and simplicity, He had to be shown both in fire and in a dove, so that every heart touched by His grace may become both tranquil with the gentleness of meekness and inflamed with zeal for justice. Finally, it must be asked why in our Redeemer Himself, the Mediator between God and men, the Spirit appeared through a dove, but in the disciples through fire? Certainly the only-begotten Son of God is the judge of the human race.

But who could endure His justice if, before gathering us through gentleness, He had wished to examine our faults through zeal for righteousness? Therefore, made man for men, He showed Himself gentle to men. He did not wish to strike sinners, but to gather them. First He wished to correct gently, so that He might have those whom He would afterward save in judgment. Therefore the Spirit ought to have appeared over Him in a dove, since He was not coming to strike sins now through zeal, but still to tolerate them through gentleness. But on the contrary, the Holy Spirit ought to have been shown over the disciples in fire, so that those who were simply men, and therefore sinners, He might kindle as spiritual servants against themselves, and the sins which God would spare through gentleness, they themselves might punish in themselves through repentance. For neither could they themselves be without sin who were clinging to the heavenly teaching, as John attests, who says: If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. Therefore He came in fire upon men, but appeared in a dove upon the Lord, because the sins which the Lord piously tolerates through gentleness, we ought to carefully observe through zeal for righteousness, and always burn away with the fire of repentance.

Therefore the Spirit was shown through a dove in the Redeemer, but through fire in men, because the more the severity of our Judge has been tempered toward us, the more our weakness ought to become enkindled toward ourselves. Therefore, having completed the explanation of the four propositions, let us pass on to contemplate the gifts of the same Spirit. Concerning this Spirit it is written: ”His Spirit has adorned the heavens. For the ornaments of the heavens are the virtues of those who preach. Paul enumerates these ornaments, saying: ”To one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge accord-

ing to the same Spirit, to another faith in the same Spirit, to another the grace of healing in one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of speeches. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. Therefore, as many as are the gifts of those who preach, so many are the ornaments of the heavens. Hence it is written again: ”By the word of the Lord the heavens were established. For the Word of the Lord is the Son of the Father. But concerning these same heavens, namely the holy apostles, so that the entire holy Trinity might be shown to have worked together, it is suddenly added concerning the divinity of the Holy Spirit:

”And by the breath of His mouth is all their power. Therefore the power of the heavens was received from the Spirit, because they would not have presumed to oppose the powers of this world unless the strength of the Holy Spirit had made them firm. For we know what kind of teachers of the holy Church they were before the coming of this Spirit, and we observe how great in strength they became after His coming. Certainly, this very pastor of the Church, at whose most sacred body we are seated, let the servant girl who was the doorkeeper, when questioned, tell how great was his weakness and how great his fear before the coming of the Spirit. For struck by the voice of one woman, while he feared to die, he denied the Life. And then Peter denied on earth, while the thief confessed on the cross. But let us hear what kind of man this person of such great fear became after the coming of the Spirit. A meeting of magistrates and elders takes place, and after being beaten the apostles are ordered not to speak in the name of Jesus: Peter responded with great authority: ”We must obey God rather than men. And again: ”Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.

And they went rejoicing from the presence of the council, because they were counted worthy to suffer insults for the name of Jesus. Behold, Peter rejoices in beatings, who before was afraid at mere words. And he who previously feared when questioned by the voice of a servant girl, after the coming of the Holy Spirit, though beaten, tramples down the powers of rulers. It is fitting to raise the eyes of faith to the power of this craftsman, and to consider here and there the Fathers of the new and old testament. Behold, with these same eyes of faith opened, I gaze upon David, Amos, Daniel, Peter, Paul, Matthew, and I wish to consider what kind of craftsman this Holy Spirit is, but in my very consideration I fall short. For he fills a boy who plays the harp, and makes him a psalmist. He fills a herdsman shepherd picking sycamore figs, and makes him a prophet. He fills an abstinent boy, and makes him a judge of elders. He fills a fisherman, and makes him a preacher. He fills a persecutor, and makes him a teacher of the Gentiles. He fills a tax collector, and makes him an evangelist. O what a craftsman this Spirit is! There is no delay in learning whatever he wills. As soon as he touches the

mind, he teaches, and merely to have touched is to have taught. For as soon as he illuminates the human soul, he transforms it;

he suddenly takes away what it was, and suddenly produces what it was not. Let us consider what kind of men our holy preachers were when this day found them, and what kind it made them. Certainly those who were sitting in one room out of fear of the Jews knew each one the language of their birth, and yet they did not presume to speak openly of Christ even in that language which they knew. The Spirit came, and in their mouths taught them through the diversity of tongues, while in their minds he strengthened them with authority. They began to speak of Christ in foreign tongues, who before were afraid to speak of him even in their own language. For the inflamed heart despised the torments of the body which it had feared before; it conquered the force of carnal dread through love of the Creator. And those who before had succumbed to their adversaries through fear now surpassed them in authority. He who raised them to the height of such eminence, what else should I say, except that he made the minds of earthly men into heavens? Consider, dearest brothers, after the incarnation of the only-begotten Son of God, what manner of solemnity this day is concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit. For just as that feast is honorable, so also is this one. In that feast, indeed, God remaining in himself took on man; in this one, men received God coming from above. In that feast, God was naturally made man;

in this one, men were made gods through adoption. If therefore we do not wish to remain carnal in death, let us love this life-giving Spirit, dearest brothers. But because the flesh does not know the spirit, perhaps someone may say to himself with carnal thinking: How am I able to love one whom I do not know? This we also concede, because the mind, intent upon visible things, does not know how to see the invisible. For it thinks of nothing except visible things, and even when it is not acting upon them, it draws their images inward; and while it lies among corporeal images, it cannot rise to incorporeal things. Hence it happens that the more familiarly it carries corporeal creation in its thought, the worse it fails to know the Creator. But since we cannot see God, we have something we can do, whereby a path may be made by which the eye of our understanding may come to him. Certainly, he whom we are in no way able to see in himself, we can now see in his servants. While we behold them doing wondrous things, it becomes certain to us that God dwells in their minds. In an incorporeal matter, let us draw a practice from corporeal things. For none of us is able to gaze upon the rising sun clearly by looking into its sphere, because our eyes, strained by its rays, are beaten back; but we look upon mountains illuminated by the sun, and we see that the sun has now risen.

Therefore, since we cannot see the Sun of Justice in himself, let us see the mountains illuminated by his brightness, namely the holy apostles, who shine forth with

virtues and flash with miracles, whom the brightness of the risen Sun has flooded, and though he is invisible in himself, through them, as through illuminated mountains, he has shown himself visible to us. For the power of divinity in itself is like the sun in heaven; the power of divinity in human beings is the sun on earth. Therefore let us gaze upon the Sun of Justice on earth, whom we cannot see in heaven, so that while we walk by him on earth with unoffending foot of work, we may sometime lift our eyes to heaven to behold him. But our journey on earth is made with unoffending foot if God and neighbor are loved with an undivided mind. For neither is God truly loved without neighbor, nor is neighbor truly loved without God. Hence it is that, as we have already said in another sermon, the same Spirit is read to have been given to the disciples twice: first by the Lord while dwelling on earth, afterward by the Lord presiding from heaven. On earth, indeed, he is given that neighbor may be loved; from heaven, truly, that God may be loved.

But why first on earth, afterward from heaven, unless it is plainly given to understand that, according to John's voice, "He who does not love his brother whom he sees, how can he love God whom he does not see? Therefore let us love our neighbor, brothers; let us love him who is near us, that we may be able to arrive at the love of him who is above us. Let the mind meditate on what it may offer to God in its neighbor, so that it may perfectly deserve to rejoice in God with its neighbor. Then we shall arrive at that joy of the heavenly company, of which we have now received the pledge of the Holy Spirit. Let us strive with all love toward that end, in which we shall rejoice without end. There is the holy fellowship of the citizens above; there is certain festivity; there is secure rest; there is true peace, which is no longer left to us but is given through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY 31. Delivered to the people in the basilica of Saint Lawrence the martyr, on the Saturday of the Four Seasons of September.

READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE. At that time, Jesus was telling the crowds this parable: A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it, and found none. And he said to the keeper of the vineyard: Behold, it is three years since I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down therefore, why does it even occupy the ground? But he answering, said to him: Lord, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it, and put a basket of manure. And if indeed it bears fruit; but if not, in the future you shall cut it down. And he was teaching in their synagogue on the Sabbaths. And behold a woman who had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years, and she was bent over, and could not at all look upward. And when Jesus saw her, he called her to himself, and said to her: Woman, you are released from your infirmity. And he laid his hands upon her; and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God, etc. Our Lord and Redeemer speaks through His Gospel sometimes in words,

sometimes in deeds; sometimes one thing in words and another in deeds; but sometimes the same thing in words as in deeds. For you have heard two things from the Gospel, brothers: the unfruitful fig tree and the bent woman, and compassion was bestowed upon both.

The one He told through a parable, the other He performed through an actual deed. But the unfruitful fig tree signifies the same thing as the bent woman, and the fig tree that was spared signifies the same as the woman made upright. The lord of the vineyard came to the fig tree three times and found no fruit at all, and the woman who was made upright had been bent for eighteen years. What is signified by this number of eighteen years is the same as what is conveyed by the lord of the vineyard coming to the unfruitful fig tree three times. Since, therefore, by setting forth these things in advance we have touched upon the whole summary, let us now discuss each point in order through the reading. Someone had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came seeking fruit on it, and found none. What does the fig tree designate, if not human nature? What does the bent woman signify and declare, if not the same nature? Which was both well planted like the fig tree, and well made like the woman; but having fallen into fault by its own will, it preserves neither the fruit of good work nor the state of uprightness. For falling into sin by its own will, because it refused to bear the fruit of obedience, it lost the state of uprightness. Created in the likeness of God, while it did not persist in its dignity, it scorned to preserve what it had been when planted or created.

The lord of the vineyard came to the fig tree a third time, because he sought out the nature of the human race before the law, under the law, and under grace, by waiting, admonishing, and visiting. And he said to the keeper of the vineyard: Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. He came before the law, because through natural understanding he made known what each person should do toward his neighbor by his own example. He came in the law, because he taught by commanding. He came after the law through grace, because he showed the presence of his mercy by displaying it. But nevertheless he complains that in three years he found no fruit, because the minds of certain wicked people are neither corrected by the inspired natural law, nor instructed by precepts, nor converted by the miracles of his incarnation. What indeed is expressed by the keeper of the vineyard, except the order of those placed in authority? Who, while they preside over the Church, certainly bear the care of the Lord’s vineyard. For Peter the apostle was the first keeper of this vineyard. We unworthy ones follow him, inasmuch as we labor for your instruction by teaching, entreating, and rebuking. But now we must hear with great fear what is said to the cultivator of the vineyard concerning the unfruitful tree: Cut it down; why does it even occupy the ground?

Each person according to his own measure, insofar as he holds a place in this present life, if he does not produce the fruit of good works, like an unfruitful tree occupies the ground, because in that place where he himself is, he also denies others the opportunity to work. But in this world any powerful person, if he does not have the fruit of good works, also presents an obstacle to others, because whoever is under him is oppressed by the example of his wickedness, as if by the shadow of his perversity. The unfruitful tree stands above, and below the barren ground lies. The shadow of the unfruitful tree thickens above, and the ray of the sun is by no means permitted to descend to the earth, because when any subjects observe the perverse examples of a perverse patron, they themselves also, remaining unfruitful, are deprived of the light of truth. And, pressed down by the shadow, they do not receive the warmth of the sun, because they remain cold toward God on account of that by which they are badly protected in this world. But concerning any such perverse and powerful person, God scarcely makes any further inquiry. For after he has lost himself, the only question to be asked is why he also oppresses others. Hence the lord of that same vineyard rightly says: Why does it even occupy the ground? For he occupies the ground who burdens the minds of others;

he occupies the ground who does not employ in good works the place that he holds. But nevertheless it is our duty to pray for such people. For let us hear what the vinedresser says: ”Lord, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it. What does it mean to dig around the fig tree, except to rebuke unfruitful minds? For every ditch is in the low ground. And certainly rebuke humbles the mind by showing it to itself. Therefore, as often as we correct someone for their sin, we dig around the unfruitful tree as if from the duty of cultivation. But after the digging, let us hear what is said: ”And I will put a basket of dung. What is a basket of dung, except the memory of sins? For the sins of the flesh are called dung. Hence it is also said through the prophet: ”The beasts have rotted in their dung. For the beasts to rot in their dung is for carnal people to end their lives in the stench of luxury. Therefore, as often as we rebuke a carnal mind for its sins, as often as we bring back to its memory the vices of the past, we pour out a basket of dung, as it were, to the unfruitful tree, so that it may recall the memory of the evils it has done and grow fat, as it were, from the stench toward the grace of compunction.

Therefore a basket of dung is placed at the root of the tree when the conscience of its depravity is touched by the memory of thought. And when the mind rouses itself through penitence to lamentation and reforms itself to the grace of good works, the root of the heart returns to fruitfulness of works as if by the touch of dung: it laments what it remembers having done, it is displeased with itself for what it recalls having been; it directs its intention against itself and kindles its spirit toward better things. Therefore from the stench the tree revives to fruitfulness, because from consideration of sin the soul raises itself to good works. And there are many who hear rebukes and yet scorn to return to penitence, and, unfruitful

to God, stand green in this world. But let us hear what the vinedresser adds: ”If indeed it bears fruit; but if not, you shall cut it down in the future. Because indeed one who does not wish to grow fat here toward fruitfulness through rebuke will fall there from where he can no longer rise through penitence; and he will be cut down in the future, although here he may seem to stand green without fruit. He was teaching in their synagogue on the Sabbaths. And behold, a woman who had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years.

A little earlier we have already said that the threefold coming of the Lord to the unfruitful fig tree is what the number of eighteen years signifies in relation to the bent woman. For on the sixth day man was made, and on that same sixth day all the works of the Lord were completed. Moreover, the number six multiplied in a triangle makes eighteen. Therefore, because man, who was made on the sixth day, did not wish to have perfect works, but stood weak before the law, under the law, and at the beginning of dawning grace, the bent woman was eighteen years. And she was bowed down, nor could she look upward at all. Every sinner thinking earthly thoughts, not seeking heavenly things, is unable to look upward, because while he follows lower desires, he is bent from the uprightness of his mind, and he always sees these things which he thinks about without ceasing. Return to your hearts, dearest brothers, always examine what you turn over in your thoughts at every hour. One thinks about honors, another about money, another about the extent of estates. All these things are below, and when the mind is entangled in such things, it is bent from the uprightness of its state. And because it does not rise up to heavenly desire, like the bent woman it can in no way look upward. It follows: When Jesus saw her, he called her to him and said to her: Woman, you are released from your infirmity.

And he laid his hand upon her, and immediately she was made straight. He called and raised her up, because he illuminated and aided her. He calls but does not raise up when indeed we are illuminated by his grace, but, our merits requiring it, we cannot be aided. For often we see what things ought to be done, but we do not fulfill this in deed. We strive and grow weak. The judgment of the mind perceives righteousness, but the strength of action succumbs to it, because indeed it is already part of the punishment of sin that good can be perceived through a gift, yet it happens that one is repelled by merit from that which is seen. For habitual fault binds the mind so that it can by no means rise to righteousness. It strives and falls, because where it willingly persisted for a long time, there also, though unwilling, it falls compelled. Well is it said of this our crookedness, as a type of the human race, through the Psalmist: I am bowed down and humiliated utterly. For having contemplated that man was created for gazing upon the heavenly light, but having been cast out on account of his sins, he carries the darkness of his own mind, does not seek heavenly things, attends to the lowest things, by no means desires celestial things, always turns earthly things over in his mind, and what he

grieved concerning his race, he cried out in himself, saying: I am bowed down and humiliated utterly.

For losing the contemplation of heavenly things, if man thought only of the necessities of the flesh, he would be bowed down and humiliated, but nevertheless not utterly. Therefore he whom not only necessity casts down from higher thoughts, but also illicit pleasure prostrates, is not only bowed down but utterly bowed down. Hence another prophet says concerning unclean spirits: Who said to your soul, Bow down that we may pass over. For the soul stands upright when it desires heavenly things, and is by no means bent toward the lowest things. But when malign spirits see it standing in its uprightness, they cannot pass through it. For their passing through is to scatter unclean desires upon it. Therefore they say, Bow down that we may pass over, because if the soul does not cast itself down to desiring the lowest things, their perversity by no means prevails against it; and they cannot pass through her whom they fear standing rigid against them in heavenly intention. Therefore, brothers most dear, we do not give way to malign spirits within us when we desire earthly things, when we bend down toward temporal appetites. Let it shame us, then, to desire earthly things and to offer the backs of our minds to ascending adversaries. He who is bent always gazes upon the earth, and he who seeks the lowest things does not remember by what price he was redeemed. Hence also it is said through Moses that whoever is burdened with a hump should by no means be advanced to the priesthood.

And all of us who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ are made members of that same high priest. Whence also it is said to us through Peter: ”But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood. But he who bears a hump always gazes at the lowest things. Therefore he is driven from the priesthood, because whoever is intent only on earthly things is himself a witness to himself that he is not a member of the high priest. Hence again, fish that do not have fins are forbidden from being eaten by the faithful people. For fish that have scale-fins are also accustomed to leap above the waters. What therefore is figured by finned fish except elect souls? These alone indeed pass into the body of the heavenly Church, who, supported by the fins of virtues, know how to leap through heavenly desire, so that they may reach toward things above through contemplation, although they fall back again into themselves from mortal flesh. If therefore we have now recognized the goods of the heavenly homeland, let it displease us, brothers most dear, that we are bent. Let the bent woman be placed before our eyes, and the unfruitful tree. Let us remember the evils we have done, let us send to the root of the heart a basket of dung, so that what was foul to us here through penance may then grow rich in the fruit of retribution. And if we cannot perform the highest works of virtue, God himself rejoices in our lamentation.

For from the very beginning of justice we will please him, we who punish the unjust things we have done. Nor will there be delay in weeping, because enduring joys will quickly wipe away passing tears. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY 32. Delivered to the people in the basilica of Saints Processus and Martinianus, on the day of their feast.

READING OF THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE. At that time, Jesus said to his disciples: If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world, but loses himself and brings about his own destruction? For whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his majesty, and that of the Father, and of the holy angels. But I say to you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God. Because our Lord and Redeemer came into the world as a new man, he gave new precepts to the world. For he set the newness of himself in opposition to our old life nourished in vices. For what did the old, what did the carnal man know except to hold onto his own things, to seize what belongs to others if he could, or to covet them if he could not? But the heavenly physician applies remedies that counteract each and every vice.

For just as in the art of medicine hot things are cured by cold and cold things by hot, so our Lord set forth teachings contrary to sins, so that he might command continence to the unchaste, generosity to the greedy, gentleness to the wrathful, and humility to the proud. Certainly when he set forth new commandments to those following him, he said: ”Unless someone renounces all that he possesses, he cannot be my disciple. As if he were saying openly: You who through your old life covet what belongs to others, through the pursuit of a new way of life give away even your own things. But let us hear what he says in this reading: ”Whoever wishes to come after me, let him deny himself. There it is said that we should deny our possessions; here it is said that we should deny ourselves. And perhaps it is not difficult for a person to leave behind his possessions, but it is very difficult to leave behind himself. For it is a lesser thing to deny what one has, but it is a very great thing to deny what one is. To those coming to him, the Lord commanded that we renounce our possessions, because all of us who come to the contest of faith take up a struggle against evil spirits. But evil spirits possess nothing of their own in this world. Therefore we must wrestle naked against those who are naked.

For if someone clothed wrestles with someone naked, he is thrown to the ground more quickly because he has something by which he can be seized. For what are all earthly things except certain garments of the body? Therefore, whoever hastens

to the contest against the devil should cast off his garments lest he be overcome. Let him possess nothing in this world by loving it; let him seek no pleasures of passing things, lest where he is covered according to his wish, he be seized for his fall from that very thing. Yet it is not enough to leave behind our possessions unless we also leave behind ourselves. What is it that we are saying: ”Let us also leave behind ourselves”? For if we leave ourselves behind, where shall we go outside of ourselves? Or who is it that goes if he has abandoned himself? But we are one thing having fallen through sin, another thing as created by nature; one thing is what we have made ourselves, another is what we were made. Let us leave behind ourselves as we made ourselves by sinning, and let us remain ourselves as we were made through grace. For behold, if someone who was proud, having been converted to Christ, has become humble, he has left himself behind. If any lustful person has changed his life to continence, he has certainly denied what he was.

If any greedy person has now ceased to grasp at things and has learned to give away his own possessions who previously seized what belonged to others, without doubt he has left himself behind. He himself indeed remains by nature, but he is not himself by malice. For thus it is written: ”Turn the wicked, and they shall not be. For the wicked when converted shall not be—not because they shall not exist at all in essence, but surely they shall not be in the guilt of wickedness. Therefore we leave ourselves behind, we deny ourselves, when we avoid what we were through oldness and strive toward that to which we are called through newness. Let us consider how Paul had denied himself, who said: ”Yet I live, now not I. For that savage persecutor had been extinguished, and the devout preacher had begun to live. For if he himself were still that same person, he would certainly not be devout. But let him who denies that he lives say from where it is that he proclaims holy words through the teaching of truth. He immediately adds: ”But Christ lives in me. As if he were saying openly: I indeed have been extinguished from myself because I do not live carnally; yet I have not died essentially because I live spiritually in Christ. Therefore let the Truth speak, let him say: ”If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself. Because unless someone falls away from himself, he does not draw near to him who is above himself;

nor is he able to grasp what is beyond himself if he does not know how to sacrifice what he is. So seedlings of vegetables are transplanted so that they may flourish, and, if I may say so, they are uprooted so that they may grow. So seeds of things perish when mixed with the earth, so that in the renewal of their kind they may rise up more abundantly. For from where they seem to have lost what they were, from there they receive the ability to appear as what they were not. But he who now denies himself from vices must seek out the virtues in which he may grow. For when it was said: ”Whoever wishes to come after me, let him deny himself,” it is immediately added: ”And let him take up his cross daily, and follow me. For the cross is taken up in two ways: either when the body is afflicted through absti-

nence, or when the mind is troubled through compassion for one's neighbor. Let us consider how Paul had borne his cross in both ways, who said: "I chastise my body and bring it into subjection, lest perhaps while preaching to others I myself should become a castaway. Behold, in the affliction of the body we have heard of the cross of the flesh; let us now hear of the cross of the mind in compassion for one's neighbor. For he says: "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is scandalized, and I am not on fire?

Indeed the perfect preacher, in order to give an example of abstinence, carried the cross in his body. And because he drew upon himself the losses of another's weakness, he carried the cross in his heart. But because certain vices lie close to these very virtues, we must explain which vice besieges abstinence of the flesh and which besieges compassion of the mind. For vainglory often besieges abstinence of the flesh from nearby, because when thinness in the body and pallor in the face are observed, the revealed virtue is praised; and it pours itself outward all the more quickly, the more it appears to human eyes through the display of pallor. And it often happens that what is believed to be done for God's sake is done solely for human approval. This is well signified by that Simon who, found on the road, carries the Lord's cross under compulsion. For burdens belonging to another are carried under compulsion when something is done through the pursuit of vanity. Who then are designated by Simon, if not the abstinent and arrogant? They indeed afflict the flesh through abstinence, but they do not seek the fruit of abstinence within. Therefore Simon carries the Lord's cross under compulsion, because when he is not led to a good work by good will, a sinner performs the deed of a just man without fruit.

Hence the same Simon carries the cross but does not die, because the abstinent and arrogant indeed afflict the body through abstinence, but through the desire for glory they live to the world. False piety, however, often secretly besieges compassion of the soul, so that it sometimes drags it down even to condoning vices, whereas one ought not to exercise compassion toward faults, but zeal. For compassion is owed to the person, and rectitude to the vices, so that in one and the same person we both love the good that he was made and pursue the evils that he has done, lest while we carelessly remit faults, we seem not to have shown compassion through charity, but to have fallen through negligence. For he that will save his life shall lose it; and he that shall lose his life for my sake shall save it. Thus it is said to the faithful: He that will save his life shall lose it; and he that shall lose his life for my sake shall save it. As if it were said to the farmer: If you keep your grain, you lose it; if you sow it, you renew it. For who does not know that when grain is cast as seed, it perishes from sight, it fails in the earth? But from where it rots in the dust, from there it springs up green in renewal. Because indeed the holy Church has one time of persecution and another of peace, our Redeemer distinguishes these very times in his precepts.

For in time of persecution life must be laid down, but in time of peace those earthly desires that can more readily dominate must be broken. Hence it is now said: For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world, but loses himself and brings about his own ruin? When persecution from adversaries is absent, the heart must be guarded all the more vigilantly. For in time of peace, because it is permitted to live, it is also pleasing to pursue ambition. This greed is indeed well restrained if the very condition of the one pursuing is carefully considered. For why should he press on to gather, when the one who gathers cannot himself remain? Let each one therefore consider his course, and he will recognize that the little he has can suffice for him. But perhaps he fears that provisions will fail on this journey of life. The short way rebukes our long desires; much is carried in vain when the destination is near. Often moreover we overcome greed, but there still remains this obstacle: that we hold to the ways of righteousness with too little guardianship of perfection. For often we despise all things that are passing away, yet we are still hindered by the custom of human respect, so that we are not yet able to express in voice the righteousness we preserve in mind; and we neglect the face of God in defense of justice as much as we fear human faces against justice.

But to this wound also an appropriate remedy is added when the Lord says: He who shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he shall come in his majesty, and that of the Father, and of the holy angels. But behold, now people say to themselves: We no longer are ashamed of the Lord and His words, because we profess Him with open voice. To these I respond that in this Christian people there are some who confess Christ for the reason that they see everyone else is Christian. For if the name of Christ were not in such great glory today, the holy Church would not have so many who profess Christ. Therefore the voice of profession is not sufficient as proof of faith, when the profession of the generality defends it from shame. Yet there is a way for each person to examine himself, to prove himself truly in the confession of Christ: whether he is no longer ashamed of His name, whether with full strength of mind he has subdued human shame. Certainly in a time of persecution the faithful could be ashamed of being stripped of their possessions, cast down from positions of dignity, afflicted with beatings. But in a time of peace, because these things are absent from our persecutions, there is another way in which we are shown to ourselves. We often fear being despised by our neighbors, we disdain to tolerate verbal injuries;

if perhaps a quarrel arises with a neighbor, we are ashamed to make satisfaction first. For the carnal heart, while it seeks the glory of this life, rejects humility. And very often the very person who is angry desires to be reconciled with the one who disagrees with him, but is ashamed to go first to make satisfaction. Let us consider the deeds of the Truth, that we may see where the actions of our depravity lie. For if we are members of the supreme Head, we ought to imitate Him to whom we are joined. For what does Paul, that outstanding preacher, say as an example

for our instruction? We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were exhorting through us; we beseech you for Christ's sake, be reconciled to God. Behold, by sinning we have created discord between ourselves and God, and yet God first sent His ambassadors to us, so that we ourselves who sinned might come to peace with God when asked. Therefore let human pride be ashamed, let anyone be confounded who does not first make satisfaction to his neighbor, when after our fault, so that we might be reconciled to Him, God Himself who was offended beseeches us through intervening ambassadors. He continues: "But I say to you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God, dearest brothers, is not always called the coming kingdom in sacred Scripture, but sometimes the present Church is so called. Hence it is written:

"The Son of man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of scandal. In that kingdom, indeed, there will be no scandals, where certainly the reprobate are not admitted. By this example it is understood that in this passage the kingdom of God refers to the present Church. And because some of the disciples were going to live in the body long enough to see the Church of God built and raised up against the glory of this world, it is now said as a consoling promise: "There are some of those standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God. But when the Lord was giving such great precepts about the death that must be undergone, what need was there to come suddenly to this promise? If we consider carefully, we recognize with what great dispensation of love this is done. For to the inexperienced disciples something had to be promised even about the present life, so that they could be strengthened more firmly for the future. Thus to the Israelite people, about to be freed from the land of Egypt, the promised land was promised, and when they were to be called to heavenly gifts, they were persuaded by earthly promises. Why was this? So that while there was something they could receive nearby, they might then more faithfully believe what they could hear about from afar. For a carnal people, if they did not receive small things, would not believe in great things.

Therefore Almighty God, by granting earthly things, persuades toward heavenly things, so that by receiving what they could see, they might learn to hope for what they could not see at all; and they would become all the more firm regarding invisible things, inasmuch as visible promises supported them toward certainty of hope. Hence rightly also it is said through the Psalmist: "He gave them the lands of the nations, and they took possession of the labors of the peoples, that they might keep his statutes and observe his law. So therefore in this passage, Truth speaking to the inexperienced disciples promises that the kingdom of God will be seen on earth, so that it might be more faithfully hoped for by them in heaven. From that very kingdom which we now see exalted in the world, let us hope for the kingdom which we believe is to be received in heaven. For there are some who are counted by the

name of Christianity, but do not have the faith of Christianity. They judge that only visible things exist, they do not desire invisible things, because they do not even suspect that they exist. We stand at the bodies of the holy martyrs, my brothers. Would they have given their flesh over to death unless they were most certainly convinced that there was a life for which they ought to die? And behold, those who so believed shine forth with miracles.

For to their dead bodies the living sick come and are healed, perjurers come and are tormented by a demon, the demon-possessed come and are set free. How then do they live there where they live, if in so many miracles they live here where they are dead? I will tell you, brothers, a story brief in words but not small in merit, which I learned from certain devout elders who narrated it. In the time of the Goths there was a certain very religious matron who frequently came to the church of these martyrs. One day when she had come to pray as was her custom, upon leaving she found two monks standing there in pilgrim's garb. She believed them to be pilgrims and ordered that something be given to them as alms. But before her almoner could approach them to distribute the alms, they came closer to her and said: "You visit us now; we will seek you out on the day of judgment, and whatever we can, we will provide for you. Having said this, they vanished from her sight. Terrified, she returned to pray and poured herself out at great length in tears. And after this she became all the more persistent in prayer, the more certain she was of the promise.

But if, according to the words of Paul, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, we can no longer tell you to believe in the life to come, because behold, those who live in that life are visibly presented to human eyes. For what can be seen is better said to be known than believed. Therefore the Lord wished us to know the life to come rather than merely believe in it, since he visibly shows us that those whom he invisibly receives live with him. Therefore, dearest brothers, in the case of your judgment which you have before the strict Judge, make these your advocates; employ these as your defenders on the day of such great terror. Surely if some case of yours were to be heard tomorrow before a certain great judge, this entire day would be spent in thought, your brotherhood would seek an advocate, and would act with great prayers that a defender might come to you before so great a judge. Behold, the strict Judge Jesus is about to come; the terror of that great council of angels and archangels is brought forth. In that assembly our case is examined, and yet we do not now seek advocates whom we might have as defenders then. Our defenders the holy martyrs are present; they wish to be asked, and, so to speak, they seek to be sought. Therefore seek these as helpers of your prayer;

find these as protectors against your guilt, because He who judges wishes to be asked not to punish sinners. Hence He threatens wrath for so long a time, and

yet mercifully waits. But may His mercy so restore us that it in no way render us negligent. May our sins so disturb us that our mind does not rush headlong into despair, because if we who presume also fear, and fearing also hope, we shall more quickly attain the eternal kingdom, through Him who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY 33. Delivered to the people in the basilica of Saint Clement, on Friday of the Ember Days of September.

READING OF THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE. At that time, a certain Pharisee asked Jesus to eat with him. And entering the house of the Pharisee, he reclined at table. And behold, a woman who was a sinner in the city, when she learned that Jesus was reclining at table in the house of the Pharisee, brought an alabaster jar of ointment, and standing behind at his feet, she began to wet his feet with tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said within himself: This man, if he were a prophet, would surely know who and what kind of woman this is who touches him, for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering, said to him: Simon, I have something to say to you. And he said: Master, speak. A certain creditor had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they had nothing to pay, he forgave them both. Which of them therefore loves him more? Simon answering, said: I suppose the one to whom he forgave more. And he said to him: You have judged rightly. And turning to the woman, he said to Simon: Do you see this woman? I entered your house, you gave me no water for my feet; but she has wet my feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair.

You gave me no kiss, but she from the time she entered has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I say to you: Her many sins are forgiven, because she has loved much. But to whom less is forgiven, he loves less. And he said to her: Your sins are forgiven. And those who were reclining at table with him began to say within themselves: Who is this who even forgives sins? And he said to the woman: Your faith has saved you, go in peace. As I think about Mary’s repentance, I would rather weep than say anything. For whose heart, even if made of stone, would those tears of this sinful woman not soften toward the example of repentance? For she considered what she had done, and she refused to restrain what she would do. She entered upon those dining, she came unbidden, amid the feast she offered tears. Learn with what sorrow she burns, who is not ashamed to weep even amid a feast. This woman whom Luke calls a sinful woman, John names Mary, and we believe her to be that Mary from whom Mark testifies seven demons were cast out. And what is signified by seven demons, except all vices? For since all time is

comprised in seven days, rightly by the number seven is universality represented. Therefore Mary had seven demons, because she was full of all vices.

But behold, because she perceived the stains of her own shame, she ran to the fountain of mercy to be washed, she was not ashamed before those dining. For because she was gravely ashamed of herself within, she believed there was nothing to be ashamed of outwardly. What then do we marvel at, brothers, Mary coming, or the Lord receiving her? Shall I say receiving, or drawing? I shall say better, drawing and receiving, because surely he himself drew her inwardly through mercy, who received her outwardly through gentleness. But now, running through the text of the holy Gospel, let us see also the very order in which she came to be healed. She brought an alabaster jar of ointment, and standing behind at Jesus's feet, she began to wet his feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with ointment. It is clear, brothers, that this woman, previously devoted to illicit acts, had applied ointment to herself for the fragrance of her flesh. What she had shamefully used for herself, she was now offering to God in a praiseworthy manner. With her eyes she had lusted after earthly things, but now crushing them through penitence, she wept. She had used her hair for adorning her face, but now with her hair she wiped away tears. With her mouth she had spoken proud words, but kissing the Lord's feet, she pressed this same mouth to the footprints of her Redeemer.

Therefore, as many pleasures as she had in herself, so many burnt offerings did she find from herself. She converted the number of her sins into virtues, so that everything which had despised God through her fault might serve God entirely in penitence. But the Pharisee, observing this, despises her, and reproves not only the sinful woman who came but also the Lord who received her, saying within himself: "This man, if he were a prophet, would surely know who and what kind of woman this is who touches him, for she is a sinner. Behold, the Pharisee, truly proud within himself and falsely righteous, reproves the sick woman for her sickness and the physician for his assistance—he who was himself also sick from the wound of pride and did not know it. Between two sick persons the physician was present; but one sick person retained sound judgment in her fever, while the other had lost both the sense of the flesh and of the mind in his fever. For she wept over what she had done; but the Pharisee, puffed up with false righteousness, was aggravating the force of his own illness. In his sickness, therefore, he had also lost his judgment, who did not even know this very thing: that he was far from salvation.

But amid these things, a groaning compels us to look at certain men of our own order who, endowed with the priestly office, if perhaps they have done anything outwardly righteous, even slightly, immediately despise those subject to them, and disdain any sinners placed among the people, and refuse to have compassion on those confessing their fault, and, as if in the manner of the Pharisee, disdain to

be touched by a sinful woman. If indeed this woman had come to the feet of the Pharisee, she would certainly have departed, driven back by his kicks. For he would have believed himself defiled by another's sin. But because true righteousness did not fill him, he was sick from another's wound. Hence it is always necessary that when we observe any sinners, we first bewail ourselves in their calamity, because perhaps we have either fallen into similar sins or, if we have not fallen, we can fall. And if the censure of the teacher's office ought always to pursue vices with the force of discipline, it is nevertheless fitting that we carefully distinguish, because we owe severity to vices but compassion to nature. For if the sinner must be struck, the neighbor must be nourished. But when through repentance he himself now strikes what he has done, the sinner is now no longer our neighbor in that sense, because when he directs God's justice against himself, he punishes in himself what divine justice reproves. But let us now hear by what judgment this proud and arrogant man is convicted.

For a parable is set before him concerning two debtors, of whom one owes less and the other more; when the debt of both is forgiven, he is asked which one loves the forgiver of the debt more. To these words he immediately replied: He loves more to whom more is forgiven. In this matter it should be noted that while the Pharisee is convicted by his own judgment, like a madman he carries the rope by which he will be bound. The good deeds of the sinful woman are enumerated to him, the evil deeds of the false righteous man are enumerated, when it is said: I entered your house, you gave no water for my feet; but she has washed my feet with tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss; but she, from the time she entered, has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil; but she has anointed my feet with ointment. After this enumeration, the judgment is added: Therefore I say to you: Her many sins are forgiven, because she loved much. What, my brothers, do we believe love to be, if not fire? And what is sin, if not rust? Hence it is now said: Her many sins are forgiven, because she loved much. As if it were openly said: She has fully burned away the rust of sin, because she burns intensely with the fire of love.

For the rust of sin is consumed all the more, the more the sinner's heart is set ablaze with the great fire of charity. Behold, she who had come sick to the physician has been healed, but others are still sick concerning her salvation. For those reclining at table together complained, saying among themselves: Who is this who even forgives sins? But the heavenly physician does not despise the sick, even those whom he sees becoming worse from the medicine. And he confirms her whom he had healed by the sentence of his mercy, saying: Your faith has saved you, go in peace. For faith indeed saved her, because she did not doubt that she could receive what she sought. But she had already received that very certainty of hope from him from whom she also sought salvation through hope. And she is commanded to go in peace, so that she may no longer be turned aside from the way of truth into the

path of scandal. Hence it is also said through Zechariah: To direct our feet into the way of peace. For we direct our steps into the way of peace when we proceed along that path of actions in which we are not at discord with the grace of our Creator. These things, dearest brothers, we have run through in historical exposition; now, if you please, let us discuss what has been said with mystical understanding. For whom does the Pharisee, presuming upon false righteousness, represent except the Jewish people?

And whom does the sinful woman, but coming to the Lord's feet and weeping, designate except the converted Gentile world? She came with an alabaster jar, poured out ointment, stood behind at the Lord's feet, washed his feet with tears, wiped them with her hair, and did not cease to kiss those same feet which she was bathing and wiping. Therefore that woman represented us, us, if we return to the Lord with our whole heart after our sins, if we imitate her mourning of penitence. For what is expressed by the ointment except the fragrance of good reputation? Hence Paul also says: We are the good fragrance of Christ to God in every place. If therefore we do right works by which we spread the fragrance of good reputation upon the Church, what do we pour upon the Lord's body but ointment? But the woman stood beside Jesus' feet. For we stood against the Lord's feet when, placed in sins, we were held back from his ways. But if we turn to true penitence after sins, we now stand behind beside his feet, because we follow the footsteps of him whom we opposed. The woman washes his feet with tears. This we also truly do if we bend down with the feeling of compassion to any of the least members of the Lord, if we suffer with his saints in tribulation, if we consider their sorrow our own. The woman wiped with her hair the feet she had washed. For hair is superfluous to the body.

And what does abundant earthly substance represent except the appearance of hair? Which, when it is superfluous to necessary use, does not even feel it when cut off. Therefore we wipe the Lord's feet with our hair when we show mercy to his saints, with whom we suffer out of charity, even from those things which are superfluous to us, so that the mind may grieve through compassion, and the generous hand may also show the feeling of grief. For one washes the Redeemer's feet with tears but does not wipe them with hair, who somehow suffers with a neighbor's pain but nevertheless does not show mercy to them from what is superfluous to himself. One weeps and does not wipe who indeed offers words of sorrow but does not in the least cut off the force of pain by ministering what is lacking. The woman kisses the feet she wipes. This we also fully do if we lovingly cherish those whom we support with generosity, lest the need of our neighbor be burdensome to us, lest his very poverty which is sustained become onerous to us, and while the hand gives what is necessary, the soul grows cold in love. The feet can also be understood as the mystery of his incarnation, by which his divinity touched the earth, because he took on flesh. For the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.

Therefore we kiss the Redeemer's feet when we love the mystery of his incarnation with our whole heart.

We anoint the feet with ointment when we proclaim the very power of his humanity with good report of sacred eloquence. But the Pharisee sees this and envies it, because when the Jewish people observe the Gentiles preaching God, they waste away in their own malice. But our Redeemer enumerates the deeds of this woman as if they were the good deeds of the Gentiles, so that the Jewish people might recognize in what evil they lie. For thus the Pharisee is rebuked, so that through him, as we have said, that faithless people might be shown. "I entered your house, you gave no water for my feet, but she has washed my feet with tears. Water indeed is outside us, but the moisture of tears is within us, because that faithless people never gave even those things that were outside themselves for the Lord; but the converted Gentiles poured out not only the substance of their possessions but even their blood for him. "You gave me no kiss; but she, from the time she entered, has not ceased to kiss my feet. A kiss is indeed a sign of love. And that faithless people did not give God a kiss, because they did not wish to love him out of charity, whom they served out of fear. But the Gentiles, once called, do not cease to kiss the footsteps of their Redeemer, because they continually sigh in love for him.

Hence also in the voice of the bride concerning this same Redeemer it is said in the Song of Songs: "Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth. Rightly does she desire the kiss of her Creator, who prepares herself to serve him through love. "You did not anoint my head with oil. If we understand the feet of the Lord as the mystery of his incarnation, fittingly his divinity is designated by his head. Hence also through Paul it is said: "The head of Christ is God. For the Jewish people professed to believe in God, and not in him as if in a man. But it is said to the Pharisee, "You did not anoint my head with oil," because he neglected to proclaim with worthy praise even that very power of his divinity, in which the Jewish people pledged to believe. "But she has anointed my feet with ointment," because when the Gentiles believed the mystery of his incarnation, they proclaimed even his lowliness with the highest praise. But now our Redeemer concludes the good deeds he has enumerated, when he adds through his verdict: "Therefore I say to you: Her many sins are forgiven, because she has loved much. As if he were saying openly: Even if what is being refined is very hard, nevertheless the fire of love abounds, by which even hard things are consumed. It is fitting meanwhile to consider this contemplation of such great mercy.

The deeds of a sinful woman, but one repenting—with what esteem does Truth preserve them in His presence, which He enumerates to her adversary with such detailed distribution. The Lord was reclining at the Pharisee's dinner, but He was delighting in the feasts of the mind at the penitent woman's. At the Pharisee's house, Truth was fed outwardly; at the sinful woman's, yet one who had converted,

He was fed inwardly. Hence the holy Church says to Him in the Song of Songs, whom she seeks under the likeness of a young deer: ”Show me, O you whom my soul loves, where you feed, where you rest at midday. For the Lord is called a young deer, according to His assumed flesh the son of the ancient fathers. Indeed, a more fervent heat burns at midday, and the young deer seeks a shady place where the fire of heat does not affect it. Therefore, the Lord rests in those hearts which the love of the present age does not inflame, which the desires of the flesh do not burn up, which, set ablaze by their anxieties, do not wither in the lusts of this world. Hence it is also said to Mary: ”The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the young deer seeks shady places at midday for feeding, because the Lord is fed by such minds as are not burned by bodily desires through the regard of tempering grace.

Therefore, the penitent woman fed the Lord more within than the Pharisee fed Him outwardly, because our Redeemer had fled like a young deer from the heat of carnal things to her mind, which the shade of repentance tempered after the fire of vices. Let us consider what great tenderness it was not only to admit the sinful woman to himself, but even to offer her his feet to touch. Let us consider the grace of merciful God, and let us condemn the multitude of our own guilt. Behold, he sees sinners and endures them, tolerates those who resist, and yet daily calls them mercifully through the Gospel. He desires our confession from a pure heart, and has forgiven all that we have done wrong. The mercy of the Redeemer has tempered for us the severity of the law. For in it was written: If anyone does this or that, let him surely die. If anyone does these or those things, let him be overwhelmed with stones. Our Creator and Redeemer appeared in the flesh, promising not punishment but life to the confession of sinners; he receives the woman confessing her wounds, and sends her away healed. He bent the hardness of the law toward mercy, because those whom the law justly condemns, he himself mercifully frees. Hence it is also well written in the law that the hands of Moses were heavy; therefore taking a stone, they placed it underneath, upon which he sat; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands.

Moses indeed sat upon a stone, when the law rested upon the Church. But this same law had heavy hands, because it did not mercifully bear with sinners, but struck them with severe punishment. Aaron means mountain of strength, and Hur means fire. Whom therefore does this mountain of strength signify, if not our Redeemer, of whom it is said through the prophet: In the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared on the top of the mountains? Or who is figured by fire, if not the Holy Spirit, of whom the same Redeemer says: I came to cast fire upon the earth? Therefore Aaron and Hur support the heavy hands of Moses, and by supporting them render them lighter, because the Mediator of God and men, coming with the fire of the Holy Spirit, showed us through spiritual understanding that the heavy commandments of the law, which could not be borne

while held carnally, are tolerable for us. For he rendered the hands of Moses light, as it were, because he turned the weight of the law's commandments to the power of confession. He indicated this promise of mercy for us who follow, when he says through the prophet: I do not desire the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live. Hence again under the figure of Judea it is said to every sinful soul: If a man puts away his wife, and she departs and marries another man, will he return to her again?

Will not that woman be polluted and contaminated? But you have fornicated with many lovers; nevertheless return to me, says the Lord. Behold, he gave the example of a shameful woman. He showed that after such shame she cannot be received back. But he overcomes by mercy this very example that he set forth, when he says that a fornicating woman can by no means be received back, and yet he himself waits to receive the fornicating soul. Consider, brothers, the weight of such great tenderness. He says what cannot be done, and demonstrates that he himself can do this even against custom. Behold, he calls, and those whom he declares to be defiled, he also seeks to embrace, those by whom he complains he has been abandoned. Let no one therefore waste the time of such great mercy, let no one cast away the offered remedies of divine tenderness. Behold, heavenly kindness calls us back when we have turned away, and prepares for us returning the bosom of his clemency. Let each one therefore consider by what debt he is bound, when God waits for him and is not provoked though despised. Let him who was unwilling to remain return, let him who disdained to stand at least rise after his fall. How much love our Creator has as he waits for us, he indicates when he says through the prophet: I attended and listened, no one speaks what is good; there is no one who reflects in his heart and says, What have I done?

Certainly we should never have thought evil things. But because we were unwilling to think right things, behold, he still endures, that we may reflect. See the bosom of such great tenderness, consider the open lap of mercy before you; those whom thinking evil destroyed, thinking well upon it he seeks. To you therefore, dearest brothers, to you bring back the eyes of your mind, and set before you the penitent sinful woman as an example for imitation; whatever sins you remember committing in adolescence, whatever in youth, weep over them; wipe away the stains of your character and works with tears. Let us now love the footsteps of our Redeemer, which we despised by sinning. Behold, as we have said, the bosom of heavenly tenderness is opened to receive us, nor is our stained life despised. Through the fact that we abhor our defilement, we already accord with interior purity. The Lord mercifully embraces us when we return, because the life of sinners can no longer be unworthy to him when it is washed with tears in Christ Jesus our Lord, who lives and reigns as God with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY XXXIV. Delivered to the people in the basilica of the blessed John and Paul, on the third Sunday after Pentecost.

READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE. At that time, tax collectors and sinners were drawing near to Jesus to hear him. And the Pharisees and Scribes were murmuring, saying: ”This man receives sinners and eats with them. And he spoke this parable to them, saying: ”What man among you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does he not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that was lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing; and coming home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them: ’Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ I say to you that there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner doing penance than over ninety-nine righteous who have no need of penance. Or what woman, having ten drachmas, if she loses one drachma, does she not light a lamp and sweep the house and search diligently until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying: ’Rejoice with me, for I have found the drachma that I had lost.’ So I say to you, there will be joy before the angels of God over one sinner doing penance. The summer season, which is very harmful to my body, prevented me from speaking about the exposition of the Gospel for a long intervening period. But did charity cease to burn because the tongue was silent?

For I say what each one of you recognizes in himself. Often charity, hindered by certain occupations, burns undiminished in the heart and yet is not shown in outward action, because the sun too, when covered by a cloud, is not seen on earth, yet still burns in the sky. So it is that charity is often occupied thus, and exerts the force of its ardor within, while outwardly it does not show the flames of its work. But since now the time for speaking has returned, your eagerness kindles me, so that it pleases me to speak all the more, the more desirously your minds await this. You have heard in the Gospel reading, my brothers, that sinners and tax collectors approached our Redeemer; and they were received not only for conversation, but also for dining together. When the Pharisees saw this, they were indignant. From this matter, understand that true justice has compassion, while false justice has disdain, although even the just are accustomed to be rightly indignant at sinners. But it is one thing that is done from the swelling of pride, another from zeal for discipline. For they show disdain, but without being disdainful; they despair, but without being despairing; they stir up persecution, but lovingly, because although outwardly they intensify rebukes through discipline, inwardly they preserve sweetness through charity. They often place before themselves in their minds the very ones whom they correct, and they consider as better even those whom they judge.

By doing this, they guard their subjects through discipline and themselves through humility. But on the contrary, those who are accustomed to taking pride in false

justice look down on all others, show no mercy in condescending to the weak; and because they do not believe themselves to be sinners, they become sinners all the more grievously. The Pharisees certainly belonged to this number, who, judging the Lord because he received sinners, with their dry hearts criticized the very fountain of mercy. But because they were sick in such a way that they did not know they were sick, the heavenly physician heals them with gentle remedies so that they might recognize what they were; he presents a kind parable and presses upon the swelling of the wound in their heart. For he says: ”Which of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does he not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after the one that was lost? Behold, with wonderful dispensation of mercy, the Truth gave a similitude which man might recognize in himself, and yet which pertained especially to the very author of mankind. For since one hundred is a perfect number, he himself had a hundred sheep when he created the substance of angels and men. But one sheep was lost when man, by sinning, abandoned the pastures of life. He left the ninety-nine sheep in the desert because he left those supreme choirs of angels in heaven. But why is heaven called a desert, unless because desert means abandoned?

For man abandoned heaven when he sinned. The ninety-nine sheep remained in the desert while the Lord was seeking one on earth, because the number of rational creatures, namely of angels and men, which had been created to see God, was diminished by the perishing of man, and so that the perfect sum of sheep might be made whole in heaven, lost man was being sought on earth. For what this evangelist calls ”in the desert,” another says ”in the mountains,” to signify in the heights, because indeed the sheep that had not perished stood in the lofty places. And when he finds the sheep, he lays it on his shoulders rejoicing. He placed the sheep on his shoulders because by taking on human nature he himself bore our sins. And coming home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them: ”Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost. Having found the sheep, he returns home because our Shepherd, having restored man, returned to the heavenly kingdom. There he finds friends and neighbors, namely those choirs of angels who are his friends because they continuously guard his will in their steadfastness. They are also his neighbors because they perpetually enjoy the brightness of his vision through their constant presence. And it should be noted that he does not say ”Rejoice with the sheep that was found,” but ”with me,” because indeed our life is his joy, and when we are led back to heaven, we fulfill the celebration of his gladness.

I tell you that thus there will be joy in heaven over one sinner doing penance, more than over ninety-nine just who have no need of penance. We must consider, my brothers, why the Lord declares there is more joy in heaven over converted sinners than over the just who stand firm, unless it is what we ourselves know through daily experience of observation: that very often those who know themselves weighed

down by no burden of sins do indeed stand in the way of justice, commit no unlawful acts, yet do not anxiously long for the heavenly homeland, and grant themselves as much use of lawful things as they remember having committed no unlawful ones. And very often they remain sluggish in practicing the highest goods, because they are quite secure in themselves that they have committed no graver evils. But on the contrary, sometimes those who remember having done certain unlawful things, pierced with compunction by their very grief, burn ardently with love of God, and exercise themselves in great virtues, seek out all the difficulties of holy struggle, abandon all worldly things, flee honors, rejoice when insults are received, burn with desire, long for the heavenly homeland; and because they consider that they have strayed from God, they compensate for preceding losses with subsequent gains.

Therefore there is greater joy in heaven over a converted sinner than over a just person standing firm, because a commander in battle also loves more that soldier who, returning after flight, vigorously presses the enemy, than the one who never showed his back, and never performed any deed of valor. So too the farmer loves more that land which after thorns brings forth abundant crops, than that which never had thorns and never produces a fertile harvest. But amid these things it must be known that there are many righteous persons in whose life there is such joy that no repentance of sinners can in any way be preferred to them. For many are conscious of no evils in themselves, and yet they exert themselves in such ardent affliction as if they were constrained by all sins. They reject even all lawful things, they gird themselves nobly for contempt of the world, they refuse to allow themselves anything whatsoever, they cut off from themselves even permitted goods, they despise visible things, they are inflamed by invisible things, they rejoice in lamentations, they humble themselves in all things; and just as some bewail sins of deeds, so these bewail sins of thoughts. What then shall I call these, except both righteous and penitent, who humble themselves in repentance for sins of thought, and always persevere upright in deed?

From this therefore it must be gathered how great a joy the righteous person makes for God when he humbly mourns, if the unrighteous person makes joy in heaven when he condemns through repentance what he has done wickedly. There follows: ”Or what woman having ten drachmas, if she loses one drachma, does she not light a lamp, and sweep the house, and search diligently until she finds the drachma she had lost? He who is signified by the shepherd is also signified by the woman. For He Himself is God, He Himself is also the wisdom of God. And because an image is imprinted on a drachma, the woman lost a drachma when man, who had been created in the image of God, by sinning departed from the likeness of his Creator. But the woman lit a lamp, because the wisdom of God appeared in humanity. For a lamp is a light in an earthen vessel: and a light in an earthen vessel is divinity in flesh. Concerning which earthen vessel of His body, Wisdom Himself says: ”My

strength is dried up like a potsherd. For because a potsherd is hardened in fire, His strength dried up like a potsherd, because He strengthened the flesh He had assumed unto the glory of resurrection through the tribulation of His passion. And when the lamp was lit, she swept the house, because as soon as His divinity shone forth through the flesh, our whole conscience was shaken.

For the house is swept when the human conscience is disturbed by consideration of its own guilt. This word ”swept” does not disagree with what is read in other manuscripts as ”cleansed,” because indeed a wicked mind, unless it is first overturned through fear, is not cleansed of its accustomed vices. Therefore, with the house swept, the drachma is found, because when the conscience of man is disturbed, the likeness of the Creator is restored in man. ”And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying: Rejoice with me, because I have found the drachma which I had lost. Who are these friends or neighbors except those heavenly powers already mentioned above? They are so close to the supreme Wisdom because they approach Him through the grace of continual vision. But among these things we should by no means carelessly overlook why this woman, through whom the wisdom of God is figured, is said to have had ten drachmas, of which she lost one, which she found when she searched for it. For the Lord created the nature of angels and men to know Him, and when He willed it to endure unto eternity, He without doubt created it in His own likeness. The woman had ten drachmas because there are nine orders of angels.

But so that the number of the elect might be completed, man was created as the tenth, who did not perish from his Creator even after his sin, because eternal Wisdom, flashing with miracles through the flesh, restored him by the light of the earthen vessel. We have said there are nine orders of angels, because we know from the testimony of sacred Scripture that there are angels, archangels, virtues, powers, principalities, dominations, thrones, cherubim, and seraphim. For nearly all pages of sacred Scripture testify that there are angels and archangels. The books of the prophets frequently speak, as is well known, of cherubim and seraphim. The apostle Paul also enumerates the names of four orders to the Ephesians, saying: ”Above every principality, and power, and virtue, and domination. Writing again to the Colossians, he says: ”Whether thrones, or powers, or principalities, or dominations. He had already described dominations, principalities, and powers when speaking to the Ephesians; but when about to say these things also to the Colossians, he added thrones, about which he had not yet said anything to the Ephesians. Therefore, when thrones are joined to those four which he mentioned to the Ephesians—that is, principalities, powers, virtues, and dominations—there are five orders that are specifically expressed. When angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim are added to these, without doubt nine orders of angels are found to exist. Hence also it is said through the prophet to that angel who was created first: ”You are the seal of likeness, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty;

you were in the delights of the paradise of God. Here it should be noted that he is not said to be made in the likeness of God, but the seal of likeness, so that because his nature is more subtle, the image of God is understood to be expressed in him more similarly. In that passage it is soon added: ”Every precious stone was your covering: sardius, topaz, and jasper, chrysolite, onyx, and beryl, sapphire, carbuncle, and emerald. Behold, he named nine kinds of stones, because indeed there are nine orders of angels. That first angel stood adorned and covered with these orders because, since he was placed over all the hosts of angels, he was more glorious by comparison with them. But why have we touched upon these choirs of persevering angels by enumeration, if we do not also explain their ministries with some precision? For in the Greek language, angels are called messengers, and archangels are called chief messengers. It should also be known that the word ”angel” is a name of office, not of nature. For those holy spirits of the heavenly homeland are indeed always spirits, but they cannot always be called angels, since they are angels only when something is announced through them; hence it is said through the Psalmist: ”Who makes His angels spirits. As if he were saying plainly: He who always has them as spirits also makes them angels when He wills. Moreover, those who announce lesser things are called angels, while those who announce the greatest things are called archangels.

This is why not just any angel, but the archangel Gabriel, was sent to the Virgin Mary. For it was fitting that the highest angel should come for this ministry, since he was announcing the highest of all things. They are also designated by their own personal names so that their names might indicate what they are capable of in their work. For in that holy city, which perfect knowledge from the vision of almighty God completes, they are not given their own names because their persons could not be known without names; rather, when they come to minister something to us, they also take their names among us from their ministries. Michael indeed means ”Who is like God”; Gabriel, ”the strength of God”; and Raphael is called ”the medicine of God. And whenever something of wondrous power is accomplished, Michael is said to be sent, so that from the act itself and the name it may be understood that no one can do what God is able to do. Hence that ancient enemy, who through pride desired to be like God, saying:

”I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of heaven, I will sit on the mountain of the covenant, on the sides of the north, I will ascend above the height of the clouds, I will be like the Most High,” when at the end of the world he is left to his own power to be destroyed by the final punishment, is said to be about to fight with the archangel Michael, as it is said through John: ”There was a battle with the archangel Michael,” so that he who proudly raised himself to the likeness of God, slain by Michael, might learn that no one rises to the likeness of God through pride. Gabriel, who is called the strength of God, is also sent to Mary (Luke 1:26). For he came to announce him who deigned to appear humble

to conquer the powers of the air. Of whom it is said through the Psalmist: ”Lift up your gates, O princes, and be lifted up, eternal gates, and the King of glory shall enter. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. And again: ”The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory. Therefore, he who was the Lord of hosts and mighty in battle, coming to wage war against the powers of the air, was to be announced through the strength of God.

Raphael also, as we said, is interpreted as the medicine of God, because when he touched the eyes of Tobias as if through the office of healing, he wiped away the darkness of his blindness. He therefore who is sent to heal was fittingly called the medicine of God. But since we have briefly touched upon the names of angels by interpretation, it now remains for us to briefly explain the very terms of their offices. For indeed those spirits are called Virtues through whom signs and miracles are performed more frequently. Powers also are called those who have received this more powerfully than others in their order, so that the adverse powers are subject to their authority, by whose power they are restrained lest they prevail to tempt the hearts of men as much as they wish. Principalities also are called those who preside over the good spirits of angels themselves, who, while they arrange what things are to be done by others subject to them, act as rulers over them for carrying out the divine ministries. Dominions, however, are called those who transcend even the powers of the principalities by a lofty dissimilarity. For to rule as a prince is to stand first among the rest, but to dominate is to possess even all those who are subject. Those hosts of angels, therefore, which are preeminent with wondrous power, are called Dominions because the rest are subject to them for obedience.

Thrones also are those hosts which are so called because Almighty God always presides over them for exercising judgment. For since in Latin speech we call thrones ”seats,” those are called thrones of God who are filled with such great grace of divinity that the Lord sits in them and through them decrees His judgments. Whence it is also said through the Psalmist: ”You sit upon the throne, you who judge equity. Cherubim also means fullness of knowledge. And those more sublime hosts are therefore called Cherubim because they are filled with knowledge so much more perfect as they contemplate the brightness of God more closely; so that, according to the measure of the creature, they know all things fully in proportion as they approach the vision of their Creator through the merit of their dignity. Seraphim also are called those hosts of holy spirits which burn with incomparable love from the singular nearness of their Creator. For Seraphim are called burning or kindling. Because they are so joined to God that no other spirits stand between them and God, they burn so much more as they see Him more closely. Their flame indeed is love, because the more subtly they behold the brightness of His divinity, the more powerfully they are inflamed in love of Him. But what does it profit us to touch briefly upon these matters concerning the angelic spirits, if we do not strive to apply them also to our own advancement through suitable reflection?

For since that heavenly city consists of angels and men, to which we believe the human race ascends in such number as equals the elect angels who remained there, as it is written: ”He set the boundaries of the nations according to the number of the angels of God,” we too ought to draw something from those distinctions of the heavenly citizens for the use of our own way of life, and inflame ourselves with good pursuits toward growth in virtues. For since such a multitude of men is believed to ascend there as equals the multitude of angels that remained, it follows that those men who return to the heavenly homeland should imitate something from those hosts as they return there. For the different ways of life of men correspond distinctly to the orders of individual hosts, and they are assigned to their lot through similarity of life. For there are many who grasp small things, yet do not cease to announce piously these same small things to their brethren. These therefore run to be numbered among the angels. And there are some who, refreshed by the gift of divine generosity, are able both to grasp and to announce the highest secrets of heaven. Where then are these assigned except among the number of archangels? And there are others who do wondrous things and powerfully work signs. Where then do these belong except to the lot and number of the heavenly Virtues?

And there are some who even drive malign spirits from possessed bodies and cast them out by the power of prayer and the force of received authority. Where then do these obtain their reward except among the number of the heavenly Powers? And there are some who through received virtues even transcend the merits of elect men, and since they are better than the good, they also rule over their elect brethren. Where then have these received their lot except among the numbers of Principalities? And there are some who so dominate all vices and all desires within themselves that by the very right of their purity they are called gods among men; whence also it is said to Moses: ”Behold, I have made you a god to Pharaoh. Where then do these run except among the numbers of Dominations? And there are some who, while they rule themselves with watchful care, and while they examine themselves with anxious attention, always clinging to divine fear, receive this as a gift of virtue: that they can rightly judge others as well. While divine contemplation is indeed present to their minds, the Lord, presiding in them as on His throne, examines the deeds of others and wonderfully dispenses all things from His seat. What then are these except thrones of their Creator? Or where are they enrolled except among the numbers of the heavenly Seats? While the holy Church is governed through them, often even the elect are judged concerning certain of their weak actions.

And there are some who are so full of love for God and neighbor that they may rightly be called Cherubim. For since, as we said before, Cherubim means fullness of knowledge, and we have learned from Paul’s saying that love is the fullness of the law, all who are more fully filled than others with love of God and neighbor have received the lot of their merits among the numbers of the Cherubim. And there

are some who, kindled by the flames of heavenly contemplation, pant only for desire of their Creator, desire nothing more in this world, are fed solely on love of eternity, cast aside all earthly things, transcend in mind all temporal things, love and burn, and rest in their very burning; by loving they burn, by speaking they kindle others also, and those whom they touch with their word they immediately cause to burn with love of God. What then should I call these except Seraphim, whose heart, turned into fire, both shines and burns, because they both illuminate the eyes of minds toward heavenly things and, by causing compunction, purge the rust of vices in tears? Those therefore who are thus inflamed with love of their Creator—where have they received the lot of their calling except among the number of the Seraphim? But as I speak these things, dearest brethren, turn yourselves inward to yourselves, examine the merits and thoughts of your secret hearts.

See whether you already do anything good within yourselves, see whether you find the lot of your calling among the number of these hosts that we have briefly touched upon. But woe to the soul that recognizes nothing in itself of these good things we have enumerated, and a yet worse woe threatens it if it both understands itself to be deprived of gifts and does not groan at all. Whoever therefore is such, my brethren, is greatly to be lamented, because he does not lament. Let us therefore consider the received gifts of the elect, and with what virtue we can, let us pant for love of so great a lot. Let him who does not recognize in himself the grace of gifts groan. But let him who recognizes lesser things in himself not envy others their greater things, because those heavenly distinctions of blessed spirits are so established that some are set over others. Indeed, Dionysius the Areopagite, that ancient and venerable Father, is said to declare that from the lesser hosts of angels some are sent forth to fulfill their ministry either visibly or invisibly, namely because angels or archangels come for human consolation. For those higher hosts never withdraw from the inner places, since those who are preeminent have no function of external ministry. This seems to be contradicted by what Isaiah says: ”And one of the Seraphim flew to me, and in his hand was a coal which he had taken with tongs from the altar, and he touched my mouth.

But in this statement of the prophet, he wants it understood that the spirits who are sent receive the name of those whose office they perform. For the angel who carries a coal from the altar to burn up the sins of speech is called a Seraphim, which means burning. This interpretation is also believed to be supported not unsuitably by what is said through Daniel: ”Thousands of thousands ministered to him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before him. For ministering is one thing, and standing before is another, because those minister to God who also go out to us announcing; but those stand before who so enjoy inward contemplation that they are not at all sent forth to accomplish external works. But because in certain passages of Scripture we have learned that some things are done through the cherubim, and other things through the seraphim, whether they do these things by

themselves, or whether they are done through the hosts subject to them, which, as is said, receive the names of the greater ones because they come from the greater ones, we do not wish to affirm what we do not prove by clear testimonies. This, however, we know most certainly, that to carry out service from above, some spirits send others, as the prophet Zechariah testifies, who says: Behold, the angel who was speaking in me went forth; and behold, another angel went forth to meet him, and he said to him: Run, and speak to this young man, saying:

Jerusalem shall be inhabited without walls. For when an angel says to an angel "Run and speak," there is no doubt that one sends another. Those who are sent are lesser, those who send are greater. But this too we hold as certain concerning those very hosts that are sent, that even when they come to us, they so fulfill their ministry externally that they are never absent internally through contemplation. Therefore they are both sent and stand before him, because although the angelic spirit is circumscribed, yet the supreme spirit himself, who is God, is not circumscribed. And so the angels, even when sent, are before him, because wherever they go when sent, they run within him. It should also be known that often the very orders of blessed spirits take on the names of orders neighboring them. For we have said that the Thrones, that is, the seats of God, are a special order of blessed spirits, and yet it is said by the Psalmist: "You who sit upon the cherubim, appear," because, evidently, since in those very distinctions of hosts the cherubim are joined to the thrones, the Lord is said to sit even upon the cherubim by equality with the neighboring host. For thus in that highest city certain things are special to each, yet they are common to all; and what each one has in part within himself, this he possesses fully in another order. But they are not commonly reckoned by one and the same name for this reason:

that order ought to be called by the private name of each thing which has received this more fully as a gift. For we have said that seraphim means burning, and yet all burn equally with love of the Creator. Cherubim indeed means fullness of knowledge, and yet who there is ignorant of anything where all together see God himself, the fountain of knowledge? Those hosts also over which the Creator presides are called thrones, but who can be blessed unless his Creator presides over his mind? Therefore what are possessed in part by all have been given as a private name to those who have received these more fully as a gift. For even if some things there are possessed by some in such a way that they cannot be possessed by others, just as dominations and principalities are called by a special name, all things there belong to each, because through the love of the Spirit what belongs to one is possessed by others. But behold, while we search out the secrets of the heavenly citizens, we have digressed far from the order of our exposition. Let us therefore sigh toward those of whom we speak, but let us return to ourselves. For we ought to remember that we are flesh. Let us be silent meanwhile about the secrets of

heaven, but before the eyes of our Creator let us wipe away the stains of our dust with the hand of repentance. Behold, divine mercy itself promises, saying:

There shall be joy in heaven over one sinner doing penance; and yet through the prophet the Lord says: In whatever day the just man shall sin, all his righteousnesses shall be in oblivion before me. Let us consider, if we can, the dispensation of heavenly loving-kindness. To those who stand, if they should fall, he threatens punishment; but to the fallen, that they might desire to rise, he promises mercy. He terrifies those, lest they presume upon their good works; he comforts these, lest they despair in their evils. You are just—fear wrath, lest you fall; you are a sinner—trust in mercy, that you may rise. But behold, we have already fallen, we have been utterly unable to stand, we lie in our wicked desires. But he who struck us down when we were upright still waits, and urges us to rise. He opens the bosom of his loving-kindness, and seeks to receive us back to himself through repentance. But we cannot do penance worthily unless we also know the manner of that same penance. For to do penance is both to bewail the evils committed, and not to commit things that must be bewailed. For he who so deplores some sins while yet committing others, still either pretends to do penance or does not know what it is. For what does it profit if someone weeps for sins of lust, and yet still pants with the burning heat of avarice?

Or what does it profit if he now mourns the faults of anger, and yet still wastes away with the torches of envy? But what we say is far too little, that he who deplores sins should by no means commit things to be deplored, and that he who bewails vices should fear to perpetrate vices. 16. For one must consider most carefully that he who remembers having committed unlawful things should strive to abstain even from certain lawful things, so that through this he may make satisfaction to his Creator, that he who has committed forbidden things ought to cut off from himself even permitted things, and should reproach himself in the least matters who remembers having sinned in the greatest. What I say is excessive, unless I confirm these things from testimonies of sacred Scripture. The Law of the Old Testament certainly forbids coveting another’s wife, but it does not punish a king for commanding brave deeds of soldiers, or for desiring water. And we all know that David, pierced by the sword of concupiscence, both coveted and took away another man’s wife. Fitting scourges followed his fault, and he corrected the evil he had perpetrated through the lamentations of penance. When long afterward he sat against the battle lines of enemies, he wished from desire to drink water from the cistern of Bethlehem. His chosen soldiers, breaking through the midst of the opposing forces, brought back unharmed the water the king had desired.

But the man instructed by scourges immediately reproached himself for having desired water at the peril of his soldiers, and pouring it out, he offered it to the Lord, as it is written there: He poured it out to the Lord. For the water poured out

was turned into a sacrifice to the Lord, because he slew the fault of concupiscence through the penance of his self-reproach. He therefore who once did not at all fear to covet another's wife, afterward was even afraid because he had coveted water. For since he remembered having perpetrated unlawful things, now stern against himself, he abstained even from lawful things. Thus, thus do we do penance, if we perfectly bewail what we have committed. Let us consider the heavenly riches of our Creator. He saw us sin, and bore with us. He who forbade us to sin before our fault does not cease even after our fault to wait for us to seek pardon. Behold, He whom we despised calls us. We have turned away from Him, and yet He does not turn away. Whence it is well said through Isaiah: And your eyes shall see your teacher, and your ears shall hear the voice of one warning from behind your back. Man was warned as if to his face when, created for righteousness, he received the precepts of rectitude. But when he despised these same precepts, he turned, as it were, the back of his mind to his Creator's face.

But behold, He still follows behind and warns, because even though He has been despised by us, yet He does not cease to call us. We have turned our back to His face, as it were, whose words we despise, whose precepts we trample underfoot; but standing behind our back He calls us back though we are turned away, He who both sees that He is despised and yet cries out through His precepts, waits through His patience. Consider therefore, dearest brothers, if any servant of yours were suddenly to become proud while you were speaking to him, and were to turn his back to your face, would not his master, being despised, strike his pride and inflict wounds of severe punishment? Behold, by sinning we have turned our backs to the face of our Creator, and yet we are endured. He graciously calls back those who have proudly turned away, and He who could strike us as we turn away instead promises rewards if we return. Therefore let such great mercy of our Creator soften the hardness of our guilt, and let man, who could have experienced the evil he did by being struck, at least blush with shame at being waited for. I briefly relate a matter, brothers, which I learned from the account of the venerable man Maximian, then the father and priest of my monastery, but now bishop of Syracuse. If you listen to this attentively, I believe it will greatly benefit your charity.

In our own times there was a certain Victorinus, who was also called by another name, Aemilianus, not lacking in substance according to a moderate way of life; but because the sin of the flesh often reigns amid abundance of possessions, he fell into a certain crime, which he ought greatly to have feared, and to have thought about the enormity of his own death. Therefore, struck with compunction by consideration of his guilt, he rose up against himself, abandoned all things of this world, and sought a monastery. In that monastery, indeed, he showed himself of such great humility and such great strictness toward himself, that all the brothers who had grown there in the love of God were compelled to despise their own lives when they saw his penance. For he strove with the whole effort of his mind to crucify his

flesh, to break his own will, to seek secret prayers, to wash himself daily with tears, to desire contempt of himself, and to fear veneration offered by the brothers. He had been accustomed to anticipate the nightly vigils of the brothers; and because the mountain on which the monastery was situated jutted out on one side in a more secluded area, he had made it his custom to go out there before the vigils, so that he might slay himself daily in the weeping of penance, the more secretly, the more freely.

For he contemplated the severity of his coming Judge, and, already in harmony with that same Judge, he punished in tears the guilt of his crime. One night, however, the abbot of the monastery, being awake, observed him secretly going out and followed him outside with slow step. When he saw him prostrate in prayer on the secluded side of the mountain, he wished to wait until he arose, so that he might also observe the very perseverance of his prayer, when suddenly a light sent from heaven was poured out over him who lay prostrate in prayer; and such great brightness spread in that place that the whole part of that region grew white from the same light. When the abbot saw this, he trembled and fled. And when after a long space of time that same brother had returned to the monastery, his abbot, in order to learn whether he had recognized the outpouring of so great a light upon himself, endeavored to question him, saying: ”Where were you, brother? But he, believing he could remain hidden, answered that he had been in the monastery. When he denied it, the abbot was compelled to say what he had seen. But he, seeing that he had been discovered, also revealed what had been hidden from the abbot, adding: ”When you saw the light descending upon me from heaven, a voice also came at the same time, saying: ’Your sin is forgiven.’” And indeed Almighty God could have pardoned his sin in silence;

but by speaking through a voice, by shining through light, He wished to strike our hearts to penance by the example of His mercy. We marvel, dearest brothers, that the Lord struck down His persecutor Saul from heaven, spoke to him from heaven. Behold, in our times also a sinner doing penance heard a voice from the heavens. To him it was said: ”Why do you persecute me? But this man merited to hear: ”Your sin is forgiven. Far inferior in merits is this penitent sinner compared to Paul. But because we are still speaking here of Saul breathing the cruelty of slaughter, let it be permitted to say boldly that Saul on account of pride heard a voice of rebuke, but this man on account of humility heard a voice of consolation. Because humility had cast him down, divine mercy raised him up; because pride had exalted the other, divine severity humbled him. Therefore have confidence, my brothers, in the mercy of our Creator; consider what you do, reconsider what you have done. Look upon the generosity of heavenly mercy, and come with tears to the merciful Judge while He still waits. For considering that He is just, do not neglect your sins; but considering that He is merciful, do not despair. God made man gives man confidence before God. There is great hope for us who do penance,

because our advocate has become our judge. Who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. Amen.

HOMILY XXXV. Delivered to the people in the basilica of Saint Mennas the martyr, on the day of his birth.

READING OF THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE. At that time, Jesus said to his disciples: When you shall hear of wars and seditions, be not terrified; these things must first come to pass, but the end is not yet at hand. Then he said to them: Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be great earthquakes in various places, and pestilences and famines, and terrors from heaven, and there shall be great signs. But before all these things, they shall lay their hands upon you and persecute you, delivering you up to synagogues and prisons, dragging you before kings and governors for my name's sake. And these things shall happen to you for a testimony. Lay it up therefore in your hearts not to meditate beforehand how you shall respond. For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to resist and contradict. And you shall be betrayed by parents and brethren and kinsmen and friends, and some of you they shall put to death. And you shall be hated by all men for my name's sake, yet not a hair of your head shall perish. In your patience you shall possess your souls. Because we have journeyed rather far from the city, lest a later hour hinder us from returning, it is necessary that a shorter discourse pass through the exposition of the holy Gospel.

Our Lord and Redeemer announces beforehand the evils that precede the perishing world, so that the things to come may disturb us less because they have been foreknown. For missiles that are foreseen strike less forcefully; and we endure the evils of the world more tolerably if we are fortified against them by the shield of foreknowledge. For behold he says: "When you hear of wars and seditions, do not be terrified; for these things must happen first, but the end is not yet at once. The words of our Redeemer must be weighed carefully, through which he announces that we will suffer one thing internally, another externally. For wars indeed pertain to enemies, seditions to citizens. Therefore, to indicate that we are troubled both internally and externally, he declares that we suffer one thing from enemies, another from brothers. But since the end does not immediately follow when these evils come first, he adds: "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there will be great earthquakes in various places, and pestilences and famines, and terrors from heaven; and there will be great signs. Or as is found in certain manuscripts: "Terrors from heaven and storms. And afterward it is added: "And there will be great signs. The final tribulation is preceded by many tribulations, and through the frequent evils that come before, the perpetual evils that will follow are indicated.

And therefore after wars and seditions the end does not come immediately, because many evils must run before, so that they may be able to announce evil without end. But since so many signs of disturbance have been mentioned, we ought to touch briefly upon the consideration of each one, because it is necessary that we suffer some things from heaven, some from earth, some from the elements, some from men. For he says: ”Nation will rise against nation”—behold the disturbance of men; ”there will be great earthquakes in various places”—behold the look of wrath from above; ”there will be pestilences”—behold the disorder of bodies; ”there will be famine”—behold the barrenness of the earth; ”terrors from heaven and storms”—behold the disorder of the air. Because therefore all things are to be brought to an end, before the end all things are disturbed; and we who have sinned in all things are struck in all things, so that what is said may be fulfilled: ”And the world will fight on his behalf against the senseless. For all things that we received for the use of life we have turned to the use of sin, but all things that we bent to the use of wickedness are turned against us for the use of vengeance. Indeed we turned the tranquility of human peace to the use of vain security; we loved the pilgrimage of earth as if it were our homeland’s dwelling; we reduced the health of bodies to the use of vices;

we twisted the abundance of plenty not to the necessity of the flesh but to the perversity of pleasure; we forced even the serene enticements of the air to serve our love of earthly delight. Rightly therefore it remains that all things strike us together, which all together served our vices in evil subjection, so that as many joys as we previously had unharmed in the world, so many torments from it we are afterward compelled to feel. But it should be noted what is said: ”Terrors from heaven and storms. Since winter storms usually come according to the order of the seasons, why are storms predicted here as a sign of destruction, unless because the Lord announces that storms will come that in no way keep the order of the seasons? For those that come in an orderly fashion are not a sign; but storms are a sign that confound even the appointed times of the seasons themselves. This we too have recently experienced, because we saw the entire summer season turned into winter rains. But because all these things come not from the injustice of the one striking but from the merit of the world that suffers, the deeds of wicked men are set forth first when it is said: ”But before all these things they will lay their hands upon you and persecute you, and deliver you to synagogues, leading you before kings and governors for my name’s sake. As if he were saying openly:

First the hearts of men are disturbed, and afterward the elements, so that when the order of things is thrown into confusion, it may be shown from what retribution this comes. For although the end of the world depends on its own order, it is made known that it finds certain more perverse people who may worthily be crushed by its ruins, when it is added: ”Leading you before kings and governors for my name’s sake. But these things will happen to you for a testimony. For a testimony, clearly,

of whom, unless of those who either inflict death by persecuting or who see and do not imitate? For the death of the just is a help to the good and a testimony against the wicked, so that the perverse may perish without excuse from the very thing whence the elect take an example that they may live. But upon hearing so many terrors, the hearts of the weak could be disturbed, and therefore consolation is added when it is immediately subjoined: ”Settle it therefore in your hearts not to premeditate how you will answer. For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries will not be able to resist or contradict. As if He openly says to His weakening members: Do not be terrified, do not be afraid; you approach the contest, but I fight; you utter the words, but I am the one who speaks. It follows:

”But you will be betrayed by parents and brothers, and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. Evils inflicted by strangers cause lesser pain. But those torments rage more fiercely within us which we suffer from those in whose minds we had confidence, because along with bodily harm, the evils of lost love torment us. Hence it is that the Lord says through the Psalmist concerning Judas His betrayer: ”Indeed if my enemy had cursed me, I would have borne it; and if he who hated me had spoken great things against me, I would certainly have hidden myself from him. But you, a man of one mind with me, my guide and my acquaintance, who took sweet food together with me, we walked in the house of God with agreement. And again: ”The man of my peace in whom I trusted, and who ate my bread, has greatly plotted treachery against me. As if He says in plain words about His betrayer: I bore his transgression all the more gravely because I perceived it from one who seemed to be mine. All the elect, therefore, because they are members of the supreme Head, also follow their Head in sufferings, so that they feel those very people as adversaries in their death from whose life they had confidence, and their reward of labor increases all the more as the gain of their virtue profits from another’s loss of love.

But because the things foretold concerning the affliction of death are harsh, consolation is immediately added concerning the joy of the resurrection, when it is said: ”Not a hair of your head shall perish. We know, brothers, that flesh when cut feels pain, but hair when cut does not feel pain. Therefore He says to His martyrs: ”Not a hair of your head shall perish,” clearly saying: Why do you fear that what feels pain when cut may perish, when even that which does not feel pain when cut cannot perish in you? There follows: ”In your patience you shall possess your souls. The possession of the soul is placed in the virtue of patience because patience is the root and guardian of all virtues. Through patience we truly possess our souls, because while we learn to master ourselves, we begin to possess that very thing which we are. Patience, however, is to endure the evils of others with equanimity, and to feel no sting of resentment even against the one who inflicts the evils. For whoever bears the evils of a neighbor in such a way that he nevertheless grieves silently and seeks an opportunity for fitting retribution does not display patience

but merely shows it outwardly. For it is written: ”Love is patient, love is kind. It is patient so as to bear the evils of others, and kind so as to love even those whom it bears. Hence Truth says through Himself:

”Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who persecute and slander you. It is therefore a virtue before men to tolerate adversaries, but the virtue before God is to love them, because God accepts only that sacrifice which the flame of charity kindles before His eyes on the altar of good works. 5. But it should be known that very often we seem to be patient only because we cannot repay evils. But whoever does not repay evil because he is unable to, without doubt, as we said, is not patient, because patience is sought not in outward show but in the heart. Through the vice of impatience, doctrine itself, the nurse of virtues, is scattered. For it is written: ”A man’s learning is known through patience. Therefore, the less patient anyone is shown to be, the less learned he is shown to be. For one cannot truly impart good things by teaching if he does not know how to tolerate the evils of others with equanimity in his way of living. For Solomon again indicates how great is the height at which the virtue of patience excels, saying: ”The patient man is better than the strong man, and he who rules his spirit than he who captures cities. It is therefore a lesser victory to capture cities, because what is conquered is external. But what is conquered through patience is greater, because the mind is overcome by itself, and it subjects itself to itself, when patience prostrates it in the humility of forbearance.

But it should be known that it very often happens to patient people that at the very time when they suffer adversities or hear insults, they are struck by no grief, and they display patience in such a way that they take care also to guard the innocence of their heart. But when after a little while they recall to memory those very things they endured, they are inflamed by the fire of most vehement grief, they seek occasions for revenge, and they lose in their reconsideration, judging themselves, the meekness they had while enduring. The cunning adversary wages war against two people: inflaming one to be the first to hurl insults, while provoking the other to return insults when injured. But since the one whom he stirred to utter insults has already emerged as his victor, he grieves more bitterly against the one whom he could not move to return injuries. Thus it happens that he rises up with all his strength against the one whom he observes to have bravely endured insults. Since he could not move him during the very hurling of injuries, he withdraws for a time from open battle, seeks an opportunity for deception in secret thought, and he who lost in public warfare burns to lay hidden ambushes. For now in a time of quiet he returns to the victor’s mind and brings back to memory either losses of possessions or the darts of injuries.

Greatly exaggerating everything that was inflicted upon him, he shows it to have been intolerable, and disturbs the mind of the one at rest with such fury that of-

ten a patient man, now a captive after his victory, is ashamed that he bore those things with equanimity. He grieves that he did not return insults and seeks to repay worse if the opportunity should arise. To whom, then, are such people similar, if not to those who are victorious on the battlefield through courage, but are afterwards captured within the city walls through negligence? To whom are they similar, if not to those whom a severe illness striking suddenly does not take from life, but whom a recurring fever coming lightly kills? Therefore, he truly preserves patience who both tolerates the evils of others without distress for the time being, and reflecting on these same things, rejoices that he endured such things—lest the good of patience perish in time of quiet which was guarded during disturbances. But because we celebrate today the birthday of a martyr, my brothers, we ought by no means to consider ourselves strangers to the virtue of his patience. For if, with the Lord helping us, we strive to preserve the virtue of patience, we both live in the peace of the Church and yet hold the palm of martyrdom. For there are two kinds of martyrdom: one in the mind, another in the mind together with action. And so we can be martyrs even if we are not slain by any sword of persecutors.

For to die at the hands of a persecutor is martyrdom in open deed; but to bear insults, to love one who hates us, is martyrdom in hidden thought. For that there are two kinds of martyrdom, one in hidden deed, another in public, the Truth testifies, who asks the sons of Zebedee, saying: ”Can you drink the cup that I am about to drink? When they immediately answered Him: ”We can,” the Lord at once replied, saying: ”You shall indeed drink my cup. For what do we understand by the cup except the suffering of the Passion? Of which He says elsewhere: ”Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. And the sons of Zebedee, that is, James and John, did not both die through martyrdom, and yet both heard that they would drink the cup. For John did not end his life through martyrdom, yet he was a martyr, because the suffering that he did not undergo in body he preserved in mind. Therefore, by this example, we too can be martyrs without the sword, if we truly guard patience in our soul. I do not think it beside the point, dearest brothers, if I speak to you one example of preserving patience for your edification. There was in our days a certain man named Stephen, father of a monastery situated near the walls of the city of Rieti, a man of great holiness, singular in the virtue of patience. And many still survive who knew him and relate both his life and his death.

His speech was unpolished, but his life was learned. He had despised all things for love of the heavenly fatherland; he fled from possessing anything in this world; he avoided the tumults of men and was intent upon frequent and prolonged prayers. Yet the virtue of patience had grown exceedingly strong in him, so that he considered anyone who had caused him some trouble to be his friend; he returned thanks for insults; if any loss had been inflicted upon him in his very poverty, he counted this the greatest gain; he regarded all his adversaries as nothing other than helpers. When the day of death pressed him to depart from the body, many

gathered together to commend their souls to so holy a soul as it departed from this world. And while all those who had gathered stood around his bed, some saw with their bodily eyes angels entering, but they were utterly unable to say anything; others saw nothing at all; but all who were present were struck with such violent fear that no one was able to stand there while that holy soul was departing. And so both those who had seen and those who had seen nothing at all, all struck and terrified by the same fear, fled, and no one was able to stand by him as he died. Consider therefore, brothers, how the almighty God terrifies when he comes as a strict judge, if he so terrified those standing by when he came gracious and rewarding;

or how he can be feared when he can be seen, if he so prostrated the minds of those present even when he could not be seen. Behold, dearest brothers, that patience preserved in ecclesiastical peace raised him to what a height of recompense. What did his Creator give him inwardly, concerning whom such great glory was made known to us outwardly on the day of his departure? With whom should we believe him to be joined except the holy martyrs, whom, with bodily eyes also bearing witness, we know to have been received by blessed spirits? He did not fall struck down by any sword, and yet in his departure he received the crown of patience which he had held in his mind. We prove daily that what was said before us is true: that holy Church, full of the flowers of the elect, has lilies in peace, roses in war. It should also be known that the virtue of patience is usually exercised in three ways. For there are some things we endure from God, others from the ancient adversary, and others from our neighbor. From our neighbor we endure persecutions, losses, and insults; from the ancient adversary, temptations; and from God, we bear chastisements.

But in all these three ways, the mind must watch itself with a vigilant eye, lest against the evils of a neighbor it be drawn to return evil, lest against the temptations of the adversary it be seduced into delight or consent to sin, lest against the chastisements of its Maker it rush into excessive murmuring. For the adversary is perfectly conquered when our mind is not drawn to delight or consent amid his temptations, when it is guarded from hatred amid the insults of a neighbor, and when it is restrained from murmuring amid the chastisements of God. Nor, in doing these things, should we seek present goods to be given to us in return; for in exchange for the labor of patience, the goods of the life to come are to be hoped for, so that the reward of our labor may begin when all labor has completely ceased. Hence it is also said through the Psalmist: ”The poor shall not be forgotten forever; the patience of the poor shall not perish forever. For the patience of the poor seems to have perished when nothing is repaid to the humble for it in this life. But the patience of the poor shall not perish forever, because its glory is received when all toilsome things are ended together. Therefore, brothers, preserve patience in your mind, and when circumstances demand it, exercise it in action. Let no insult-

ing words move any of you to hatred of your neighbor; let no losses of perishable things disturb you.

For if with a steadfast mind you fear lasting losses, you do not consider the losses of passing things to be serious; if you behold the glory of eternal recompense, you do not grieve over temporal injury. Therefore tolerate your adversaries, but love as brothers those whom you tolerate. Seek eternal rewards in exchange for temporal losses. And let no one among you trust that he can accomplish this by his own strength, but obtain through prayers that he who commands this may himself grant it. And we know that he gladly hears those who ask, when what is asked to be given is what he commands. When he is continually implored in prayer, he swiftly aids in temptation, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns as God with him in the unity of the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen.

HOMILY XXXVI. Delivered to the people in the basilica of the blessed apostles Philip and James, on the second Sunday after Pentecost.

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE. At that time, Jesus told this parable to the Pharisees: A certain man made a great supper and invited many. And he sent his servant at the hour of supper to tell those who were invited to come, for all things were now ready. And they all began at once to make excuses. The first said to him: I have bought a farm, and I must go out and see it; I ask you, have me excused. And another said: I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them; I ask you, have me excused. And another said: I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. And the servant returned and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant: Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the feeble, and the blind and the lame. And the servant said: Lord, it has been done as you commanded, and still there is room. And the Lord said to the servant: Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper. This is the distinction, dearest brothers, that usually exists between the delights of the body and those of the heart:

bodily delights, when they are not possessed, kindle in themselves a serious desire, but when possessed and consumed, they immediately turn the one eating them into disgust through satiety. Spiritual delights, on the contrary, when not possessed are treated with disgust, but when possessed they are desired; and the more they are hungered for by the one eating, the more they are also consumed by the one hungering. In the former, the appetite pleases but the experience displeases; in the latter, the appetite is of little account, but the experience pleases more. In the former, appetite generates satiety, and satiety generates disgust; but in the latter, appetite generates satiety, and satiety generates appetite. For spiritual delights increase desire in the mind while they satisfy, because the more their

flavor is perceived, the more one recognizes what should be loved more eagerly. And therefore, when not possessed, they cannot be loved, because their flavor is unknown. For who is able to love what he does not know? Hence the Psalmist admonishes us, saying: ”Taste and see that the Lord is sweet. As if he were saying openly: You do not know his sweetness if you do not taste it at all. But touch the food of life with the palate of your heart, so that by proving its sweetness you may be able to love it. Man lost these delights when he sinned in paradise; he went outside when he closed his mouth to the food of eternal sweetness.

Hence we also, born into the hardship of this pilgrimage, have come here already full of disgust, nor do we know what we ought to desire; and the disease of our disgust increases all the more as the soul distances itself further from eating that sweetness; and it no longer desires internal delights precisely because it has long since lost the habit of consuming them. Therefore we waste away in our disgust, and we are wearied by the long plague of fasting. And because we are unwilling to taste inwardly the sweetness prepared for us, we wretches love our hunger outside. But the heavenly mercy does not abandon those who abandon it. For he recalls those despised delights to the eyes of our memory, and sets them before us; in his promise he shakes off our torpor, and invites us to repel our disgust. For he says: ”A certain man made a great supper, and invited many. Who is this man, except he of whom it is said through the Prophet: ”And he is a man, and who has known him? He made a great supper, because he prepared for us the fullness of inward sweetness. He invited many, but few come, because sometimes those very ones who are subject to him through faith contradict his eternal banquet by living wickedly. It follows: ”And he sent his servant at the hour of supper to tell those who were invited to come. What is the hour of supper, except the end of the world?

In which we certainly are, as Paul long ago testifies, saying: ”We are those upon whom the ends of the ages have come. If therefore it is already the hour of supper when we are called, the less should we excuse ourselves from the banquet of God, the more we perceive that the end of the age has drawn near. For the more we consider that nothing remains, the more we ought to fear lest the time of grace that is at hand be lost. Moreover, this banquet of God is called not a dinner but a supper, because after dinner a supper remains, but after supper no banquet remains. And because the eternal banquet of God will be prepared for us at the end, it was right that this should be called not a dinner but a supper. But who is designated by this servant, who is sent by the householder to invite, except the order of preachers? Of which order, although we are still unworthy, although we are burdened by the weight of our sins, nevertheless we too are in these days, and when I speak something to you concerning your edification, this is what I do, for I am a servant of the supreme householder. When I admonish you to contempt of the world, I come to invite you to the supper of God. Let no one despise me in this place on my own ac-

count. And if I appear in no way worthy to invite, yet great are the delights which I promise.

Often, my brothers, what I say tends to happen, that a powerful person has a despised servant; and when through him he sends some message to his own people or to strangers, the person of the speaking servant is not despised, because reverence for the sending master is preserved in the heart. Nor do those who hear consider through whom, but what or from whom they hear. So therefore, brothers, so conduct yourselves, and if perhaps you rightly despise us, yet preserve in your mind reverence for the Lord who calls. Willingly obey to become guests of the supreme householder. Examine your hearts, and drive out from them deadly disgust. For to repel your disgust, all things are now prepared. But if you are still carnal, perhaps you seek carnal feasts. Behold, those very carnal feasts have been converted into spiritual nourishment for you. For to wipe away the disgust of your mind, that singular lamb has been slain for you at the supper of the Lord. But what are we to do, we who see that what follows still happens among many? ”And they all began at once to make excuse. God offers what ought to have been asked for; He wishes to give unasked what could scarcely have been hoped for even if He had deigned to grant it when asked, yet He is despised; He announces that the delights of eternal refreshment are prepared, and yet all together make excuse.

Let us place before the eyes of our mind the least things, that we may be able to worthily weigh the greater. If some powerful man were to send to invite any poor person, what, brothers, I ask, what would that poor man do, except rejoice at that very invitation of his, give a humble response, change his garment, hasten to go as quickly as possible, lest another arrive at the banquet of the powerful man before him? Therefore a rich man invites, and a poor man hastens to come; we are invited to God’s banquet, and we make excuses. But behold, amid these things I can estimate what your hearts answer to themselves. For perhaps in secret thoughts they say to themselves: We do not wish to make excuse, for we rejoice both to be called and to arrive at that banquet of heavenly refreshment. Those who speak such things to you, their minds speak truth, if they do not love earthly things more than heavenly, if they are not occupied more with bodily matters than with spiritual. Hence here also the very cause of those making excuses is added, when it is immediately brought in: The first said: I have bought a farm, and I must go out and see it; I pray you, have me excused. What is designated by the farm except earthly substance? He went out therefore to see the farm who thinks only of external things on account of his substance. Another said:

I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to test them; I pray you, have me excused. What do we understand by the five yoke of oxen except the five senses of the body? These are also rightly called yokes, because they are doubled in each sex. These bodily senses, indeed, because they do not know how to comprehend

internal things, but know only external ones, and, abandoning what is innermost, touch those things which are outside, rightly through them curiosity is designated. For while it seeks to examine the life of another, always ignorant of its own inner depths, it strives to think about external things. For the vice of curiosity is grievous, which while it leads anyone's mind outwardly to investigate the life of a neighbor, always hides from him his own inner depths, so that knowing the affairs of others, he does not know himself, and the mind of the curious person, the more skilled it becomes in another's merit, the more ignorant it becomes of its own. For this reason also it is said concerning these same five yoke of oxen: I go to test them; I pray you, have me excused. For the very words of the one making excuse do not differ from the signification of his vice when he says: I go to test them, because indeed testing sometimes tends to pertain to curiosity.

But it should be noted that both he who makes excuse from his inviter's supper on account of the farm and he who does so on account of testing the yoke of oxen mixes in words of humility, saying: I pray you, have me excused. For when he says I pray you, and yet disdains to come, humility sounds in the voice, pride in the action. And behold, every wicked person judges these things when he hears them, yet does not cease to do the things he judges. For when we say to anyone acting perversely: Be converted, follow God, abandon the world, where do we call him except to the Lord's supper? But when he responds: Pray for me, because I am a sinner, I cannot do this, what else does he do except both ask and make excuse? For saying: I am a sinner, he insinuates humility; but adding: I cannot be converted, he demonstrates pride. Therefore he makes excuse by asking, who both puts on humility in his voice and exercises pride in his action. Another said: I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. What is understood by a wife except the pleasure of the flesh? For although marriage is good, and established by divine providence for the propagation of offspring, nevertheless some seek through it not the fruitfulness of children, but the desires of pleasure, and therefore through a just thing an unjust thing can not inappropriately be signified.

Therefore the supreme father of the household invites you to the supper of the eternal banquet; but while one is given to avarice, another to curiosity, another to the pleasure of the flesh, indeed all the reprobate together make excuses. While earthly care occupies this one, shrewd thinking about another's affairs devastates that one, carnal pleasure also defiles the mind of yet another, and each fastidious person does not hasten to the feast of eternal life. There follows: The servant returned and reported these things to his master. Then the angry master of the house said to his servant: Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the feeble, and the blind and the lame. Behold, he who clings to earthly substance more than is right refuses to come to the Lord's supper; he who sweats at the labor of curiosity disdains the prepared nourishments of life; he who serves carnal desires rejects the feasts of the spiritual banquet. Therefore,

because the proud refuse to come, the poor are chosen. Why is this? Because, according to Paul's words, God chooses the weak things of the world to confound the strong. But it must be noted how those who are called to the supper and come are described: the poor and the feeble. They are called poor and feeble who in their own judgment are weak in their own eyes. For there are poor who are as if strong, who even when placed in poverty are proud.

The blind, indeed, are those who have no light of understanding. The lame also are those who do not have right steps in their conduct. But since vices of character are signified in the weakness of the limbs, it is certainly clear that just as those were sinners who when called refused to come, so also these are sinners who are invited and come. But proud sinners are rejected, so that humble sinners may be chosen. Therefore God chose these whom the world despises, because very often that contempt itself calls a person back to himself. For he who left his father and squandered prodigally the portion of substance he had received, after he began to hunger, returned to himself and said: "How many hired servants in my father's house have bread in abundance? Indeed he had departed far from himself when he was sinning. And if he had not hungered, he would never have returned to himself, because only after he lacked earthly things did he begin to consider what he had lost of spiritual things. Therefore the poor and the weak, the blind and the lame are called, and they come, because all who are infirm and despised in this world very often hear the voice of God more quickly, precisely because they have nothing in this world in which to take delight. This is well represented by that Egyptian boy of the Amalekites, who, when the Amalekites were plundering and advancing, remained sick on the road, and wasted away from hunger and thirst.

Yet David found him and provided him food and drink; and he, immediately recovering, became David's guide. He found the Amalekites feasting, and with great strength he overthrew those who had abandoned him in his weakness. For the Amalekite people are called "the licking ones. And what is designated by the licking people except the minds of worldly persons? They lick, as it were, all earthly things by grasping at them, since they delight only in temporal matters. For like a licking people taking plunder, those who love earthly gains heap them up from the losses of others. But the Egyptian boy is left sick on the road, because whenever any sinner begins to weaken from his standing in this world, he soon becomes an object of contempt to worldly minds. Yet David finds him and offers him food and drink, because the Lord, strong of hand, does not despise those cast off by the world, and very often he converts to the grace of his love those who, being unable to follow the world, remain as it were on the road, and he extends to them the food and drink of his word; and he chooses them as guides for himself on the way, as it were, when he makes them his preachers as well. For when they bring Christ into the hearts of sinners, they lead David, as it were, against his enemies.

They strike the feasting Amalekites as if with David's sword, because by the Lord's power they overthrow all the proud who had despised them in the world. Therefore the Egyptian boy who had remained on the road kills the Amalekites, because very often those same ones overcome the minds of worldly persons by preaching, who previously were unable to run with the worldly in this world. But let us hear what the servant adds after the poor have been brought to the supper: Lord, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room. Many such were gathered from Judea to the Lord's supper, but the multitude that believed from the people of Israel did not fill the place of the heavenly banquet. The throng of Jews has already entered, but there is still room vacant in the kingdom where the multitude of the Gentiles must be received. Hence it is said to the same servant: Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. When the Lord invites certain ones from villages and streets to the supper, He clearly designates that people who had known how to keep the law under civilized society; but when He commands His guests to be gathered from highways and hedges, He doubtless seeks to gather a rustic people, that is, the Gentiles, of whose signification it is said through the Psalmist: Then shall all the trees of the forest rejoice before the face of the Lord, because He comes.

For the trees of the forest are called the Gentiles, because in their unbelief they were always twisted and unfruitful. Those therefore who were converted from that rustic way of life came to the Lord's supper as if from hedges. It should be noted that in this third invitation it does not say "Invite," but "Compel them to enter. For some are called and disdain to come; others are called and come; but of others it is by no means said that they are called, but that they are compelled to enter. Those who are called and disdain to come are those who receive the gift of understanding, but do not follow that understanding with works; those who are called and come are those who perfect the grace of understanding they have received by acting upon it; but some are called in such a way that they are also compelled. For there are some who understand the good things they ought to do, but cease from doing them; they see what they ought to do, but do not follow it out of desire. To these, as we said above, it often happens that the adversity of this world strikes them in their carnal desires; they try to grasp temporal glory and cannot; and while they propose to sail through the deep waters, as it were, toward the greater concerns of this age, they are always driven back by contrary winds to the shores of their own dejection.

And when they see themselves broken in their desires, with the world opposing them, they are reminded what they owe to their Creator, so that they return to Him with shame, whom they had abandoned in their pride for love of the world. For often some who wish to advance toward temporal glory either waste away in prolonged illness, or fall crushed by injuries, or are afflicted when struck by heavy losses, and in the sorrow of the world they see that they should have placed

no confidence in its pleasures, and reproaching themselves for their own desires, they turn their hearts to God. Of these indeed the Lord says through the prophet: ”Behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns, and I will wall it in with a barrier, and she shall not find her paths; and she shall follow after her lovers, and shall not overtake them; she shall seek them, and shall not find them, and she shall say: I will go and return to my first husband, because it was better with me then than now. The husband of every faithful soul is God, because she is joined to Him through faith. But that soul which had been joined to God follows after her lovers, when the mind which has already believed through faith still subjects itself in action to unclean spirits, seeks the glory of the world, feeds on carnal delight, and is nourished by exquisite pleasures. But often almighty God mercifully looks upon such a soul and mingles bitterness with her pleasures.

Hence He says: ”Behold, I will hedge up your ways with thorns. For our ways are hedged with thorns when in what we wrongly desire we find the pricks of pain. ”And I will wall them in with a barrier, and she shall not find her paths. Our ways are walled in with a barrier when hard obstacles in this world resist our desires. And we cannot find our paths, because we are prevented from obtaining what we wrongly seek. ”And she shall follow after her lovers, and shall not overtake them; she shall seek them, and shall not find them”; because the soul does not at all attain the fulfillment of her desires from the malign spirits to whom she had subjected herself in her desires. But what great benefit arises from this salutary adversity He adds when it follows: ”And she shall say: I will go and return to my first husband, because it was better with me then than now. Therefore, after she finds her ways hedged with thorns, after she cannot overtake her lovers, she returns to the love of her first husband, because often after we cannot obtain what we want in this world, after we grow weary in earthly desires from their impossibility, then we bring God back to mind, then He who displeased us begins to please; and He whose precepts had been bitter to us suddenly becomes sweet in memory;

and the sinful soul who had tried to be an adulteress, yet could not through open act, resolves to be a faithful wife. Those therefore who, broken by the adversities of this world, return to the love of God and are corrected from the desires of the present life—what are they, my brothers, but compelled to enter? But the sentence that is immediately added is greatly to be feared. Receive this with attentive ear of heart, my brothers and lords: insofar as you are sinners, my brothers; insofar as you are righteous, my lords. Receive this with attentive ear, so that you may feel it less at the judgment, the more fearfully you now hear it in preaching. For he says: ”But I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper. Behold, he calls through himself, he calls through angels, he calls through the fathers, he calls through the prophets, he calls through the apostles, he calls through pastors, he calls also through us, he often calls through miracles, he often calls through scourges, he sometimes calls through the prosperity of this world, he

sometimes calls through adversity. Let no one despise, lest while the one called makes excuses, when he wishes to enter he may not be able. Hear what Wisdom says through Solomon: ”Then they shall call upon me, and I will not hear; they shall rise early, and shall not find me. Hence it is that the foolish virgins coming late cry out, saying: ”Lord, Lord, open to us.

But to those seeking entrance it is then said: ”Amen, amen, I say to you, I know you not. What amid these things, dearest brothers, except that we ought to abandon all things, postpone the cares of the world, and yearn for eternal desires alone? But these things have been given to few. I want to admonish you to leave all things behind, but I do not presume to do so. If therefore you cannot abandon all things of the world, hold onto the things of this world in such a way that you are not held by them in the world; so that earthly things may be possessed and not possess you; so that what you have may be under the dominion of your mind, lest if your mind is conquered by love of earthly things, it itself be rather possessed by its own possessions. Therefore let temporal things be for use, eternal things for desire; let temporal things be for the journey, let eternal things be longed for at the arrival. Let whatever is done in this world be regarded as if from the side. But let the eyes of the mind reach forward before us, while with complete attention they gaze upon those things to which we are coming. Let vices be thoroughly uprooted, torn out not only from the act of deeds, but also from the thought of the heart.

Let not the pleasure of the flesh, nor the anxiety of curiosity, nor the fever of ambition hinder us from the Lord’s supper, but even those things which we do honorably in the world, let us touch them as if from a certain side of the mind, so that earthly things which please us may serve our body in such a way that they by no means obstruct our heart. Therefore, brothers, we do not dare to tell you to leave all things behind; but nevertheless, if you wish, you leave all things behind even while retaining them, if you so manage temporal things that you still strive with your whole mind toward eternal things. For this reason the Apostle Paul says: ”The time is short: it remains that those who have wives be as though not having them, those who weep as though not weeping, and those who rejoice as though not rejoicing, and those who buy as though not possessing, and those who use this world as though not using it; for the form of this world is passing away. For he has a wife, but as though not having one, who knows how to pay the debts of the flesh in such a way that he is not compelled through her to cling to the world with his whole mind. For when the same excellent preacher says again:

”He who has a wife thinks about the things of this world, how he may please his wife,” that man has a wife as though not having one who strives to please his spouse in such a way that he nevertheless does not displease his Creator. He also weeps, but as though not weeping, who is so afflicted by temporal losses that he nevertheless always consoles his soul with thoughts of eternal gains. But he rejoices,

yet as though not rejoicing, who is so gladdened by temporal goods that he nevertheless always considers the everlasting torments; and in that by which he lifts up his mind with joy, he immediately presses it down with the weight of prudent fear. Moreover, he buys, but as though not possessing, who both prepares earthly things for use, and yet with careful thought foresees that he will soon leave these behind. He also uses the world, but as though not using it, who both outwardly applies all necessary things to the service of his life, and yet does not allow these same things to dominate his mind, so that they serve as subjects externally, and never break the intention of a soul striving toward higher things. Whoever therefore are such, for them indeed all earthly things are present not for desire but for use, because they make use of necessary things indeed, but desire to have nothing with sin. From these very possessions they daily acquire rewards, and they rejoice more in good work than in good possession.

And lest these things seem difficult to some, I relate a matter concerning a person whom many of you have known, which matter indeed I myself learned three years ago in the city of Centumcellae from faithful persons. For recently in that same city there was a count named Theophanius, a man devoted to works of mercy, intent on good deeds, especially zealous for hospitality. Occupied with carrying out the duties of his office, he conducted earthly and temporal affairs; but as became clearer from his end, more from obligation than from intention. For when, as the time of his death approached, a most severe storm prevented him from being carried out for burial, and his wife with most vehement weeping asked him, saying: ”What shall I do? How shall I carry you out for burial, when I cannot leave the door of this house because of the excessive storm? Then he replied: ”Do not weep, woman, for as soon as I am dead, fair weather will return. And immediately death followed his words, and fair weather followed his death. His hands and feet had been swelling with the fluid of gout, and had turned into wounds, and lay open with flowing pus. But when his body had been uncovered for washing according to custom, his hands and feet were found so healthy, as if they had never had any wound at all.

And so he was carried out and buried, and it seemed good to his wife that on the fourth day the marble which had been placed over his tomb should be changed. When this marble placed over his body had been removed, such a fragrance of sweet odor emanated from his body, as if instead of worms, spices had been fermenting from his decaying flesh. I have said these things, therefore, so that I might show by a nearby example that some both wear a secular habit and do not have a secular spirit. For those whom necessity binds in such manner in the world that they cannot be entirely stripped of the world, ought so to hold the things which are of the world that they nevertheless do not know how to succumb to them through weakness of mind. Think on this, therefore, and when you cannot relinquish all the things which are of the world, conduct external matters well outwardly, but ardently hasten inwardly toward eternal things. Let nothing retard the desire of

your mind, let the delight of no thing in this world entangle you. If good is loved, let the mind delight in better goods, that is, in heavenly things. If evil is feared, let eternal evils be set before the soul, so that when it perceives that there is both more to love and more to fear there, it may by no means cling to things here.

For accomplishing these things we have the mediator between God and men as our helper, through whom we shall obtain all things more quickly, if we burn with true love for him, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever. Amen.

HOMILY 37. Delivered to the people in the basilica of the blessed martyr Sebastian, on the day of his birth.

READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE. At that time, Jesus said to the crowds: If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, and wife and children, and brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not carry his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, wishing to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the costs that are necessary, whether he has enough to complete it, lest after he has laid the foundation and is not able to finish it, all who see it begin to mock him, saying: This man began to build and was not able to finish? Or what king, going to wage war against another king, does not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Otherwise, while the other is still far away, he sends an embassy and asks for terms of peace. So therefore, every one of you who does not renounce all that he possesses cannot be my disciple. If we consider, dearest brothers, what and how great are the things promised to us in heaven, everything that is possessed on earth becomes worthless to the soul. For earthly substance, compared to heavenly happiness, is a burden, not a help. Temporal life, compared to eternal life, should be called death rather than life.

For what is this daily failing of corruption itself other than a kind of prolongation of death? But what tongue can tell, or what understanding can grasp how great are the joys of that heavenly city: to be present among the choirs of angels, to stand with the most blessed spirits in the glory of the Creator, to behold the face of God present before us, to see the uncircumscribed light, to be affected by no fear of death, to rejoice in the gift of perpetual incorruption? But at hearing these things the soul is set ablaze, and already desires to stand there where it hopes to rejoice without end. But one cannot arrive at great rewards except through great labors. Hence Paul, that excellent preacher, says: No one will be crowned unless he has competed lawfully. Therefore let the greatness of the rewards delight the mind, but let not the struggle of labors deter it. Hence Truth says to those coming to him: If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, and wife and children, and brothers and sisters, and even his own soul as well, he cannot be my

disciple. But it is fitting to inquire how we are commanded to hate our parents and blood relatives, when we are ordered to love even our enemies? And certainly the Truth says concerning a wife: What God has joined together, let not man separate. And Paul says: Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church.

Behold, the disciple preaches that a wife should be loved, while the Master says: He who does not hate his wife cannot be my disciple. Does the judge announce one thing while the herald proclaims another? Or can we both hate and love at the same time? But if we weigh the force of the precept, we are able to do both through discernment, so that those who are joined to us by kinship of the flesh, and whom we recognize as our neighbors, we may love, and those whom we suffer as adversaries in the way of God we may disregard by hating and fleeing from them. For one who thinks carnally is loved, as it were, through hatred, when he brings wicked things upon us and is not heard. Moreover, so that the Lord might demonstrate that this hatred toward our neighbors does not proceed from lack of affection but from charity, He added immediately, saying: And his own soul as well. Therefore we are commanded to hate our neighbors, and to hate our own soul. It is clear, then, that one ought to hate his neighbor by loving him, he who hates his neighbor just as he hates himself. For we truly hate our own soul well when we do not yield to its carnal desires, when we break its appetite, when we resist its pleasures. Therefore what is led to better things by being despised is loved, as it were, through hatred.

Thus, thus indeed we ought to show the discernment of hatred toward our neighbors, so that we may both love in them what they are, and hold in hatred that by which they obstruct us on our journey to God. Certainly, when Paul was going to Jerusalem, the prophet Agabus took hold of his belt and bound his own feet, saying: ”The man whose belt this is, they will bind thus in Jerusalem. But what did he who perfectly hated his own soul say? ”I am prepared not only to be bound but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, nor do I consider my soul more precious than myself. Behold how he hated his soul by loving it, or rather, by hating it he loved it, since he desired to hand it over to death for Jesus, so that he might raise it to life from the death of sin. Therefore, from this discernment of our hatred let us draw a pattern for hatred of our neighbor. Let anyone in this world be loved, even an adversary, but let not even a relative be loved who is opposed in the way of God. For whoever now desires eternal things, in the cause of God which he undertakes, must become estranged from father, from mother, from wife, from children, from relatives, from his very self, so that he may know God more truly the more he recognizes no one in God’s cause.

For the carnal affections greatly buffet the intention of the mind and obscure its vision; yet we do not suffer them as harmful if we hold them in check by suppressing them. Therefore, neighbors are to be loved, charity is to be extended to all, both

relatives and strangers, yet for the sake of that same charity we must not be turned aside from love of God. Now we know that when the ark of the Lord was returning from the land of the Philistines to the land of the Israelites, it was placed upon a cart, and cows were yoked to the cart, which are recorded to have been nursing mothers, whose calves they shut up at home. And it is written: ”The cows went straight along the way that leads to Beth-shemesh, and they kept to one path, going and lowing, and they turned aside neither to the right nor to the left. What then do the cows signify but all the faithful in the Church, who while they consider the precepts of sacred Scripture, carry as it were the ark of the Lord placed upon them? Concerning these it should also be noted that they are recorded to have been nursing mothers, because there are many who, while inwardly set upon the way of God, are outwardly bound by carnal affections; yet they do not turn aside from the straight path, who carry the ark of God in their mind. For behold the cows proceed to Beth-shemesh. Beth-shemesh means ”house of the sun”; and the Prophet says:

”But unto you who fear the Lord shall the sun of righteousness arise. If therefore we are heading toward the dwelling of the eternal sun, it is surely fitting that we not turn aside from the way of God on account of carnal affections. For it must be considered with all our strength that the cows placed under God’s cart proceed and groan: they give forth lowing from deep within, and yet they do not turn their steps from the path. Thus indeed ought the preachers of God, thus ought all the faithful within holy Church to be, that they may have compassion on their neighbors through charity, and yet not stray from the way of God through that compassion. But how this very hatred of one’s soul ought to be shown, Truth makes clear by adding: ”He who does not carry his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For the cross is so called from torture. And we carry the Lord’s cross in two ways: either when we afflict the flesh through abstinence, or when through compassion for our neighbor we consider his necessity as our own. For he who shows pain at another’s necessity carries the cross in his mind. But it should be known that there are some who practice abstinence of the flesh not for God, but for vainglory. And there are many who bestow compassion on their neighbor not spiritually, but carnally, so that they favor him not toward virtue, but as if by pitying him toward sins.

These therefore seem to carry a cross, but they do not follow the Lord. Hence this same Truth rightly says: ”He who does not carry his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For to carry the cross and go after the Lord is to practice either abstinence of the flesh or compassion for one’s neighbor out of zeal for eternal purpose. For whoever practices these things for a temporal purpose indeed carries the cross, but refuses to go after the Lord. Because lofty precepts have been given, a comparison of building something lofty is immediately added, when it is said: ”For which of you, wishing to build a tower, does not first sit down and

count the costs that are necessary, whether he has enough to complete it, lest after he has laid the foundation and cannot finish it, all who see it begin to mock him, saying: 'This man began to build and could not finish'? Everything we do, we ought to anticipate through careful consideration. For behold, according to the voice of Truth, he who builds a tower first prepares the costs of the building. If therefore we desire to construct a tower of humility, we must first prepare ourselves against the adversities of this world. For this is the difference between an earthly and a heavenly building: an earthly building is constructed by gathering expenses, but a heavenly building is constructed by dispersing expenses. For the former we make expenditures if we gather things not possessed;

for the latter we make expenditures if we relinquish even what we possess. That rich man could not have these expenditures, who, possessing many properties, sought out the Master, saying: "Good Master, what shall I do to possess eternal life? When he had heard the command to leave all things, he went away sad, and was made anxious in his mind from the very source by which he was outwardly richer in possessions. For because he loved in this life the expenditures of exaltation, in striving toward the eternal homeland he refused to have the expenditures of humility. But we must consider what is said: "All who see it begin to mock him," because, according to the voice of Paul, "We have been made a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men. And in everything we do, we ought to consider our hidden adversaries, who always press upon our works, who always rejoice at our failure. Beholding these, the Prophet says: "My God, in you I trust; I shall not be ashamed, nor let my enemies mock me. For when we are intent upon good works, unless we vigilantly watch against malign spirits, we suffer as mockers the very ones we have as persuaders to evil. But because a comparison has been given concerning the construction of a building, now a similitude is added from lesser to greater, so that greater things may be weighed from the smallest matters. For it follows:

"Or what king, going to wage war against another king, does not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Otherwise, while the other is still far away, he sends an embassy and asks for terms of peace. A king comes to battle against another king on equal terms, and yet if he perceives that he cannot be sufficient, he sends an embassy and seeks terms of peace. With what tears, then, ought we to hope for pardon, we who in that dreadful judgment do not come to trial on equal terms with our King, whom our condition, weakness, and cause show to be inferior? But perhaps we have already cut off the faults of evil works, we already outwardly avoid all wicked things; yet are we sufficient to render an account of our thoughts? For he is said to come with twenty thousand against whom he who comes with ten thousand is by no means sufficient. Ten thousand to twenty thousand is indeed as one to two. But if we make much progress, we barely keep our outward works

in righteousness. For even if the lust of the flesh has been cut off, nevertheless it has not yet been cut off completely from the heart. But he who comes to judge examines both outward and inward things together, weighs deeds and thoughts equally.

Therefore he comes with a double army against a single one, who examines us, scarcely prepared in works alone, concerning both our works and our thoughts at once. What then must be done, brothers, except that while we see that we with a single army cannot prevail against his double one, we send an embassy while he is still far off, and ask for terms of peace? For he is said to be far off because he is not yet seen as present through judgment. Let us send to him as our embassy our tears, let us send works of mercy, let us sacrifice upon his altar victims of propitiation, let us recognize that we cannot contend with him in judgment; let us weigh the power of his might, let us ask for terms of peace. This is our embassy, which appeases the coming king. Consider, brothers, how kind it is that he who has the power to crush us by his coming delays to come. Let us send to him, as we said, our embassy, by weeping, by giving, by offering sacred victims. For the victim of the sacred altar, offered with tears and kindness of mind, singularly avails for our absolution, because he who rising again from the dead dies no more, still through this mystery suffers again for us. For as often as we offer to him the victim of his passion, so often do we renew his passion for our absolution.

Many of you, most beloved brethren, as I believe, happened to know what I wish to recall to your memory by narrating it. It is reported to have happened not long before our times that a certain man was captured by enemies and carried off far away; and when he was held in chains for a long time, since his wife did not receive him back from that captivity, she thought him dead. On his behalf, as though he were already deceased, she took care to offer sacrifices every week. His chains were loosened in captivity as many times as sacrifices had been offered by his wife for the release of his soul. For returning after a long time, he told his wife with great wonder that on certain days, every week, his chains were loosened. When his wife examined those days and hours, she recognized that he had been released whenever she remembered that the sacrifice had been offered for him. From this, therefore, most beloved brethren, from this gather by certain consideration how much the sacred sacrifice offered by us is able to loose the bond of the heart in us, if offered by one person it was able to loose the chains of the body in another. Many of you, dearest brothers, knew Cassius, bishop of the city of Narni, whose custom it was to offer daily sacrifices to God, so that scarcely any day of his life passed without his immolating a victim of propitiation to almighty God. His life also greatly accorded with his sacrifice.

For giving all that he had in alms, when the hour for offering the sacrifice came, as if flowing entirely in tears, he would slay himself with great contrition of heart.

I learned of both his life and his death from a certain deacon of venerable life who had been raised by him. For he said that on a certain night the Lord appeared in a vision to his priest, saying: ”Go and tell the bishop: Do what you are doing, work what you are working, let not your foot cease, let not your hand cease; on the birthday of the apostles you will come to me, and I will give you your reward. The priest arose, but because the birthday of the apostles was near at hand, he was afraid to announce to the bishop the day of his death being so close. On another night the Lord returned, vehemently rebuked his disobedience, and repeated the same words of his command. Then the priest arose to go, but again weakness of heart became an obstacle to revealing the vision; and he became hardened against going even after the repeated admonition of the command, and neglected to make known what he had seen. But because great kindness, when despised, is usually followed by greater wrath of vengeance, the Lord appearing in a third vision now added blows to words, and he was beaten with such severe stripes that the wounds of his body softened the hardness of his heart.

Therefore, instructed by the beating, he arose and went to the bishop, and found him already standing according to custom near the tomb of the blessed martyr Juvenal to offer the sacrifice. He asked for privacy from those standing around, and prostrated himself at his feet. When the bishop could scarcely raise him up as he wept profusely, he endeavored to learn the causes of his tears. But he, about to relate the order of the vision, first let his garment slip from his shoulders and revealed the wounds of his body, witnesses, so to speak, of truth and of fault, showing with what severity of punishment the blows received had furrowed his limbs with inflicted bruises. As soon as the bishop saw these, he was horrified, and with voices of great astonishment inquired who had presumed to do such things to him. But he replied that he had suffered these things on his behalf. Amazement grew with terror; but now the priest, adding no more delays to his inquiry, opened the secret of the revelation, and narrated to him the words of the Lord’s command as he had heard them, saying: ”Do what you are doing, work what you are working, let not your hand cease, let not your foot cease; on the birthday of the apostles you will come to me, and I will give you your reward.

When he heard these things, the bishop prostrated himself in prayer with great contrition of heart, and he who had come at the third hour to offer the sacrifice prolonged it until the ninth hour because of the greatness of his extended prayer. And from that day the gains of his piety increased more and more; and he became as strong in work as he was certain of the reward, since he had already begun, from that promise, to have as his debtor the one to whom he himself had been indebted. Now it had been his custom to come to Rome each year on the birthday of the apostles; but now, suspicious because of this revelation, he was unwilling to come according to custom. Therefore at that time he was anxious, and in the second and third years as well he was held in suspense in expectation of his death;

similarly in the fourth, fifth, and sixth years. He might have despaired of the truth of the revelation, if the blows had not given credence to the words. But behold, in the seventh year he arrived unharmed at the sacred vigils of the awaited birthday; but a mild fever touched him during the vigils, and on the very birthday itself he declined to perform the solemnities of Mass for his children who awaited him.

But they, because they were equally suspicious about his departure, all came to him together, binding themselves unanimously that they would by no means consent to the solemnities of Mass being celebrated on that day unless their same bishop approached the Lord as intercessor for them. Then he, compelled, celebrated Mass in the oratory of the episcopal residence, and with his own hand gave the Lord's body and peace to all. When the entire ministry of the offered sacrifice was completed, he returned to his bed, and lying there, when he saw his priests and ministers standing around him, as if saying a last farewell, he admonished them about preserving the bond of charity, and proclaimed with what great concord they ought to be united among themselves. When suddenly, in the midst of those very words of holy exhortation, he cried out in a terrible voice, saying: "The hour has come. And immediately he gave to those assisting him with his own hands the linen cloth, which according to the custom for the dying was to be stretched over his face. When it was stretched out, he gave up his spirit, and thus that holy soul, arriving at eternal joys, was released from the corruption of the flesh. Whom, dearest brothers, whom did this man imitate in his death, if not him whom he had contemplated in his life?

For saying "The hour has come," he departed from the body, because Jesus also, when all things were accomplished, when he had said "It is finished," bowing his head, gave up his spirit. What therefore the Lord did by his power, the servant did by his calling. Behold how that embassy sent with daily sacrifices, almsgiving, and tears made so great a peace of grace with the coming King. Therefore let him who can abandon all things. But he who cannot abandon all things, while the King is still far off, let him send an embassy, let him offer the gifts of tears, alms, and sacrifices. For He who knows that He cannot be endured when angry wishes to be appeased by prayers. The reason He still delays His coming is that He awaits an embassy of peace. For He would have come already if He wished, and would have slain all His adversaries. But He both indicates how terrible He will be when He comes, and yet delays His coming, because He does not wish to find any whom He must punish. He announces to us the guilt of our contempt, saying: "So therefore, every one of you who does not renounce all that he possesses cannot be my disciple"; and yet He bestows the remedy of hoped-for salvation, because He who cannot be endured in His wrath wishes to be appeased through an embassy seeking peace. Wash therefore, dearest brothers, the stains of your sins with tears, wipe them away with alms, cleanse them with holy sacrifices.

Do not possess through desire what you have not yet abandoned in practice. Fix your hope in the Redeemer alone, pass over in mind to the eternal homeland. For if you no longer possess anything in this world through love, you have abandoned all things even while possessing them. May He Himself grant us the joys we long for, He who has bestowed upon us the remedies of eternal peace, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY XXXVIII. Delivered to the people in the basilica of the blessed martyr Clement.

READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW. At that time, Jesus was speaking to the chief priests and Pharisees in parables, saying: The kingdom of heaven is like a king who made a wedding feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who had been invited to the wedding, and they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying: Tell those who have been invited: Behold, I have prepared my banquet, my bulls and fatted calves have been slaughtered, and all things are ready, come to the wedding. But they paid no attention and went away, one to his farm, another to his business; and the rest seized his servants, and having treated them shamefully, killed them. When the king heard this, he was angry; and having sent his armies, he destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants: The wedding feast indeed is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the crossroads, and whoever you find, call to the wedding. And his servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests. But the king went in to see the guests; and he saw there a man not dressed in a wedding garment, and said to him: Friend, how did you enter here not having a wedding garment? But he was silent. Then the king said to the attendants:

Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen. The text of the Gospel reading, dearest brothers, I wish, if I can, to run through briefly, so that at its end I may be free to speak more extensively. But first it must be asked whether this reading in Matthew is the same one that is described in Luke under the name of a supper. And indeed there are some things that seem to be discordant with each other, because here a dinner is mentioned, there a supper; here the one who entered the wedding feast without proper garments was rejected, there no one who is said to have entered is reported to have been rejected. From this matter it is rightly concluded that both here the present Church is signified by the wedding feast, and there the eternal and final banquet is signified by the supper, because some enter this one who are going to depart, and whoever has once entered that one will no longer go out. But if perhaps anyone contends that this is the same

reading, I think it better, with faith preserved, to yield to another's understanding than to serve contentions, since it can perhaps also be suitably understood that Matthew said what Luke was silent about concerning the casting out of him who had not come with a wedding garment.

But that it is called a supper by the one and a dinner by the other does not at all oppose our understanding, because since among the ancients dinner was daily at the ninth hour, that same dinner was also called supper. I remember that I have often said that frequently in the holy Gospel the present Church is called the kingdom of heaven. For the congregation of the righteous is called the kingdom of heaven. Because the Lord says through the prophet: Heaven is my throne; and Solomon says: The soul of the righteous is the seat of wisdom; Paul also says: Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God; we ought clearly to conclude that if God is wisdom, and the soul of the righteous is the seat of wisdom, since heaven is called the throne of God, therefore the soul of the righteous is heaven. Hence it is said through the Psalmist concerning the holy preachers: The heavens declare the glory of God. Therefore the kingdom of heaven is the Church of the righteous, because while their hearts seek nothing on earth, through the fact that they sigh for things above, the Lord already reigns in them as if in heavenly places. Let it therefore be said: The kingdom of heaven is like a man who was a king, who made a wedding feast for his son. Now your charity understands who this king is, the father of the king's son: namely he to whom the Psalmist says:

"O God, give your judgment to the king, and your justice to the king's son. He made a wedding for his son. For God the Father made a wedding for God his Son when he joined him to human nature in the womb of the Virgin, when he willed that God before all ages should become man at the end of the ages. But since this union is usually made from two persons, far be it from our understanding that we should believe the person of God and man, our Redeemer Jesus Christ, to be united from two persons. Indeed we say that he exists from two and in two natures; but we avoid as impious the belief that he is composed of two persons. Therefore it can be said more openly and safely that in this the Father made a wedding for his Son the king, by which through the mystery of the incarnation he joined the holy Church to him. Moreover, the womb of the Virgin mother was the bridal chamber of this bridegroom. Hence the Psalmist also says: "He has set his tabernacle in the sun, and he himself comes forth like a bridegroom from his chamber. For like a bridegroom he came forth from his chamber, because God incarnate went out from the uncorrupted womb of the Virgin to join the Church to himself. Therefore he sent his servants to invite friends to this wedding. He sent once, he sent again, because he made the preachers of the Lord's incarnation first prophets, and afterward apostles.

Thus he sent servants twice to invite, because he both declared the incarnation of the Only-begotten as future through the prophets, and announced it as accomplished through the apostles. But since those who were first invited were unwilling to come to the wedding banquet, in the second invitation it is now said: ”Behold, I have prepared my dinner, my bulls and fatted calves are slain, and all things are ready. What do we understand by the bulls and fattened birds, dearest brothers, if not the fathers of the Old and New Testament? Because I speak to common people, I must also explain the very words of the Gospel reading. For we call ”altilia” fattened birds; from the word ”alere” (to nourish), we call them ”altilia,” as if ”alitilia. Since it was written in the law: ”You shall love your friend, and hate your enemy,” the just had then received permission to suppress God’s adversaries and their own with whatever strength they could, and to strike them by right of the sword. This is without doubt restrained in the New Testament, when Truth Himself preaches, saying: ”Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you. Who then are signified by the bulls if not the fathers of the Old Testament? For since they had received from the permission of the law the right to strike their adversaries with the repayment of hatred, so to speak, what else were they but bulls, who struck their enemies with the horn of bodily strength?

And what is figured by the fattened birds if not the fathers of the New Testament, who, receiving the grace of inner richness, striving upward from earthly desires, are lifted to the heights of their contemplation on wings? Indeed, to place one’s thought on lowly things—what else is this but a certain dryness of mind? But those who through understanding of heavenly things are already fed through holy desires with the food of inner delight from above grow fat, as it were, with more abundant nourishment. The Prophet had longed to be fattened with this richness when he said: ”Let my soul be filled as with fat and richness. Therefore, because the preachers of the Lord’s incarnation who were sent endured persecution from unbelievers—first the prophets and afterward the holy apostles—it is said to those invited who refused to come: ”My bulls and fattened birds have been slain, and all things are ready. As if it were said more openly: Look upon the deaths of the fathers who went before, and consider the remedies for your life. It should be noted that in the first invitation nothing is said about bulls and fattened birds, but in the second it is now mentioned that the bulls and fattened birds have been slaughtered, because almighty God, when we refuse to hear His words, adds examples, so that everything we believe impossible becomes easier for us to hope for, the more we hear that others have already passed through it. There follows:

”But they neglected it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business. To go to a farm is to devote oneself immoderately to earthly labor; to go to business is to yearn for the profits of worldly activities. For when one person is intent on earthly labor and another is given over to the activities of this world, each refuses to consider the mystery of the Lord’s incarnation and to live according to it—as

if going off to a farm or to business, he declines to come to the king's wedding. And very often, what is more serious, some people not only reject the grace of him who calls but even persecute it. Hence it is added: "But the rest seized his servants, and after treating them with contempt, killed them. But when the king learned of this, he sent his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. He destroys the murderers because he slays the persecutors. He burns their city with fire because not only their souls but also the flesh in which they had dwelt is tormented by the eternal flame of hell. It is said that he destroyed the murderers by sending armies because all judgment among humans is carried out through angels. For what are those hosts of angels if not the armies of our King? Hence the same king is called "Lord Sabaoth. For Sabaoth is translated as "of armies. Therefore he sends an army to destroy his adversaries because the Lord indeed executes vengeance through angels.

The power of this vengeance our fathers once only heard about, but we now see it. For where are those proud persecutors of the martyrs? Where are those who raised the neck of their heart against their Creator and swelled with deadly pride over the glory of this world? Behold, the death of the martyrs now flourishes in the faith of the living, and those who gloried in their cruelty against them do not come into our memory even among the number of the dead. Thus we recognize in actual events what we hear in parables. But he who sees that those invited despise him will not allow his son's wedding to remain empty. He sends to others, because even if the word of God labors among some, nevertheless at some point it will find a place where it may rest. Hence it is added: Then he said to his servants: The wedding indeed is prepared, but those who were invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the crossroads, and whomever you find, call to the wedding. If in Sacred Scripture we understand ways as actions, we understand the crossroads as the failures of actions, because those whom no prosperity accompanies in earthly activities usually come easily to God. It follows: And his servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good, and the wedding was filled with guests.

Behold, now by the very quality of those dining together it is openly shown that through these royal nuptials the present Church is designated, in which both good and evil come together. For it is mixed with a diversity of children, because although it begets all unto faith, yet it does not lead all through a change of life to the liberty of spiritual grace, their faults preventing it. For as long as we live here, it is necessary that we proceed on the way of the present age in a mixed state. But then we are separated when we arrive. For the good alone are nowhere except in heaven; and the evil alone are nowhere except in hell. But this life which is situated between heaven and hell, just as it subsists in the middle, so it receives the citizens of both parts in common; whom nevertheless holy Church both now receives without distinction and afterward separates at their departure. If therefore

you are good, as long as you subsist in this life, bear with the evil patiently. For whoever does not tolerate the evil, he himself is a witness to himself through his intolerance that he is not good. For he refuses to be Abel whom the malice of Cain does not exercise. Thus on the threshing floor the grains are pressed under the chaff; thus flowers arise among thorns, and the rose which gives fragrance grows with the thorn which pricks. Indeed the first man had two sons;

but one of them was chosen, the other was reprobate. The ark of Noah contained three sons; but two of them were chosen, and one was reprobate. Abraham had two sons; but one was chosen, the other was reprobate. Isaac had two sons; but one was chosen, the other was rejected. Jacob had twelve sons; but of these one was sold through innocence, while the others through malice were sellers of their brother. Twelve apostles were chosen; but one was mixed among them who would test, eleven who would be tested. Seven deacons were ordained by the apostles; but while six remained in the right faith, one became the author of error. In this Church therefore neither can the evil be without the good, nor the good without the evil. Therefore, dearest brothers, bring back to mind the times past, and strengthen yourselves for the toleration of the evil. For if we are children of the elect, it necessarily remains that we walk by their examples. For he was not good who refused to tolerate the evil. For hence it is that blessed Job asserts of himself, saying: I was a brother of dragons, and a companion of ostriches. Hence through Solomon it is said in the voice of the bridegroom to holy Church: As a lily among thorns, so is my beloved among the daughters. Hence the Lord says to Ezekiel: Son of man, unbelievers and subverters are with you, and you dwell among scorpions. Hence Peter glorifies the life of blessed Lot, saying:

And he rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the injury of the wicked in their conduct; for in sight and hearing he was righteous, dwelling among those who from day to day tormented his righteous soul with their lawless deeds. Hence Paul both praises and strengthens the life of his disciples, saying: In the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life. Hence John testifies to the Church of Pergamos, saying: I know where you dwell, where the throne of Satan is, and you hold my name, and you have not denied my faith. Behold, dearest brothers, running through almost all things we recognize that he was not good whom the depravity of the evil did not test. For if I may speak thus, the iron of our soul is by no means brought to the sharpness of a fine edge unless the file of another's depravity has worn it down. But it should not frighten you that in the Church there are both many who are evil and few who are good, because the ark amid the waters of the flood, which bore the type of this Church, was both wide in its lower parts and narrow in its upper parts, and at its very summit it grew to the measure of a single cubit. In its lower part it is to be believed it contained quadrupeds and reptiles, but in its upper part birds and human beings. It was wide where it held beasts;

it was narrow where it preserved human beings, because indeed the holy Church is spacious in carnal matters but narrow in spiritual ones. For where it tolerates the bestial behavior of people, there it relaxes its fold more widely. But where it has those who are supported by spiritual reason, there indeed it is led to the summit, yet because they are few, it is narrowed. For wide is the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who go by it; and narrow is the way that leads to life, and few are those who find it. Moreover, the ark is narrowed at the top to such an extent that it is brought to the measure of a single cubit, because in the holy Church the holier any persons are, the fewer they are. At its summit it is brought to him who alone among human beings was born holy, without comparison to any other. Who, according to the voice of the Psalmist, was made like a solitary sparrow on a rooftop. Therefore the evil are to be tolerated all the more, the more abundantly they abound, because even on the threshing floor there are few grains that are stored in granaries, and great heaps of chaff that are burned with fire. But since you have now entered the house of the wedding, that is, the holy Church, by the Lord's generosity, carefully observe, brothers, lest the king upon entering find fault with something in the attire of your mind.

For with great fear of heart we must consider what is immediately added: "The king entered to see those reclining at table, and he saw there a man not clothed in a wedding garment. What, dearest brothers, do we think is expressed by the wedding garment? For if we say the wedding garment is baptism or faith, who entered this wedding without baptism and faith? For by that very fact he is outside, because he has not yet believed. What then should we understand the wedding garment to be, except charity? For he enters the wedding, but does not enter with a wedding garment, who standing in the holy Church has faith but does not have charity. For rightly is charity called the wedding garment, because our Creator had this in himself when he came to the wedding of uniting the Church to himself. For it was accomplished solely by the love of God that his only-begotten Son united the minds of chosen people to himself. Hence John also says: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son for us. He therefore who came to humanity through charity made known that same charity to be the wedding garment. Therefore everyone among you who, being placed in the Church, has believed in God has already entered the wedding; but he does not come with a wedding garment if he does not preserve the grace of charity.

And certainly, brothers, if anyone were invited to a carnal wedding, he would change his garment, he would show by the very beauty of his attire that he rejoices with the bridegroom and bride, and he would be ashamed to appear in despised garments among those rejoicing and celebrating the feast. We come to the wedding of God, and we neglect to change the garment of our heart. The angels rejoice together when the elect are taken up to heaven. With what mind, then, do we behold these spiritual festivities, we who do not have the wedding garment, that is,

charity, which alone presents us as beautiful? It should be known that just as a garment is woven on two beams, namely the upper and the lower, so charity is held in two commandments, that is, in the love of God and of neighbor. For it is written: ”You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength; and your neighbor as yourself. In this matter it should be noted that in the love of neighbor a measure of love is established, when it is said: ”You shall love your neighbor as yourself”; but the love of God is constrained by no measure, when it is said: ”You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength. For one is not commanded how much to love, but from how much, when it is said:

”With all,” because he truly loves God who leaves nothing of himself for himself. Therefore whoever takes care to have a wedding garment at the wedding must keep these two commandments of charity. For this is why, in the prophet Ezekiel, the vestibule of the gate of that city situated on the mountain is measured at two cubits, because surely the entrance to the heavenly city is not opened to us if in this Church, which is called a vestibule because it is still outside, the love of God and neighbor is not maintained. This is why scarlet twice-dyed is commanded to be woven into the curtains of the tabernacle. You are, brothers, you are the curtains of the tabernacle, who veil heavenly secrets in your hearts through faith. But twice-dyed scarlet must be in the curtains of the tabernacle. For scarlet has the appearance of fire. And what is charity, if not fire? But this charity must be twice-dyed, so that it may be dyed through the love of God, and dyed through the love of neighbor. For he who so loves God that through contemplation of Him he neglects his neighbor, is indeed scarlet, but not twice-dyed. Again, he who so loves his neighbor that nevertheless he abandons the contemplation of God through love of him, is scarlet, but not twice-dyed.

Therefore, that your charity may be able to be twice-dyed scarlet, let it kindle itself both to the love of God and to the love of neighbor, so that it neither abandons the contemplation of God out of compassion for neighbor, nor, clinging to the contemplation of God more than it ought, casts aside compassion for neighbor. And so let every person living among people so yearn for Him whom he desires, that nevertheless he does not abandon the one with whom he was running; and let him so bring help to this one, that he in no way grows sluggish toward Him to whom he was hastening. It must also be known that this love of neighbor is subdivided into two precepts, as a certain wise man says: ”See that you do not do to another what you hate to have done to you. And Truth Himself preaches through Himself, saying: ”What you wish men to do to you, do the same to them. For if we both give to others what we rightly wish to be rendered to us, and we ourselves avoid doing to others what we do not wish done to us, we preserve the laws of charity unharmed. But let no one, when he loves someone, think that he immediately has charity, unless he first examines the very strength of his love. For if anyone loves

someone, but does not love him for the sake of God, he does not have charity, but thinks he has it.

True charity, however, is when a friend is loved in God, and an enemy is loved for the sake of God. For he loves those whom he loves for the sake of God, who already knows how to love even those by whom he is not loved. For charity is usually proven only through the adversity of hatred. Hence the Lord Himself says: ”Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you. Therefore, he loves securely who loves for the sake of God the one by whom he understands he is not loved. These things are great, these things are lofty, and difficult for many to practice, but nevertheless this is the wedding garment. Whoever does not have this garment while reclining at the wedding feast, let him now anxiously fear when the king enters, lest he be cast outside. For behold it is said: ”The king entered the wedding feast to see those reclining at table, and he saw there a man not clothed with a wedding garment. We are the ones, dearest brothers, who recline at the wedding feast of the Word, who already have faith in the Church, who are fed by the banquets of Sacred Scripture, who rejoice that the Church is joined to God. Consider, I ask, whether you have come to this wedding feast with a wedding garment; examine your thoughts with anxious inquiry. Weigh your hearts concerning each matter:

whether you now hold hatred against no one, whether you are not inflamed by any torch of envy against another’s good fortune, whether you do not hasten to harm anyone through hidden malice. Behold, the king enters the wedding and contemplates the condition of our heart, and to him whom he does not find clothed in charity, he immediately says in anger: Friend, how did you enter here not having a wedding garment? It is greatly to be wondered at, dearest brothers, that he both calls him friend and rejects him, as if he were saying to him more openly: Friend and not friend; friend by faith, but not friend by works. But he was struck silent, because—what cannot be said without groaning—in that strictness of the final rebuke, every argument of excuse ceases, since he who rebukes outwardly is the one who, as witness of conscience, accuses the soul within. But amid these things it must be known that whoever has this garment of virtue, but does not yet have it perfectly, ought not to despair of pardon at the entrance of the merciful king, because he himself also, granting us hope through the Psalmist, says: Your eyes saw my imperfection, and in your book all shall be written. But since we have said these few things for the consolation of one who has it but is weak, let us now turn our words to him who does not have it at all. It follows: Then the king said to the servants:

Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the feet and hands are bound by the strictness of the sentence, which now refused to be bound from wicked works through amendment of life. Or certainly, punishment then binds those whom guilt now bound

from good works. For the feet that neglect to visit the sick, the hands that give nothing to the needy, are already bound from good work by their own will. Therefore, those who now are willingly bound in vice will then be unwillingly bound in punishment. Moreover, it is well said that he is cast into the outer darkness. For we call the inner darkness the blindness of the heart, but the outer darkness the eternal night of damnation. Therefore, every condemned person is sent not into the inner but into the outer darkness, because he who here willingly fell into blindness of heart is there unwillingly cast into the night of damnation. Where there is said to be weeping and gnashing of teeth, so that there the teeth may gnash which here rejoiced in gluttony; there the eyes may weep which here were occupied with unlawful desires; so that each and every member may be subjected to punishment which here served in subjection to each and every vice. But when one has been rejected, in whom clearly the whole body of the wicked is represented, a general judgment is immediately added, in which it is said:

”For many are called, but few are chosen. What we have heard is greatly to be feared, dearest brothers. Behold, we who have all now been called through faith come to the wedding feast of the heavenly king, we both believe and confess the mystery of his incarnation, we receive the banquet of the divine Word, but on the future day of judgment the king will enter. That we are called, we know; whether we are chosen, we do not know. Therefore it is necessary that each one of us humble himself in humility all the more because he does not know whether he is chosen. For some do not even begin good works, while others do not persist at all in the good works they have begun. One person is seen to lead nearly his whole life in wickedness, but near the end of his life he is called back from his wickedness through the lamentations of severe penance; another seems to lead a chosen life, and yet it happens that near the end of his life he turns aside to the wickedness of error. One begins good well and finishes better; another casts himself down in evil deeds from his earliest age, and in the same works is always finished worse than himself. Therefore let each one anxiously fear for himself all the more because he does not know what remains, for, what must often be said and retained without forgetfulness: ”Many are called, but few are chosen.

But because sometimes the examples of the faithful convert the minds of hearers more than the words of teachers, I wish to tell you something from nearby, which your hearts may hear with all the more fear, since it sounds to them from close at hand. For we are not speaking of things done long ago, but we recall those of which witnesses exist, and who report that they were present. My father had three sisters, who were all three sacred virgins: one was called Tharsilla, another Gordiana, another Aemiliana. All were converted with one ardor, consecrated at one and the same time, living under regular discipline, they led a common life in their own home. And when they had been for a long time in the same manner of life, Tharsilla and Aemiliana began to grow daily with increasing love for their Creator,

and though they were here only in body, daily they passed in spirit to eternal things. But on the contrary, Gordiana's spirit began to grow lukewarm from the warmth of inner love through daily losses, and little by little to return to the love of this world. Often Tharsilla used to say to her sister Aemiliana with great sighing: I see that our sister Gordiana is not of our lot; for I perceive that she flows outward, and does not keep her heart to what she has professed. They took care to correct her with gentle daily reproof, and to reform her from levity of manners to the gravity of her state.

She would indeed suddenly assume an expression of gravity amid the words of correction, but when the hour of that correction had passed, the assumed gravity of respectability immediately passed as well, and she soon returned to frivolous words. She rejoiced in the company of lay girls, and any person who was not devoted to this world was very burdensome to her. But one night to this Tharsilla, my aunt, who among her sisters had excelled in the honor and height of sanctity by virtue of continuous prayer, zealous mortification, singular abstinence, and gravity of life, as she herself related, my great-great-grandfather Felix, bishop of this Roman Church, appeared in a vision, and showed her a mansion of perpetual brightness, saying: Come, for I receive you into this mansion of light. She was immediately seized by a fever the following day and came to her final day. And just as when noble women and men are dying many gather to console their relatives, at the very hour of her departure many men and women stood around her bed, among whom my mother also was present; when suddenly she looked upward and saw Jesus coming, and with great earnestness began to cry out to those standing around, saying: Depart, depart, Jesus comes. And as she gazed upon him whom she saw, that holy soul was released from the flesh; and suddenly such a fragrance of wondrous odor was spread about that the sweetness itself showed to all that the author of sweetness had come there.

And when her body was stripped to be washed as is the custom for the dead, it was found that hardened skin had grown on her elbows and knees, in the manner of camels, from long practice of prayer, and her dead flesh testified to what her living spirit had always done. These things occurred before the day of the Lord's Nativity. When that had passed, she soon appeared to her sister Aemiliana in a vision of the night, saying: Come, so that since I spent the Lord's Nativity without you, I may now spend the holy day of Theophany with you. She, immediately anxious about the salvation of their sister Gordiana, replied: And if I come alone, to whom do I leave our sister Gordiana? To her, as she reported, Tharsilla said again with sad countenance: Come, for our sister Gordiana has been reckoned among the laywomen. This vision was soon followed by bodily illness, and just as had been said, before the day of the Lord's appearing, with that illness growing worse, she died. But Gordiana, as soon as she found herself left alone, her wickedness increased, and what had previously lain hidden in the desire of thought, she afterward carried

out in the effect of wicked action. For forgetful of the fear of the Lord, forgetful of modesty and reverence, forgetful of her consecration, she afterward took the steward of her fields as a husband.

Behold, all three were first converted with one ardor, but they did not remain in one and the same devotion, because according to the Lord's voice, Many are called, but few are chosen. I have said these things therefore, lest anyone already established in good work attribute to himself the strength of good work, lest anyone trust in his own action, because even if he knows today what he is like, he still does not know what he will be tomorrow. Let no one therefore rejoice securely in his own works, since while still in the uncertainty of this life he does not know what end will follow. But because I have related a matter which terrified you from divine severity, I also relate another thing from nearby which may console your terrified hearts from divine mercy; which however I remember that I already said in another sermon, but you were by no means present. Two years ago, a certain brother came to my monastery, which is situated near the Church of the blessed martyrs John and Paul, for the purpose of conversion. After being tested according to the rule for a long time, he was eventually admitted. His brother followed him to the monastery not out of zeal for conversion but out of carnal affection. Now the one who had come for conversion was very pleasing to the brothers; but his brother, on the contrary, was far different from his life and character. He lived in the monastery more from necessity than from choice.

And though he was perverse in all his actions, he was patiently tolerated by everyone for the sake of his brother. For he was frivolous in speech, wicked in action, refined in clothing, unrefined in character; and he could not bear it if anyone spoke to him about adopting the religious life. Indeed, his way of life had become burdensome for all the brothers to witness, yet, as was said, he was tolerable to all for the sake of his brother. He greatly despised it if anyone spoke to him about correcting his depravity. He could not only not do good things, but could not even hear about them. He kept declaring, with oaths, anger, and mockery, that he would never embrace the religious life. But in that plague which recently consumed a great part of the population of this city, he was struck in the groin and brought to the point of death. When he was breathing his last, the brothers gathered to protect his departure with their prayers. His body was already dead from the extremities, and vital warmth still lingered only in his chest. All the brothers began to pray more earnestly for him as they saw him departing so quickly. Suddenly, with the brothers standing by, he began to cry out with whatever effort he could and to interrupt their prayers, saying: "Withdraw, withdraw! Behold, I have been given to a dragon to be devoured, and because of your presence he cannot devour me. He has already swallowed my head in his mouth;

give him room so that he may torment me no longer but do what he is going to do. If I have been given to him to be devoured, why do I suffer this delay because of you? Then the brothers began to say to him: ”What are you saying, brother? Make the sign of the holy cross upon yourself. He answered as best he could, saying: ”I want to sign myself, but I cannot, because I am pressed down by the dragon. When the brothers heard this, they prostrated themselves on the ground and with tears began to pray more intensely for his deliverance. And behold, suddenly the sick man began to improve and to rejoice with whatever voice he had, saying: ”Thanks be to God! Behold, the dragon who had taken me to devour me has fled; driven out by your prayers, he could not remain. Now intercede for my sins, because I am ready to be converted and to abandon the worldly life entirely. Therefore this man, who, as was already said, had been dead from the extremities of his body, was preserved for life and was converted to God with his whole heart. He was disciplined by long and continuous afflictions in that same conversion, and died a few days ago when his bodily illness increased. As he was dying, he did not see the dragon, because he had conquered it through the transformation of his heart.

Behold, my brothers, Gordiana, whom I mentioned above, fell from the height of the religious habit to punishment, and this brother, about whom I have told these things, returned from the very moment of death to eternal life. Therefore no one knows what is being done concerning himself in the hidden judgments of God; for many are called, but few are chosen. Since, therefore, no one is certain about himself that he is chosen, it remains that all should tremble, all should fear concerning their conduct, all should rejoice only in divine mercy, and no one should presume upon his own strength. There is one who perfects our confidence, namely he who deigned to assume our nature into himself, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY 39. Delivered to the people in the basilica of blessed John, which is called the Constantiniana.

READING OF THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE. At that time, when Jesus drew near to Jerusalem, seeing the city, he wept over it, saying: If you had known, even you, and indeed in this your day, the things that are for your peace; but now they are hidden from your eyes. For days shall come upon you, and your enemies shall surround you with a rampart; and they shall encircle you, and press you in on every side, and cast you to the ground, and your children who are in you; and they shall not leave in you a stone upon a stone, because you did not know the time of your visitation. And entering the temple, he began to cast out those selling in it and those buying, saying to them: It is written that my house is a house of prayer. But you have made it a den of thieves. And he was teaching daily in the temple. I wish to run through the brief reading of the holy Gospel with a brief discourse, if I can, so that a more extended consideration may be given to it by those who

know how to think much from little. That the overthrow of Jerusalem which was accomplished by Vespasian and Titus, the Roman princes, is described while the Lord weeps, no one who has read the history of that destruction is unaware. For the Roman princes are indicated when it is said: ”Because the days will come upon you, and your enemies will surround you with a rampart;

and they will encircle you, and hem you in on every side, and cast you to the ground, and your children who are in you. This also which is added: ”They will not leave in you a stone upon a stone,” even the very relocation of that city now testifies, because while it is now built in the place where the Lord had been crucified outside the gate, that former Jerusalem, as it is said, was utterly destroyed. From what fault the punishment of its destruction was inflicted upon it is added: ”Because you did not know the time of your visitation. For the Creator of all things deigned to visit it through the mystery of his incarnation, but it did not remember the fear and love of him. Whence also through prophecy, in rebuke of the human heart, the birds of heaven are brought forward as testimony, when it is said: ”The kite in the sky has known its time; the turtledove and the swallow and the stork have kept the time of their coming, but my people has not known the judgment of the Lord. But first we must ask what it means that is said: ”Seeing the city, he wept over it, saying: If you had known, even you. For the Redeemer first wept over the ruin of the faithless city, which the city itself did not know was coming upon it. To which the weeping Lord rightly says: ”If you had known, even you”—understand:

you would weep—you who now, because you do not know what threatens, rejoice. Whence it is also added: ”And indeed in this your day, the things that are for your peace. For when it gave itself to the pleasures of the flesh and did not foresee the evils to come, it had in its day those things which could be for its peace. But why it had present goods for peace is made clear when it is said: ”But now they are hidden from your eyes. For if the evils which threatened had not been hidden from the eyes of its heart, it would not have been joyful in present prosperity. Its punishment also, which was threatening from the Roman princes, as I said before, was soon added. Having described this, what the Lord did is added: because, entering the temple, he began to cast out those selling and buying in it, saying to them: It is written that my house is a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves. For he who foretold the evils to come and immediately entered the temple to cast out from it those selling and buying, clearly made known that the ruin of the people came chiefly from the fault of the priests. Indeed, in describing the destruction but striking at those selling and buying in the temple, he showed by the very effect of his work whence the root of perdition sprang.

Moreover, as we have learned from another evangelist as witness, doves were being sold in the temple. And what is received through doves except the gift of the Holy Spirit? But he expels the sellers and buyers from the temple, because he

condemns either those who grant the imposition of hands for a gift, or those who strive to buy the gift of the Spirit. About this temple it is soon added: My house is a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves. For those who sat in the temple to receive gifts, it was certainly not doubtful that they would seek to harm those who gave nothing. Therefore the house of prayer had been made a den of thieves, because they knew how to stand in the temple for this purpose: either to eagerly pursue bodily those not giving gifts, or to kill spiritually those who did give. But because our Redeemer does not withhold the words of preaching even from the unworthy and ungrateful, after he maintained the vigor of discipline by casting out the perverse, he soon showed the gift of grace. For it is added: And he was teaching daily in the temple. We have run through these things briefly, treating them according to the historical sense.

But since we know that Jerusalem has now been destroyed and through its destruction has been changed for the better, since we know that the robbers were driven from the temple and that the temple itself has now been demolished, we ought to draw some likeness inwardly from external things and fear the ruin of morals from the ruined buildings of walls. For seeing the city, he wept over it, saying: If you had known, even you. This he did once, when he announced that the city would perish. This our Redeemer never ceases to do daily through his elect, when he considers that certain people have passed from a good life to wicked ways. For he mourns those who do not know why they are mourned, because, according to the words of Solomon: They rejoice when they have done evil and exult in the worst things. If they had recognized their damnation which hangs over them, they themselves would mourn with the tears of the elect. The sentence which follows fittingly applies to the soul about to perish: And indeed in this your day, the things that are for your peace, but now they are hidden from your eyes. Here the perverse soul has its own day, which rejoices in transitory time.

For such a soul the things present are for peace, because while it rejoices in temporal things, while it is exalted by honors, while it dissolves in carnal pleasure, while it is terrified by no fear of future punishment, it has peace in its day, which will have the grave scandal of its damnation in another’s day. For there it will be afflicted, where the just will rejoice; and all the things which now are for its peace will then be turned into the bitterness of strife, because it will begin to quarrel with itself as to why it did not dread the damnation it suffers, why it closed the eyes of its mind from foreseeing the evils to follow. Hence it is told: But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the perverse soul, devoted to present things, dissolved in earthly pleasures, hides from itself the evils to follow, because it refuses to foresee future things which would disturb its present joy; and while it abandons itself to the delights of the present life, what else does it do but go to the fire with closed eyes? Hence it is well written: In the day of good things, do not be forgetful of evil things. And therefore it is said through Paul:

Let those who rejoice be as though not rejoicing, because even if there is any joy of the present time, it is to be experienced in such a way that the bitterness of the following judgment never departs from memory, so that while the fearful mind is pierced through by fear of final vengeance, as much as present joy now prevails, so much will the wrath that follows afterward be tempered. For hence it is written: Blessed is the man who is always fearful; but he who is hard of mind will fall into evil. For the wrath of the following judgment will then be borne all the more severely, the less it is feared now even amid sins. There follows: Because the days shall come upon thee, and thine enemies shall surround thee with a rampart. Who are ever greater enemies of the human soul than the malignant spirits, who besiege it as it departs from the body, whom they nourished with deceitful pleasures while it was placed in love of the flesh? They surround it with a rampart, because by bringing back before the eyes of its mind the iniquities which it perpetrated, they constrict it, dragging it to the fellowship of their damnation, so that caught now in the very extremity of life, it may see both by what enemies it is surrounded, and yet be unable to find a way of escape, because it is no longer permitted to perform the good works which, when it was permitted to do them, it despised.

Concerning these, what follows can also be aptly understood: They shall surround thee and press thee in on every side. For malignant spirits press in upon the soul on every side, when they bring back to it the iniquities not only of deed, but also of speech and moreover of thought, so that she who formerly spread herself abroad through many crimes may at the end be pressed in on all sides in retribution. There follows: And they shall cast thee to the ground, and thy children who are in thee. Then the soul is cast to the ground through the knowledge of its guilt, when the flesh which it believed to be its life is compelled to return to dust. Then her children fall into death, when the illicit thoughts which now proceed from her are scattered in the final punishment of life, as it is written: In that day all their thoughts shall perish. These harsh thoughts can also be understood through the signification of stones. For there follows: And they shall not leave in thee stone upon stone. For when a perverse mind adds a yet more perverse thought to a perverse thought, what else does it do but place stone upon stone? But in the destroyed city stone is not left upon stone, because when the soul is led to its punishment, the whole structure of its thoughts is scattered. Why it suffers this is added: ”Because you did not know the time of your visitation.

Almighty God is accustomed to visit every wicked soul in many ways. For He visits it continually through His commandment, sometimes through affliction, and sometimes through a miracle, so that it may hear the truths it did not know, and yet if still proud and contemptuous, it may return pricked by pain, or overcome by benefits may blush at the evil it has done. But because it does not recognize the time of its visitation, it is handed over at the end of life to those enemies with whom it will be bound in the fellowship of perpetual damnation at the eternal judgment, as it is

written: ”When you go with your adversary to the magistrate on the way, make an effort to be freed from him, lest perhaps he drag you to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer cast you into prison. For our adversary on the way is the word of God, contrary to our carnal desires in the present life. He is freed from it who humbly submits to His commandments. Otherwise the adversary will hand him over to the judge, and the judge will hand him over to the officer, because from the contempt of the Lord’s word the guilty sinner will be held liable at the examination of the judge.

The judge hands him over to the officer, because He permits the malignant spirit to drag him away for punishment, so that he himself may exact the soul driven from the body for punishment, the soul that willingly consented to him for sin. The officer casts him into prison, because through the malignant spirit he is thrust back into hell until the day of judgment comes, from which point he himself also will be tormented together in the fires of hell. After the destruction of the city is completed, which we have applied to the likeness of a perishing soul, it is immediately added: ”And entering the temple, he began to cast out those selling and buying in it. Just as the temple of God is in the city, so also is the life of religious persons among the faithful people. And often some take up the habit of religion, and when they receive a place in the sacred orders, they turn the office of holy religion into a commerce of earthly business. Those selling in the temple are they who bestow for a reward what rightly belongs to certain persons. For to sell justice is to maintain it in exchange for receiving a reward. Those buying in the temple are they who, while refusing to render to their neighbor what is just, and while disdaining to do what is rightly owed, give a reward to patrons and buy sin. To them it is rightly said:

”My house is a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves,” because when perverse men sometimes hold a place of religion, there they slay with the swords of their malice where they ought to have given life to their neighbors through the intercession of their prayer. The temple and house of God is also the very mind and conscience of the faithful. If at any time it brings forth perverse thoughts in injury to a neighbor, it is as though robbers are dwelling in a cave and killing those who walk by in simplicity, when they thrust swords of injury into those who are guilty of nothing. For the mind of the faithful is no longer a house of prayer but a den of thieves when, having abandoned the innocence and simplicity of holiness, it strives to do that by which it might harm its neighbors. But because against all these perverse things we are ceaselessly instructed by the words of our Redeemer through the sacred pages, what is reported to have been done is still being done now, when it says: ”And he was teaching daily in the temple. For when he subtly instructs the mind of the faithful to guard against evils, Truth teaches daily in the temple. But we must know that we are truly instructed by the words

of truth if we look upon our final evils with fear and without ceasing, according to what is said by a certain wise man:

”In all your works remember your last end, and you will never sin. Indeed, we ought to consider daily what we have heard from the voice of our same Redeemer: ”If only on this day of yours you knew the things that are for your peace; but now they are hidden from your eyes. For while the strict Judge waits and does not yet extend his hand in striking, while there seems to be a certain security of time before the retribution of final vengeance, we ought to consider the evil that follows, and considering it, groan; groaning, avoid it; and look upon the sins we have committed without ceasing; looking upon them, weep; and weeping, wipe them away. Let no joy of passing prosperity dissolve us, nor let transitory things obstruct the eyes of our mind, nor lead us blind to the fire. For if it be considered strictly, from the mouth of Truth it is known how weighty is the reproach, when it is said to the negligent one who does not look ahead to future things: ”If only on this day of yours you knew the things that are for your peace; but now they are hidden from your eyes. For we must consider deeply how terrible for us will be the hour of our death, what fear of mind, how great then the memory of all our evils, what forgetfulness of past happiness, what dread and consideration of the Judge.

What, therefore, ought the present things be to us for delight, when, as all things pass away together, that which threatens cannot pass away? When that which is loved is utterly ended, and that begins where pain never ends? Then malign spirits seek their own works in the departing soul; then they recount the evils they persuaded, that they may drag the soul as their companion to torments. But why do we say this only of the perverse soul, when they come also to the elect as they depart, and seek something of their own in them, if they might prevail? Yet One among men existed, who before His passion says with free voice: ”I will no longer speak much with you; for the prince of this world comes, and in me he has nothing. For since he saw Him as a mortal man, the prince of the world believed he could find something of his own in Him. But He departed from the corruption of the world without any sin, who came into the world without sin. This Peter did not presume to say of himself against the prince of the world, Peter who deserved to hear: ”Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. This Paul did not presume to say, who before he paid the debt of death reached the secrets of the third heaven.

This John did not dare to say, who for his special love reclined on the breast of his Redeemer at supper. For since the Prophet says: ”Behold, I was conceived in iniquities, and in sins did my mother bear me,” he could not be without fault in the world who came into the world with fault. Hence the same Prophet says: ”No living person shall be justified in your sight. Hence Solomon says: ”There is no just man on earth who does good and does not sin. Hence John says: ”If we say that we have

no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. Hence James says: ”For in many things we all offend. For it is established that all who were conceived from the pleasure of the flesh—without doubt in their action, or speech, or thought—the prince of this world had something of his own in them. But therefore he could not seize them afterward or hold them before, because He snatched them from their debts who paid the debt of death for us without being in debt, so that our debts do not hold us under the right of our enemy, because the mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, freely rendered for us what He did not owe. For He who rendered for us the unowed death of the flesh freed us from the owed death of the soul. He says therefore: ”For the prince of this world comes, and in me he has nothing.

Hence we must take care, and consider daily with great weeping, how ravenous, how terrible the prince of this world may come seeking his own works in us on the day of our departure, if he came even to God dying in the flesh, and sought something in Him in whom he could find nothing. What then shall we wretches say, what shall we do, we who have committed innumerable evils? What shall we say to the adversary who searches us and finds much of his own in us, except only this which is our certain refuge and solid hope: that we have been made one with him in whom the prince of this world sought something of his own and could find nothing at all? For he alone is free among the dead. And we are now released from the bondage of sin with true liberty, because we are united to him who is truly free. For it is established, and we cannot deny it, but we truthfully confess that the prince of this world has much in us; yet at the time of our death he cannot seize us, because we have become members of him in whom he has nothing. But what does it profit that we are joined to our Redeemer through faith, if we are separated from him by our conduct? For he himself says: Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore right works must be joined to right faith.

Let us wash away the evils we have done through daily laments; let right works arising from love of God and neighbor overcome our past wickedness; let us refuse no good that we can bestow upon our brothers. For we do not otherwise become members of our Redeemer unless by clinging to God and showing compassion to our neighbor. But because examples rather than words more often stir the hearts of listeners to the love of God and neighbor, I am eager to relate to your charity what my son Epiphanius the deacon, who is present here, born in the province of Isauria, is accustomed to tell as a miracle that occurred in the neighboring land of Lycaonia. For he says that there was a certain monk named Martyrius, a man of very venerable life, who was traveling from his own monastery to visit another monastery over which a spiritual father presided. And so as he went on his way, he found a leper whom the elephantine disease had disfigured throughout his limbs with dense wounds, wanting to return to his lodging but unable to do so because

of weariness. And this man said that he had his lodging on that very road where the same monk Martyrius was hastening to go.

But the man of God, having pity on the weariness of this leper, immediately threw down and spread out on the ground the cloak with which he was clothed, and placed the leper upon it, and lifting him up wrapped all around in his cloak upon his shoulder, he carried him back with him. And when he was now approaching the doors of the monastery, the spiritual father of that monastery began to cry out with a loud voice: Run, open the doors of the monastery quickly, because brother Martyrius is coming carrying the Lord. But immediately when Martyrius reached the entrance of the monastery, he who was thought to be a leper leaped from his neck, and appearing in that form in which the Redeemer of the human race is accustomed to be recognized by men, God and man Christ Jesus, he returned to heaven while Martyrius watched, and ascending he said to him: Martyrius, you were not ashamed of me on earth; I will not be ashamed of you in heaven. And when this holy man had just entered the monastery, the father of the monastery said to him: Brother Martyrius, where is he whom you were carrying? To which he replied, saying: If I had known who he was, I would have held his feet. Then the same Martyrius related that when he had carried him, he had not felt his weight at all. Nor is this surprising;

for how could he feel weight, when he who was being carried was himself carrying the one who bore him? In this matter we must consider how much fraternal compassion avails, how much the bowels of mercy join us to almighty God. For we draw near to him who is above all things precisely when we lower ourselves even beneath ourselves through compassion for our neighbor. In bodily matters, no one touches high things unless he stretches upward; but in spiritual matters it is certain that the more we are drawn down through compassion, the more truly we approach the heights. But behold, for our edification it is not enough for the Redeemer of the human race that he declared he would say at the last judgment: Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me, unless he also showed in himself before the judgment what he had said; so that he might demonstrate that whoever now renders good works to the needy renders them especially to him for whose love he renders them. And the more anyone receives a greater reward, the more he does not despise even him who seems most deserving of contempt. For what in human flesh is more sublime than the flesh of Christ, which is exalted above the angels? And what in human flesh is more abject than the flesh of a leper, which is torn apart by swelling wounds and filled with exhaling stenches?

But behold, he appeared in the form of a leper; and he who is to be revered above all things did not disdain to be seen as despised below all things. Why this, except to admonish us who are slower of understanding, that whoever hastens to stand

before him who is in heaven should not refuse to be humbled on earth and to suffer with even the abject and despicable brethren? I had resolved to speak to your charity briefly; but because the way of man is not in himself, the flowing speech cannot be restrained, which he himself of whom we speak disposes, who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY 40. Delivered to the people in the basilica of the holy martyr Lawrence on the second Sunday after Pentecost.

READING OF THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE. At that time, Jesus said to his disciples: There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and feasted sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, who lay at his gate, full of sores, desiring to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table, and no one gave to him. But even the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. And the rich man also died, and was buried in hell. And lifting up his eyes when he was in torments, he saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said: Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame. And Abraham said to him: Son, remember that you received good things in your lifetime, and Lazarus likewise evil things. But now he is comforted, and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been established, so that those who wish to pass from here to you cannot, nor can they cross over from there to here. And he said: I ask you then, father, that you send him to my father's house;

for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come into this place of torments. And Abraham said to him: They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. But he said: No, father Abraham; but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent. But he said to him: If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe if someone rises from the dead. In the words of sacred Scripture, dearest brothers, the truth of history must first be preserved, and afterward the spiritual understanding of allegory must be sought. For then the fruit of allegory is sweetly gathered when it is first established through history in the root of truth. But since sometimes allegory builds faith and history builds morality, we who by God's authority now speak to the faithful do not think it unreasonable if we set aside this order of speaking, so that you who already hold firm faith should first hear something briefly about allegory; and what is very necessary for you concerning the moral sense of history, let this be kept for last in the order of our exposition, because those things which happen to be heard afterward are usually better remembered. And so we pass quickly over the allegorical meanings, that we may come more swiftly to the breadth of the moral sense. There was a certain

rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and feasted sumptuously every day.

Whom, dearest brothers, does this rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and feasted sumptuously every day signify, if not the Jewish people, who had the cultivation of life outwardly, who used the delights of the law they received for show, not for usefulness? And whom does Lazarus full of sores figuratively represent, if not the Gentile people? For when he turned to God and was not ashamed to confess his sins, he had a wound on his skin. For in a wound of the skin, poison is drawn from the inner parts and bursts forth outward. What then is the confession of sins, if not a kind of breaking open of wounds? For the poison of sin is healthfully opened in confession, which was festering within the mind. For wounds of the skin draw the fluid of corruption to the surface. And in confessing sins, what else do we do but open the evil that lay hidden within us? But the wounded Lazarus desired to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table, and no one gave to him, because that proud people scorned to admit any Gentile to knowledge of the law. And since they held the teaching of the law not for charity but for pride, they swelled as it were with the riches they had received. And because words flowed from them out of knowledge, crumbs as it were fell from the table. But on the other hand, dogs licked the wounds of the poor man lying there.

Sometimes in sacred speech preachers are understood by dogs. For the tongue of a dog, when it licks a wound, heals it, because holy teachers too, when they instruct us in the confession of our sin, touch as it were the wound of the mind through their tongue; and because by speaking they rescue us from sins, by touching wounds as it were they restore us to health. For that by the name of dogs the tongue of preachers is signified, the Lord says through the Psalmist: The tongue of your dogs from enemies, from him. For from the unbelieving Jews the holy preachers were chosen, who, coming against thieves and robbers in defense of the truth, gave great barkings, so to speak, for the Lord. Against this it is said of certain reprobates: Dumb dogs, not able to bark. Because therefore holy preachers condemn sins, but approve the confession of sins, saying: Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be saved, dogs lick the sores of Lazarus. For holy teachers, when they receive the confessions of the Gentiles, restore the wounds of minds to health. Hence also Lazarus is well interpreted as "one who is helped," because they help him toward deliverance, because they heal his wounds through the correction of their tongue. The licking of dogs can also signify the broad tongue of flatterers. For flatterers lick our wounds, who often are accustomed to praise with wicked favor even those very evils which we reprove in ourselves.

Now it happened that both died. The rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, was buried in hell; but Lazarus was led by angels into Abraham's bosom.

What does Abraham's bosom signify but the secret rest of the fathers? Of which the Truth says: Many, he says, will come from the East and the West, and will recline with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. For he who is said to have been clothed in purple and fine linen is rightly called a child of the kingdom. He who lifts his eyes from afar to see Lazarus, because while the unfaithful are in the depths through the punishments of their damnation, they behold the faithful above them in rest before the day of the last judgment, whose joys afterward they can in no way contemplate. But what they see is far away, because they do not attain there by merit. Moreover he is shown to burn more in his tongue, when he says: Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame. The unbelieving people held the words of the law in their mouth, which they scorned to keep in deed. Therefore he will burn more there, where he showed himself to know what he was unwilling to do. Wherefore it is well said of the learned and negligent through Solomon:

All the labor of man is in his mouth, but his soul will not be filled, because whoever labors only to know what he ought to say, fasts with an empty mind from the very refreshment of his knowledge. He desires to be touched by the tip of a finger, because given over to eternal punishments he wishes to share in even the least work of the just. To whom it is answered that in this life he received his good things, because he considered all his joy to be transitory happiness. For the just can have good things here, and yet not receive them as recompense, because while they seek better things, that is eternal things, whatever good things may have been present, in their judgment, when they burn with holy desires, they seem hardly good at all. Hence the prophet David, who was supported by the riches of his kingdom and many attendants, although he perceived that these things were good for necessity, nevertheless panted with longing for one singular good alone, saying: But for me, to cling to God is good. Among these things it should be noted what is said to him: Remember, son. For behold, Abraham calls him son, whom nevertheless he does not free from torment, because the faithful forefathers of this unfaithful people, since they see that many have strayed from their faith, do not rescue from torments by any compassion those whom nevertheless they recognize as sons according to the flesh.

Moreover the rich man placed in torments declares that he has five brothers, because that same proud Jewish people, which has already been condemned for the most part, knows that his followers whom he left upon the earth are given over to the five senses of the body. Therefore by the number five he expresses the brothers he had left behind, because he who is placed in hell groans that they do not rise to spiritual understanding, and asks that Lazarus be sent to them. To whom it is said that they have Moses and the prophets. But he says: They will not believe, unless someone rises from the dead. To whom it is immediately answered: If they do not

hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe even if someone rises from the dead. Certainly the Truth says of Moses: If you believed Moses, you would certainly believe me also. For he wrote of me. Therefore what is said through Abraham's response is fulfilled. For the Lord rose from the dead, but that Jewish people, because they were unwilling to believe Moses, also scorned to believe him who rose from the dead. And since they scorned to understand the words of Moses spiritually, they did not come to him of whom Moses had spoken. Let this suffice, dearest brothers, for us to have briefly touched upon in searching out the mysteries of allegory; now let the mind return to contemplate more broadly the moral meaning of the historical event:

"There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and feasted sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, who lay at the gate of the rich man, full of sores. Some think that the precepts of the Old Testament are stricter than those of the New; but these are certainly deceived by careless consideration. For in the Old Testament, not avarice but robbery is punished. There, property unjustly taken is punished by fourfold restitution. But here this rich man is not blamed for taking what belonged to others, but for not giving what was his own. Nor is it said that he oppressed anyone by violence, but that he exalted himself in the things he had received. From this, therefore, we must especially conclude with what punishment he should be punished who seizes what belongs to others, if he is struck with the condemnation of hell who does not share his own possessions. Therefore let no one consider himself safe, saying: "Behold, I do not seize what belongs to others, but I enjoy things lawfully granted to me," because this rich man was not punished for taking what belonged to others, but because he wrongly abandoned himself to the things he had received. This too is what delivered him to hell:

that he was not fearful in his prosperity, that he turned the gifts he received to the use of arrogance, that he knew nothing of the bowels of compassion, that he refused to redeem his sins even when he had abundant means to do so. And there are some who do not think that the wearing of fine and costly garments is a sin. But if indeed it were not a fault, the Word of God would never so carefully express that the rich man who is tormented in hell had been clothed in fine linen and purple. For no one seeks exceptional garments except for vainglory, that is, to appear more honorable than others. For the thing itself testifies that more costly clothing is sought only for empty glory, because no one wishes to be clothed in precious garments where he cannot be seen by others. We can better understand this fault also from the opposite: for if the lowliness of cheap clothing were not a virtue, the evangelist would not carefully say of John: "He was clothed with camel's hair. But we must note especially how great is the order of narration in the mouth of Truth concerning the proud rich man and the humble poor man. For behold it is said: "There was a certain rich man"; and immediately it is added: "And there was a certain beggar,

named Lazarus. Certainly among the people the names of the rich are usually known more than those of the poor.

What is it, therefore, that the Lord, speaking of a poor man and a rich man, tells the name of the poor man and does not tell the name of the rich man, except that God knows and approves the humble, and does not know the proud? Hence also to some who are proud of the power of their miracles He will say at the end: ”I know you not whence you are: depart from me, all you workers of iniquity. But on the contrary, to Moses it is said: ”I know you by name. Therefore He says of the rich man: ”A certain man. He says of the poor man: ”A beggar, named Lazarus. As if He openly said: I know the humble poor man, I do not know the proud rich man. The one I hold as known through approval, the other I do not know through the judgment of reprobation. We must also consider with what great consideration our Creator dispenses all things. For one thing is not done for one purpose alone. For behold, Lazarus the beggar, full of sores, lies before the gate of the rich man. From this one circumstance the Lord fulfilled two judgments. For the rich man would perhaps have had some excuse if Lazarus, poor and ulcerous, had not lain before his gate, if he had been far away, if his poverty had not been troublesome to his eyes.

Again, if the rich man had been far from the eyes of the ulcerous poor man, the poor man would have endured less temptation in his soul. But when He placed the needy and ulcerated man before the gate of the rich man abounding in delights, in one and the same circumstance He both heaped up condemnation upon the rich man who showed no mercy at the sight of the poor man, and again by the sight of the rich man daily tested and proved the tempted poor man. For how many temptations do you think this needy man, beset with wounds, endured in his thoughts, when he himself lacked bread and did not even have health, and saw before him a rich man having both health and delights with pleasure; when he saw himself afflicted with pain and cold, while the other rejoiced, clothed in fine linen and purple; himself brought low by wounds, the other overflowing with the things he had received; himself in need, the other unwilling to give? How great, my brothers, do we think was the tumult of temptation then in the heart of the poor man, for whom certainly poverty could have sufficed as punishment, even if he had been healthy; and again, sickness would have sufficed, even if he had had some support? But that the poor man might be more fully proved, both poverty and sickness together wasted him away.

And moreover he saw the rich man going forth, surrounded by throngs of attendants, while he himself in his weakness and want was visited by no one. For that no one was there to visit him, the dogs testify, who freely licked his wounds. From this one circumstance, therefore, almighty God rendered two judgments, when He permitted Lazarus the poor man to lie before the gate of the rich man, so that both

the wicked rich man might increase for himself the vengeance of condemnation, and the tempted poor man might grow unto reward. The one daily beheld him on whom he showed no mercy; the other saw him by whom he was being proved. Two hearts below, but one observer above, who both by tempting exercised the one unto glory, and by tolerating awaited the other unto punishment. For there follows: And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. And the rich man also died, and was buried in hell. This rich man, when placed in his own torment, seeks as a patron the one on whom he was unwilling to have mercy in this life. For behold it is added: Who lifting up his eyes, when he was in torments, saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said: Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame.

O how great is the subtlety of God's judgments! O how strictly is the recompense of good and evil deeds carried out! Certainly it was said above that in this life Lazarus sought the crumbs falling from the rich man's table, and no one gave to him; now concerning the torment of the rich man it is said that he desires water to be dropped from the tip of Lazarus's finger into his mouth. From this therefore, from this, brethren, gather how great is the strictness of God's severity. For this rich man who was unwilling to give even the least things from his table to the wounded poor man, placed in hell, came to seeking even the least things. For he who denied crumbs of bread asked for a drop of water. But it must be carefully noted what it means that the rich man placed in the fire asks for his tongue to be cooled. For it is the custom of sacred Scripture sometimes to say one thing, but to indicate another by that same saying. Now above the Lord had described this proud rich man not as given to talkativeness, but as feasting excessively. And He did not narrate that he sinned by talkativeness, but that he sinned by pride and greed through gluttony. But because talkativeness usually abounds at feasts, he who is said to have feasted wickedly here is reported to burn more grievously in his tongue in hell.

For the sin of talkativeness first serves those who feast wickedly, and after talkativeness the levity of jesting also follows. For that jesting follows gluttony, sacred Scripture testifies, which says: The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play. But before the body is moved to play, the tongue is moved to jokes and empty words. What therefore is indicated by the fact that the rich man placed in torments asks for his tongue to be cooled, except that he who by feasting had sinned more by talkativeness was burning more fiercely in his tongue through the justice of retribution? But this which is said to him through Abraham's response must be considered with very great fear: "Son, remember that you received good things in your life, and Lazarus likewise evil things. But now he is comforted here, and you are tormented. This sentence, my brothers, needs fear rather than exposi-

tion. For if any of you have received something of external good in this world, you ought to fear that very external gift, so to speak, lest it be given to you as recompense for certain of your deeds, lest the Judge who here restored external goods reject you from the retribution of inward good, lest honor here or riches be not an aid to virtue but a reward for labor.

For behold, when it is said, ”You received good things in your life,” it is indicated that this rich man also had something of good, from which he might receive good things in this life. And again, when it is said of Lazarus that he received evil things, it is clearly shown that Lazarus also had some evil that needed to be purged. But the fire of poverty purged the evils of Lazarus, and the happiness of passing life rewarded the goods of the rich man. Poverty afflicted and cleansed the one; abundance rewarded and repelled the other. Therefore whoever among you have good things in this world, when you recall that you have done good deeds, greatly fear concerning them, lest the prosperity granted to you be the reward of those same goods. And when you see any poor people committing some blameworthy acts, do not despise them, do not despair of them, because perhaps the furnace of poverty purges what the excess of very slight depravity stains. Fear greatly concerning yourselves, because a prosperous life has even followed some evil deeds. But consider carefully concerning them, because the teacher poverty also torments their life until it leads them to righteousness. There follows: ”And in all these things, between us and you a great chasm has been established, so that those who wish to cross from here to you cannot, nor can they pass from there to here.

In this matter, it must be carefully investigated how it is said, ”Those who wish to cross from here to you cannot. For there is no doubt that those who are in hell desire to cross over to the lot of the blessed. But those who have already been received into the lot of blessedness—in what sense is it said that they wish to cross over to those who are tortured in hell? But just as the reprobate desire to cross over to the elect, that is, to migrate away from the affliction of their punishments, so for the just to cross over to those who are afflicted and placed in torments means to go in mind through mercy and to wish to free them. But those who wish to cross from the seat of the blessed to those who are afflicted and placed in torments cannot do so, because the souls of the just, although they have mercy in the goodness of their nature, being now joined to the justice of their Creator, are bound by such great rectitude that they are moved by no compassion toward the reprobate. For they are in harmony with the Judge to whom they cling, and they do not condescend out of mercy to those whom they cannot rescue, because they will then see them as foreign to themselves to the same degree that they perceive them to be rejected by their Creator whom they love.

Therefore neither do the unjust cross over to the lot of the blessed, because they are bound by perpetual damnation; nor can the just cross over to the reprobate,

because, already raised up through the justice of judgment, they have no mercy on them from any compassion whatsoever. But after hope concerning himself is taken from the burning rich man, his mind runs back to the relatives whom he had left behind, because the punishment of the reprobate sometimes unprofitably instructs their mind toward charity, so that they then love their own spiritually, who here, while they loved sins, did not even love themselves. Hence it is now added: ”I ask you therefore, Father, to send him to my father’s house; for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come into this place of torments. In this matter it should be noted how much is heaped upon the burning rich man for his punishment. For both knowledge and memory are preserved for him unto his punishment. For he recognizes Lazarus whom he despised, and he also remembers his brothers whom he left behind. For his vengeance from the poor man would not be complete if he did not recognize him in retribution. And the punishment in fire would not be complete if he did not fear for his own what he himself suffers.

Therefore, that sinners may be punished more in their torment, they both see the glory of those whom they despised, and are also tortured by the punishment of those whom they loved unprofitably. Indeed it is to be believed that before the retribution of the last judgment the unjust see certain just ones in rest, so that seeing them in joy they may be tortured not only by their own punishment but also by the good of those others. But the just always behold the unjust in torments, so that their joy may increase from this, because they see the evil which they mercifully escaped; and they give so much greater thanks to their deliverer, as they see in others what they themselves could have suffered if they had been abandoned. Nor does the observed punishment of the reprobate darken that brightness of such great blessedness in the minds of the just, because where there will no longer be compassion for misery, it will without doubt be unable to diminish the joy of the blessed. But what wonder if, while the just behold the torments of the unjust, this comes to them as a service to their joys, when even in a painting black color is placed beneath so that white or red may appear brighter? For as was said, the joys of the good increase so much more as the evils of the damned which they escaped lie beneath their eyes.

And although their own joys suffice them fully for enjoyment, yet they without doubt always behold the evils of the reprobate, because those who see the brightness of their Creator, nothing is done in creation that they cannot see. But when the rich man asked that Lazarus be sent, Abraham immediately answered: They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. But he who had despised the words of God thought that his followers could not hear these things. Hence the rich man also replied: No, my father; but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will believe. To whom a truthful judgment is immediately spoken: If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe someone who has risen from the dead, because indeed those who despise the words of the law will fulfill the precepts of

the Redeemer, who rose from the dead, with greater difficulty the more subtle they are. For whatever is said through the law is less than what is commanded through the Lord. For the law commands that tithes be given, but our Redeemer commands that everything be given up by those who follow perfection. The law cuts away sins of the flesh, but our Redeemer condemns even unlawful thoughts. If therefore they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe if someone rises from the dead, because when will those who neglect to fulfill the lesser precepts of the law grow strong enough to obey the higher commands of our Savior?

And indeed it is certain that those who refuse to fulfill his words undoubtedly refuse to believe him. Let it suffice that we have said these things from consideration of the event itself. But you, brothers, knowing both the rest of Lazarus and the punishment of the rich man, act diligently, seek intercessors for your sins, and secure the poor as advocates for yourselves on the day of judgment. For you now have many Lazaruses; they lie before your doors, and they need what falls daily from your table while you are already satisfied. The words of sacred scripture ought to instruct us to fulfill the commands of piety. Every day, if we seek Lazarus, we find him; every day, even if we do not seek him, we see Lazarus. Behold, the poor present themselves persistently, they ask of us, who will then come as intercessors for us. Certainly we ought to have asked them entirely, yet we are the ones being asked. Consider whether we ought to refuse what is requested of us, when those who ask are our patrons. Therefore do not waste the times for mercy, do not neglect the remedies you have received. Before punishment, think about punishment. When you look upon any who are lowly in this world, even if some things of theirs seem reprehensible, do not despise them, because perhaps those whom weakness of character wounds, the medicine of poverty heals.

If there are any such things of theirs that ought rightly to be reproved, turn these, if you wish, to the use of your own reward, so that from their very faults the increase of your piety may be accumulated, inasmuch as you give both bread and word equally, the bread of refreshment with the word of correction; and let those who sought one thing receive two forms of nourishment from you, while they are satisfied both outwardly with food and inwardly with discourse. Therefore when a poor person is seen to be blameworthy, he ought to be admonished, not despised. But if he has nothing deserving of reproof, he ought to be greatly venerated as an intercessor. But behold, we see many people, and we do not know what merit each one has. Therefore all are to be venerated, and it is necessary that you humble yourself before all, the more so because you do not know which of them is Christ. I am telling of a matter, brothers, which he who is present—my brother and fellow presbyter Speciosus—knows well. At that time when I entered the monastery, there was a certain old woman named Redempta, established in the religious habit, who dwelt in this city near the church of blessed Mary ever virgin. She had been a disciple of that Herundo who, endowed with great virtues, was said to have led

the eremitic life upon the Praenestine mountains. Two disciples in the same habit were attached to her:

one named Romula, and another who still survives to this day, whom indeed I know by face but not by name. These three, therefore, living together in one dwelling, led a life full of riches of character yet nevertheless poor in possessions. Now this Romula whom I have mentioned surpassed her fellow disciple whom I spoke of by great merits of life. For she was of marvelous patience, of the highest obedience, a guardian of her mouth for silence, and greatly devoted to the practice of continual prayer. But since often those whom people already esteem as perfect still have something of imperfection in the eyes of the supreme Maker—just as we unskilled people often behold statues not yet perfectly sculpted and already praise them as if perfect, which the artist still examines and polishes, and already hears them praised yet does not cease to strike them for improvement—this Romula whom we mentioned was struck by that bodily affliction which physicians call by the Greek word paralysis, and lying in bed for many years, she lay deprived of the use of nearly all her limbs. Yet these same afflictions had not brought her mind to impatience. For the very losses of her limbs had become increases of her virtues, since she had grown all the more diligently to the practice of prayer, inasmuch as she was utterly unable to do anything else. Therefore one night she called to that same Redempta whom I mentioned, who was nurturing both her disciples in the place of daughters, saying: ”Mother, come; mother, come.

She arose at once with the other disciple, as became known to many from both of them reporting the matter, and as I too learned at that same time. And when they stood by the bed of the one lying there at midnight, suddenly light sent from heaven filled the whole space of that little cell, and such great brilliance shone forth that it struck the hearts of those standing by with inestimable fear, and, as they themselves recounted afterward, their whole body became rigid and they remained in sudden stupor. For there began to be heard a sound as of a great multitude entering, the door of the cell being shaken as if pressed by a throng of those entering. And, as they said, they sensed a multitude of those entering, but because of the excess of fear and light they could see nothing, for both terror had pressed down their eyes and the very brightness of so great a light was dazzling them. This light was immediately followed by a fragrance of wondrous odor, so that the sweetness of the scent refreshed their spirit, which the light sent forth had terrified. But when they could not bear the force of that brightness, Romula began to console with gentle voice the trembling Redempta standing by her, the teacher of her character, saying: ”Do not fear, mother; I am not dying now. And while she said this repeatedly, gradually the light that had been sent in was withdrawn, but the odor that had followed remained.

And so the second and third day passed, with the fragrance of the scent remaining. Therefore on the fourth night she called her teacher again. When she came, Romula asked for and received the viaticum. But Redempta and the other disciple had not yet withdrawn from the bed of the one lying there when suddenly in the street before the door of that cell two choirs of those singing psalms stood still, and as they themselves said they distinguished the sexes by their voices, they said men were singing the psalm and women were responding. And while these heavenly obsequies were being performed before the doors of the cell, that holy soul was released from the flesh. As she was being led to heaven, the higher the choirs of singers ascended, the more faintly the psalmody began to be heard, until both the sound of that psalmody and the sweetness of the odor ended in the distance. Therefore, as long as she lived in the body, who held her in honor? She seemed unworthy to all, despised by everyone. Who would deign to approach her, who would deign to see her? But God's pearl lay hidden in a dunghill. By dunghill, brothers, I mean this very corruptibility of the body; by dunghill I designate the rejection of poverty. Therefore the pearl that lay in the dunghill was taken up and placed in the adornment of the heavenly King; now she shines among the citizens above, now she gleams among those fiery stones of the eternal diadem.

O you who believe yourselves to be rich in this world, or who are, compare, if you can, your false riches with the true riches of Romula. You possess all things in the way of this world, only to lose them; she sought nothing on the journey, and found everything upon arrival. You lead a joyful life, you fear a sad death; she endured a sad life, she arrived at a joyful death. You seek the service of men for a time; she, despised by men, found the choirs of angels as companions. Learn therefore, brothers, to despise all temporal things; learn to scorn passing honor, to love eternal glory. Honor those whom you see as poor, and those whom you observe outwardly as despised by the world, consider them inwardly as friends of God. Share with them what you have, so that one day they may deign to share with you what they have. Consider what is said by the mouth of the teacher of the nations: In this time let your abundance supply their want, that their abundance also may be a supplement to your want. Consider what Truth itself says in person: As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me. Why are you slow to give, when what you extend to one lying on earth you give to him who sits in heaven?

But may almighty God, who speaks through me in your ears, speak through himself in your minds—he who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, through all ages of ages. Amen.

Source. English translation: an older public-domain translation as collected in the Writings-Database (HistoricalChristianFaith), mostly from the Ante-Nicene, Nicene

and Post-Nicene Fathers and similar nineteenth-century editions. SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Square brackets, Greek or Latin words and footnote-free text are as the source file prints them, and a transcription error may remain. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.